WRITINGS OF RICHARD BAXTER

by Richard Baxter

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

127 Chapters

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Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

0.01. A Call to the Unconverted to Turn and Live

A Call to the Unconverted to Turn and Live By the late Reverend and Pious Mr. RICHARD BAXTER YORK Printed for WILSON, SPENCE, and MAWMAN.

M,DCC,XCV.

Richard Baxter (November 12, 1615 - December 8, 1691) was an English Puritan church leader, divine scholar and controversialist, called by Dean Stanley "the chief of English Protestant Schoolmen".

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Chapter 3

1.01. A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR; AND The great Success which attended the CALL when first published.

IT may be proper to prefix an account of this book given by Mr. Baxter himself, which was found in his study after his death, in his own words:

“I published a short treatise on conversion, intitled, A Call to the Unconverted. The occasion of this was my converse with bishop Usher, while I was at London. who, approving my method and directions suited for peace of conscience, was importunate with me to write directions suited to the various states of Christians, and also against particular sins: I reverenced the man, but disregarded these persuasions, supposing I could do nothing but what is done better already: but when he was dead, his words went deeper to my mind, and I purposed to obey his counsel; yet, so as that to the first sort of men, (the ungodly), I thought vehement persuasions meeter than directions only; and so for such I published this little book, which God hath blessed with unexpected success, beyond all the rest that I have written, except “The Saint’s Rest.” In a little more than a year, there were about twenty thousand of them printed by my own consent, and about ten thousand since; beside many thousands by stolen impressions, which poor men stole for lucre sake.—Through God’s mercy, I have information of almost whole households converted by this small book, which I set so light by; and, as if all this in England, Scotland, and Ireland, were not mercy enough to me, God (since I was silenced) hath sent it over on his message to many beyond the seas; for when Mr. Elliot had printed all the Bible in the Indian language, he next translated this my “Call to the Unconverted,” as he wrote to us here.—And yet God would make some farther use of it; for Mr. Stoop, the pastor of the French Church in London, being driven hence by the displeasure of his superiors, was pleased to translate it into French. I hope it will not be unprofitable there, nor in Germany, when it is printed in Dutch.”

It may be proper further to mention Dr. Bates’ account of the author, and of this useful Treatise.—In his sermon at Mr. Baxter’s funeral, he thus says: “His books of practical divinity have been effectual for more conversions of sinners to God than any printed in our time: and while the church remains on earth, will be of continual efficacy to recover lost souls.—There is a vigorous pulse in them, that keeps the reader awake and attentive.”—His Call to the Unconverted, how small in book, but how powerful in virtue! Truth speaks in it with that authority and efficacy, that it makes the reader to lay his hand upon his heart, and find that he hath a soul and a conscience, though he lived before as if he had none. He told some friends, that six brothers were converted by reading that Call, and that every week he received letters of some converted by his books. This he spake with most humbled thankfulness, that God was pleased to use him as an instrument for the salvation of souls.”

Self-denial and contempt of the world were shining graces in him. I never knew any person less indulgent to himself, and more indifferent to his temporal interest. His patience was truly Christian; he was tried by many afflictions. We are tender of our reputation. His name was obscured under a

cloud of detraction: many scandalous darts were thrown at him. He was accused for his Paraphrase upon the New Testament, and condemned, unheard, to a prison, where he remained some years; but he was so far from being moved at the unrighteous prosecution, not he joyfully said to a constant friend, “What could I desire more of God, than having served him to my power, I should be called to suffer for him!” His pacific spirit was a clear character of his being a child of God. How ardently he endeavoured to cement the breaches amongst us is publicly known. He said to a friend, “I can as willing be a martyr for love as for any article of the creed.”—It is strange, to astonishment, that those who agree in the substantial and great points of the reformed religion, and are of different sentiments only in things not so clear, nor of that moment as those wherein they consent, should be of opposite parties.

Death reveals the secrets of the heart; then words are spoken with most feeling and least affectation. This excellent saint was the same in his life and death: his last hours were spent in preparing others and himself to appear before God. He said to his friends that visited him, “You come hither to learn to die, I am not the only person that must go this way: I can assure you, that your whole life, be it ever so long, is little enough to prepare for death. Have a care of this vain deceitful world and the lusts of the flesh: Be sure you choose God for your portion, heaven for your home, God’s glory for your end, his word for your rule, and then you need never fear but we shall meet with comfort.”

Never was penitent sinner more humble and debasing, never was a sincere believer more calm and comfortable. He acknowledged himself to be the vilest dunghill-worm (it was his usual expression) that ever went to heaven; he admired the divine condescension to man, after saying “Lord, what is man? what am I? a vile worm to the great God!” Many times he prayed, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” and blessed God, that that he was left upon record in the Gospel as an effectual prayer: He said, “God may justly condemn me for the best duty I ever did; and all my hopes are from the free mercy of God in Christ,” which he often prayed for.

After a slumber he awaked and said, “I than rest from my labour.” A minister then present said, “and your work follow you.” To whom he replied “No works! I will leave out works, if God will grant me the other.”—When a friend was comforting him with the remembrance of the good many had received by his preaching and writings, he said, “I was but a pen in God’s hand, and what praise is due to a pen?” His resigned submission to the will of God, in his sharp sickness, was eminent. When extremity of pain constrained him earnestly to pray to God for his release by death, he would check himself: “It is not fit for me to prescribe;” and said, “when thou wilt, what thou wilt.” At another time he said, “That he found great comfort and sweetness in repeating the words of the Lord’s prayer; and was sorry that some good people were prejudiced against the use of it; for, there were all necessary petitions for soul and body contained in it.” At other times he gave excellent counse1 to young ministers that visited him, and earnestly prayed to God to bless their labours, and make them very successful in converting many souls to Christ; and expressed great joy that they were of moderate peaceful spirits.

During his sickness, when the question was asked, how he did, his reply was, “almost well,” His joy was most remarkable when in his own apprehension death was nearest; and his spiritual joy was at length consummate in eternal joy.

Thus lived and died that blessed saint.—I have, without any artificial fiction in words, given a sincere short account of him. All our tears are below the just grief for such an invaluable loss. It is the comfort of his friends that he enjoys a blessed reward in heaven, and hath left a precious remembrance on earth.

Now, blessed be the gracious God, that he was pleased to prolong the life of his servant, so useful and beneficial to the world, to a full age: that he hath brought him slowly and safely to heaven.

I shall conclude this account with my own deliberate wish: “May I live the remainder of my life as entirely to the glory of God as he lived; and when I shall come to the period of my life, may I die in the same blessed peace wherein he died: may I be with him in the kingdom of light and love for ever.”

I shall also add Dr. Calamy’s account of this Treatise; his words are thus: “In 1657, Mr. Baxter published a Call to the Unconverted; a book blessed by God with marvellous success, in reclaiming persons from their impieties. Twenty thousand of them were printed and dispersed in little more than a year. It was translated into French, and Dutch, and other European languages; and Mr. Elliot translated it into the Indian language; and Mr. Cotton Mather, in his life, gives an account of an Indian prince, who was so well affected with this book, that he sat reading it, with tears in his eyes, till he died.”

1.02. PREFACE

To all unsanctified Persons that shall read this Book; especially of my Hearers in the Borough and Parish of Kiaderminster.

Men and Brethren, THE eternal God, that made you for a life everlasting, and hath redeemed you by his only Son, when you had lost it and yourselves, being mindful of you in your sin and misery, bath indited the gospel, and sealed it by his spirit, and commanded his ministers to preach it to the world, that pardon being freely offered you, and heaven being set before you, he might call you off from your fleshly pleasures, and from following after this deceitful world, and acquaint you with the life that you were created and redeemed for, before you are dead and past remedy. He sendeth you not prophets or apostles, that receive their message by immediate revelation; but yet he calleth you by his ordinary ministers, who are commissioned by him to preach the same gospel which Christ and his apostles first delivered. The Lord seeth how you forget him and your latter end, and how light you make of everlasting things, as men that understand not what they have to do or suffer. He seeth how bold you are in sin, and how fearless threatnings, and how careless of your souls, and how the works of infidels are in your lives, while the belief of Christians is in your mouths. He seeth the dreadful day at hand, when your sorrows will begin, and you must lament all this with fruitless cries in torment and desperation; and then the remembrance of your folly will tear your hearts, if true conversion now prevent it not. In compassion of your sinful miserable souls, the Lord, that better knows your case than you can know it, hath made it our duty to speak to you in his name, 2 Corinthians 5:19. and to tell you plainly of your sin and misery, and what will be your end, and how sad a change you will shortly see, if yet you go on a little longer. Having bought you at so dear a rate as the blood of his son Jesus Christ, and made you so free and general promise of pardon, and grace, and everlasting glory; he commandeth us to tender all this to you, as the gift of God, and to intreat you to consider of the necessity and worth of what he offereth.—He seeth and pitieth you, while you are drowned in worldly cares and pleasures, and eagerly following childish toys, and wasting that short and precious time for a thing of nought, in which you should make ready for an everlasting life; and therefore he high commanded us to call after you, and tell you how you lose your labour, and are about to lose your souls, and to tell you what greater and better things you might certainly have, if you would hearken to his Call, Isaiah 55:1-3. We believe and obey the voice of God; and come to you on his message, who hath charged us to preach, and be instant with you in season and out of season, and to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and shew your transgressions and your sins, Isaiah 53:1. 2 Timothy 4:1-2. But alas! to the grief of our souls and your own undoing, you stop your ears, you stiffen your necks, you harden your hearts, and send us back to God with groans, to tell him that we have done his message, but can do no good on you, nor scarcely get a sober hearing.—Oh! that our eyes were a fountain of tears, that we might lament our ignorant, careless people, that have Christ before them, and pardon, and life, and heaven before them, and that have not hearts to know or value them! that might have Christ, and grace, and glory, as well as others, if it were not for their wilfill negligence and contempt! O that the Lord would fill our hearts with more compassion to these miserable souls, that we might

cast ourselves even at their feet, and follow them to their houses, and speak to them with our bitter tears: For, long have we preached to many of them in vain: We study plainness to make them understand, and many of them will not understand us; we study serious, piercing words, to make them feel, but they will not feel. If the greatest matters would work with them, we should awake them; if the sweetest things would work, we should entice them and win their hearts; if the most dreadful things would work, we should at least affright them from their wickedness; if truth and certainty would take with them, we should soon convince them; if the God that made them, and the Christ that bought them, might be heard, the case would soon be altered with them; if scripture might be heard, we should soon prevail; if reason, even the best and strongest reason, might be heard, we should not doubt but we should speedily convince them; if experience might be heard, even their own experience, and the experience of all the world, the matter would be mended; yea, if the conscience within them might be heard, the case would be better with them than it is. But if nothing can be heard, what then shall we do for them? If the dreadful God of heaven be slighted, who then shall be regarded? If the inestimable love and blood of a Redeemer be made light of, what then shall be valued? If heaven have no desirable glory with them, and everlasting joys be nothing worth, if they can jest at hell, and dance about the bottomless pit, and play with the consuming fire, and that when God and man do warn them of it; what shall we do for such souls as these?

Once more, in the name of the God of heaven, I shall do the message to you which he hath commanded us, and leave it in these standing lines to convert you or to condemn you; to change you, or to rise up in judgment against you, and to be a witness to your faces, that once you had a serious call to turn. Hear, all you that are drudges of the world, and the servants of flesh and Satan! that spend your days in looking after prosperity on earth, and drown your consciences in drinking, and gluttony, and idleness, and foolish sports, and know your sin, and yet will sin, as if you set God at defiance, and bid him do his worst and spare not! Hearken, all you that mind not God, and have no heart to holy things, and feel no favour in the word or worship of the Lord, or in the thoughts or mention of eternal life, that are careless of your immortal souls, and never bestow one hour in inquiring what case they are in, whether sanctified or unsanctified, and whether you are ready to appear before the Lord! Hearken, all you that, by sinning in the light, have dinned yourselves into infidelity, and do not believe the word of God. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear the gracious and yet the dreadful call of God! His eye is all this while upon you. Your sins are registered, and you shall surely hear of them again. God keepeth the book now; and he will write it all upon your consciences with his terrors; and then you also shall keep it yourselves: O sinners, that you knew but what you are doing! and whom you are all this while offending! the sun itself is darkness before that Majesty, which you daily abuse and carelessly provoke. The sinning angels were not able to stand before him, but were cast down to be tormented with devils. And dare such silly worms as you so carelessly offend, and set yourselves against your Maker! O that you did but a little know what case that wretched soul is in, that hath engaged the living God against him! The words of his mouth, that made thee, can unmake thee; the frown of his face will cut thee off and cast thee out into utter darkness. How eager are the devils to be doing with thee that have tempted thee, and do but wait for the word from God to take and use thee as their own! and then in a moment thou wilt be in hell. If God be against thee, all things are against thee: this world is but thy prison, for all thou so lovest it; thou art but reserved in it to the day of wrath, Job 21:30. the Judge is coming, thy soul is even going. Yet a little while, and thy friend shall say of thee, “He is dead;”

and thou shalt see the things that thou now dost despise, and feel that which now thou wilt not believe. Death will bring such an argument as thou canst not answer; an argument that shall effectually confute thy cavils against the words and ways of God, and all thy self-conceited dotages. And then how soon will thy mind be changed? Then be an unbeliever if thou canst; stand then to all thy former words, which thou wast wont to utter against a holy and a heavenly life. Make good that cause then before the Lord, which thou wast wont to plead against thy teachers, and against the people that feared God. Then stand to thy old opinions and contemptuous thoughts of the diligence of the saints; make ready now thy strongest reasons, and stand up then before the Judge, and plead like a man for thy fleshly, thy worldly, and ungodly life. But know that thou wilt have One to plead with, that will not be outfaced by thee; nor so easily put off as we thy fellow-creatures. O poor soul! there is nothing but a slender veil of flesh between thee and that amazing sight, which will quickly silence thee, and turn thy tone, and make thee of another mind! As soon as death hath drawn this curtain, thou shalt see first which will quickly leave thee speechless. And how quickly will that day and hour come! When thou hast had but a few more merry hours, and but a few more pleasant draughts and morsels, and a little more of the honours and riches of the world, thy portion will be spent, and thy pleasures ended, and all is then gone that thou settest thy heart upon; of all, that thou soldest thy Saviour and salvation for, there is nothing left but the heavy reckoning. As a thief, that sits merrily spending the money in an alehouse which he hath stolen, when men are riding in post-haste to apprehend him, so it is with you. While you are drowned in cares or fleshly pleasures, and making merry with your own shame, death is coming in post-haste to seize upon you, and carry your souls to such a place and state as now you little know or think of. Suppose, when you were bold and busy in your sin, that a messenger were but coming post from London to apprehend you and take away your lives; though you saw him not, yet if you knew that he was coming, it would mar your mirth, and you would be thinking of the haste he makes, and hearkening when he knocked at your door. O that you could but see what haste death makes, tho’ yet he hath not overtaken you! No post so swift! No messenger more sure! As sure as the sun will be with you in the morning, though it hath many thousand and hundred thousand miles to go in the night, so sure will death be quickly with you; and then where is your sport and pleasure? Then will you jest and brave it out? Then will you jeer at them that warned you? Then is it better to be a believing saint or a sensual worldling? “And then whose shall all these things be” that you have gathered? Luke 12:19-21. Do you not observe that days and weeks are quickly gone, and nights and mornings come apace, and speedily succeed each other? You sleep, “but your damnation slumbereth not,” you linger, “but your judgment this long time lingereth not,” 2 Peter 2:3-5. to which “you are reserved for punishment,” 2 Peter 2:8-9.—O that you were wise to understand this, and that you did consider your latter end,” Deuteronomy 32:29 —“He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear the call of God in this day of his salvation.”

O careless sinners! that you did but know the love that you unthankfully neglect, and the preciousness of the blood of Christ which you despise! O that you did but know the riches of the gospel! O that you did but know, a little know, the certainty, and the glory, and blessedness, of that everlasting life, which now you will not set your hearts upon, nor be persuaded first and diligently to seek, Hebrews 11:6. and Hebrews 12:28. Matthew 6:12. Did you but know the endless life with God which you now neglect, how quickly would you cast away your sin, how quickly would you change your mind and life, your course and company, and turn the streams of your affections, and

lay your care another way! How resolutely would you scorn to yield to such temptations as now deceive you and carry you away! How zealously would you bestir yourselves for that most blessed life! How earnest would you be with God in prayer! How diligent in hearing, and learning, and inquiring!—How serious in meditating on the laws of God! (Psalms 1:2.) How fearful of sinning in thought, word, or deed; and how careful to please God and grow in holiness!—O what a changed people you would be! And why should not the certain word of God be believed by you, and prevail with you, which, openeth to you these glorious and eternal things?

Yea, let me tell you, that even here on earth, ye little know the difference between the life which you refuse, and the life which you would choose. The sanctified are conversing with God, when you dare scarce think of him, and when you are conversing with but earth and flesh.—Their conversation is in heaven, when you are utter strangers to it, and your belly is your God, and you are minding earthly things, Php 3:18-20. They are seeking after the face of God, when you seek for nothing higher than this world.—They are busily laying out for an endless life, where they shall be equal with the angels, Luke 20:36. when you are taken up with a shadow and a transitory thing of naught. How long and base is your earthly, fleshly, sinful life, in comparison of the noble, spiritual lfe of true believers! Many a time have I looked on such men with grief and pity, to see them trudge about the world, and spend their lives, and care, and labour, for nothing but a little food and raiment, or a little fading pelf, or fleshly pleasures, or empty honours, as if they had no higher things to mind.—What difference is there between the lives of these men and of the beasts that perish, that spend their time in working, and eating, and living, but that they may live? They taste not of the inward heavenly pleasures which believers taste and live upon.—I had rather have a little of their comfort, which the fore-thoughts of their heavenly inheritance afford them, though I had all their scorns and sufferings with it, than to have all your pleasures and treacherous prosperity. I would not have one of your secret gripes and pangs of conscience, and dark and dreadful thoughts of death and the life to come, for all that ever the world hath done for you, or all that you can reasonably hope that it should do. If I were in your unconverted carnal state, and knew but what I know, and believed but what I now believe, methinks my life would he a fore-taste of hell: How oft should I be thinking of the terrors of the Lord of the dismal day that is hastening on! Sure death and hell would be still before me. I should think of them by day, and dream of them by night; I should lie down in fear, and rise in fear, and live in fear, lest death should come before I were converted. I should have small felicity in any thing that I possessed, and little pleasure in any company, and little joy in any thing in the world, as long as I knew myself to be under the curse and wrath of God. I should be still afraid of hearing that voice, Luke 12:20. “Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.” And that fearful sentence would he written upon my conscience, Isaiah 48:22. and Isaiah 57:21. “There is no peace, faith my God, to the wicked.”—O poor sinners! it is a joyfuller life than this that you might live, if you were but but truly willing, to hearken to Christ, and come home to God. You might then draw near to God, with boldness, and call him your father, and comfortably trust him with your souls and bodies. If you look upon the promises, you may say, they are all mine: If upon the curse, you may say, from this I am delivered! When you read the law, you may see what you are saved from!—When you read the gospel, you may see him that redeemed you, and see the course of his love, and holy life, and sufferings, and trace him in his temptations, tears, and blood, in the work of your salvation. You may see death conquered, and heaven opened, and your resurrection and glorification provided for in the resurrection and glorification of your Lord. If you look on the saints, you may say, “They are my brethren and

companions." If on the unsanctified you may rejoice to think that you are saved from that state. If you look upon the heavens, the sun, and moon, and stars innumerable, you may think and say, "My Father's face is infinitely more glorious; it is higher matters that he hath prepared for his saints; yonder is but the outward court of heaven: The blessedness that he hath promised us is so much higher that flesh and blood cannot behold it." If you think of the grave, you may remember that the glorified Spirit, a living Head, and a loving Father, have all so near relation to your dust, that it cannot be forgotten or neglected, but more certainly revive than the plants and flowers in the spring, because that the soul is still alive, that is the root of the body; and Christ is alive, that is the root of both.—Even death, which is the king of fears, may be remembered and entertained with joy, as being the day of your deliverance from the remnants of sin and sorrow, and the day which you believed, and hoped, and waited for, when you shall see the blessed things which you had heard of, and shall find, by present joyful experience, what it was to choose the better part, and to be a sincere believing saint. What say you, Sir? is not this a more delightful life, to be assured of salvation, and ready to die, than to live as the ungodly, that have their hearts overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and so that day comes upon them unawares? Luke 21:34, Luke 21:36. Might you not live a comfortable life, if once you were made the heirs of heaven, and sure to be saved when you leave the world?—O look about you then, and think what you do, and cast not away such hopes as these for very nothing. The flesh and world can give you no such hopes or comforts.

And, besides all the misery that you bring upon yourselves, you are the troublers of others as long as you are unconverted. You trouble magistrates to rule you by their laws; you trouble ministers by resisting the light and guidance which they offer you. Your sin and misery are the greatest grief and trouble to them in the world.—You trouble the commonwealth, and draw the judgments of God upon you. It is you that most disturb the holy peace and order of the churches, and hinder our union and reformation, and are the shame and trouble of the churches where you intrude, and of the places where you are.—Ah! Lord, how heavy and sad a case is this, that even in England, where the gospel doth abound above any other nation in the world, where teaching is so plain and common, and all the helps we can desire is at hand; when the sword hath been hewing us, and judgment hath run as a fire through the Land; when deliverances have relieved us, and so many admirable mercies have engaged us to God, and to the gospel, and a holy life; that after all this, our cities, and towns, and countries, shall abound with multitudes of unsanctified men, and swarm with so much sensuality, as every where, to our grief, we see! One would have thought, that after all this light, and all this experience, and all these judgments and mercies of God, the people of this nation should have joined together, as one man, to turn to the Lord, and should have come to their godly teacher, and lamented all their former sins, and desired him to join with them in public humiliation, to confess them openly, and beg pardon of them from the Lord, and should have craved his instruction for the time to come, and be glad to be ruled by the spirit within, and the ministers of Christ without, according to the word of God. One would think that, after such reason and scripture-evidence as they hear, and after all these means and mercies, there should not be an ungodly person left amongst us, nor a wordling, nor a drunkard, nor a hater of reformation, nor an enemy to holiness, to be found in all our towns or countries. If we be not all agreed about some ceremonies or forms of government, one would think that, before this, we should have been all agreed to live a holy and heavenly life, in obedience to God, his word, and ministers, and in love and peace with one another.—But alas! how far are our people from this course! Most of them, in

most places, do set their hearts on earthly things, and seek “not first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof,” but look at holiness as a needless thing: Their families are prayerless, or else a few heartless lifeless words must serve instead of hearty, fervent, daily prayers [or perhaps only on the Lord’s-day in the evening]; their children are not taught the knowledge of Christ, and the covenant of grace, nor brought up in the nurture of the Lord, though they firmly promised all this in their baptism.

They instruct not their servants in the matters of salvation, but so their work be done they care not. There are more railing speeches in their families than gracious words that tend to edification. How few are the families that fear the Lord, and inquire at his word and ministers how they should live, and what they should do, and are willing to be taught and ruled, and that heartily look after everlasting life! And those few that God hath made so happy are commonly the by-word of their neighbours; when we see some live in drunkenness, and some in pride and worldliness, and most of them have little care of their salvation, though the cause be gross and past all controversy, yet will they hardly be convinced of their misery, and more hardly recovered and reformed: but when we have done all that we are able to save them from their sins, we leave the most of them as we find them. And if, according to the law of God, we cast them out of the communion of the church, when they have obstinately rejected all our admonitions, they rage at us as if we were their enemies, and their hearts are filled with malice against us, and they will sooner set themselves against the Lord and his laws, and church, and ministers, than against their deadly sins. This is the doleful case of England: We have magistrates that countenance the ways of godliness, and a happy opportunity for unity and reformation is before us, and faithful ministers long to see the right ordering of the church and of the ordinances of God; but the power of sin in our people doth frustrate almost all. No where can almost a faithful minister set up the unquestionable discipline of Christ, or put back the most scandalous impenitent sinners from the communion of the church and participation of the sacraments, but the most of the people rail at them and revile them; as if these ignorant careless souls were wiser than their teachers, or than God himself. And thus in the day of our visitation, when God calls upon us to reform his church, though magistrates seem willing, and faithful ministers seem willing, yet are the multitude of the people still unwilling, and have so blinded themselves, and hardened their hearts, that, even in these days of light and grace, they are the obstinate enemies of light and grace, and will not be brought by the calls of God to see their folly, and know what is for their good. O that the people of England “knew at least in this their day the things that belong unto their peace, before they are hid from their eyes!” Luke 19:42.

O foolish miserable souls! Galatians 3:1. who hath bewitched your minds into such madness, and your hearts into such deadness, that you should be such mortal enemies to yourselves, and go on so obstinately towards damnation, that neither the word of God, nor the persuasions of men, can change your minds, or hold your hands, or stop you, till you are past remedy! Well, sinners! this life will not last always; this patience will nor wait upon you still. Do not think that you shall abuse your Maker and Redeemer, and serve his enemies, and debase your souls, and trouble the world, and wrong the church, and reproach the godly, and grieve your teachers, and hinder reformation, and all this upon free cost. You know not yet what this must cost you, but you must shortly know, when the righteous God shall take you in hand, who will handle you in another manner than the sharpest magistrates or the plainest-dealing pastors did, unless you prevent the everlasting torments by a sound conversion, and a speedy obeying of the call of God. “He that hath an ear to hear, let him

hear," while mercy hath a voice to call.

One objection I find most common in the mouths of the ungodly, especially of late years: they say, "We can do nothing without God, we cannot have grace if God will not give it us; and, if he will, we shall quickly turn; if he have not predestinated us, and will not turn us, how can we turn ourselves or be saved; it is not in him that wills nor in him that runs." And thus they think they are excused.

I have answered this formerly, and in this book: but let me now say this much.—1. Though you cannot cure yourselves, you can hurt and poison yourselves. It is God that must sanctify your hearts; but who corrupted them? Will you wilfully take poison, because you cannot cure yourselves? Methinks you should the more forbear it. You should the more take heed of sinning, if you cannot mend what sin doth mar.—2. Though you cannot be converted without the special grace of God, yet you must know that God giveth his grace in the use of his holy means which he hath appointed to that end; and common grace may enable you to forbear your gross sinning (as to the outward act) and to use those means. Can you truly say, that you do as much as you are able to do? Are you not able to go by an alehouse-door, or to forbear the company that hardeneth you in sin? Are you not able to hear the word, and think of what you heard when you come home, and to consider with yourselves of your own condition and of everlasting things ? Are you not able to read good books from day to day, at least the Lord's-day, and to converse with those that fear the Lord? You cannot say you have done what you are able.—3. And therefore you must know that you can forfeit the grace and help of God by your wilful sinning or negligence, though you cannot, without grace, turn to God. If you will not do what you can, it is just with God to deny you that grace by which you might do more. 4. And, for God's decrees, you must know that they separate not the end and means, but tie them together. God never decreed to save any but the sanctified, nor to damn any but the unsanctified. God doth as truly decree whether your land, this year, than be barren or fruitful, and just how long you shall live in the world, as he hath decreed whether you shall be saved or not; and yet you would think that man but a fool that would forbear ploughing and sowing, and say, "If God have decreed that my ground shall bear corn, it will bear, whether I plough and sow or not. If God have decreed that I shall live, I shall live, whether I eat or not; but if he have not, it is not eating that will keep me alive." Do you know how to answer such a man, or do you not? If you do, then you know how to answer yourselves; for the case is alike God's decree is as peremptory about your bodies as your souls: if you do not, then try first, there conclusions upon your bodies, before you venture to try them on your soul: see first whether God will keep you alive without food or raiment, and whether he will give you corn without tillage and labour, and whether he will bring you to your journey's end without a travail or carriage; and, if you speed well in this, then try whether he will bring you to heaven without your diligent use of means, and sit down and say, We cannot sanctify ourselves.

Well, Sirs, I have but three requests to you, and I have done.

First, That you will seriously read over this small Treatise; (and, if you have such as need it in your families, that you would read it over and over to them; and if those that fear God would go now and then to their ignorant neighbour, and read this or some other book to them on this subject, they might be a means of winning of souls). If we cannot intreat so small a labour of men, for their own salvation, as to read such short instructions as these, they set little by themselves, and will most justly perish.

Secondly, When you have read over this book, I would intreat you to go alone, and ponder a little what you have read, and bethink you, as in the sight of God, whether it be not true, and do not nearly touch your souls, anti whether it be not time to took about you. And also intreat you, that you will upon your knees beseech the Lord that he will open your eyes to understand the truth, and turn your hearts to the love of God, and beg of him all that saving grace which you have so long neglected, and follow it on from day to day, till your hearts be changed.—And withal, that you will go to your pastors, (that are set over you, to take care of the health and safety of your souls, as physicians do for the health of your bodies), and desire them to direct you what course to take, and acquaint them with your spiritual estate, and that you may have the benefit of their advice and ministerial help.

Or, if you have not a faithful pastor at home, make use of some other in so great a need.

Thirdly, When by reading, consideration, prayer, and ministerial advice, you are once acquainted with your sin and misery, with your duty and remedy, delay not, but presently forsake your sinful company and courses, and turn to God, and obey his call. As you love your souls, take heed that you go not on against so loud a call of God, and against your own knowledge and consciences, lest it go worse with you in the day of judgment than with Sodom and Gomorrah. Inquire of God, as a man that is willing to know the truth, and not be a wilful cheater of his soul. Search the holy scriptures daily, and see whether these things be so or not; try impartially whether it be safer to trust heaven or earth, and whether it be better to follow God or man, the spirit or the flesh, and better to live in holiness or sin, and whether an unsanctified estate be safe for you to abide in one day longer; and, when you have found out which is best resolve accordingly, and make your choice without any more ado. If you will be true to your own souls, and do not love everlasting torments, I beseech you, as from the Lord, that you will but take this reasonable advice. O what happy towns and countries, and what a happy nation might we have, if we could but persuade our neighbours to agree to such a necessary motion! What joyful men would all faithful ministers be, if they could but see their people truly heavenly and holy; this would be the unity, the peace, the safety, the glory, of our churches; the happiness of our neighbours, and the comfort of our souls. ‘Then how comfortably should we preach pardon and peace to you, and deliver the sacraments, which are the seals of peace to you! And with what love and joy might we live among you! At your death-bed how boldly might we comfort and encourage your departing souls! And at your burial, how comfortably might we leave you in the grave, in expectation to meet your souls in heaven, and to see your bodies raised to that glory!

But, if still the most of you will go on in a careless, ignorant, fleshly, worldly, or unholy life, and all our desires and labours cannot so far prevail as to keep you from the wilful damning of yourselves; we must then imitate our Lord, who delighteth himself in those few that are jewels, and in the little flock that shall receive the kingdom, when the most shall reap the misery which they sowed. In nature excellent things are few. The world hath not many suns or moons: it is but a little of the earth that is gold or silver. Princes and nobles are but a small part of the sons of men; and it is no great number that are learned, judicious, or wise, here in the world. And therefore, if the gate being strait and very narrow, there be but few that find salvation, yet God will have his glory and pleasure in those few. And when Christ shall come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, his coming will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all true believers, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. And for the rest,

as God the Father vouchsafed to create them, and God the Son disdained not to bear the penalty of their sins upon the cross, and did not judge such sufferings in vain, though he knew that by refusing the sanctifications of the Holy Ghost they would finally destroy themselves, so we, that are his ministers, though these be not gathered, judge not our labour wholly lost. See Isaiah 49:5.

Reader, I have done with thee, (when thou hast perused this book), but sin hath not yet done with thee, (even those that thou thoughtest had been forgotten long ago), and Satan hath not yet done with thee, (though now he be out of sight) and God hath not yet done with thee, because thou wilt not be persuaded to have done with the deadly reigning sin. I have written thee this persuasive as one that is going into another world, where the things are seen that I here speak of, and as one that knoweth thou must be shortly there thyself. As ever thou wilt meet me with comfort before the Lord that made us; as ever thou wilt escape the everlasting plagues prepared for the final neglectors of salvation; and for all that are not sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and love not the communion of the saints, as members of the holy catholic church; and as ever thou hopest to see the face of Christ the judge, and of the majesty of the Father, with peace and comfort, and to be received into glory when thou art turned naked out of this world; I beseech thee, I charge thee, to hear and obey the Call of God, and resolvedly to turn that thou mayest live. But, if thou wilt not, even when thou hast no true reason for it but because thou wilt not, I summon thee to answer it before the Lord, and require thee there to bear me witness that I gave thee warning, and that thou wast not condemned for want of a call to turn and live, but because thou wouldest not believe it and obey it; which also must be the testimony of Thy serious Monitor,

Dec. 11, 1657.

RICHARD BAXTER.

1.03. SERMON I

Ezekiel 33:11.

Say to them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for, why will ye die, O house of Israel?

IT hath been the astonishing wonder of many a man, as well as me, to read in the holy Scripture, how few will be saved; and that the greatest part, even of those that are called, will be everlastingly shut out of the kingdom of heaven, and be tormented with the devils in eternal fire. Infidels believe not this when they read it, and therefore they must feel it. Those that do believe it are forced to cry out with Paul, Romans 11:33, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” but nature itself doth teach us all to lay the blame of evil works upon the doers, and therefore, when we see any heinous thing done, a principle of justice doth provoke us to inquire after him that did it, that the evil of the work may return the evil of shame upon the author. If we saw a man killed and cut in pieces we would presently ask, “Oh! who did this cruel deed?” If the town was wilfully set on fire, you would ask, “what wicked wretch did this?” So when we read that most will be firebrands of hell for ever, we must needs think with ourselves, how comes this to pass? and who is it long of? who is it that is so cruel as to be the cause of such a thing as this? and we can meet with few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confessed by all that Satan is the cause: but that doth not resolve the doubt, because he is not the principal cause. He doth not force men to sin, but tempt them to it; and leaves it to their own wills whether they will do it or not: he doth not carry men to an alehouse and force open their mouths, and pour in the drink; nor doth he hold them that they cannot go to God’s service; nor doth he force their hearts from holy thoughts. It lieth therefore between God himself and the sinner; one of them must needs be the principal cause of all this misery, whichever it is; for there is no other to cast it upon; and God disclaimeth it; he will not take it upon him: and the wicked disclaim it usually, and they will not take it upon them. And this is the controversy that is here managed in my text. The Lord complaineth of the people; and the people think it is the fault of God. The same controversy is handled, Ezekiel 18:25. where they plainly say, “that the way of the Lord is not equal:” and God saith, “it is their ways that are not equal.” So here they say, in Ezekiel 33:10, “If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?” As if they should say, if we must die, and be miserable, how can we help it? as if it were not long of them, but God. But God in my text doth clear himself of it, and telleth them how they may help it if they will, and persuadeth them to use means, and if they will not be persuaded, he lets them know that it is long of themselves; and, if this will not satisfy them, he will not therefore forbear to punish them. It is he that will be their judge, and he will judge them according to their ways; they are no judges of him or themselves, as wanting authority, and wisdom, and impartiality. Nor is it the cavilling with God, that shall serve their turn, or save them from the execution of justice, at which they murmur. The words of this verse contain: 1. God’s clearing of himself from the blame of their destruction. This he doth not by disowning his judgments and execution

according to that law, or by giving them any hope that the law shall not be executed; but by professing that it is not their death that he takes pleasure in, but their returning rather, that they may live: and this he confirmeth to them by his oath. 2. An express exhortation to the wicked to return, wherein God doth not only command, but persuade and condescend also to reason the case with them, why will they die? The direct end of his exhortation is, that they may turn and live. The secondary or reserved ends, upon supposition that this is not attained, are these two: First, to convince them by the means which he used, that it is not the long of God if they be miserable. Secondly, to convince them from their manifest wilfulness in rejecting all his commands and persuasions, that it is the long of themselves; and they die, because they will die. The substance of the text doth lie in these observations following.

Doct. 1. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

Doct. 2. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn.

Doct. 3. God taketh pleasure in men's conversion and salvation; but not in their death or damnation: he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

Doct. 4. This is a most certain truth, which because God would not have men to question, he hath confirmed it to them solemnly by his oath.

Doct. 5. The Lord doth redouble his commands and persuasions to the wicked to turn Doct. 6. The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with them, and asketh the wicked, why they will die?

Doct. 7. If after all this the wicked will not turn, it is not the long of God that they perish, but of themselves; their own wilfulness is the cause of their damnation; they therefore die, because they will die.

Having laid the text open before your eyes in these plain propositions, I shall next speak somewhat of each of them in order, though briefly.

Doct. 1. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

If you will believe God, believe this: there is but one of these two ways for every wicked man, either conversion or damnation. I know the wicked will hardly be persuaded either of the truth or equity of this. No wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that which they would not have to be true, and fewer would have that to be true, which they apprehend to be against them. But it is not quarrelling with the law, or with the judge, that will save the malefactor. Believing and regarding the law, might have prevented his death; but denying and accusing it will but hasten it. If it were not so, a hundred would bring their reason against the law, for one that would bring his reason to the law. And men would rather give their reasons, why they should not be punished, than to hear the commands and reasons of their governors which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge, but that you might be ruled and judged by it.

But, if there be any so blind as to venture to question either the truth or the justice of this law of God, I shall briefly give you that evidence of both, which methinks should satisfy a reasonable man. And first, if you doubt whether this be the word of God or not, besides a hundred other texts, you may be satisfied by these few.— Matthew 18:5. "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."— John 3:3. "Verily,

verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."— 2 Corinthians 5:17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."— Colossians 3:9-10. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him."— Hebrews 12:14. "Without holiness no man shall see God."— Romans 8:8-9. "So, then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."—"Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."— Galatians 6:45. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."— 1 Peter 1:3. "According to his abundant grace he hath begotten us to a lively hope."— 1 Peter 1:23. "Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."— 1 Peter 2:1-2. "Wherefore laying aside malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speaking: as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."— Psalms 9:17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."— Psalms 11:5. "And the Lord loveth the righteous, but the wicked his soul hateth." As I need not stay to open these texts, which are so plain, so I think I need not add any more of that multitude which speak the like. If thou be a man that dost believe the word of God, here is already enough to satisfy thee, that the wicked must be converted or condemned. You are already brought so far, that you must either confess that this is true, or say plainly you will not believe the word of God. And, if once you come to that pass, there are but small hopes of you: look to yourselves as well as you can, for, it is likely you will not be long out of hell. You would be ready to fly in the face of him that should give you the lie; and yet dare you give the lie to God? But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him, blame him not if he never warn you more, or if he forsake you, and give you up as hopeless. For to what purpose should he warn you, if you will not believe him? Should he send an angel from heaven to you, it seems you would not believe. For an angel can speak but the word of God; and, if an angel should bring you any other gospel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accursed (Galatians 1:8). And surely there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. If he be not to be believed, then all the angels in heaven are not to be believed. And if you stand on these terms with God, I shall leave you till he deal with you in a more convincing way. God hath a voice that will make you hear. Though he intreat you to hear the voice of his gospel, he will make you hear the voice of his condemning sentence, without intreaty. We cannot make you believe against your will; but God will make you feel against your will. But let us hear what reason you have, why you will not believe this word of God, which tells us that the wicked must be converted or condemned. I know your reason; it is because that you judge it unlikely that God should be so unmerciful: you think it cruelty to damn men everlastingly for so small a thing as a sinful life. And this leads us to the second thing, which is, to justify the equity of God in his laws and judgments. And first, I think you will not deny but that it is most suitable to an immortal soul to be ruled by laws that promise an eternal reward and threaten an endless punishment. Otherwise the law should not be suited to the nature of the subject, who will not be fully ruled by any lower means than the hopes or fears of everlasting things: As it is in case of temporal punishment; if a law were now made, that the most heinous crimes shall be punished with a hundred years captivity, this might be of some efficacy, as being equal to our lives. But, if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been sufficient, because men would know that they might have so many hundred years impunity afterwards. So it is in the present case.

2. I suppose that you will confess, that the promise of an endless and inconceivable glory is not so unsuitable to the wisdom of God, or the case of man. And why then should you not think so of the threatening of an endless and unspeakable misery?

3. When you find it in the word of God that so it is, and so it will be, do you think yourselves fit to contradict this word?—Will you call your Maker to the bar, and examine his word upon the accusation or falsehood? Will you set upon him, and judge him by the law of your conceits? Are you wiser, and better, and more righteous than he? Must the God of heaven come to you to learn wisdom? Must infinite wisdom learn of folly? and infinite Holiness be corrected by a selfish sinner that cannot keep himself an hour clean? Must the Almighty stand at the bar of a worm? O! horrid arrogance of senseless dust! Shall every mole, or clod, or dunghill, accuse the sun of darkness, and undertake to illuminate the world? Where were you when the Almighty made these laws, that he did not call you to his counsel? Surely he made them before you were born, without desiring your advice! and you came into the world too late to reverse them. If you could have done so great a work, you should have stepped out of your nothingness, and have contradicted Christ when he was on earth, or Moses before him, or have saved Adam and his sinful progeny from the threatened death, that so there might have been no need of Christ! And what if God withdraw his patience and sustenation, and let you drop into hell while you are quarrelling with his word?—Will you then believe that there is no hell?

4. If sin be such an evil that it requires the death of Christ for its expiation, no wonder if it deserve our everlasting misery.

5. And if the sin of the devils deserved an endless torment, why not also the sin of man?

6. And methinks you should perceive, that it is not possible for the best of men, much less for the wicked, to be competent judges of the desert of sin. Alas! We are both blind and partial. You can never know fully the desert of sin till you fully know, the evil of sin: and you can never fully know the evil of sin till you fully know, 1 The excellency of the soul, which it deformeth: 2. And the excellency of holiness, which it doth obliterate: 3. And the reason and excellency of the glory, which it violateth: And 4. the excellency of the glory which it doth despise: And, 5. the excellency and office of reason, which it treadeth down: 6. No, nor till you know the infinite excellency, almightiness and holiness, of that God, against whom it is committed. When you fully know all these, you shall fully know the desert of sin. Besides, you know that the offender is too partial to judge the law or the proceedings of the judge. We judge by feeling, which blinds our reason. We see, in common worldly things, that most men think the cause is right which is their own; and that all is wrong that is done against them; and let the most wise, or just impartial friends persuade them to the contrary, and it is all in vain. There are few children but think the father is unmerciful, or dealeth hardly with them, if he whip them. There is scarce the vilest wretch, but thinketh the church doth wrong him, if they excommunicate him; or scarce a thief or murderer that is hanged, but would accuse the law and judge of cruelty, if that would serve his turn.

7. Can you think that an unholy soul is fit for heaven? Alas! they cannot love God there, nor do him any service which he can accept. They are contrary to God; they loathe that which he most loveth; and love that which he abhoreth: they are incapable of that imperfect communion with him; which his saints do here partake of. How then can they live in that perfect love of him, and full delight and communion with him, which is the blessedness of heaven? You do not accuse yourselves of

unmercifulness, if you make not your enemy your bosom counsellor; and yet you will blame the absolute Lord, the most wise and gracious Sovereign of the world, if he condemn the unconverted to perpetual misery.

USE.

I beseech you now, all that love your souls, that instead of quarrelling with God, and with his word, you will presently stoop to it, and use it for good. All you that are unconverted in this assembly, take this as the undoubted truth of God; you must ere long be converted or condemned; there is no other way, but to turn or die. When God that cannot lie hath told you this; when you hear it from the Maker and Judge of the world, it is time for him that hath ears to hear. By this time you may see what you have to trust to. You are but dead and damned men, except you will be converted. Should I tell you otherwise, I should deceive you with a lie.—Should I hide this from you, I should undo you, and be guilty of your blood, as the verses before my text assure me: Ezekiel 33:8. “When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you shalt surely die, if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand.”—You see then, though this be a rough and unwelcome doctrine, it is such as we must preach, and you must hear. It is easier to hear of hell than feel it. If your necessities did not require it, we would not gall your tender ears with truths that seem so harsh and grievous. Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and to hear and think of it. The reason why so few escape it is, because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of conversion, and go the narrow way of holiness while they have time; and they strive not, because they are not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger they are in; and they are not awakened, because they are loathe to hear or think of it, and that is partly through foolish tenderness and carnal self-love, and partly because they do not well believe the word that threateneth it.—If you will not thoroughly believe this truth, methinks the weight of it should force you to remember it; and it should follow you, and give you no rest, till you are converted. If you had but once heard this word, by the voice of an angel, “Thou must be converted, or condemned; turn, or die” would it not stick in your mind, and haunt you night and day, so that in your sinning you would remember it, as if the voice were still in your ears, “turn, or die!” O happy were your souls if it might thus work with you, and never be forgotten or let you alone till it have driven home your heart to God. But if you will cast it out by forgetfulness or unbelief, how can it work to your conversion and salvation? But take this with you to your sorrow, though you may put this out of your minds, you cannot put it out of the Bible; but there it will stand as a settled truth, which you shall experimentally know forever, that there is no other way but, turn, or die.

O what is the matter then, that the hearts of sinners be not pierced with such a weighty truth! A man would think now, that every unconverted soul that hears these words should be pricked to the heart, and think with themselves, this is my own case, and never be quiet till they found themselves converted.—Believe it, Sirs, this drowsy careless temper will not last long. Conversion and condemnation are both of them awakening things. I can foretel it as truly as if I saw it with my eyes, that either grace or hell will shortly bring these matters to the quick, and make you say, “What have I done? what a foolish wicked course have I taken?” The scornful and the stupid state of sinners, will last but a little while, As soon as they either turn or die, the presumptuous dream will be at an end, and then their wits and feeling will return. But I foresee there are two things that are likely to harden the unconverted, and make me lose all my labour, except they can be taken

out of the way: and that is, the misunderstanding on those two words: [the wicked] and [turn.] Some will think to themselves, it is true, the wicked must turn or die; but what is that to me? I am not wicked, though I am a sinner, as all men are. Others will think, “it is true that we must turn from our evil ways; but I am turned long ago: I hope this is not now to do.” And thus, while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we lose all our labour in persuading them to turn. I shall therefore, before I go any farther, tell you here who are meant by the wicked, and who they are that must turn or die; and also what is meant by turning, and who they are that are truly converted. And this I have purposely reserved for this place, preferring the method that fits my end. And here you may observe, that, in the sense of the text, a wicked man and a converted man are contraries. No man is a wicked man that is converted, and no man is a converted man that is wicked; so that to be a wicked man, and to be an unconverted man, is all one. And therefore in opening one, we shall open both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedness or conversion is, I must go to the bottom, and fetch up the matter from the beginning.

It pleased the great Creator of the world to make three sorts of living creatures.—Angels he made pure spirits, without flesh, and therefore he made them only for heaven, and not to dwell on earth. Beasts were made flesh, without immortal souls, and therefore they were made only for the earth, and not for heaven: Man is of a middle nature between both, as partaking of both flesh and spirit, so is he made for earth, but as his passage or way to heaven, and not that this should be his home or happiness. The blessed state that man was made for was to behold the glorious majesty of the Lord, and to praise him among his holy angels; and to love him, and to be filled with his love forever. And as this was the end that man was made for, so God did give him means that were fitted to the attaining of it. These means were principally two: First, the right disposition of the mind of man; Secondly, the right ordering of his life. For the first, God suited the disposition of man unto the end; giving him such knowledge of God as was fit for his present state, and a heart inclined to God in holy love. But yet he did not fix or confirm him in this condition; but, having made him a free agent, he left him in the hands of his own free will. For the second, God did that which belongeth to him: that is, he gave man a perfect law, requiring him to continue in the love of God, and perfectly to obey him. By the wilful breach of this law, man did not only forfeit his hopes of everlasting life, but also turned his heart from God, and fixed it on these lower fleshly things, and hereby did blot out our spiritual image of God, from the soul: So that man did both fall short of the glory of God, which was his end, and put himself out of the way by which he should have attained it; and this both as to the frame of his heart, and of his life. The holy inclination and love of his soul to God, he lost, and instead of it, he contracted an inclination and love to the pleasing of his flesh, or carnal self, by earthly things; growing strange to God, and acquainted with the creature: and the course of this life was suited to the inclination of his heart; he lived to his carnal self, and not to God, he sought the creature, for the pleasing of his flesh, instead of seeking to please the Lord. With this nature, or corrupt inclination, we are all now born into the world; for, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” Job 14:4. As a lion hath a fierce and cruel nature before it doth devour; and an adder hath a venomous nature before she sting; so in our infancy we have those sinful natures, or inclinations, before we think, or speak, or do amiss: and hence springeth all the sin of our lives. And not only so, but when God hath of his mercy provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of our souls, and bring us back to God again, we naturally love our present

state, and are loathe to be brought out of it, and therefore are set against the means of our recovery. And, though custom have taught us to thank Christ for his good will, yet carnal self persuadeth us to refuse his remedies, and to desire to be excused when we are commanded to take the medicines which he offereth, and are called to forsake all and follow him to God and glory.

I pray you read over this leaf again, and mark it: for in these few words you have a true description of our natural state, and consequently of a wicked man. For every man that is in this state of corrupted nature is a wicked man, and in a state of death. By this also you are prepared to understand what it is to be converted; to which end you must farther know, that the mercy of God, not willing that man should perish in his sin, provided a remedy, by causing his Son to take our nature, and being in one person God and man, to become a mediator between God and man; and, by dying for our sins on the cross, to ransom us from the curse of God and the power of the devil: and, having thus redeemed us, the Father has delivered us into his hands as his own. Hereupon the Father and the Mediator do make a new law and covenant for man: not like the first, which gave life to none but the perfectly obedient, and condemned man for every sin; but Christ hath made a law of grace, or a promise of pardon and everlasting life to all, that, by true repentance and by faith in Christ, are converted unto God. Like an act of oblivion which is made by a prince to a company of rebels, on condition they lay down their arms and come in, and be loyal subjects for the time to come.

But, because the Lord knoweth that the heart of man is grown so wicked, that for all this men will not accept of the remedy, if they be left to themselves; therefore that Holy Ghost hath undertaken it as his office, to inspire the apostles, and seal up the scriptures by miracles and wonders, and to illuminate and convert the sons of the elect. So that by this much you see, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have each their several works, which are eminently ascribed to them. The Father's works were to create us, to rule us as his rational creatures, by the law of nature, and judge us thereby, and in mercy to provide us a Redeemer, when we were lost, and to send his Son, and accept his ransom. The works of the Son for us were these; to ransom and redeem us by his sufferings and righteousness, to give out the promise or law of grace, and rule and judge the world as their Redeemer, on terms of grace, and to make intercession for us, that the benefit of his death may be communicated; and to send the Holy Ghost, which the Father also doth by the Son. The works of the Holy Ghost for us are these; to indite the holy scriptures, by inspiring and guiding the prophets and apostles, and sealing the word by his miraculous gifts and works; and the illuminating and exciting the ordinary ministers of the gospel, and so enabling them and helping them to publish that word; and, by the same word, illuminating and converting the souls of men. So that, as you could not have been reasonable creatures if the Father had not created you; nor have had any access to God if the Son had not redeemed you; so neither can you have a part in Christ, or be saved, except the Holy Ghost do sanctify you. So that by this time you may see the several causes of this work:— The Father sendeth his Son: the Son redeemeth us, and maketh the promise of grace; the Holy Ghost inditeth and sealeth this gospel; the apostles are the secretaries of the Spirit to write it; the preachers of the gospel to proclaim it, and persuade men to obey it; and the Holy Ghost doth make their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to entertain it; and all this to repair the image of God upon the soul, and to set the heart upon God again, and take it off the creature and carnal self to which it is revolted, and so turn the current of the life into a heavenly course, which before was earthly, and all this by the entertainment of Christ by Faith,

who is the physician of the soul. By what I have said, you may see what it is to be wicked, and what it is to be converted; which I think will yet be plainer to you, if I describe them as consisting of their several parts; and, for the first, a wicked man may be known by these three things.

First, he is one who places his chief content on earth, and loveth the creature more than God, and his fleshly prosperity above the heavenly felicity: He favoureth the things of the flesh, but neither discerneth nor savoureth the things of the spirit:—Though he will say, that heaven is better than earth, yet doth not really so esteem it to himself; if he might be sure of earth, he would let go heaven, and had rather stay here than be removed thither. A life of perfect holiness, in the sight of God, and in his love and praise for ever in heaven, doth not find such liking, with his heart, as a life of health, and wealth, and honour, here upon earth. And though he falsely profess that he loveth God above all, yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love within him, but his mind is more set on the world, or fleshly pleasures than on God. In a word, whoever loveth earth above heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God, is a wicked unconverted man. On the other hand, a converted man is illuminated to discern the loveliness of God; and so far believeth the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is taken up to it, and set more upon it, than any thing in this world. He had rather see the face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praises, than have all the wealth or pleasures of the world; he seeth that all things else are vanity, and nothing but God can fill the soul, and therefore, let the world go which way it will, he layeth up his treasures and hopes in heaven, and for that he resolves to let go all. As the fire doth mount upwards, and the needle that is touched with the loadstone still turneth to the north, so the converted soul is inclined to God. Nothing else can satisfy him, nor can he find any content and rest but in his love. In a word, all that are converted do esteem and love God better than all the world; and the heavenly felicity is dearer to them than their fleshly prosperity. The proof of what I have said you may find in these places of scripture: Php 3:18, Php 3:21. Matthew 6:19-21. Colossians 3:1-2, Colossians 3:4-5. Romans 8:5-9, Romans 8:18, Romans 8:23. Psalms 73:25-26.

Secondly, a wicked man is one that maketh it the principal business of his life to prosper in the world, and attain his fleshly ends. And though he may read and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins, yet this is all but the by, and he never makes it the principal business of his life to please God, and attain everlasting glory, and puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more service than the flesh can spare; for he will not part with all for heaven. On the contrary, a converted man is one that makes it the principal care and business of his life to please God, and to be saved, and takes all the blessings of this life but as accommodations in his journey towards another life, and useth the creature in subordination to God: he loveth a holy life, and longeth to be more holy: he hath no sin but what he hateth, and longeth, and prayeth, and striveth to be rid of. The drift and bent of his life is for God; and, if he sin, it is contrary to the very bent of his heart and life, and therefore he rises again and lamenteth it, and dares not wilfully live in any known sin. There is nothing in this world so dear to him but he can give it up to God, and forsake it for him, and the hopes of glory.—All this you may see in Colossians 3:1-5. Matthew 6:20, Matthew 6:33. Luke 18:22-23, Luke 18:29. Luke 14:18, Luke 14:24, Luke 14:26-27. Romans 8:13. Galatians 5:24. Luke 12:21, &c.

Thirdly, the soul of a wicked man did never truly discern and relish the mystery of redemption, nor thankfu1ly entertain an offered Saviour; nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor willing to be ruled by him as the physician of his soul, that he may be saved from the guilt and

power of his sins, and recovered unto God; but his heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means by which he should be recovered. Though he may be willing to be carnally religious, yet he never resigneth up his soul to Christ, and to the motion and conduct of his word and spirit. On the contrary, the converted soul having felt himself undone by sin, and perceiving that he hath lost his peace with God, and hopes of heaven, and is in danger of everlasting misery, doth thankfully entertain the tidings of redemption, and, believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Saviour, resigneth up himself to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; he taketh Christ as the life of his soul, and liveth by him, and useth him as a salve for every sore, admiring the wisdom and love of God in this wonderful work of man's redemption. In a word, Christ doth even dwell in his heart by faith, and the life that he now liveth is by the faith of the Son of God, that he hath loved him, and gave himself for him; yea, it is not so much he that liveth, as Christ in him. For these, see Job 1:11-12, and Job 3:20. John 15:2-4. 1 Corinthians 1:20, and 1 Corinthians 2:2.

You see now in plain terms, from the word of God, who are the wicked and who are the converted. Ignorant people think that if a man be no swearer, nor curser, nor railer, nor drunkard, nor fornicator, nor extortioner, nor wrong any body in their dealings, and if they come to church, and say their prayers, receive the sacrament, and sometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, these cannot be unconverted men. Or if a man, that hath been guilty of drunkenness, or swearing, or gaming, or the like vices, do but forbear them for the time to come, they think that this is a converted man.—Others think, if a man, that hath been an enemy and scorner at godliness, do but approve it, and join himself with those that are godly, and be hated for it by the wicked, as the godly are, that this must needs be a converted man. And some are so foolish as to think that they are converted by taking up some new opinion. And some think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of hell, and had conviction and tortures of conscience, and thereupon have purposed and promised amendment, and take up a life of civil behaviour and outward religion, that this must needs be true conversion. And these are the poor deluded souls that are like to lose the benefit of all our persuasions; and, when they hear that the wicked must turn or die, they think that this is not spoken to them; for they are not wicked, but are turned already. And therefore it is that Christ told some of the rulers of the Jews who were graver and civiler than the common people, that "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of Christ before them," Matthew 21:31. Not that a harlot or gross sinner can be saved without conversion, but because it was easier to make these gross sinners perceive their sin and misery, and the necessity of a change, than the civiler sort delude themselves by thinking that they are converted already, when they are not.

O sirs, conversion is another kind of work than most are aware of; it is not a small matter to bring an earthly mind to heaven, and to shew man the amiable excellencies of God, till he be taken up in such love to him, that can never be quenched; to break the heart for sin, and make him fly for refuge to Christ, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his soul; to have the very drift and bent of the heart and life changed; so that a man renounceth that which he took for felicity, and placeth his felicity where he never did before, and liveth not to the same end, and driveth not on the same design in the world, as he formerly did: in a word, he that is in Christ is a new creature: "old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17). He hath a new understanding, a new will and resolution, new sorrows, and desires, and love, and delight: new thoughts, new speeches, new company, (if possible) and new conversation. Sin, that was before a

jesting matter with him, is now so odious and terrible to him, that he flies from it as from death. The world, that was so lovely in his eyes, doth now appear but as vanity and vexation: God, that was before neglected, is now the only happiness of his soul; before he was forgotten, and every lust preferred before him: but now he is set next the heart, and all things must give place to him, and the heart is taken up in the attendance and observance of him, and is grieved when be hides his face, and never thinks itself well without him. Christ himself, that was wont to be slightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge, and he liveth upon him as on his daily bread; he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him, nor think, nor speak, nor live without him.—Heaven itself, that before was looked upon but as a tolerable reserve which he hoped might serve his turn better than hell, when he could not stay any longer in the world, is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and rest, where he shall see, and love, and praise that God that hath his heart already. Hell, that before did seem but as a bug bear to frighten men from sin, doth now appear to be a real misery, that is not to be ventured on, nor jested with.—The works of holiness, which before he was weary of, and seemed to be more ado than needs, are now both his recreation, and his business, and the trade that he lives upon. The Bible, which was before to him but almost as a common book, is now as the law of God, as a letter written to him from heaven, and subscribed with the name or the eternal Majesty; it is the rule of his thoughts, and words, and deeds; the commands are binding, the threats are dreadful, and the promises of it speak life to his soul. The godly, that seemed to him but like other men, are now the excellentest and happiest on earth. And the wicked that were his play-fellows, are now his grief; and he, that could laugh at their sins, is readier now to weep for their sin and misery, Psalms 16:3. and Psalms 15:4. Php 3:18. In short, he hath a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavours, and therefore his heart and life are new. Before, his carnal self was his end; and his pleasure and worldly profits, and credit were his way; and now God and everlasting glory are his end; and Christ, and the spirit, and word, and ordinances, holiness to God, and righteousness, and mercy to men, these are his way. Before, self was the chiefest ruler; to which the matters of God and conscience must stoop and give place. And now God in Christ, by the spirit, word and ministry, is that chief ruler, to whom both self and all the matters of self must give place. So that this is not a change in one, or two, or twenty points, but in the whole soul, and in the very end and bent of the conversation. A man may step out of one path into another, and yet have his face the same way, and be still going towards the same place: But it is another matter to turn quite back again, and take his journey the contrary way, to a contrary place. So it is here: a man may turn from drunkenness to thriftiness, and forsake his good fellowship, and other gross disgraceful sins, and set upon some duties of religion, and yet be still going to the same end as before, intending his carnal self above all, and giving it still the government of his soul. But, when he is converted, this self is denied and taken down, and God is set up, and his face is turned the contrary way; and he, that before was addicted to himself, and lived to himself, is now by sanctification devoted to God, and liveth unto God. Before, he asked himself what he should do with his time, his parts, and his estate, and for himself he used them; but now he asketh God what he shall do with them, and useth them for him. Before, he would please God so far as might stand with the pleasure of his flesh and carnal self, but not to any great displeasure of them. But now he will please God, let flesh and self be ever so much displeased. This is the great change that God will make upon all that shall be saved.

You can say, that the Holy Ghost is our sanctifier; but do you know what sanctification is? Why, this is that I have now opened to you; and every man and woman in the world must have this, or

be condemned to everlasting misery. They must turn or die. Do you believe all this, or do you not? Surely you dare not say, you do not; for it is past a doubt or denial. These are not controversies, where one learned pious man is of one mind, and another of another; where one party saith this, and another saith that; every denomination among us that deserve to be called Christians are all agreed in this that I have said; and, if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a case where every party do believe him, you are utterly inexcusable.

But, if you do believe this, how comes it to pass that you live so quietly in an unconverted state? Do you know that you are converted? and can you find this wonderful change upon your souls? Have you been thus born again, and made anew?—Are not these strange matters to many of you? and such as you never felt upon yourselves? If you cannot tell the day or week of your change, or the very sermon, that converted you, yet, do you find that the work is done; that such a change indeed there is, and that you have such hearts as before described? Alas! The most do follow their worldly business, and little trouble their minds with such thoughts: and, if they be but restrained from scandalous sins, and can say, “I am no whoremonger, nor thief, nor curser, nor swearer, nor tipler, nor extortioner; I go to church, and say my prayers;” they think that this is true conversion, and they shall be saved as well as any. Alas, this is foolish cheating of yourselves; this is too much contempt of an endless glory, and too gross neglect of your immortal souls.—Can you make so light of heaven and hell? Your corpse will shortly lie in the dust, and angels or devils will presently seize upon your souls, and every man and woman of you all will shortly be among other company, and in another case than now you are; you will dwell in those houses but a little longer, you will work in your shops but a little longer; you will sit in these seats, and dwell on this earth, but a little longer; you will see with those eyes, and hear with those ears, and speak with those tongues, but a little longer; till the resurrection day: and can you make shift to forget this? O what a place will you be shortly in of joy or torment! O what a sight will you shortly see in heaven or hell! O what thoughts will shortly fill your hearts with unspeakable delight or horror! What work will you be employed in; to praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in fire unquenchable with devils! And should all this be forgotten? And all this will be endless, and sealed up by an unchangeable decree; ETERNITY, ETERNITY will be the measure of your joys or sorrows: And can this be forgotten? And all this is true, most certainly true.—When you have gone up and down a little longer, and slept and awaked a few times more, you will be dead and gone, and find all true that now I tell you. And yet can you now so much forget it? You shall then remember that you heard this sermon, and that this day, from this place, you were reminded of these things; and perceive them matters a thousand times greater than either you or I could have conceived; and yet shall they now be so much forgotten?

Beloved friends, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and to lay to heart these things myself, I should have remained in a dark and selfish state, and have perished for ever: but, if he have truly made me sensible of them, it will constrain me to compassionate you as well as myself. If your eyes were so far opened as to see hell, and you saw your neighbours, that were unconverted, dragged thither with hideous cries, though they were such as you accounted honest people on earth, and feared no such matter by themselves, such a sight would make you go home and think of it; and think again, and make you warn all about you as that damned worldling in Luke 16:28. would have had his brethren warned, lest they come to that place of torment. Why, faith is a kind of sight; it is the eye of the soul, the evidence of things not seen. If 1 believe God, it is next to

seeing; and therefore I beseech you excuse me, if I be half as earnest with you about these matters as if I had seen them. If I must die to-morrow, and it were in my power to come again from another world, and tell you what I had seen, would you not be willing to hear me? and would you not believe and regard what I should tell you? If I might preach one sermon to you after I am dead, and have seen what is done in the world to come, would you not have me plainly speak the truth and would you not crowd to hear me? and would you not lay it to heart? But this must not be; God hath his appointed way of teaching you by scripture and ministers, and he will not humour unbelievers so far as to send men from the dead to them, and to alter his established way. If any man quarrel with the sun, God will not humour him so far as to set up a clearer light. Friends, I beseech you, regard me now as you would do if I should come from the dead to you; for, I can give you as full assurance of the truth of what I say to you as if I had been there and seen it with my eyes: For, it is possible for one from the dead to deceive you; but Jesus Christ can never deceive you: but Jesus Christ can never deceive you.—The word of God. delivered in scripture, and sealed by the miracles and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this, or believe nothing. Believe and obey this, or you are undone. Now, as ever you believe the word of God, and as ever you care for the salvation of your souls, let me beg of you this reasonable request; and I beseech yon deny me not: that you would, without any more delay, when you are gone from hence, remember what you heard, and enter into an earnest search of your hearts, and say to yourselves, “Is it so indeed? Must I turn or die? Must I be converted or condemned? It is time for me then to look about me, before it be too late. O why did not I look after this till now? Why did I venturously post off so great a business? Was I awake, or in my wits? O blessed God, what a mercy is it that thou didst not cut off my life all this while, before I had any certain hope of eternal life!—Well, God forbid that I should neglect this work any longer. What state is my soul in? Am I converted, or am I not? Was ever such a change or work done upon my soul? Have I been illuminated by the word and spirit of the Lord to see the odiousness of sin, the need of a Saviour, the love of Christ, and the excellencies of God and glory? Is my heart broken or humbled within me for my former life? Have I thankfully entertained my Saviour and Lord that offered himself with pardon and life for my soul? Do I hate my former sinful life, and the remnant of every sin that is in me? Do I fly from them as my deadly enemies? Do I give up myself to a life of holiness and obedience to God? Do I love and delight in it? Can I truly say that I am dead to the world and carnal self, and that I live for God, and the glory which he hath promised? Hath heaven more of my estimation and resolution than earth? and is God the dearest and highest in my soul? Once, I am sure, I lived principally to the world and flesh, and God had nothing but some heartless services which the world could spare, and which were the leavings of the flesh.—Is my heart now turned another way? Have I a new design, and a new end, and a new train of holy affections? Have I set my hopes and heart in heaven? And is it not the scope, and design, and bent of my heart and life, to get well to heaven, and see the glorious face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praise? And when I sin, is it against the habitual bent and design of my heart? And do I conquer all gross sins, and am I weary and willing to be rid of mine infirmities? This is the state of a converted soul, and thus it must be with me, or I must perish. Is it thus indeed with me, or is it not? It is time to get this doubt resolved, before the dreadful judge resolve it. I am not such a stranger to my own heart and life, but I may somewhat perceive whether I am thus converted or not: if I be not, it will do me no good to flatter my soul with false conceits and hopes. I am resolved no more to deceive myself, but endeavour to know truly, off or on, whether I be converted, yea or no: that, if I be, I may rejoice

in it; and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on till I reach the crown: And If I am not, I may set myself to beg and seek after the grace that should convert me, and may turn without any more delay:—For, if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Christ I may turn and be recovered; but, if I stay till either my heart be forsaken of God, in blindness or hardness, or till I be caught away by death, it is then too late. There is no place for repentance and conversion then: I know it must be now or never."

Sirs, this is my request to you, that you will but take your hearts to task, and thus examine them, till you see, if it may be, whether you are converted or not; and, if you cannot find it out by your own endeavours, go to your ministers, if they be faithful and experienced men, and desire their assistance. The matter is great, let not bashfulness, nor carelessness hinder you. They are set over you to advise you, for the saving of your soul, as physicians advise you for the curing of your bodies. It undoes many thousands, that they think they are in the way to salvation when they are not; and thinking that they are converted, when it is no such thing. And then, when we call to them to turn, they go away as they came, and think that this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope they shall do well enough in the way that they are in; at least if they do but pick the fairest path, and avoid some of the foulest steps; when, alas! all this while they live but to the world and flesh, and are strangers to God and eternal life, and are quite out of the way to heaven. And all this is much, because we cannot persuade them to a few serious thoughts of their condition, and to spend a few hours in the examining of their states. Is there not many a self-deceiving wretch that hears me this day, that never bestowed one hour in all their lives to examine their souls, and try whether they are truly converted or not?—O merciful God, that will care for such wretches as care no more for themselves, and that will do so much to save them from hell, and help them to heaven, who will do so little for it themselves! If all that are in the way to hell did but know it, they durst not continue in it. The greatest hope that the devil hath of bringing you to damnation without a rescue, is by keeping you blind-fold and ignorant of your state, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you were out of the way to heaven, and were lost forever if you should die as you are; durst you sleep another night in the state that you are in? durst you live another day in it? Could you heartily laugh or be merry in such a state? What! and not know but you may be snatched away to hell in an hour! Sure it would constrain you to forsake your former company and course and to betake yourselves to the ways of holiness and the communion of saints: Sure it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to seek help of those that are fit to counsel you. There is none of you sure that cares not for being damned. Well then, I beseech you presently make inquiry into your hearts, and give them no rest till you find out your condition; that, if it be good, you may rejoice in it, and go on; and, if it be bad, you may presently look about you for recovery, as men that believe they must turn or die. What say you, Sirs? Will you resolve, and promise, to be at thus much labour for your own souls? Will you fall upon this self-examination when you get home? Is my request unreasonable? Your consciences know it is not.—Resolve on it, then, before you stir; knowing how much it concerneth your souls. I beseech you, for the sake of that God that doth command you, at whose bar you will shortly all appear, that you do not deny me this reasonable request: for the sake of souls that must turn or die, I beseech you deny me not; even but to make it your business to understand your own conditions, and build upon sure ground, and know, off and on, whether you are converted or not, and venture not your souls on negligent security.

1.04. SERMON II

Ezekiel 33:11.

Say to them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for, why will ye die, O house of Israel? A TRUE description of those who are in a converted state has already been given you; the change which conversion makes in the soul has also been described; and the request is most earnestly repeated to you, impartially and thoroughly to consider your condition: Rest not satisfied, till you know whether you are indeed converted. But perhaps you will say, what if we should find ourselves yet unconverted, what shall we do then?—This question leadeth me to my second doctrine, which will do much to the answering of it, to which I now proceed.

Doct. 2. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn; unfeignedly and thoroughly turn. The Lord here professeth that this is what he takes pleasure in, that the wicked turn and live. Heaven is made as sure to the converted, as hell is to the unconverted. Turn and live is as certain a truth as turn or die. God was not bound to provide us a Saviour, nor open to us a door of hope, nor call us to repent and turn when once we had cast ourselves away by sin, but he hath freely done it to magnify his mercy. Sinners, there are none of you shall have cause to go home and say I preach despair to you. Do we use to shut up the door of mercy against you? O that you would not shut it up against yourselves! Do we use to tell you that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn and be sanctified? When did you ever hear a preacher say such a word? You that bark at preachers of the gospel, for desiring to keep you out of hell, and say that they preach despair, tell me, if you can, when did you ever hear any sober man say, that there is no hope for you, tho' you repent and be converted? No, it is the contrary that we proclaim from the Lord; and, whoever is born again, and by faith and repentance doth become a new creature, shall certainly be saved: And so far are we from persuading you to despair of this, that we persuade you not to make any doubt of it. It is life, not death, that is the first part of our message to you, our commission is to offer salvation, certain salvation; a speedy, glorious, everlasting salvation, to everyone of you; to the poorest beggar as well as the greatest Lord; to the worst of you, even to drunkards, swearers, worldlings, thieves, yea, to the despisers and reproachers of the holy way of salvation. We are commanded by the Lord our master to offer you a pardon for all that is past, if you will but now at last return and live: we are commanded to beseech and intreat you to accept the offer and return; to tell you what preparations are made by Christ; what mercy stays for you, what patience waiteth on you, what thoughts of kindness God hath towards you, and how happy, how certainly and unspeakably happy, you may be, if you will.—We have indeed also a message of wrath and death, yea, of a two-fold wrath and death; but neither of them is our principal message; we must tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under, for the breach of the law of works; but this is but to shew you the need of mercy, and to provoke you to esteem the grace of the Redeemer. And we tell you nothing but the truth, which you must know: For, who will seek out for physic, that knows not that he is sick? Our telling you of your misery is not it that makes you miserable, but drives you out to seek for mercy. It is you that

have brought this death upon yourselves. We tell you also of another death; even remediless and much greater torment, that will fall on those that will not be converted. But, as this is true, and must be told you, so it is but the last and saddest part of our message. We are first to offer you mercy if you will turn; and it is only those that will not turn, nor hear the voice of mercy, to whom we must foretel damnation to. Will you but cast away your transgressions, delay no longer, but come away at the call of Christ, and be converted, and become new creatures, and we have not a word of damning wrath or death to speak against you.—I do here in the name of the Lord of life, proclaim to you, all that hear me this day, to the greatest, the oldest sinner, that you may have mercy and salvation, if you will but turn. There is mercy in God, there is sufficiency in the satisfaction of Christ, the promise is free, and full, and universal; you may have life, if you will but turn. But then, as you love your souls, remember what turning it is the scripture speaks of. It is not to mend the old house, but to pull down all, and build a-new on Christ, the rock and sure foundation. It is not to mend somewhat in a carnal course of life, but to mortify the flesh, and live after the spirit. It is not to serve the flesh and the world, in a more reformed way, without any scandalous disgraceful sins, and with a certain kind of religiousness; but it is to change your master, and your works, and end, and to set your face the contrary way, and do all for the life that you never saw, and dedicate yourselves and all you have to God. This is the change that must be made, if you will live.

Yourselves are witnesses now, that it is salvation, and not damnation, that is the great doctrine I preach to you, and the first part of my message to you. Accept of this, and we shall go no farther with you; for we would not so much as affright or trouble you with the name of damnation without necessity. But if you will not be saved, there is no remedy, but damnation must take place; for there is no middle place between the two, you must have either life or death. And we are not only to offer you life, but to shew you the grounds on which we do it; and call you to believe that God doth mean indeed as he speaks: that the promise is true, and extendeth conditionally to you, as well as others: and that heaven is no fancy, but a true felicity.

If you ask, Where is your commission for this offer? Among a hundred texts of scripture, I will shew it to you in these few:

First, you see it here in my text, and the following verses, and in the 18th of Ezekiel, as plain as can be spoken. And in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, you have the very sum of our commission. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things passed away, behold, all things are become new. And all things are from God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation: now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled unto God; for, he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” So Mark 16:15-16. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to all creature. He that believeth, (that is with such a converting faith as is expressed) and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.” And Luke 24:46-47. “Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance, (which is conversion) and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.” And Acts 5:30-31. “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” And Acts 13:38-39. “Be it known unto you,

therefore, men and brethren, that through this name is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and, by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." And, lest you think this offer is restrained to the Jews, see Galatians 6:15. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." And Luke 14:17. "Come, for all things are now ready." and Luke 14:23-24.

You see by this time that we are commanded to offer life to you all, and to tell you, from God, that if you will turn, you may live.

Here you may safely trust your souls; for the love of God is the fountain of this offer, John 3:16. and the blood of the Son of God hath purchased it: The faithfulness and truth of God are engaged to make the promise good; miracles have sealed up the truth of it; preachers are sent through the world to proclaim it; the sacraments are instituted and used for the solemn delivery of the mercy offered to them that will accept it; and the spirit doth open the heart to entertain it; and is itself the earnest of the full possession: So that the truth of it is past controversy, that the worst of you all, and every one of you, if you will but be converted, may be saved.

Indeed, if you will needs believe that you shall be saved without conversion, then you believe a falsehood; and, if I should preach that to you, I should preach a lie: This were not to believe God, but the devil and your own deceitful hearts.—God hath his promise of life, and the devil hath his promise of life: God's promise is, "return and live:" The devil's promise is, "you shall live, whether you turn or not."—The word of God is, as I have shewn you, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matthew 18:3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John 3:3, John 3:5. "Without holiness none shall see God," Hebrews 12:14.—The devil's word is, "you may be saved without being born again and converted; you may do well enough without being holy; God doth but frighten you; he is more merciful, than to do as he saith; he will be better to you than his word."—And, alas! the greatest part of the world believe this word of the devil before the word of God: just as our sin and misery came into the world. God saith to our first parents, "if ye eat ye shall die:" And the devil contradicted him and said, "Ye shall not die, if you do but cry, God have mercy, at last, and give over the acts of sin when you can practice it no longer." And this is the word that the world believes.—O heinous wickedness, to believe the devil before God! And yet that is not the worst; but blasphemously they call this a believing and trusting in God, when they put him in the shape of Satan, who was a liar from the beginning. And, when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this a trusting God, and say they believe in him, and trust in him for salvation. Where did ever God say, that the unregenerate, unconverted, unsanctified, shall be saved? Shew such a word in Scripture. I challenge you, if you can. Why this is the devil's word, and to believe it is to believe the devil, and the sin that is commonly called presumption. And do you call this a believing and trusting God? There is every thing in the word of God to comfort and strengthen the hearts of the sanctified: but not a word to strengthen the hands of wickedness, nor to give men the least hope of being saved, though they be never sanctified.

But, if you will turn, and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to entertain you. Then trust God for salvation boldly; for he is engaged by his word to save you. He will be a father to none but his children, and he will save none but those that forsake the world, the devil, and the flesh, and come into his family to be members of his Son, and have communion with his

saints. But, if they will not come in, it is long of themselves. His doors are open, he keeps none back. He never sent such a message as this to any of you, “It was now too late; I will not receive thee though thou be converted.”—He might have done so, and done you no wrong: But he did not; he doth not to this day: He is still ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts, to turn. And the fulness of this truth will yet more appear in the two following doctrines, which I shall therefore next proceed to, before I make any farther application of this.

Doct. 3. God takes pleasure in men’s conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation: He had rather they would turn and live, than go on and die.

I shall first teach you how to understand this, and then clear up the truth of it to you.

And, for the first, you must observe these following things.

1. A simple willingness, or complacency, is the first act of the will, following the simple apprehension of the undertaking, before it proceedeth to compare things together. But the choosing act of the will is a following act, and supposeth the comparing practical act of the understanding. And these two acts may often be carried to contrary objects without any fault at all in the person.

2. An unfeigned willingness may have divers degrees. Some things I am so far willing of as that I will do all that lieth in my power to accomplish them: and some things I am truly willing another should do, when yet I will not do all that ever I am able to procure them, having many reasons to dissuade me therefrom, though yet I will do all that belongs me to do.

3. The will of a ruler, as such, is manifested in making and executing laws; but the will of a man, in his simple natural capacity, or as absolute Lord of his own, is manifested in desiring or resolving of events.

4. A ruler’s will, as lawgiver, is first and principally that his laws be obeyed, and not at all that the penalty be executed on any, but only on supposition that they will not obey his laws. But a ruler’s will, as judge, supposeth the law already either kept or broken; and therefore he resolveth on rewards or punishments accordingly.

Having given up these necessary distinctions, I shall next apply them to the case in hand in these following propositions.

1. It is in the glass of the word and creatures that in this life we must know God; and so, according to the nature of man, we ascribe to him understanding and will, removing all the imperfections that we can, because we are capable of no higher positive conceptions of him.

2. And, on the same grounds, we do (with the scripture) distinguish between the acts of God’s will, as diversified from the respects or the objects, though as to God’s essence they are all one.

3. And the bolder, because that, when we speak of Christ, we have the more ground for it from human nature.

4. And thus we say, that the simple complacency, will, or love of God, is to all that is naturally or morally good according to the nature and degree of its goodness. And so he hath pleasure in the conversion and salvation of all, which yet will never come to pass.

5. And God, a ruler and law-giver of the world, hath so far a practical will for their salvation as to make them a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and an act of oblivion for all their sin, if so be they will not unthankfully reject it, and to command his messengers to offer this gift to all the world, and persuade them to accept it. And so he doth all that, as a lawgiver or promiser, belongs to him to do for their salvation.

6. But yet he resolveth, as lawgiver, that they that will not turn shall die: And, as judge, when their day of grace is past, he will execute that decree.

7. So, that he thus unfeignedly willeth the conversion of those that will never be converted; but not as absolute Lord, with the fullest efficacious resollution, nor as a thing which he resolveth shall undoubtedly come to pass, or would engage all his power to accomplish. It is in the power of a prince to set a guard upon a murderer, to see that he shall not murder and be hanged: But, if upon good reason he forbear this, and do but send to his subjects, and warn and intreat them not to be murderers, I hope he may well say, that he would not have them murder and be hanged: He takes no pleasure in it, but rather that they forbear and live: And, if he do more for some, upon some special reason, he is not found to do so by all. The king may well say to all the murderers and felons in the land, “I have no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would obey my laws and live: But, if you will not, I have resolved for all this, that you shall die.”—The judge may truly say to the thief or murderer, “Alas, man, I have no delight in your death: I had rather thou had kept the law and saved thy life: but seeing thou hast not, I must condemn thee, or else I should be unjust.” So, though God have no pleasure in your damnation, and therefore calls upon you to return and live; yet he hath pleasure in the demonstration of his own justice, and the executing his laws; and therefore he has for all this fully resolved, that, if you will not be converted, you shall be condemned. If God were so much against the death of the wicked as that he were resolved to do all that he can to hinder it, then no man should be condemned; whereas Christ telleth you that few will be saved. But so far God is against your damnation as that he will teach you and warn you, and set before you life and death, and offer you your choice, and command his ministers to intreat you not to damn yourselves, but accept his mercy, and so to leave you without excuse. But, if this will not do, and if still you be unconverted, he professeth to you, he is resolved on your damnation, and hath commanded us to say to you in his name, ver. 18, “O wicked man, thou shalt surely die!” And Christ hath little less than sworn it over and over, with a “Verily, verily, except you be converted, and born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven” Matthew 18:3. John 3:3. Mark that he said, you cannot. It is in vain to hope for it, and in vain to dream that God is willing for it, for it is a thing that cannot be. In a word, you see then the meaning of the text, that God, the great law giver of the world, doth take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; though yet he be resolved that none shall live but those that turn, and, as a judge, even delighteth in justice, and in manifesting his hatred of sin, though not in the misery, which they have brought upon themselves, in itself considered.

2. And for the proofs of the point, I shall be very brief in them, because I suppose you easily believe it already.

1. The very gracious nature of God, proclaimed, Exodus 34:6. and Exodus 20:6. and frequently elsewhere, may assure you of this, that he hath no pleasure in your death.

2. If God had more pleasure in thy death than in your conversion and life, he would not have so frequently commanded thee in his word, to turn; he would not have made thee such promises of life, if thou wilt but turn; he would not have persuaded thee to it by so many reasons. The tenor of his gospel proves the point.

3. And his commission, that he had given to the ministers of the gospel, doth fully prove it. If God had taken more pleasure in your damnation than in thy conversion and salvation, he would never have charged us to offer you mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly and privately; and to intreat and beseech you to turn and live; to acquaint you with your sins, and foretel you of your danger, and to do all that possibly we can for your conversion, and to continue patiently so doing, though you should hate or abuse us for our pains. Would God have done this, and appointed his ordinances for your good, if he had taken pleasure in your death?

4. It is proved also by the course of his providence. If God had rather you were damned than converted and saved, he would not second his word with his works, and entice you by his daily kindness to himself, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are his means to lead you to repentance, Romans 2:4. and bring you so often under his rod to force you to your wits. He would not set so many examples before your eyes, no, nor wait on you so patiently as he doth, from day to day, and year to year. These are no signs of one that taketh pleasure in your death.—If this had been his delight, how easily could he have had thee long ago in hell? How often before this could he have caught thee away in the midst of thy sins, with a curse or oath, or lie in thy mouth, in thy ignorance, and pride, and sensuality? When thou wast last in thy drunkenness, or last deriding the ways of God, how easily could he have stopped thy breath, and tamed thee with his plagues, and made thee sober in another world? Alas! how small a matter is it for the Almighty to rule the tongue of the profanest railer, and tie the hands of the most malicious persecutor, or calm the fury of the bitterest of his enemies, and make them know that they are but worms? If he should frown upon thee, thou wouldst drop into thy grave. If he gave commission to one of his angels to go and destroy ten thousand sinners, how quickly would it be done. How easily can he lay thee upon the bed of languishing, and make thee lie roaring there in pain, and make thee eat the words of reproach which thou hast spoken against his servants, his word, his worship, and his holy ways, and make thee send to beg their prayers whom thou didst despise in your presumption! How easily can he lay thy flesh under gripes and groans, and make it too weak to hold thy soul, and make it more loathsome than the dung of the earth!—That flesh which now must have what it loves, and must not be displeased though God be displeased; and must be humored in meat, drinks, and clothes, whatever God says to the contrary, how quickly would the frowns of God consume it?—When thou wast passionately defending thy sin, and quarrelling with them that would have drawn thee from it, and shewing thy spleen against the reprover, and pleading for the works of darkness; how easily could God have snatched thee away in a moment, and set thee before his dreadful Majesty, where thou shouldest see ten thousand times ten thousand glorious angels waiting on his throne? and have called thee there to plead thy cause, and asked thee, “What hast thou now to say against your Creator, his truth, his servants, or his holy ways? Now plead thy cause, and make the best of it thou canst. Now what canst thou say in excuse of thy sins? Now give account of thy worldliness and fleshly life, of thy time, of all the mercies thou hast had!” O how thy stubborn heart would have melted, and thy proud looks be taken down, and thy countenance turned pale, and thy stout words changed into speechless silence, or dreadful cries,

if God had but set you thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cause with thee, which thou hast here so maliciously pleaded against! How easily can he at any time say to thy guilty soul, “Come away, and live in that flesh no more till the resurrection,” and it cannot resist! A word of his mouth would take off the poise of thy present life, and then all thy parts and powers would stand still: And, if he say unto thee, “Live no longer, or live in hell,” thou couldest not disobey. But God hath yet done none of this, but hath patiently forborne thee, and mercifully upheld thee, and given thee that breath which thou didst breathe out against him, and given those mercies which thou did sacrifice to thy flesh, and afforded thee that provision, which thou spentest to satisfy thy greedy throat; he gave thee every minute of that time which thou didst waste in idleness, or drunkenness, or worldliness: and doth not all his patience and mercy shew that he desired not thy damnation? Can the candle burn without the oil? Can your houses stand without the earth to bear them? As well can you live one hour without the support of God. And why did he so long support thy life, but to see when thou wouldest bethink thee of the folly of thy ways, and return and live. Will any man purposely put arms into his enemy’s hands to resist him; or hold a candle to a murderer that is killing his children, or to an idle servant that plays or sleeps the while? Surely it is to see whether you will at last return and live, that God hath so long waited on thee.

5. It is farther proved, by the suffering of his Son, that God taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Would he have ransomed them from death at so dear a rate? Would he have astonished angels and men by his condescension? Would God have dwelt in flesh, and have come in the form of a servant, and have assumed humanity into one person with the Godhead? And would Christ have lived a life of suffering, and died a cursed death for sinners, if he had rather taken pleasure in their death? Suppose you saw him but so busy in preaching, and healing of them, as you find him in Mark 3:21. or so long in fasting, as in Matthew 4:1-25 or all night in prayer, as in Luke 6:12. or praying with the drops of blood trickling from him instead of sweat, as Luke 22:44. or suffering a cursed death upon the cross, and pouring out his soul as a sacrifice for our sins: Would you have thought these the signs of one that delighted in the death of the wicked? And think not to extenuate it by saying, that it was only for his elect: For, it was thy sin, and the sin of all the world, that lay upon our Redeemer; and his sacrifice and satisfaction is sufficient for all, and the fruits of it are offered to one as well as another: but it is true, that it was never the intent of his mind to pardon and save any that would not by faith and repentance be converted. If you had seen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the state of disobedient, impenitent people, Luke 14:41-42. or complaining of their stubbornness, as Matthew 23:37. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” Or, if you had seen and heard him on the cross praying for his persecutors, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” would you have suspected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked, even of those that perish by their wilful unbelief? When God hath so loved, (not only loved, but so loved) the world, as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, by an effectual faith, should not perish, but have everlasting life; I think he hath hereby proved, against the malice of men and devils, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would turn and live.

6. Lastly, if all this will not yet satisfy you, take his own word, that knoweth best his own mind, or at least believe his oath: But this leadeth me up to the fourth doctrine.

Doct. 4. The Lord hath confirmed to us by his oath, that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and live; that he may leave man no pretence to question the truth of it.

If you dare question his word, I hope you dare not question his oath. As Christ hath solemnly protested that the unregenerate and unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 18:3. John 3:3. so God hath sworn that his pleasure is not in their death, but in their conversion and life. And as the Apostle saith, Hebrews 6:13, Hebrews 6:16-18. Because he can swear by no greater than himself, he saith, “As I live, &c.” For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of strife: wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, “we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us, which we have, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.” If there be any man that cannot reconcile this truth with the doctrine of predestination, or the actual damnation of the wicked, that is his own ignorance; he hath no pretence left to deny or question therefore the truth of the point in hand; for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore must not be distorted to reduce it to other points; but doubtful points must rather be reduced to it, and certain truths must be believed to agree with it, though our shallow brains do hardly discern the agreement.

USE.

I do now intreat thee, if thou be an unconverted sinner that hearest these words, that thou wouldest ponder a little on the forementioned doctrines, and bethink thyself awhile who it is that takes pleasure in your sin and damnation! Certainly it is not God: He hath sworn, for his part, that he takes no pleasure in it. And I know it is not the pleasing of him that you intend in it. You dare not say, that you drink, and swear, and neglect holy duties, and quench the motion of the Spirit, to please God. That were as if you should reproach the prince, and break his laws, and seek his death, and say you did all this to please him. Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin and death? Not any that bear the image of God, for they must be like minded to him. God knows it is small pleasure to your faithful teachers to see you serve your deadly enemy, and madly venture your eternal state, and wilfully run into the flames of hell. It is small pleasure to them to see upon your souls (in the sad effects) such blindness, and hard-heartedness and carelessness, and presumption; such wilfulness in evil, and such unteachableness and stiffness against the ways of life and peace. They know these are marks of death, and of the wrath of God, and they know from the word of God what is like to be the end of them; and therefore it is no more pleasure to them than to a tender physician to see the plague-marks break out upon his patient. Alas! to foresee your everlasting torments, and know not how to prevent them! To see how near you are to hell, and we cannot make you believe it, and consider it! To see how easily, how certainly you might escape, if we knew but how to make you willing! How fair you are for everlasting salvation, if you would but turn and do your best, and make it the care and business of your lives! but you will not do it. If our lives lay on it, we cannot persuade you to it: We study day and night what to say to you, that may convince you and persuade you, and yet it is undone: We lay before you the word of God, and shew you the very chapter and verse where it is written, that you cannot be saved except you be converted, and yet we leave the most of you as we find you:—We hope you will believe the word of God, though you believe not us, and that you will regard it when we shew you

the plain scripture for it: but we hope in vain, and labour in vain, as to any saving change upon your hearts. And do you think that this is a pleasant thing to us? Many a time in secret prayer we are fain to complain to God with sad hearts, “Alas! Lord, we have spoken to them in thy name, but they little regard us: We have told them what thou bidst us tell them concerning the danger of an unconverted state, but they do not believe us; we have told them that thou hast protested that “there is no peace to the wicked,” Isaiah 48:22. and Isaiah 57:21. but the worst of them all will scarcely believe that they are wicked; we have shewn them thy word, where thou hast said, “That if they live after the flesh they shall die;” Romans 8:13. but they say, “They will believe in thee, when they will not believe thee; that they will trust in thee, when they give no credit to thy word; and when they have hope that the threatnings of thy words are false, they will yet call this a hoping in God; and though we shew them where thou hast said, that when a wicked man dieth all his hopes perish, yet cannot we persuade them from their deceitful hopes,” Proverbs 11:7.—We tell them what a base unprofitable thing sin is; but they love it, and therefore will not leave it.—We tell them how dear they buy this pleasure, and that they must pay for it in everlasting torment; and they bless themselves, and will not believe it; but will do as the most do: and, because God is merciful, they will not believe him, but will venture their souls, come of it what will. We tell them how ready the Lord is to receive them; and this doth but make them delay their repentance and be bolder in their sin.—Some of them say they purpose to repent, but they are still the same; and some say they do repent already, while yet they are not converted from their sins. We exhort them, we intreat them, we offer them our help, but we cannot prevail with them; but they that were drunkards are drunkards still; and they that were voluptuous flesh-pleasing wretches are such still; and they that were worldlings are worldlings still; and they that were ignorant, and proud, and self-conceited, are so still.—Few of them will see and confess their sin, and fewer will forsake it, but comfort themselves that all men are sinners; as if there were no difference between a converted sinner and an unconverted. Some of them will not come near us when we are willing to instruct them, but think they have enough already, and need not our instruction; and some of them will give us the hearing, and do what they list; and most of them are like dead men that cannot feel; so that, when we tell them of the matters of everlasting consequence, we cannot get a word of it to their hearts. If we do not obey them, and humour them in baptising the children of the most obstinately wicked, and giving them the Lord’s Supper, and doing all that they would have us, though never so much against the word of God, they will hate us, and rail at us; but if we beseech them but to confess and forsake their sins, and save their souls, they will not do it.—We tell them, if they will but turn, we will deny them none of the ordinances of God, neither baptism to the children, nor the Lord’s Supper to themselves; but they will not hear us. They would have us disobey God, and damn our own souls to please them, and yet they will not turn and save their own souls to please God.—They are wiser in their own eyes than all their teachers; they rage and are confident in their own way, and, if we would never so fain, we cannot change them. Lord, this is the case of our miserable neighbours, and we cannot help it; we see them ready to drop into hell, and we cannot help it; we know if they would unfeignedly turn they might be saved, but we cannot persuade them; if we would beg it of them on our knees, we cannot persuade them to it; if we would beg it of them with tears, we cannot persuade them; and what more can we do?”

These are the secret complaints and moans that many a poor minister is fain to make. And do you think that he hath any pleasure in this? Is it a pleasure to him to see you go on in sin, and cannot stop you? To see you so miserable, and cannot so much as make you sensible of it; to see you

merry, when you are not sure to be an hour out of hell? To think what you must for ever suffer, because you will not turn? And to think what an everlasting life of glory you wilfully despise and cast away? What sadder thing can you bring to their hearts? And how can you devise to grieve them more? Who is it then that you pleasure by your sin and death? It is none of your understanding godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their souls to see your misery; and they lament you many a time when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourselves. Who is it then that takes pleasure in your sin? It is none but the three great enemies of God, whom you renounced in your baptism, and are now turned falsely to serve.

1. The devil indeed takes pleasure in your sin and death; for this is the very end of all his temptations. For this, he watches night and day: you cannot devise to please him better than to go on in sin: how glad is he when he sees thee going to the alehouse, or other sin and when he heareth you curse, or swear, or rail? How glad is he when he heareth thee revile the minister that would draw thee from thy sin, and help to save thee? These are his delight.

2. The wicked are also delighted in it; for it is agreeable to their nature.

3. But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleasing of the devil that you intend, even when you please him; but it is your own flesh, the greatest and most dangerous enemy, that you intend to please. It is the flesh that would be pampered, that would be pleased in meat, and drink, and clothing; that would be pleased in your company, and pleased in applause and credit with the world, and pleased in sports, and lusts, and idleness: this is the gulf that devoureth all. This is the very god that you serve, for, the scripture saith of such, “that their bellies are their gods,” Php 3:18. But I beseech you stay a little and consider the business.

1. Quest. Should your flesh be pleased before your Maker? Will you displease the Lord, and displease your teachers, and your godly friends, and all to please your brutish appetites, or sensual desires? Is not God worthy to be the ruler of your flesh? If he shall not rule it, he will not save it; you cannot in reason expect that he should.

2. Quest. Your flesh is pleased with your sin; but is your conscience pleased? doth not it grudge within you and tell you sometimes that all is not well, and that your case is not so safe as you make it to be? and should not your soul and conscience be pleased before your corruptible flesh?

3. Quest. But, is not your flesh preparing for its own displeasure also? It loves the bait, but doth it love the hook? It loves the strong drink and sweet morsels; it loves its ease, and sport, and merriment: it loves to be rich, and well spoken of by men, and to be somebody in the world: but doth it love the curse of God? Doth it love to stand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlasting fire? Doth it love to be tormented with the devils for ever?—Take all together: for there is no separating sin and hell, but only by faith and true conversion; if you will keep one you must have the other. If death and hell be pleasant to you, no wonder then if you go on in sin; but, if they are not (as I am sure they are not), then what if sin were never so pleasant, is it worth the loss of life eternal? Is a little drink, or meat, or ease; is the good word of sinners; are the riches of this world to be valued above the joys of heaven? Or are they worth the sufferings of eternal fire?

These questions should be considered before you go any farther, by every man that hath reason to consider, and that believes he hath a soul to save or lose.

Well, the Lord here sweareth that he hath no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would turn and live; if yet you will go on and die rather than turn; remember it was not to please God that you did it; it was to please the world, and to please yourselves. And, if men will damn themselves to please themselves, and run into endless torments for delight, and have not the wit, the heart, the grace, to hearken to God or man, that would reclaim them, what remedy? They must take what they get by it, and repent it in another manner, when it is too late! Before I proceed any further in the application, I shall come to the next doctrine; which giveth me a fuller ground for it.

Doct. 5. So earnest is God for the conversion of sinners, that he doubleth his commands and exhortations with vehemency: “Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?” This doctrine is the application of the former, as by a use of exhortation, and accordingly I shall handle it. Is there an unconverted sinner that heareth these vehement words of God? Is there ever a man or woman in this assembly that is yet a stranger to the renewing, sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost? It is a happy assembly, if it be not so with the most. Hearken then to the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by Christ without delay. Would you know the will of God? Why this is his will, that you presently turn. Shall the living God send so earnest a message to his creatures, and should they not obey? Hearken then, all you that live after the flesh; the Lord, that gave you thy breath and being, hath sent a message to you from heaven; and this is his message, “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Shall the voice of the eternal Majesty be neglected? If he do but terribly thunder, thou art afraid. O but this word concerneth thy life or death everlasting. It is both a command and an exhortation. As if he had said to thee, “I charge thee, upon the allegiance that thou owest to me your Creator and Redeemer, that thou renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil, and turn to me that you mayest live. I condescend to intreat thee, as thou lovest or fearest him that made thee: as thou lovest thine own life, even thine everlasting life, Turn and live: as ever thou wouldst escape eternal misery, “Turn, turn, for why wilt thou die?” And is there a heart in man, in a reasonable creature, that can once refuse such a message, such a command, such an exhortation as this? O what a thing then is the heart of man!

Hearken then, all that love yourselves, and all that regard your own salvation:—Here is the joyfullest message that ever was sent to the ears of man, “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?” You are not yet shut up under desperation. Here is mercy offered you; turn, and you shall have it. O with what joyful hearts should you receive these tidings! I know this is not the first time that you have heard it; but how have you regarded it, or how do you regard it now? Hear, all you ignorant, careless sinners, the word of the Lord! Hear, all you worldlings, you sensual flesh-pleasers; you gluttons, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and swearers; you railers and backbiters, slanderers and liars: “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?”

Hear, all ye that are void of the love of God, whose hearts are not toward him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory, but set more by your earthly prosperity and delights than by the joys of heaven; all you that are religious but a little by the by, and give God no more than your flesh can spare; that have not denied your carnal selves, and forsaken all that you have for Christ, in the estimation and grounded resolution of your souls, but have some one thing in the world so dear to you that you cannot spare it for Christ, if he required it, but will rather venture on his displeasure than forsake it; “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?”

If you never heard it, or observed it before, remember that you were told it from the word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live; and if you will not turn, you shall surely die.

What now will you do, Sirs? What is your resolution? Will you turn, or will you not? Halt not any longer between two opinions: If the Lord be God, follow him; if your flesh be God, then serve it still. If heaven be better than earth and fleshly pleasures, come away then, and seek a better country, and "lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal, and be awakened at last with all your might to seek the kingdom that cannot be moved," Hebrews 12:28. and to employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your cares and labours another way than formerly you have done. But, if earth be better than heaven, or will do more for you, or last you longer, then keep it, and make your best of it, and follow it still. Are you resolved what to do? If you be not, I will set a few more moving considerations before you, to see if reason will make you resolve.

Consider first, "What preparations mercy hath made for your salvation:" and what pity it is that any man should be damned after all this. The time was, when the flaming sword was in the way, and the curse of God's law would have kept thee back if thou hadst been ever so willing to turn to God: The time was when thyself, and all the friends that thou hast in the world, could never have procured thee the pardon of thy sins past, though thou hadst ever so much lamented and reformed them. But Christ hath removed this impediment by the ransom of his blood. The time was, that God was wholly unreconciled, as being not satisfied for the violation of his law: but now he is so far satisfied and reconciled, as that he hath made thee a free act of oblivion, and a free deed of gift of Christ and life, and offereth it to thee, and intreateth thee to accept it, and it may be thine, if thou wilt. "For he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation," 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. Sinners, we too are commanded to deliver this message to you all, as from the Lord, "Come, for all things are ready," Luke 14:17. Are all things ready, and are you unready? God is ready to entertain you, and pardon all that you have done against him, if you will but come. As long as you have sinned, as wilfully as you have sinned, he is ready to cast all behind his back, if you will but come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have staid so long, he is ready even to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, and rejoice in your conversion, if you will but turn.—Even the earthly worldling and swinish drunkard will find God ready to bid them welcome, if they will but come. Doth not this turn thy heart within thee?—O sinner, if thou have a heart of flesh, and not of stone in thee, methinks this should melt it. Shall the infinite Majesty of Heaven even wait for thy returning, and be ready to receive thee who have abused him, and forgotten him so long? Shall he delight in thy conversion, that might at any time glorify his justice in thy damnation, and yet doth it not melt thy heart within thee, and art thou not yet ready to come in? Hast thou not as much reason to be ready to come as God hath to invite thee and bid thee welcome?

But, that is not all: Christ hath done his part on the cross, and made such way for thee to the Father, that on his account thou mayst be welcome if thou wilt come. And yet art thou not ready? A pardon is already expressly granted and offered thee in the gospel. And yet art thou not ready? The ministers of the gospel are ready to assist thee, to instruct thee; they are ready to pray for thee, and to seal up thy pardon by the administration of the holy sacrament; and yet art thou not ready?

All that fear God about thee are ready to rejoice in thy conversion, and to receive thee into the communion of saints, and to give thee the right hand of fellowship, yea, though thou hadst been one that had been cast out of their society: they dare not but forgive where God forgiveth, when it is manifest to them, by your confession and amendment: they dare not so much as hit thee in the teeth with thy former sins, because they know that God will not upbraid thee with them. If thou hadst been ever so scandalous, if thou wouldst but heartily be converted and come in, they would not refuse thee, let the world say what they would against it. And, are all these ready to receive thee, and yet art thou not ready to come in?

Yea, heaven itself is ready; the Lord will receive thee into the glory of his saints, a vile brute as thou hast been: if thou wilt but be but cleansed, thou mayst have a place before his throne; his angels will be ready to guard thy soul to the place of joy, if thou do but unfeignedly come in. And is God ready, the sacrifice of Christ ready, the promise ready, and pardon ready?—Are ministers ready, and the people of God ready, and heaven itself ready, and angels ready, and all these but waiting for your conversion, and yet art thou not ready? What! not ready to live, when you have been dead so long? Not ready to come to thy right understanding, as the prodigal is said to come to himself, Luke 15:17. when thou hast been beside thyself so long? Not ready to be saved, when thou art even ready to be condemned?—Art thou not ready to lay hold on Christ, that would deliver thee, when thou art even ready to drown and sink into damnation? Art thou not ready to be saved from hell, when thou art even ready to be cast remedilessly into it? Alas, man! dost thou know what thou dost? If thou die unconverted there is no doubt to be made of your damnation, and thou art not sure to live an hour: and yet are thou not ready to turn and to come in? O miserable wretch! Hast thou not served the flesh and the devil long enough? Yet hast thou not enough of sin? Is it so good to thee; or so profitable for thee?—Dost thou know what it is, that thou wouldest yet have more of it? Hast thou had so many calls, and so many mercies, and so many blows, and so many examples? Hast thou seen so many laid in the grave, and yet art thou not ready to let go thy sins, and come to Christ? What! after so many convictions, and gripes of conscience, after so many purposes and promises, are thou not yet ready to turn and live?—O that thy eyes, thy heart, were opened, to know how fair an offer is now made to thee! and what a joyful message it is we are sent on, to bid you come, for all things are ready.

2. Consider also, what calls thou hast to turn and live. How many, how loud, how earnest, how dreadful, and yet what encouraging, joyful calls. For the principal inviter is God himself. He, that commandeth heaven and earth, commandeth thee to turn; and presently, without delay, to turn: He commands the sun to run its course, and to rise upon thee every morning; and though it be so glorious an creature, and many times bigger than all the earth, yet it obeyeth him, and faileth not one minute of its appointed time. He commandeth all the planets and orbs of heaven, and they obey.—He commandeth the sea to ebb and flow, and the whole creation to keep its course, and all obey him. The angels of heaven obey his will, when he sends them to minister to such silly worms as we on earth, Hebrews 1:14.—And yet, if he command but a sinner to turn, he will not obey him; he only thinks himself wiser than God, and he cavils and pleads the cause of sin, and will not obey. If the Lord Almighty say the word, the heavens and all therein obey him; but if he call but a drunkard out of an alehouse, he will not obey; or if he call a worldly fleshly sinner to deny himself; and mortify the flesh, and set his heart on a better inheritance, he will not obey him.

If you had any love in thee, thou wouldst know the voice, and say, “Oh this is my father’s call! how can I find in my heart to disobey? For, the sheep of Christ do know and hear his voice, and they follow him, and he giveth them eternal life,” John 10:4. If thou hadst any spiritual life and sense in thee, at least thou wouldst say, “This call is the dreadful voice of God, and who dares disobey?”—For says the prophet, Amos 3:8. “The lion hath roared, who will not fear?” God is not a man, that thou shouldst dally and play with him: remember what he saith to Paul at his conversion, “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks,” Acts 9:5. Wilt thou yet go and despise his word, and resist his Spirit, and stop thine ear against his call? Who is it that will have the worst of this? Dost thou know whom thou disobeyest and contendest with, and what thou art doing? It were a far wiser and easier task for thee to contend with the thorns, and spurn them with thy bare feet, and beat them with thy bare hands, or put thy head into the burning fire. “Be not deceived, God will not be mocked,” Galatians 6:7. Whoever else be mocked, God will not: you had better play with the fire in your thatch than with the fire of his burning wrath: “For our God is a consuming fire,” Hebrews 12:29. O how unmeet a match art thou for God! “It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands,” Hebrews 10:31. And therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him, or resist him. As you love your souls, take heed what you do. What will you say, if he begin in wrath to plead with you? What will you do if he take you once in hand? Will you not strive against his judgment, as now you do against his grace? Saith the Lord, Isaiah 27:4, Isaiah 27:6. “Fury is not in me;” that is, I delight not to destroy you: I do it, as it were. unwillingly; but yet “Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Oh let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me!”—It is an unequal combat for the briars and stubble to make war with the fire. And thus you see who it is that calleth you, that should move you to hear this call, and turn; so consider also, by what instruments, and how often, and how earnestly, he doth it.

1. Every leaf of the blessed book of God hath as it were a voice, and calls unto thee, Turn and live; turn, or thou wilt die! How canst thou open it, and read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids thee turn?

2. It is the voice of every sermon that thou hearest: For what else is the scope and drift of all, but to call and persuade, and intreat thee to turn?

3. It is the voice of many a motion of the Spirit, that secretly speaks over these words again, and urgeth thee to turn.

4. It is likely, sometimes, it is the voice of thy own conscience. Art thou not sometimes convinced that all is not well with thee? And doth not your conscience tell thee that you must be a new man, and take a new course, and often call thee to return?

5. It is the voice of the gracious examples of the godly. When thou seest them live a heavenly life, and fly from the sin which is your delight, this really calls on thee to turn.

6. It is the voice of all the works of God. For, they also are God’s books, that teach thee this lesson, by shewing thee his greatness, and wisdom, and goodness; and calling thee to observe them, and admire the Creator, Psalms 19:1-2. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shewth his handy work; day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night sheweth knowledge.”—Every time the sun riseth upon thee, it really calleth thee to turn; as if it should say,

“What do I travel and compass the world for, but to declare to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I still find thee doing the work of sin, and sleeping out thy life in negligence? Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,” Ephesians 5:14. “The night is spent, the day is at hand; it is now high time to awake out of sleep; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and in drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof,” Romans 13:11-14.—This text was the means of Austin’s conversion.

7. It is the voice of every mercy thou dost possess. If thou couldst but hear and understand them, they all cry out unto thee, turn. Why doth the earth bear thee, but to seek and serve the Lord? Why doth it afford thee its fruits, but to serve him? Why doth the air afford you breath, but to serve him? Why do all the creatures serve thee with their labours and their lives, but that thou mightst serve the Lord of them and thee? Why doth he give thee time, and health, and strength, but for to serve him? Why hast thou meat, and drink, and clothes, but for his service? Hast thou any thing which thou hast not received? And, if thou didst receive them, it is reason thou shouldst bethink thee, from whom, and to what end and use, thou didst receive them. Didst thou never cry to him for help in thy distress? And didst thou then understand that it was thy part to turn and serve him if he would deliver thee? He hath done his part, and spared thee yet longer, and tried thee another and another year; and yet dost thou not turn? You know the parable of the unfruitful figtree, Luke 13:6-9. When the Lord had said, “Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?” He was intreated to try it one year longer, and then if it proved not fruitful, to cut it down. Christ himself there makes the application twice over, Luke 13:3 and Luke 13:5. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” How many years hath God looked for the fruits of love and holiness from thee, and hath found none, and yet hath spared thee. How many a time, by thy wilful ignorance, and carelessness, and disobedience, hast thou provoked justice to say, “Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?” And yet mercy hath prevailed, and patience hath forborne the fatal blow to this day. If thou hadst the understanding of a man within thee, thou wouldst know that all this calleth thee to turn.—“Dost thou think thou shalt still escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds,” Romans 2:3-6.

8. Moreover, it is the voice or every affliction to call thee to make haste and turn. Sickness and pain cry turn; and poverty, and loss of friends, and every twig of the chastising rod cry turn; and yet wilt thou not hearken to the call? These have come near thee, and made thee feel, they have made thee groan, and can they not make thee turn?

9. The very frame of your nature and being itself, bespeaketh thy return. Why hast thou reason, but to rule thy flesh, and serve thy Lord? Why hast thou an understanding soul, but to learn and know his will and do it? Why hast thou a heart within you that can love, and fear, and desire, but that thou shouldst fear him, and love him, and desire after him?

10. Yea, thine own engagements, by promise to the Lord, do call upon thee to turn and serve him. Thou hast bound thyself to him by a baptismal covenant, and renounced the world, the flesh, and

the devil; this thou hast confirmed by the profession of Christianity, and renewed it at sacraments, and in times of affliction: And wilt thou promise and vow, and never perform, and turn to God?

Lay all these together, now, and see what should be the issue. The holy scripture calleth upon thee to turn; the ministers of Christ call upon thee to turn; the Spirit cries turn; thy conscience cries turn; the godly, by persuasions and example cry turn; the whole world, and all the creatures therein, that are presented to thy consideration, cry turn; the present forbearance of God, cries turn; all the mercies which thou receivest cry turn; the rod of God's chastisement cries turn; thy reason, and the frame of thy nature bespeaks thy turning; and so do all your promises to God; and yet hast thou not resolved to turn?

11. Moreover, poor sinner! didst thou ever consider upon what terms thou standst all this while with him that calleth on thee to turn? Thou art his own, and owest him thyself and all thou hast, and may he not command his own? Thou art his absolute servant, and should serve no other master. Thou standest at his mercy, and thy life is in his hand; and he has resolved to save thee upon no other terms; thou hast many malicious spiritual enemies, that would be glad if God would but forsake thee, and let them alone with thee, and leave thee to their will; how quickly would they deal with thee in another manner? And thou canst not be delivered from them but by turning unto God. Thou art fallen under his wrath by your sin already; and thou knowest not how long his patience will yet wait. Perhaps this is the last year; perhaps the last day; his sword is even at thy heart while the word is in thine ear; and if thou turn not, you are a dead and undone man. Were thy eyes but open to see where thou standest, even upon the brink of hell, and to see how many thousands are there already that did not turn, thou wouldst see that it is time to look about thee.

Well, Sirs, look inwards now, and tell me how are your hearts affected with those offers of the Lord? You hear what is his mind; he delighteth not in your death; he calls to you, Turn, turn: It is a fearful sign if all this move thee not, or if it do but half move thee; and much more if it make thee more careless in your misery, because thou hearest of the mercifulness of God. The working of the medicine will partly tell us whether there be any hope of the cure. O what glad tidings would it be to those, that are now in hell, if they had but such a message from God! What a joyful word would it be to hear this, Turn and live.—Yea, what a welcome word would it be to thyself, when thou hast felt that wrath of God but an hour! or, if after a thousand or ten thousand years torment thou couldst but hear such a word from God, Turn and live; and yet wilt thou neglect it, and suffer us to return without our errand?

Behold, sinners, we are sent here as the messengers of the Lord, to set before you life and death. What say you? Which of them will you choose? Christ standeth, as it were, by thee, with heaven in the one hand, and hell in the other, and offereth thee thy choice; which wilt thou choose?—"The voice of the Lord makes the rocks to tremble," Psalms 26. And is it nothing to hear him threaten thee, if thou wilt not turn? Dost thou not understand and feel this voice, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?"—Why, it is the voice of love, of infinite love, of thy best and kindest friend, as thou mightest easily perceive by the motion; and yet canst thou neglect it? It is the voice or pity and compassion. The Lord seeth whither thou art going better than thou dost, which makes him call after thee, "Turn, turn." He seeth what will become of thee if thou turn not. He thinketh with himself, "Ah this poor sinner will cast himself into endless torments if he do not turn; I must in justice deal with him according to my righteous law;" and therefore he calleth after thee, Turn, turn, O sinner! If

you did but know the thousandth part as well as God doth, the danger that is near you, and the misery that you are running into, we should have no more need to call after you to turn.

Moreover, this voice that calls to thee, is the same that hath prevailed with thousands already, and called all to heaven that are now there: and they would not now, for a thousand worlds, that they had made light of it, and not turned to God. Now what are they possessing that turned at God's call? Now they perceive that it was indeed the voice of love that meant them no more harm than their salvation. And, if thou wilt obey the same call, thou shalt come to the same happiness. There are millions that must for ever lament that they turned not; but there is never a soul in heaven that is sorry that they are converted.

Well, Sirs, are you yet resolved, or are you not? Do I need to say any more to you? What will you do? Will you turn or not? Speak, man, in thy heart to God, though you speak not out to me; speak, lest he take your silence for denial; speak quickly, lest he never make you the like offer more. Speak resolvedly, and not waveringly, for he will have no indifferents to be his followers. Say in thy heart now, without any more delay, even before thou stir from hence, "By the grace of God I am resolved presently to turn. And because I know my own insufficiency, I am resolved to wait on God for his grace, and to follow him in his ways, and forsake my former courses and companions and give up myself to the guidance of the Lord."

You are not shut up in the darkness of heathenism, nor in the desperation of the damned.—Life is before you; and you may have it on reasonable terms, if you will; yea, on free cost, if you will accept it. The way of God lieth plain before you; the church is open to you; you may have Christ, and pardon, and holiness, if you will. What say you? Will you, or will you not? If you say nay, or say nothing, and still go on, God is witness, and this congregation is witness, and your own consciences are witnesses, how fair an offer you had this day. Remember, you might have had Christ, and would not. Remember, when you have lost it, that you might have had eternal life as well as others, and would not; and all because you would not turn.

1.05. SERMON III

Ezekiel 33:11.

Say to them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for, why will ye die, O house of Israel?

IT has been explained, and proved, that God taketh pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation. He would rather they would turn and live, than go on and die:—That he may leave man no pretence to doubt of it, the Lord hat confirmed it to us by his oath. Yea, farther, so earnest is God for the conversion of sinners, that he doubleth his commands and exhortations with vehemency, Turn ye, turn ye.

Having already illustrated and applied each of these points, let us come to the next doctrine, and hear your reasons.

Doct. 6. The Lord condescends to reason the case with unconverted sinners, and to ask them why they will die. A strange disputation it is, both as to the controversy and as to the disputants.

1. The controversy or question, propounded to dispute of, is, "Why wicked men will damn themselves?" Or, "Why they will rather die than turn?" Whether they have any sufficient reason for so doing?

2. The disputants are God and man; the most holy God, and wicked unconverted sinners. Is it not a strange thing, which God doth seem here to suppose, that any man should be willing to die and be damned? Yea, that this should be the case of the wicked; that is, of the greatest part of the world: But, you will say, this cannot be, for nature desireth the preservation and felicity of itself, and the wicked are more selfish than others, and not less; and therefore how can any man be willing to be damned?—To which I answer:

1. It is a certain truth that no man can be willing of any evil as evil, but only as it hath some appearance of good; much less can any man be willing to be eternally tormented. Misery, as such, is desired by none.

2. But yet, for all that, it is most true which God here teacheth us, that the cause, why the wicked die and are damned, is, because, they will die and be damned. And this is true in several respects.

1. Because they will go the way that leads to hell, though they are told by God and man whither it goes, and where it ends; and though God hath so often professed in his word, that if they hold on in that way, they shall be condemned, and that they shall not be saved unless they turn, Isaiah 48:22. and Isaiah 57:21. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." Isaiah 59:8. "The way of peace they know not; there is no judgment in their goings; they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace." They have the word and the oath of the living God for it; that, if they will not turn, they shall not enter into his rest.—And yet wicked they

are, and wicked they will be, let God and man say what they will; fleshly they are, and fleshly they will be, worldlings they are, and worldlings they will be; though God hath told them that “the love of the world is enmity to God; and that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,” James 4:4; 1 John 2:15. So that, consequently, these men are willing to be damned, though not directly; they are willing to walk in the way to hell, and love the certain cause of their torment; though they be not willing of hell itself, and do not love the pain which they must endure. Is not this the truth of your case, sinners? You would not burn in hell; but you will kindle the fire by your sins, and cast yourselves into it; you would not be tormented with devils for ever, but you will do that which will certainly procure it, in despite of all that can be said against it. It is just as if you would say, “I will drink this poison, but you I will not die. I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not kill myself.—I will thrust this knife into my heart, but yet I will not take away my life. I will put this fire into the thatch of my house, but yet I will not burn it.”—Just so it is with wicked men; they will be wicked, and they will live after the flesh and the world, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know that the means do lead to the end? and that God hath by his righteous law concluded, that you must repent or perish? He, that will take poison, may as well say plainly, “I will kill myself;” for it will prove no better in the end: Though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixt with it, and would not be persuaded that it was poison, but that he might take it and do well enough; but it is not his conceits and confidence that will save his life. So, if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, “We will be damned.” for so you will be unless you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a thief or murderer, that would say, “I will steal and kill, but I shall not be hanged,” when he knows that, if he do the one, the judge in justice will see that the other be done? If he say, “I will steal and murder,” he may as well say plainly, “I will be hanged.” So, if you will go on in a carnal life, you may as well say plainly, “We will go to hell.”

2. Moreover, the wicked will not use those means, without which there is no hope of their salvation. He that will not eat, may as well say plainly, he will not live, unless he can tell how to live without meat; he that will not go his journey, may as well say plainly he will not come to the end. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, nor suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly, he will be drowned. So if you be carnal and ungodly, and will not be converted, nor use the means by which you should be converted, but think it more ado than needs, you may as well say plainly, you will be damned. For if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before.

3. Yes, this is not all; but the wicked are unwilling even to partake of salvation itself. Tho’ they may desire somewhat which they call by the name of heaven, yet heaven itself, considered in the true nature of its felicity, they desire not; yea, their hearts are quite against it. Heaven is a state of perfect holiness, and of continual love and praise to God and the wicked have no heart to this. The imperfect love, and praise, and holiness, which is here to be attained, they have no mind of; much less of that which is so much greater: The joys of heaven are of so pure and spiritual a nature, that the heart of the wicked cannot desire them. So that by this time you may see on what ground it is, that God supposeth that the wicked are willing their own destruction; they will rather venture on certain misery than be converted; and then, to quiet themselves in their sins, they will make themselves believe that they shall nevertheless escape.

2. And as this controversy is matter of wonder (that even men should be such enemies to themselves, as wilfully to cast away their souls) so are the disputants too. That God should stoop so low as thus to plead the case with man; and that men should be so strangely blind and obstinate as to need all this in so plain a case; yea, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lieth upon the issue! No wonder that they will not hear us that are men, when they will not hear the Lord himself: As God saith, Ezekiel 3:7, when He sent the prophet to the Israelites, “The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted” No wonder if they can plead against a minister, or a godly neighbour, when they will plead against the Lord himself; even against the plainest passages of his word, and think that they have reason on their side. When they weary the Lord with their words, they say, “Wherein have we wearied Him?” Malachi 2:17. The priests, that despised His name, durst ask, “Wherein have we despised your name?” And when they polluted his altar, and made the temple of the Lord contemptible they durst say, “Wherein have we polluted thee?” Malachi 1:6-7. But “Wo unto him, saith the Lord, that striveth with his Maker: Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth: Shall the clay say to him that fashioned it, What makest thou?” Isaiah 45:9.

Quest. But why is it that God will reason the case with man?

Ans. 1. Because that man being a reasonable creature, is accordingly to be dealt with, and by reason to be persuaded and overcome; God hath therefore endowed them with reason, that they might use it for him. One would think a reasonable creature should not go against the clearest and the greatest reason in the world, when it is set before him.

2. At least, men shall see that God did require nothing of them that was unreasonable, but that whatever forbideth them, he hath all the right reason in the world on his side: And they have good reason to obey him, but none to disobey. And thus even the damned shall be forced to justify God, and confess that it was only reasonable that they should have turned to him; and they shall be forced to condemn themselves, and confess that they had little reason to cast away themselves by the neglecting of His grace in the day of their visitation.

USE.

Look up your best and strongest reasons, sinners, if you will make good your way:—You see now with whom you have to deal.—What say thou, unconverted, sensual sinner? Darest thou venture upon a dispute with God? Art thou able to confute him? Art thou ready to enter the lists? God asketh thee, Why wilt thou die? Art thou furnished with a sufficient answer? Wilt thou undertake to prove that God is mistaken, and that thou art in the right? O what an undertaking is that!—Why, either he or you are mistaken, when he is for your conversion, and you are against it: He calls upon you to turn, and you will not; He bids you do it presently, even to-day, while it is called to-day, and you delay, and think it time enough hereafter.—He saith it must be a total change, and you must be holy, and new creatures, and born again; and you think that less may serve the turn, and that it is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new. Who is in the right now? God or you? God calleth on you to turn, and to live a holy life, and you will not; by your disobedient lives it appears you will not. If you will, why do you not? Why have you not done it all this while? And why do you not fall upon it yet? Your wills have the command of your lives. We may certainly conclude that you are unwilling to turn, when you do not turn. And, why will you not? Can you give any reason for it that is worthy to be called a reason?

I, that am but a worm, your fellow-creature, of a shallow capacity, dare challenge the wisest of you all to reason the case with me, while I plead my Maker's cause; and I need not be discouraged, when I know I plead but the cause that God pleadeth, and contend for him that will have the best at last. Had I but these two general grounds against you, I am sure that you have no good reason on your side.

1. I am sure it can be no good reason which is against the God of truth and reason. It cannot be light that is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature but what it has from God; and therefore none can be wiser than God. It were fatal presumption for the highest angel to compare with his Creator. What is it then for a lump of dirt, an ignorant sot, that knoweth not himself, nor his own soul, that knoweth but little of the things which he seeth, yet that is more ignorant than many of his neighbours, to set himself against the wisdom of the Lord? It is one of the fullest discoveries of the horrible wickedness of carnal men, and the stark madness of such as sin, that so silly a mole dare contradict his Maker, and call in question the word of God: Yea, that those people in our parishes, that are so ignorant, that they cannot give us a reasonable answer concerning the very principles of religion, are yet so wise in their own conceit, that they dare question the plainest truths of God, yea, contradict them and cavil against them, when they can scarce speak sense, and will believe them no farther than agreeth with their foolish wisdom.

2. And as I know that God must needs be in the right, so I know the case is so palpable and gross which he pleadeth against, that no man can have reason for it. Is it possible that a man can have any reason to break his master's laws? and reason to dishonor the Lord of glory? and reason to abuse the Lord that bought him? Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to damn his own immortal soul?—Mark the Lord's question, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Is eternal death a thing to be desired? Are you in love with hell? What reason have you wilfully to perish? If you think you have reason to sin, should you not remember that "death is the wages of sin," Romans 6:23. and think whether you have any reason to undo yourselves, body and soul, for ever?—You should not only ask whether you love the adder, but whether you love the sting?—It is such a thing for a man to cast away his everlasting happiness, and to sin against God, that no good reason can be given for it; but, the more anyone pleads for it, the madder he sheweth himself to be. Had you a lordship or a kingdom offered you for every sin that you commit, it were not reason, but madness, to accept it. Could you by every sin obtain the highest thing on earth that flesh desireth, it were no considerable value to persuade you in reason to commit it. If it were to please your greatest or dearest friends, or to obey the greatest prince on earth, or to save your lives, or to escape the greatest earthly misery; all these are of no consideration to draw a man in reason to the committing of one sin. If it were a right hand or a right eye that would hinder your salvation, it is the gainfullest way to cast it away, rather than to go to hell to save it; for there is no saving a part when you lose the whole. So exceedingly great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world deserveth once to be named in comparison with them; nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, or crowns, or kingdoms, be a reasonable excuse for the neglect of matters of such high and everlasting consequence. A man can have no reason to cross his ultimate end. Heaven is such a thing, that, if you lose it, nothing can supply the want, or make up the loss: and hell its such a thing, that, if you suffer it, nothing can remove your misery, or give you ease and comfort. And therefore nothing can be a valuable consideration to excuse you for neglecting your own salvation; for, saith our Saviour, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own

soul?” Mark 8:36.

O sirs, that you did but know what matters they are that we are now speaking to you of! The saints in heaven have other kind of thoughts of these things. If the devil could come to them that live in the sight and love of God, and should offer them a cup of ale, or a whore, or merry company, or sport to entice them away from God and glory; I pray you tell me, how do you think they would entertain the motion? Nay, or if he should offer them to be kings of the earth, do you think this would entice them down from heaven? O with what hatred and holy scorn would they disdain and reject the motion! And why should not you do so, that have heaven opened to your faith, if you had but faith to see it? There is never a soul in hell but knows, by this time, that it was a mad exchange to let go heaven for fleshly pleasure, and that it is not a little mirth, or pleasure, or worldly riches, or honour, or the good will or word of men, that will quench hell fire, or make him a saver that loseth his soul. Oh! if you had heard what I believe, if you had seen what I believe, and that on the credit of the word of God, you would say there can be no reason to warrant a man to damn his soul: you durst not sleep quietly another night, before you had resolved to turn and live.

If you see a man put his hand in the fire till it burn off, you will marvel at it; but this is a thing that a man may have a reason for; as Bishop Cranmer had when he burnt off his hand for subscribing to Popery. If you see a man cut off a leg or arm, it is a sad sight; but this is a thing that a man may have a good reason for; as many a man doth to save his life. If you see a man give his body to be burnt to ashes, and to be tormented with racks, and refuse deliverance when it is offered, that is a hard case to flesh and blood: but this a man may have good reason for; as you may see in Hebrews 11:33-36. and as many a hundred martyrs have done. But, for a man to forsake the Lord that made Him, and to run into the fire of hell, when he is told of it, and intreated to turn that he may be saved; this is a thing that can have no reason in the world, that is reason indeed, to justify or excuse it. For heaven will pay for the loss of any thing that we can lose to get it; but nothing can pay for the loss of heaven.

I beseech you now let this word come nearer to your hearts. As you are convinced that you have no reason to destroy yourselves, so tell me what reason have you to refuse to turn, and live to God? What reason hath the veriest worldling, or drunkard, or ignorant careless sinner of you all, why you should not be as holy as any you know, and be as careful for your souls as any other? Will not hell be as hot to you as to others? Should not your own souls be as dear to you as theirs is them? Hath not God as much authority over you? Why then will you not become a sanctified people as well as they?

O Sirs, when God bringeth the matter down to the very principles of nature, and shews that you have no more reason to be ungodly than you have to damn your own souls! if yet you will not understand and turn, it seems a desperate case that you are in. And now, either you have reason for what you do, or you have not: if not, will you go against reason itself? Will you do that which you have no reasons for? But, if you think you have, produce them, and make the best of your matter. Reason the case a little with me, your fellow-creature, which is far easier than to reason the case with God. Tell me, man, here before the Lord, as if thou wert to die this hour, why shouldst thou not resolve to turn this day, before thou stir from the place thou standest in? What reason hast thou to deny, or to delay? Hast thou any reason that satisfieth thine own conscience for it? Or any that thou darest own and plead at the bar of God? If thou hast, let us hear them,

bring them forth, and make them good. But, alas! what poor stuff, what nonsense instead of reasons, do we daily hear from ungodly men? But for their necessity, I should be ashamed to name them.

1. One saith, “If none shall be saved but such converted and sanctified ones as you talk of, then heaven would be but empty, then God help a great many!

Ans. What! it seems you think that God doth not know, or else that he is not to be believed! Measure not all by yourselves; God hath thousands and millions of his sanctified ones; but yet they are few in comparison of the world, as Christ himself hath told us, Matthew 7:13-14. Luke 12:32. It better beseems you to make that use of this truth which Christ teaches you: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.” Luke 13:22-24.—“Fear not, little flock, (saith Christ to his sanctified ones) for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” Luke 12:32.

Object. 2. I am sure if such as I go to hell, we shall have store of company.

Ans. And will that be any ease or comfort to you? Or do you think you may not have company enough in heaven? Will you be undone for company? Or will you not believe that God will execute his threatnings, because there be so many that are guilty? All these are silly unreasonable conceits.

Object. 3. But all men are sinners, even the best of you all?

Ans. But all are not unconverted sinners. The godly live not in gross sins; and their very infirmities are their grief and burden, which they daily long, and pray, and strive to be rid of. Sin hath not dominion over them.

Object. 4. I do not see that professors are any better than other men; they will over-reach, and oppress, and are as covetous as any.

Ans. Whatever hypocrites are, it is not so with those that are sanctified. God hath thousands and tens of thousands that are otherwise; though the malicious world doth accuse them of what they can never prove, and of that which never entered into their hearts. And commonly they charge them with heart-sins, which none can see but God; because they can charge them with no such wickedness in their lives as they are guilty of themselves.

Object. 5. But I am no whoremonger, nor drunkard, nor oppressor, and therefore why shouldest thou call me to be converted?

Ans. As if you were not born after the flesh, and had not lived after the flesh, as well as others! Is it not as great a sin as any of these, for a man to have an earthly mind, and to love the world above God, and to have an unbelieving, unhumbled heart? Nay, let me tell you more; that many persons, that avoid disgraceful sins are as fast glued to the world, and as much slaves to the flesh, and as strange to God, and averse to heaven in their more civil discourse, as others are in their more shameful and notorious sins.

Object. 6. But I mean nobody any harm, nor do any harm; and why then should God condemn me?

Ans. Is it no harm to neglect the Lord that made thee, and the work for which thou camest into the world, and to prefer the creature before the Creator, and to neglect grace that is daily offered thee? It is the depth of your sinfulness to be insensible of it; the dead feel not that they are dead. If once thou wert made alive, thou wouldst see more amiss in thyself, and marvel at thyself for making so light of it.

Object. 7. I think you would make men mad under pretence of converting them; it is enough to rack the brains of sinful people, to muse so much on matters too high for them.

Ans. 1. Can you be madder than you are already? Or at least, can there be a more dangerous madness than to neglect your everlasting welfare, and wilfully undo yourselves?

2. A man is never well in his wits till he be converted; he never knows God, nor knows sin, nor knows Christ, nor knows the world, nor himself, nor what his business is on earth, so as to set himself about it, till he be converted.—The scripture saith, “That the wicked are unreasonable men,” 2 Thessalonians 3:2. and, “That the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God,” 1 Corinthians 1:20 and Luke 15:17. It is said of the prodigal, that, “when he came to himself,” he resolved to return.—It is a wise world, when men will disobey God, and run to hell for fear of being out of their wits.

3. What is there in the work that Christ calls you, that should drive a man out of his wits? Is it the loving of God, and calling upon him, and comfortably thinking of the glory to come, and the forsaking of our sins, and loving one another, and delighting ourselves in the service of God? Are these such things as should make men mad?

4. And whereas you say that these matters are too high for us, you accuse God himself for making this our work, and giving us his word, and commanding all that will be blessed to meditate on it day and night. Are the matters which we are made for, and which we live for, too high for us to meddle with? This is plainly to unman us, and to make brutes of us, as if we were like them that must meddle with no higher matters than what belongs to flesh and earth. If heaven be too high for you to think on and provide for, it will be too high for you ever to possess.

5. If God should sometimes suffer any weak-headed persons to be distracted by thinking of eternal things; this is because they misunderstand them, and run without a guide; and, of the two, I had rather be in the case of such a one, than of the mad unconverted world, that take their distraction to be their wisdom.

Object. 8. I do not thing that God cares so much what men think, or speak, or do, as to make so great a matter of it.

Ans. It seems, then, you take the word of God to be false, and then what will you believe? But your own reason might teach you better, if you believe not the scriptures: for you see God sets not so light by us, but that he vouchsafeth to make us, and still preserveth us, and daily upholdeth us, and provideth for us; and will any wise man make a curious frame for nothing? Will you make or buy a clock or watch, and daily look at it, and not care whether it go true or false? Surely, if you believe not a particular eye of Providence observing your hearts and lives, you cannot believe or

expect any particular Providence to observe your wants and troubles to relieve you. And, if God had so little cared for you as you imagine, you would never have lived till now; a hundred diseases would have striven which should first destroy you; yea, the devils would have haunted you, and fetched you away alive, as the great fishes devour the less, and as ravenous birds and beasts devour others. You cannot think that God made man for no end or use; and, if he made him for any, it was sure for himself. And can you think he cares not whether his ends be accomplished, and whether we do the work that we are made for?

Yea, by this atheistical objection you make God to have made and upholden all the world in vain. For, what are all other lower creatures for, but for man? What doth the earth, but bear and nourish us? and the beasts do serve us with their labours and lives: and so of the rest. And hath God made so glorious a habitation, and set man to dwell in it, and made all his servants; and now doth he look for nothing at his hands? nor care how he thinks, or speaks, or lives? This is most unreasonable.

Object. 9. It was a better world when men did not make so much ado in religion.

Ans. 1. It hath ever been the custom to praise the times past. That world, that you speak of, was wont to say, it was a better world in their forefathers' days, and so did they of their forefathers. This is but an old custom, because we all feel the evil of our own times, but we see not that which was before us.

2. Perhaps you speak as you think: worldlings think the world is at the best, when it is agreeable to their minds, and when they have most mirth and worldly pleasure. And I doubt not but the devil, as well as you, would say, that then it was a better world, for then he had more service and less disturbance. But the world is at the best when God is most loved, regarded, and obeyed. And how else will you know when the world is good or bad, but, by this?

Object. 10. There are so many ways and religions that we know not which to be of, and therefore we will be even as we are.

Ans. Because there are many, will you be of that way that you may be sure is wrong? None are farther out of the way than worldly, fleshly, unconverted sinners; for, they do not only err in this or that opinion, but in the very scope and drift or their lives. If you were going a journey that your life lay on, would you stop or turn again, because you met with some cross-ways, or because you saw some travelers go the horse way, and some the foot way, and some perhaps break over the hedge, yea, and some miss the way? or would you not rather be the more careful to inquire the way? If you have some servants that know not how to do your work right, and some that are unfaithful; would you take it well of any of the rest that would therefore be idle, and do you no service, because they see their companions so bad?

Object. 11. I do not see that it goes any better with those that are so godly than with other men; they are as poor, and in as much trouble as others.

Ans. And perhaps in much more, when God sees it meet. They take not earthly prosperity for their wages; they have laid up their treasure and hopes in another world, or else they are not Christians indeed; the less they have, the more is behind, and they are content to wait till then.

Object. 12. When you have said all that you can, I am resolved to hope well and trust in God, and do as well as I can, and not make so much ado.

Ans. 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is against his holy and diligent service? It is as well as you will indeed, but that is your misery.

2. My desire is, that you should hope and trust in God: But, for what is it that you would hope? Is it to be saved, if you turn and be sanctified? For this you have God's promise, and therefore hope for it, and spare not. But if you hope to be saved, without conversion and a holy life, this is not to hope in God, but in Satan, or yourselves; for God hath given you no such promise, but told you the contrary; but it is Satan and self-love, that made you such promises, and raised you to such hopes.—Well, if these and such as these, be all you have to say against conversion and a holy life, your all is nothing, and worse than nothing: And if these, and such as these, seem reasons sufficient to persuade you to forsake God, and cast yourselves into hell, the Lord deliver you from such reasons, and from such blind understandings, and from such senseless hardened hearts. Dare you stand to aver one of there reasons at the bar of God? Do you think it will then serve your turn to say, "Lord, I did not turn, because I had so much to do in the world, or because I did not like the lives of some professors; or because I saw men of so many minds?"—O how easily will the light of that day shame such reasonings as these! Had you the world to look after? Let the world which you served now pay you your wages, and save you if it can. Had you not a better world to look after first? And were you not commanded, to 'seek first God's kingdom and righteousness; and promised that other things should be added to you?" Matthew 6:33. And were ye not told, "that godliness was profitable to all things, having the promise of this life, and that which is to come?" 1 Timothy 4:8. Did the sins of the professors hinder you? You should rather have been the more heedful, and learned by their falls to beware, and have been the more careful, and not the more careless. It was the Scripture, and not their lives, that was your rule. Did the many opinions of this world hinder you? Why the Scripture, that was your rule, did teach you but one way, and that was the right way; if you had followed that, even in so much as was plain and easy, you should never have miscarried. Will not such answers as these silence you? If these will not, God hath those that will; when he asketh the man, Matthew 22:12. "Friend, how comest thou in hither, not having on a wedding-garment?" That is, what dost thou in my church among professed Christians, without a holy heart and life? What answer did he make? Why the text saith, he was speechless; he had nothing to say. The clearness of the case, and the Majesty of God, will then easily stop the mouths of the most confident of you, tho' you will not be put down by any thing we can say to you now; but will make good your cause, be it ever so bad. I know already, that never a reason that now you can give me will do you any good at last, when your case must be opened before the Lord and all the world. Nay, I scarce think that your own consciences are well satisfied with your reasons. For, if they are, it seems then you have not so much as purposed to repent. But, if you purpose to repent, it seems you do not put much confidence in your reasons which you bring against it. What say you, unconverted sinners? Have you any good reasons to give, why you should not turn, and presently turn, with all your hearts? Or will you go to hell in despite of reason itself? Bethink you what you do in time, for it will shortly be too late to bethink you.—Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or his wages? Is he a bad master? Is the devil, whom you serve, a better? Or is the flesh a better? Is there any harm in a holy life? Is a life of worldliness and ungodliness better? Do you think in your consciences, that it would do you any harm to be converted and live a holy life?

What harm can it do you? Is it harm to you to have the spirit of Christ within you? And to have a cleansed purified Heart? If it be bad to be holy, why doth God say, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15-16. Leviticus 20:7. Is it evil to be like God? Is it not said, “that God made man in His own image?” Why, this holiness is his image. This Adam lost, and this Christ by his word and Spirit would restore to you, as he doth to all that he will save. Why were you baptized into the Holy Ghost? and why do you baptize your children into the Holy Ghost as your sanctifier, if you will not be sanctified by him, but think it hard for you to be sanctified? Tell me truly, as before the Lord, tho’ you are loathe to live a holy life, had you not rather die in the case of those that do so than of others? If you were to die this day, had you not rather die in the case of a converted man than of an unconverted? Of a holy and heavenly man than of a carnal earthily man? And would you not say, as Balaam, Numbers 23:10. “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?” And why will you not now be of the mind that you will be of then? First or last you must come to this, either to be converted, or to wish you had been, when it is too late. But what is it that you are afraid of losing if you turn? Is it your friends? you will but change them; God will be your friend, and Christ, and the Spirit, will be your friend, and every Christian will be your friend. You will get one friend that will stand you in more stead than all the friends in the world could have done. The friends you lose would have but enticed you to hell; but could not have delivered you: But the friend you get will save you from hell, and bring you to His own eternal rest. Is it your pleasure that you are afraid of losing? You think you shall never have a merry day again, if once you be converted. Alas! that you should think it a greater pleasure to live in foolish sports and merriments, and please your flesh, than to live in the believing thoughts of glory, and in the love of God, and in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in which the state of grace consisteth! Romans 14:17. If it would be a greater pleasure for you to think of your lands and inheritance (if you were lords of all the country) than it is for a child to play for pins: why should it not be a greater joy to you to think of the kingdom of heaven being yours than of all the riches or pleasures of the world? As it is but foolish childishness that makes children so delight in toys that they would not leave them for all your land, so it is but foolish worldliness, and fleshliness and wickedness, that make you so much delight in your houses, and lands, and meat, and drink, and ease, and honour, as that you would not part with them for the heavenly delights. But what will you do for pleasure when these are gone? Do you not think of that? When your pleasures end in horror, and go out like a stinking snuff, the pleasures of the saints are then at best. I have had myself but a little taste of the heavenly pleasures in the forethoughts of the blessed approaching day, and in the present persuasions of the love of God in Christ; but I have taken too deep a draught of earthily pleasures, so that you may see, if I be partial, it is on your side; and yet I must profess, from that little experience, that there is no comparison.—There is more joy to be had in a day, (if the sun of life shine clear upon us) in the state of holiness, than in a whole life of sinful pleasures. I had “rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” (Psalms 84:10). “A day in his courts is better than a thousand any where else,” Psalms 84:13. The mirth of the wicked is like the laughter of a madman, that knows not his own misery; and therefore Solomon saith of such laughter, “it is mad, and of mirth, what doth it?” Ecclesiastes 2:2. and Ecclesiastes 7:2-6. “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; “for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise,

than to hear the song of fools; for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool." All the pleasure of fleshly things is but like the scratching of a man that hath the itch; it is his disease that makes him desire it; and a wise man had rather be without his pleasure than be troubled with his itch. Your loudest laughter is but like that of a man that is tickled; he laughs when he hath no cause of joy. Judge, as you are men, whether this be a wise man's part. It is but your carnal unsanctified nature that makes a holy life seem grievous to you, and a course of sensuality seem more delightful. If you will but turn, the Holy Ghost will give you another nature and inclination, and then it will be more pleasant to you to be rid of your sin than now it is to keep it; and you will then say, that you knew not what a comfortable life was till now, and that it was never well with you till God and holiness were your delight.

Quest. But how it cometh to pass that men should be so unreasonable in the matters of salvation? They have wit enough in other matters, what makes them so loathe to be converted, that there should need so many words in so plain a case, and all will not do, but the most will live and die unconverted?

Answer. To name them only in a few words, the causes are these:

1. Men are naturally in love with the earth and flesh, and their nature hath an enmity to God and godliness, as the nature of a serpent hath to a man: And when all that we can say goeth against an habitual inclination of their natures, no marvel if it little prevail.

2. They are in darkness, and know not the very things they hear. Like a man that was born blind, and hears a high commendation of the light: But what will hearing do unless he sees it? They know not what God is, nor what is the power of the cross of Christ, nor what the spirit of holiness is, nor what it is to live in love by faith; they know not the certainty, and suitableness, and excellency of the heavenly inheritance. They know not what conversion, and a holy mind and conversation, are, even when they hear of them. They are in a mist of ignorance. They are lost and bewildered in sin; like a man that hath lost himself in the night, and knows not where he is, nor how to come to himself again till the day-light recover Him.

3. They are wilfully confident that they need no conversion, but some partial amendment; and that they are in the way to heaven already, and are converted when they are not. And, if you meet a man that is quite out of his way, you may long enough call on him to turn back again, if he will not believe you that he is out of the way.

4. They are become slaves to their flesh, and drowned in the world to make provision for it. Their lusts, and passions, and appetites, have distracted them, and got such a hand over them, that they cannot tell how to deny them, or how to mind any thing else. So that the drunkard saith, "I love a cup of good drink, and I cannot forbear it." The glutton saith, "I love good cheer, and I cannot forbear." The fornicator saith, "I love to have my lust fulfilled, and I cannot forbear." And the gamester loves to have his sports, and he cannot forbear. So that they are become even captivated slaves to their flesh, and their very wilfulness is become an impotency; and what they would not do, they say they cannot. And the worldling is so taken up with earthly things, that he hath neither heart, nor mind, nor time, for heavenly; but, as in Pharaoh's dream, Genesis 41:4. "The lean kine did eat up the fat ones," so this lean and barren earth doth eat up all the thoughts of Heaven.

5. Some are so carried away by the stream of evil company, that they are possessed with hard thoughts of a godly life, by hearing them speak against it; or at least they think they may venture to do as they see most do, and so they hold on in their sinful ways; and when one is cut off and cast into hell, and another snatched away from among them to the same condemnation, it doth not much daunt them, because they see not whither they are gone. Poor wretches, they hold on in their ungodliness, for all this; for they little know that their companions are now lamenting it in torments. In Luke 16. the rich man in hell would fain have had one to warn his five brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. It is like, he knew their minds and lives, and knew that they were hastening thither, and little dreamed that he was there, yea, and would little have believed one that should have told them so. I remember a passage that a gentleman yet living told me that he saw upon a bridge over the Severn. (Mr. R. Rowley, of Shrewsbury, upon Acham bridge.) A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, and something meeting them, and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped upon the wall of the bridge, and, his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream; the rest seeing him, did one after one leap over the bridge, and were all, or almost all drowned.—Those that were behind did little know what was become of them that were gone before, but thought they might venture to follow their companions; but, as soon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the same way; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are gone. Oh but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world; then what would they give to be where they were!

6. Moreover, they have a subtle malicious enemy, that is unseen of them, and plays his game in the dark; and it is his principal business to hinder their conversion, and therefore to keep them where they are, by persuading them not to believe the Scriptures, or not to trouble their minds with these matters; or by persuading them to think ill of a godly life, or to think that it more ado than needs, and that they may be saved without conversion, and without all this stir; and that God is so merciful that he will not damn any such as they; or at least, that they may stay a little longer, and take their pleasure, and follow the world a little longer yet, and then let it go, and repent hereafter: And by such deluding cheats as these, the devil keeps the most in his captivity, and leadeth them to his misery. These, and such like impediments as these, do keep so many thousands unconverted, when God hath done so much, and Christ hath suffered so much, and ministers have said so much for their conversion; when their reasons are silenced, and they are not able to answer the Lord that calls after them, “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?” yet all comes to nothing with the greatest part of them; and they leave us no more to do, after all, but to sit down, and lament their wilful misery.

1.06. SERMON IV

Ezekiel 33:11.

Say to them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for, why will ye die, O house of Israel?

I HAVE now shewn you the reasonableness of God's commands, and the unreasonableness of wicked men's disobedience. If nothing will serve their turn, but men will yet refuse to turn, we are next to consider who it is long of if they be damned. And this brings me to the last doctrine; which is,

Doct. 7. That if, after all, these men will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they are condemned, but themselves, even their own wilfulness. They die, because they will die; that is, because they will not turn.

If you will go to hell, what remedy? God here acquits himself of your blood; it shall not lie on him if you be lost. A negligent minister may draw it upon him; and those that encourage you, or hinder you not in sin, may draw it upon them; but be sure of it, it shall not lie upon God. Saith the Lord, concerning his unprofitable vineyard, Isaiah 5:2-4. "Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard, what could have been done more to my vineyard: that I have not done in it? When he had planted it in a fruitful soil, and fenced it, and gathered out the stones, and planted it with the choicest vines," what should he have done more to it? He hath made you men, and endowed you with reason; he hath furnished you with all external necessaries, he hath given you a righteous perfect law: When you had broken it, and undone yourselves, he had pity on you, and sent His Son by a miracle of condescending mercy to die for you, and be a sacrifice for your sins; and he "was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." The Lord Jesus hath made you a deed of gift of himself, and eternal life with him, on the condition you will but accept it and return. He hath, on this reasonable condition, offered you the free pardon of all your sins; he hath written this in his word, and sealed it by his Spirit, and sent it by his ministers; they have made the offer to you, (many a time) and called you to accept it, and to turn to God. They have in his name intreated you, and reasoned the case with you, and answered all your frivolous objections. He hath long waited on you, and staid your leisure, and suffered you to abuse him to his face. He hath mercifully sustained you in the midst of your sins; he hath compassed you about with all sorts of mercies: he hath also intermixed afflictions to mind you of your folly, and call you to your wits; and his spirit hath been often striving with your hearts, and saying there, "Turn, sinner, turn to him that calleth thee: whither art thou going? What art thou doing? Dost thou know what will be the end? How long wilt thou hate thy friends, and love thine enemies? When will thou let go all, and turn, and deliver up thyself to God, and give thy Redeemer the possession of thy soul? When shall it once be?" These pleadings have been used with thee: And when thou hast delayed, thou hast been urged to make haste, and God hath called to thee, "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not thy heart: Why not now without any more delay?" Life hath been set before you, the joys of heaven have been opened to

you in the gospel; the certainty of them have been manifested; the certainty of the everlasting torments of the damned hath been declared to you. Unless you would have had a sight of heaven and hell, what could you desire more? Christ hath been, as it were, set forth crucified before your eyes, Galatians 3:1. You have been a hundred times told that you are but lost men till you come unto him. As oft you have been told of the evil of sin, of the vanity of the world, and all the pleasures and wealth it can afford, or the shortness and uncertainty of your lives, and the endless duration of the joy or torment of the life to come. All this, and more than this, have you been told, and told again, even till you were weary of hearing it, and till you could make the lighter of it, because you had so often heard it, like the smith's dog, that is brought by custom to sleep under the noise of the hammers, and when the sparks do fly about his ears; and, though all this have not converted you, yet you are alive, and might have mercy to this day, if you had but hearts to entertain it. And, now let reason itself be the judge, whether it be long of God or you, if after this you will be unconverted and be damned? If you die now, it is because you will die. What should be said more to you? or what course should be taken that is more likely to prevail? Are you able to say, and make it good, "We would fain have been converted, and become new creatures, but we could not; we would fain have forsaken our sins, but could not; we would have changed our company, and our thoughts, and our discourse, but we could not."—Why could you not, if you would? What hindered you, but the wickedness of your hearts? Who forced you to sin? or who held you back from duty? Had not you the same teaching, and time, and liberty to be godly, as your godly neighbours had? Why then could not you have been godly as well as they? Were the church-doors shut against you? or did you not keep away yourselves? or sit and sleep, or hear as if you did not hear? Did God put in any exceptions against you in his word, when he invited sinners to return; and when he promised mercy to those that do return? Did he say, "I will pardon all that repent except thee?" Did he shut you out from the liberty of his holy worship? Did he forbid you to pray to him any more than others? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him, but you forsook him, and ran away yourselves. And when he called you to him, you would not come.—If God had excepted you out of the general promise and offer of mercy, or had said to you, "Stand off; I will have nothing to do with such as you; pray not to me, for I will not hear you; if you repent never so much, and cry for mercy never so much, I will not regard you."—If God had left you nothing to trust to but desperation, then you had had a fair excuse. You might have said, "To what end do I repent and turn, when it will do no good?"—But this was not your case. You might have had Christ to be your Lord and Saviour, as well as others, and you would not; because you felt not yourselves sick enough for the physician, and because you could not spare your disease: In your hearts you said, as those rebels, Luke 19:14. "We will not have this man to reign over us" Christ "would have gathered you under the wings of his salvation, and you would not" Matthew 23:37. What desires of your welfare did the Lord express in his holy word! With what compassion did he stand over you, and say, "O that my people had hearkened unto ne, and that they had walked in my ways!" Psalms 81:13. "O that there were such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!" Deuteronomy 5:20. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Deuteronomy 33:29. He would have been your God, and done all for you that your souls could well desire; but you loved the world and your flesh above him, and therefore you would not hearken to him; though you complimented with him, and gave him high titles; yet, when it came to the closing, "you would have none of him" Psalms 81:11-12. "No

marvel, then, if he gave you up to your own lusts, and you walked in your own counsels."—He condescends to reason, and pleads the case with you, and asketh you, "What is there in me or my service, that you should be so much against me? What harm have I done thee, sinner? Have I deserved this unkind dealing at thy hand? Many mercies have I shewen thee; for which of them dost thou thus despise me? Is it I, or is it Satan, that is your enemy? Is it I, or is it thy carnal self that would undo thee? Is it a holy life, or a life of sin that thou hast cause to fly from? If thou be undone, thou procurest this to thyself, by forsaking me, the Lord, that would have saved thee," Jeremiah 2:7. "Doeth not thy own wickedness correct thee, and thy sin reprove thee, that thou mayest see that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken me?" Jeremiah 2:19. "What iniquity have you found in me, that you have followed after vanity, and forsaken me?" Jeremiah 2:5-6. He calleth out as it were to the brutes, to hear the controversy he hath against you. Micah 6:3-5. "Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth, for the Lord God hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me, for I brought you up out of Egypt, and redeemed thee, &c." "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken it. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider! Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, &c." Isaiah 1:2-4. "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?" Deuteronomy 22:6. When he saw that you forsook him, even for nothing, and turned away from your Lord and life, to hunt after the chaff and feathers of the world, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment, Isaiah 55:1-3. "Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: Hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.—Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon," Isaiah 55:6-7. and so Isaiah 1:16-18. And, when you would not hear, what complaints have you put him to, charging it on you as your wilfulness and stubbournness!— Jeremiah 2:13. "Be astonished: O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid!—For, my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."—Many a time hath Christ proclaimed that free invitation to you, Revelation 22:17, "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But you put him to complain after all his offers: "They will not come to me, that they may have life" John 5:40. He hath invited you to feast with him in the kingdom of his grace, and you have had excuses from your grounds, and your cattle, and your worldly business; and, when you would not come, you have said you could not; and provoked him to resolve that you should never taste of his supper, Luke 14:15, Luke 14:24. And who is it long of now but yourselves? and what can we say is the chief cause of your damnation, but your own wills? You will be damned. The whole case is laid open by Christ himself, Proverbs 1 from the 20th to the end, "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, she crieth in the chief place of concourse: How long, ye simple ones, will you love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour out my spirit

unto you, and I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, would none of my reproofs; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh, when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind. When distress and anguish come upon you, then shall they call on me, but I will not answer: They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For, the away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil."—I thought best to recite the whole text at large to you, because it doth so fully show the cause of the destruction of the wicked. It is not because God would not teach them, but because they would not learn. It is not because God would not call them, but because they would not turn at His reproof. Their wilfulness is their undoing.

USE. From what has been said, you may farther learn these following things:

1. From hence you may see, not only what blasphemy and impiety it is to lay the blame of men's destruction upon God, but also, how unfit these wicked wretches are to bring in such a charge against their Maker. They cry out upon God, and say, he gives them not grace, and his threatnings are severe, and God forbid that all should be damned that be not converted and sanctified: and they think it a hard measure that a short sin should have an endless suffering; and if they be damned they say they cannot help it; when in the mean time they are busy about their own destruction, even cutting the throat of their own souls, and will not be persuaded to hold their hands. They think God were cruel if he should damn them; and yet they are so cruel to themselves, that they will run into the fire of hell; when God hath told them it is a little before them, and neither intreaties, nor threatnings, nor any thing that can be said, will stop them. We see them almost undone; their careless, worldly, fleshly lives do tell us, that they are in the power of the devil; we know, if they die before they are converted, all the world cannot save them; and, knowing the uncertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day lest they drop into the fire. And, therefore, we intreat them to pity their own souls, and not to undo themselves when mercy is at hand, and they will not hear us. We intreat them to cast away their sin, and come to Christ without delay, and to have some mercy on themselves, but they will have none. And yet they think that God must be cruel if he condemn them. O wilful miserable sinners! It is not God that is cruel to you; it is you that are cruel to yourselves. You are told that you must turn or burn, and yet you turn not. You are told, that if you will needs keep your sins, you shall keep the curse of God with them, and yet you will keep them. You are told that there is no way to happiness but by holiness; and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God say more to you? What would you have him do with his mercy? He offereth it to you, and you will not have it. You are in the ditch of sin and misery, and he would give you his hand to help you out, and you refuse his help: he would cleanse you of your sins, and you had rather keep them. You love your lust, and love your gluttony, and sports, and drunkenness, and will not let them go. Would you have him bring you to heaven whether you will or not? Or would you have him bring you and your sins to heaven together? Why that is an impossibility: you may as well expect he should turn the sun into darkness. What! an unsanctified fleshly heart to be in heaven! it cannot be. "There entereth nothing that is unclean," Revelation 21:17. "For what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?" 2 Corinthians 6:14-15.

“All the day long hath he stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people,” Romans 10:25. What will you do now? Will you cry to God for mercy? Why God calleth upon you to have mercy upon yourselves, and you will not. Ministers see the poisoned cup in the drunkard’s hand, and tell him, there is poison in it, and desire him to have mercy on his soul, and forbear; and he will not hear us: drink it he must and will; he loves it; and therefore, though hell come next, he saith he cannot help it. What should one say to such men as these? We tell the ungodly careless worldling, it is not such a life that will serve the turn, or ever bring you to heaven. If a bear were at your back, you would mend your pace, and, when the curse of God is at your back, and Satan and hell are at your back, will you not stir, but ask, What needs all this ado? Is an immortal soul of no more worth? Oh! have mercy upon yourselves! But they will have no mercy on themselves, nor once regard us. We tell them the end will be bitter. Who can dwell with the everlasting fire? And yet they will have no mercy on themselves. And yet will these poor wretches say, that God is more merciful than to condemn them, when it is themselves that cruelly and unmercifully run upon condemnation; and if we should go to them, and intreat them, we cannot stop them. If we should fall on our knees to them, we cannot stop them; but to hell they will go, and yet will not believe that they are going thither. If we beg of them for the sake of God that made them, and preserveth them; for the sake of Christ, that died for them; for the sake of their own poor souls, to pity themselves, and go no farther in the way to hell, but come to Christ while his arms are open, and enter into the state of life while the door stands open, and now take mercy while mercy may be had; they will not be persuaded. If we should die for it, we cannot so much as get them so much as now and then to consider with themselves of the matter, and turn. And yet they can say, “I hope God will be merciful.” Did you never consider what he saith, Isaiah 27:11. “It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will shew them no favour” If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry, you will say he is unmerciful. If he should cast you into prison, or beat and torment you, you would say he is unmerciful. And yet you will do a thousand times more against yourselves, even cast away both soul and body for ever, and never complain of your own unmercifulness! Yea, and God, that waited upon you all the while with his mercy, must be taken to be unmerciful, if he punish you after all this. Unless the Holy God of heaven will give these wretches leave to trample upon his Son’s blood, and with the Jews, as it were, again to spit in his face, and do despite to the spirit of grace, and make a jest of sin, and a mock at holiness, and set more light by saving mercy than by the filth of their fleshly pleasures; and unless, after all this, He will save them by the mercy which they cast away, and would none of, God himself must be called unmerciful by them.—But he will be justified when he judgeth, and he will not stand or fall at the bar of a sinful worm.—I know there are many particular cavils that are brought by them against the Lord; but I shall not here stay to answer them particularly, having done it already in my Treatise of Judgment, to which I shall refer them. Had the disputing part of the world been as careful to avoid sin and destruction as they have been busy in searching after the cause of them, and forward directly to impute them to God, they might have exercised their wits more profitably, and have less wronged God, and sped better themselves. When so ugly a monster as sin is within us, and so heavy a thing as punishment is on us, and so dreadful a thing as hell is before us, one would think it would be an easy question, who is in the fault, whether God or man be the principal or culpable cause? Some men are such favourable judges of themselves, that they are proner to accuse the infinite perfection and goodness itself than their own hearts, and imitate their first parents, that said, “The

serpent tempted me, and the woman that thou gavest me gave unto me, and I did eat;"—secretly implying that God was the cause. So say they, "the understanding that thou gavest me was unable to discern; the will that thou gavest me was unable to make a better choice; the objects which thou didst set before me did entice me; the temptation which thou didst permit to assault me prevailed against me." And some are so loathe to think that God can make a self-determinate creature, that they dare not deny him that which they take to be his prerogative to be the determiner of the will in every sin, as the first efficient immediate physical cause.—And many would be content to acquit God from so much causing of evil, if they could but reconcile it with his being the chief cause of good: as if truths would be no longer truths if we are unable to see them in their perfect order and coherence; because our raveled wits cannot see them right together, nor assign each truth its proper place, we presume to conclude that some must be cast away. This is the fruit of proud self-conceitedness; when men receive not God's truth as a child his lesson, in a holy submission to the omniscience of our teacher but as censurers that are too wise to learn.

Objecti. But we cannot convert ourselves till God convert us: we can do nothing without his grace: It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy.

Answer. God hath two degrees of mercy to shew; the mercy of conversion first, and the mercy of salvation last: The latter he will give to none but those that will and run, and hath promised it to them only. The former is to make them willing that are unwilling; and though your own willingness and endeavours deserve not his grace, yet your wilful refusal deserveth that it should be denied to you. Your disability is your very unwillingness itself which excuseth not your sin, but maketh it the greater. You could turn if you were but truly willing; and, if your wills themselves are so corrupted, that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cause to seek for that grace, and yield to it, and do what you can in the use of means, and not neglect it, or set yourself against it. Do what you are able first, and then complain of God for denying you grace, if you have cause.

Object. But you seem to intimate all this while that man hath free will.

Ans. The dispute about free will is beyond your capacity; I shall therefore now trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a self-determining faculty, but it is viciously inclined, and backward to do good; and therefore we see, by sad experience, that it hath not a virtuous moral freedom. But that it is the wickedness of it which deserveth the punishment. And I pray you let us not befool ourselves with opinions. Let the case be your own. If you had an enemy so malicious that he falls upon you, and beats you every time he meets you, and takes away the lives of your children, will you excuse him, because he saith, "I have not free-will, it is my nature; I cannot choose, unless God gives me grace." If you have a servant that robbeth you, will you take such an answer from him? Might not every thief and murderer, that is hanged at the assize, give such an answer? "I have not free will; I cannot change my own heart! What can I do without God's grace?" And shall they therefore be acquitted? If not, why then should you think to be acquitted for a course of sin against the Lord?

2. From hence also you may observe these three things together: 1. What a subtle tempter Satan is. 2. What a deceitful thing sin is. 3. What a foolish creature corrupted man is. A subtile tempter indeed, that can persuade the greatest part of the world to go wilfully into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuasives as they have. A deceitful thing is sin indeed, that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life, for a thing so base and utterly unworthy! A

foolish creature is man indeed, that will be cheated of his salvation for nothing, yea, for a known nothing; and that by an enemy, and a known enemy. You would think it impossible that any man in his wits should be persuaded, for a trifle, to cast himself into the fire, or water, or into a coal-pit, to the destruction of his life. And yet men will be enticed to cast themselves into hell. If your natural lives were in your own hands, that you should not die till you should kill yourselves, how long would most of you live? And yet, when your everlasting life is so far in your own hands, under God, that you cannot be undone till you undo yourselves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing? Ah! what a silly thing is man! And what a bewitching and befooling thing is sin!

3. From hence also you may learn, that it is no great wonder if wicked men be hinderers of others in the way to heaven, and would have as many unconverted as they can, and would draw them into sin and keep them in it! Can you expect that they should have mercy on others, that have none upon themselves? and that they should so much stick to the destruction of others, that stick not to destroy themselves? They do no worse by others than they do by themselves.

4. Lastly, You may hence learn, that the greatest enemy to man is himself; and the greatest judgment in this life, that can befal him, is to be left to himself; that the great work that grace hath to do, is to save us from ourselves; that the greatest accusations and complaints of men should be against themselves; that the greatest work that we have to do ourselves, is to resist ourselves; and the greatest enemy that we should daily pray, and watch, and strive against, is our own carnal hearts and wills; and the greatest part of your work, if you will do good to others, and help them to heaven, is to save them from themselves, even from their blind understandings, and corrupted wills, and perverse affections, and violent passions, and unruly senses. I only name all these for brevity sake; and leave them to your farther consideration.

WELL, Sirs, now we have found out the great delinquent and murderer of souls, (even men's selves, their own wills) what remains but that you judge according to the evidence, and confess this great iniquity before the Lord, and be humbled for it, and do so no more? To these three ends distinctly, I shall add a few words more.—1. Farther to convince you. 2. To humble you. And 3. To reform you, if there yet be any hope.

1. We know so much of the exceeding gracious nature or God, who is so willing to do good, and delighteth to shew mercy, that we have no reason to suspect him of being the culpable cause of our death, or to call him cruel: he hath made all good, and he preserveth and maintaineth all; the eyes of all things do wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season; he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desires of all the living, Psalms 145:15-16. He is not only "righteous in all his ways (and therefore will deal justly) and holy in all his works, (and therefore not the author of sin) but he is also good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Psalms 145:17, Psalms 145:19. But as for man, we know his mind is dark, his will perverse, his affections carry him so headlong, that he is fitted by his folly and corruption to such a work as the destroying of himself. If you saw a lamb lie killed in the way, would you sooner suspect the sheep, or the wolf to be the author of it, if they both stand by? Or, if you see a house broken, and the people murdered, would you sooner suspect the prince, or judge, that is wise and just, and had no need; or a known thief or murderer? I say therefore as James 1:13-15. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man, (to draw him to sin) but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then,

when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. You see here that sin is the offspring of your own concupiscence, and not to be fathered on God; and that death is the offspring of your own sin, and the fruit which it will yield you as soon as ripe. You have a treasure of evil in yourselves, as a spider hath of poison, from whence you are bringing forth hurt to yourselves, and spinning such webs as entangle your own souls. Your nature shews it is you that are the cause.

2. It is evident that you are your own destroyers, in that you are so ready to entertain any temptation almost that is offered you. Satan is scarce readier to move you to any evil than you are ready to hear and to do as he would have you. If he would tempt your understanding to error and prejudice, you yield. If he would hinder you from good resolutions, it is soon done. If he would cool any good desires or affections, it is soon done. If he would kindle any lust, or vile affections and desires in you, it is soon done. If he will put you on to evil thoughts, or deeds, you are so free, that he needs not rod or spur. If he would keep you from holy thoughts, and words, and ways, a little doth it, you need no curb. You examine not his suggestions, nor resist them with any resolution; nor cast them out as he casts them in, nor quench the sparks which he endeavoureth to kindle; but you set in with him, and meet him half-way, and embrace his notions, and tempt him to tempt you. And it is easy for him to catch such greedy fish that are ranging for a bait, and will take the bare hook.

3. Your destruction is evidently of yourselves, in that you resist all that would help to save you, and would do you good, or hinder you from undoing yourselves. God would help and save you by his word, and you resist it; it is too strict for you. He would sanctify you by his Spirit, and you resist and quench it. If any man reprove you for your sin, you fly in his face with evil words; and if he would draw you to a holy life, and tell you of your present danger, you give him little thanks, but either bid him look to himself, he shall not answer for you; or else, at best, you put him off with heartless thank, and will not turn when you are persuaded. If ministers would privately instruct and help you, you will not come to them; your unhumbled souls do feel but little need of their help; if they would catechise you, you are too old to be catechised, though you are not too old to be ignorant and unholy. Whatever they can say to you for your good, you are so self-conceited and wise in your own eyes, (even in the depth of ignorance) that you will regard nothing that agreeth not with your present conceits; but contradict your teachers, as if you were wiser than they; you resist all that they can say to you, by your ignorance, unwilfulness, and foolish cavils, and shifting evasions, and unthankful rejections; so that no good that is offered can find any welcome acceptance and entertainment with you.

4. Moreover, it is apparent that you are self-destroyers, in that you draw the matter of your sin and destruction even from the blessed God himself. You like not the contrivance of his wisdom; you like not his justice, but take it for cruelty; you like not his holiness, but are ready to think he is such a one as yourselves, Psalms 1:21. and make as light of sin as you do; you like not his truth, but would have his threatnings, even his peremptory threatnings prove false. And his goodness, which you seem most highly to approve, you partly resist, as it would lead you to repentance; and partly abuse, to the strengthening of your sin, as if you might freely sin because God is merciful, and because his grace doth so much abound.

5. Yea, you fetch destruction from the blessed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of life himself! And nothing more emboldeneth you in sin, than that Christ hath died for you; as if now the danger of death were over, and you might boldly venture: As if Christ were become a servant to Satan and your sins, and must wait upon you while you are abusing him; and because he is become the physician of souls, and is able to save to the utmost all that come to God by him, you think he must suffer you to refuse his help, and throw away medicines, and must save you whether you will come to God by him or not; so that a great part of your sins are occasioned by your bold presumption upon the death of Christ; not considering that he came to redeem his people from their sins, and to sanctify them a peculiar people to himself, and to confirm them in holiness to the image of their heavenly Father, and to their head. Matthew 1:21. Titus 2:14. 1 Peter 1:15-16.—Colossians 3:10-11. Php 3:9-10.

6. You also fetch your own destruction from all the providences and works of God. When you think of his eternal fore-knowledge and decrees, it is to harden you in your sin, or possess your minds with quarrelling thoughts, as if his decrees might spare you the labour of repentance and a holy life, or else were the cause of sin and death. If he afflict you, you repine; if he prosper you, you the more forget him, and are the more backwards to the thoughts of the life to come. If the wicked prosper, you forget the end that will set all reckonings strait; and are ready to think it is as good to be wicked as godly; and thus you draw your death from all.

7. And the like you do from all the creatures and mercies of God to you. He giveth them to you as the tokens of his love, and furniture for his service, and you turn them against him, to the pleasing of your flesh. You eat and drink to please your appetite, and not for the glory of God, and to enable you to perform his work. Your clothes you abuse to pride. Your riches draw your hearts from heaven, Php 3:18. Your honours and applause do puff you up. If you have wealth and strength, it makes you more secure, and forget your end. Yea, other men's mercies are abused by you to your hurt. If you see their honours and dignity, you are provoked to envy them. If you see their riches, you are ready to covet them. If you look upon beauty, you are stirred up to lust. And it is well if godliness itself be not an eye sore to you.

8. The very gifts that God bestoweth on you, and the ordinances of grace which he hath instituted for his church, you turn to sin. If you have better parts than others, you grow proud and self-conceited. If you have but common gifts, you take them for special grace. You take the bare hearing of your duty for so good a work, as if it would excuse you for not obeying it. Your prayers are turned into sin, because you regard iniquity in your hearts, Psalms 66:18. "And depart not from iniquity when you call on the name of the Lord," 2 Timothy 2:19. "Your prayers are abominable, because you turn away your ear from hearing the law," Proverbs 28:9. and are more ready to offer the sacrifice or fools (thinking you do God some special service) than to hear his word and obey it," Ecclesiastes 5:1.

9. Yea, the persons that you converse with, and all their actions, you make the occasions of your sin and destruction. If they live in the fear of God, you hate them.—If they live ungodly, you imitate them. If the wicked are many, you think you may the more boldly follow them. If the godly be few, you are the more emboldened to despise them. If they walk exactly, you think they are too precise: if one of them fall in a particular temptation, you stumble upon them, and turn away from holiness, because that others are imperfectly holy; as if you were warranted to break your necks, because

some others have by heedlessness sprained a sinew or put out a bone. If a hypocrite discover himself, you say, they are all alike, and think yourselves as honest. A professor can scarce slip into any miscarriage, but, because he cuts his finger, you think you may boldly cut your throats. If ministers deal plainly with you, you say they rail. If they speak gently or coldly, you either sleep under them, or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon. If any errors creep into the church, some greedily entertain them, and others reproach the Christian doctrine for them, which is most against them. And if we would draw you from any ancient rooted error, which can but plead two, or three, or six, or seven hundred years custom, you are as much offended with a motion for reformation as if you were to lose your life by it, and hold fast old errors, while you cry out against new ones. Scarce a difference can arise among the ministers of the gospel, but you will fetch your own death from it. And you will not hear, or at least not obey, the unquestionable doctrine of any of those that jump not with your conceits. One will not hear a minister because he saith the Lord's prayer; and another will not hear him because he doth not use it. One will not hear them that are for Episcopacy; and another will not hear them that are against it. And, thus I might shew it you in many other cases, how you turn all that come near you to your own destruction; so clear is it that the ungodly are self-destroyers, and that their perdition is of themselves.

Methinks now, upon the consideration of what is said, and the review of your own ways, you should bethink you what you have done, and be ashamed and deeply humbled to remember it. If you be not, I pray you consider these following truths:

1. To be your own destroyers is to sin against the deepest principle in your natures, even the principle of self-preservation. Every thing naturally desireth or inclineth to its own felicity, welfare, or perfection. And will you set yourselves to your own destruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbours as yourselves, it is supposed that you naturally love yourselves. But if you love your neighbours no better than yourselves, it seems you would have all the world be damned.

2. How extremely do you cross your own intentions! I know you intend not your own damnation, even when you are procuring it. You think you are but doing good to yourselves, by gratifying the desires of your flesh: but, alas! it is but as a draught of cold water in a burning fever, or as the scratching of an itching wild-fire, which increaseth the disease and pain. If indeed you would have pleasure, or profit, or honour, seek them where they are to be found, and do not hunt after them in the way to hell.

3. What pity is it, that you should do that against yourselves which none else on earth or in hell can do! If all the world were combined against you, or all the devils in hell were combined against you, they could not destroy you without yourselves, nor make you sin but by your own consent. And will you do that against yourselves which no one else can do? You have hateful thoughts of the devil, because he is your enemy, and endeavoureth your destruction. And will you be worse than devils to yourselves? Why thus it is with you, if you had hearts to understand it, when you run into sin, and run from godliness, and refuse to turn at the call of God, you do more against your own souls than men or devils could do besides. And, if you should set yourselves and bend your wits to do yourselves the greatest mischief, you could not devise to do a greater.

4. You are false to the trust that God hath reposed in you. He hath much entrusted you with your own salvation; and will you betray your trust? He hath set you with all diligence to keep your hearts; and is this the keeping of them? Proverbs 4:23.

5. You do even forbid all others to pity you when you will have no pity on yourselves.—If you cry to God in the day of your calamity, for mercy, mercy; what can you expect, but that he should thrust you away, and say, “Nay, thou wouldst not have mercy on thyself: Who brought this upon thee but thy own wilfulness?” And if your brethren see you everlastingly in misery, how shall they pity you, that were your own destroyers, and would not be dissuaded?

6. It will everlastingly make you your own tormentors in hell to think on it, that you brought yourselves wilfully to that misery. O what a torturing thought it will be for ever to think with yourselves that this was your own doing!—That you were warned of this day, and warned again, but it would not do! That you wilfully sinned, and wilfully turned away from God! That you had time as well as others, but you abused it! That you had teachers as well as others, but you refused their instructions! You had holy examples, but you did not imitate them. You were offered Christ, and grace, and glory, as well as others; but you had more mind of your fleshly pleasure. You had a price in your hands, but you had not a heart to lay it out, Proverbs 17:16.—Can it chuse but torment you to think of this your present folly? O that your eyes were open to see what you have done in the wilful wronging of your own souls! and that you better understood these words of God, Proverbs 8:33-36. “Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not: Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors: For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain the favour of the Lord: But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: All they that hate me love death.” And now I am come to the conclusion of this work, my heart is troubled to think how I shall leave, lest after this the flesh should still deceive you, and the world and the devil should keep you asleep, and I should leave you as I found you, till you awake in hell: Though in care of your poor souls, I am afraid of this, as knowing the obstinacy of a carnal heart: yet I can say with the prophet Jeremiah 17:16. “I have not desired the woeful day, the Lord knoweth:” I have not, with James and John, desired that “fire might come from heaven” to consume them that refused Jesus Christ, (Luke 9:54). but it is the preventing of the eternal fire that I have been all this while endeavouring! And O that it had been a needless work! That God and conscience might have been as willing to spare me this labour as some of you could have been!—Dear friends! I am so loathe that you should die in everlasting fire, and be shut out of heaven, if it be possible to prevent it, that I shall once more ask you, what do you now resolve? Will you turn, or die? I look upon you as a physician on his patient, in a dangerous disease, that says to him, “Though you are far gone, take but this medicine, and forbear but these few things that are hurtful to you, and I dare warrant your life: but if you will not do this, you are but a dead man.”—What would you think of such a man, if the physician, and all the friends he hath, cannot persuade him to take one medicine to save his life, or to forbear one or two poisonous things that would kill him?—This is your case. As far as you are gone in sin, do but now turn and come to Christ, and take his remedies, and your sou1s shall live: Cast up your deadly sins by repentance, and turn not to the poisonous vomit any more, and you shall do well. But yet, if it were your bodies that we had to deal with, we might partly know what to do for you: Though you would not consent, yet you might be held or bound, while the medicine were poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you: But about your souls it cannot be so; we cannot convert you against your wills: There is no carrying madmen to heaven in fetters; you may be condemned against your wills, because you sinned with your wills; but you cannot be saved against your wills. The wisdom of God hath thought meet to lay men’s salvation or destruction exceedingly much upon the choice of their own wills; that no man shall come to heaven, that chose not the way to heaven, and no

man shall come to hell, but shall be forced to say, “I have the thing I chose, my own will did bring me hither.”—Now, if I could but get you to be willing, to be thoroughly, and resolvedly, and habitually willing, the work were more than half done.—And alas! must we lose our friends, and must they lose their God, their happiness, their souls, for want of this? Oh! God forbid! It is a strange thing to me, that men are so inhuman and stupid in the greatest matters, that in less things are very civil and courteous, and good neighbours. For ought I know, I have the love of all, or almost all my neighbours, so far, that if I should send to any man in the town, or parish, or country, and request a reasonable courtesy of them, they would grant it me; and when I come to request of them the greatest matter in the world, for themselves, and not for me, I can have nothing of many of them but a patient hearing. I know not whether people think a man in the pulpit is in good sadness or not, and means as he speaks; for I think I have few neighbours, but, if I were sitting familiarly with them, and telling them what I have seen, or done, or known in the world, they would believe me, and regard what I say: But when I tell them, from the infallible word of God, what they themselves shall see and know in the world to come, they shew by their lives that they do either not believe it, or not much regard it. If I met ever a one of them on the way, and told them, yonder is a coal-pit, or there is a quicksand, or there are thieves lie in wait for you, I could persuade them to turn by: But when I tell them that Satan lieth in wait for them, and that sin is poison to them, and that hell is not a matter to be jested with, they go on as if they did not hear me.—Truly, neighbours, I am in as good earnest with you in the pulpit as I am in any familiar discourse, and, if ever you will regard me, I beseech you let it be here. I think there is never a man of you all, but, if my own soul lay at your wills, you would be willing to save it, (though I cannot promise that you would leave your sins for it.) If I come hungry or naked to one of your doors, would you not part with more than a cup of drink to relieve me? I am confident you would; if it were to save my life, I know you would (some of you) hazard your own. And yet, will you not be intreated to part with your sensual pleasures for your own salvation? I profess to you, Sirs, I am as hearty a beggar with you this day, for the saving of your own souls, as I would be for my own supply, if I were forced to come begging to your own doors. And, therefore, if you would hear me then, hear me now: if you would pity me then, be intreated now to pity yourselves. I do again beseech you, as if it were on my bended knees, that you would hearken to your Redeemer, and turn, that you may live.—All you that have lived in ignorance, carelessness, and presumption, to this day; all you that have been drowned in the cares of the world, and have no mind of God and eternal glory; all you that are enslaved to your fleshly desires of meats and drink, sports and lusts; and all you that know not the necessity of holiness, and never were acquainted with the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost upon your souls; that never embraced your blessed Redeemer by a lively faith, and with admiring and thankful apprehensions of his love; and that never felt a higher estimation of God and heaven, and heartier love to them, than your fleshly prosperity, and the things below: I earnestly beseech you, not only for my sake, but for the Lord’s sake, and for your souls’ sake, that you go not one day longer in your former condition, but look about you, and cry to God for converting grace, that you may be made new creatures, and may escape the plagues that are a little before you. And if ever you will do anything for me, grant me this request, to turn from your evil ways and live. Deny me anything that ever I shall ask you for myself, if you will but grant me this. And if you deny me this, I care not for any thing else that you would grant me. Nay, as ever you will do any thing at the request of the Lord that made you and redeemed you, deny him not this; for if you deny him this, he cares for nothing that you shall grant him. As ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your

requests, and do for you at the hour of death and day of judgment, or in any of your extremities, deny not his request now in the day of your prosperity. O believe it, death and judgment, and heaven and hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they seem to carnal eyes afar off.—Well tho' I cannot hope so well of all, I will hope that some of you are by this time purposing to turn and live, and that you are ready to say, "God forbid that we should choose destruction by refusing conversion, as hitherto we have done."

If these be the thoughts and purposes of your hearts, I shall gladly give you direction what to do, and that but briefly, that you may the easier remember it for your practice.

DIRECTION I

IF you will be converted and saved, labour to understand the necessity and true nature of conversion; for what, and from what, and to what, and by what, it is that you must turn. Consider in what a lamentable condition you are till the hour of your conversion, that you may feel it is not a state to be rested in. You are under the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed; and under the wrath of God, and the curse of his law; you are bond-slaves to the devil, and daily employed in his work against the Lord, yourselves, and others; you are spiritually dead and deformed, as being void of the holy life, and nature, and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleasing unto God. You are without any promise or assurance of his protection, and live in continual danger of his justice, not knowing what hour you may be snatched away to hell, and most certain to be damned if you die in that condition. And nothing short of conversion can prevent it. Whatever civilities, or amendments, or virtues, are short of true conversion, will never procure the saving of your souls. Keep the true sense of this natural misery, and so of the necessity of conversion on your hearts. And then you must understand what it is to be converted: it is to have a new heart or disposition, and a new conversation.

Quest. 1. For what must we turn?

Ans. For these ends following, which you may attain: 1. You shall immediately be made living members of Christ, and have an interest in him, and be renewed after the image of God, and be adorned with all his graces, and quickened with a new and heavenly life, and saved from the tyranny of Satan and the dominion of sin, and be justified from the curse of the law, and have the pardon of all the sins of your whole lives, and be accepted of God, and made his sons, and have liberty to call Him Father, and go to him by prayer, in all your needs, with a promise of acceptance; you shall have the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, to sanctify and guide you; you shall have part in the brotherhood, communion, and prayers of the saints; you shall be fitted for God's service, and be freed from the dominion of sin, and be useful and a blessing to the place where you live, and shall have the promise of this life, and that which is to come. You shall want nothing that is truly good for you, and your necessary afflictions you will be enabled to bear; you may have some taste of communion with God in the spirit, especially in all holy ordinances, where God prepareth a feast for your souls; you shall be heirs of heaven while you live on earth, and may foresee by faith the everlasting glory, and so may live and die in peace; and you shall never be so low, but your happiness will be incomparably greater than your misery.—How precious is every one of these blessings, which I do but briefly name, and which in this life you may receive. And then, 2. At death your souls shall go to Christ, and at the day of judgment both soul and body shall be justified and glorified, and enter into your Master's joy; where your happiness will consist in these particulars:

1. You shall be perfected yourselves:—Your mortal bodies shall be made immortal, and the corruptible shall put on incorruption: You shall no more be hungry, or thirsty, or weary, or sick; nor shall you need to fear either shame, or sorrow, or death, or hell. Your souls shall be perfectly freed from sin, and perfectly fitted for the knowledge, and love, and praises of the Lord.

2. Your employments shall be to behold your glorious Redeemer, with all your holy fellow-citizens of heaven; and to see the glory of the most blessed God, and to love him perfectly, and be beloved by him, and to praise him everlastingly.

3. Your glory will contribute to the glory of the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God; which is more than to have a private felicity to yourselves.

4. Your glory will contribute to the glorifying of your Redeemer, who will everlastingly be magnified and pleased in you that are the travail of his soul; and this is more than the glorifying of yourselves.

5. And the eternal Majesty, the living God, will be glorified in your glory; both as he is magnified by your praises, and as he communicateth of his glory and goodness to you, and as he is pleased in you, and in the accomplishment of his glorious work, in the glory of the New Jerusalem, and of His Son. All this, the poorest beggar of you, that is converted, shall certainly and endlessly enjoy.

2. You see for what you must turn: next you must understand from what you must turn: And that is, in a word, from your carnal self, which is the end of all the unconverted. From the flesh that would be pleased before God, and would still be enticing you; from the world, that is the bait; and from the devil, that is the angler for souls, and the deceiver. And so from all known and wilful sins.

3. Next you must know to what end you must turn: and that is, to God as your end, to Christ as the way to the Father; to holiness, as the way appointed you by Christ; and to the use of all the helps and means of grace afforded you by the Lord.

4. Lastly; you must know by what you must turn: And that is, by Christ, as the only Redeemer and Intercessor; and by the Holy Ghost, as the sanctifier; and by the Word, as his instrument or means; and by faith and repentance, as the means and duties on your part to be performed. All this is of necessity.

Direct. II. If you will be converted and saved, be much in secret serious consideration. Inconsiderateness undoes the world. Withdraw yourselves often into retired secrecy, and there bethink you of the end why you were made; of the life you have lived; the time you have lost; the sin you have committed; of the love and sufferings, and fulness of Christ; of the danger you are in; of the nearness of death and judgment; of the certainty and excellency of the joys of heaven; and of the certainty and terror of the torments of hell; and eternity of both; and of the necessity of conversion and a holy life. Steep your hearts in such considerations as these.

Direct. III If you will be converted and saved, attend upon the word of God, which is the ordinary means. Read the scripture, or hear it read, and other holy writings that do apply it: Constantly attend on the public preaching of the word. As God will lighten the world by the sun, and not by himself alone without it, so will he convert and save men by his ministers, who are the lights of the world, Acts 26:17-18. Matthew 5:14. When he had miraculously humbled Paul, he sendeth him to Ananias, Acts 9:10. And when he hath sent an angel to Cornelius, it was but to bid him send for Peter, who is to tell him what he is to believe and do.

Direct. IV. “Betake yourselves to God in a course of earnest constant prayer. Confess and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beseech him to pardon what is past, and to give you his Spirit, and change your hearts and lives, and lead you in his ways, and save you from temptations.” And ply this work daily, and be not weary of it.

Direct. V. “Presently give over your known and wilful sins. Make a stand, and go that way no farther.”—Be drunk no more, but avoid the place and occasion of it. Cast away your lusts and sinful pleasures with detestation, and rail no more; and, if you have wronged any, restore as Zaccheus did. If you will commit again your old sins, what blessings can you expect on the means for conversion?

Direct. VI. “Presently, if possible, change your company, if it have hitherto been bad.” Not by forsaking your necessary relations, but your unnecessary sinful companions, and join yourselves with those that fear the Lord, and inquire of them the way to heaven. Acts 9:19, Acts 9:26. Psalms 15:4.

Direct. VII. “Deliver up yourselves to the Lord Jesus as the physician of your souls,” that he may pardon you by his blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his word and ministers, the instruments of the Spirit. He is the way, the truth, and the life; there is no coming to the Father but by him, John 14:6. “Nor is there any other name under heaven by which you can be saved,” Acts 4:12. Study therefore His person and nature, and what he hath done and suffered for you, and what he is to you, and what he will be, and how he is fitted to the full supply of all your necessities.

Direct. VIII. If you mean indeed to turn and live, “Do it speedily, without delay”. If you be not willing to turn to-day, you are not willing to do it at all.—Remember you are all this while in your blood, under the guilt of many thousand sins, and under God’s wrath, and you stand at the very brink of hell; there is but a step between you and death. And this is not a case for a man that is well in his wits to be quiet in. Up therefore presently, and fly as for your lives; as you would be gone out of your house, if it were all on fire over your heads.—O if you did but know in what continual danger you live in, and what daily unspeakable loss you do sustain, and what a safer and sweeter life you might live, you would not stand trifling, but presently turn. Multitudes miscarry that wilfully delay, when they are convinced that it must be done. Your lives are short and uncertain; and, what a case are ye in, if you die before you thoroughly turn! You have staid too long already, and wronged God too long; sin getteth strength and rooting while you delay. Your conversion will grow more hard and doubtful. You have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the last, lest God forsake you, and give you up to yourselves, and then you are undone for ever.

Direct. IX. If you will turn and live, do it “unreservedly, absolutely, and universally.” Think not to capitulate with Christ, and divide your heart betwix him and the world, and to part with some sins, and keep the rest; and to let that go that which your flesh can spare. This is but self-deluding; you must in heart and resolution forsake all that you have, or else you cannot be his disciples, Luke 14:26, Luke 14:33. If you will not take God and heaven for your portion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but you must needs also have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory are not enough for you, it is in vain to dream of salvation on these terms, for it will not be. If you seem never so religious, if yet it is but a carnal righteousness, and the flesh’s prosperity, or pleasure, or safety, be still excepted in your devotedness to God, this is as certain a way to death as open profaneness, tho’ it may be more plausible.

Direct. X. If you will turn and live, do it “resolvedly,” and stand not still deliberating, as if it were a doubtful case. Stand not wavering, as if you were yet uncertain whether God or the flesh be the better master; or whether heaven or hell be the better end; or whether sin or holiness is the better way. But away with your former lusts, and presently, habitually, fixedly resolve. Be not one day of one mind, and the next day of another; but be at a point with all the world, and resolvedly give up yourselves, and all you have to God. Now while you are reading, or hearing this, resolve. Before you sleep another night, resolve. Before you stir from the place, resolve. Before Satan have time to take you off, resolve. You never turn indeed till you do resolve, and that with a firm unchangeable resolution.—So much for the Directions. And now I have done my part in this work, that you may turn to the call of God, and live; what will become of it, I cannot tell: I have cast the seed at God’s command, but it is not in my power to give the increase. I can go no farther with my message: I cannot bring it to your hearts, nor make it work; I cannot do your parts for you to entertain it and consider it; I cannot do God’s part, by opening your heart to cause you to entertain it; nor can I shew heaven or hell to your eye-sight, nor give you new and tender hearts. If I knew what more to do for your conversion, I hope I should do it. But O thou, that art the gracious Father of spirits, thou hast sworn thou delightest not in the death of the wicked, but rather that they may turn and live; deny not thy blessing to those persuasions and directions, and suffer not thine enemies to triumph in thy sight; and the great deceiver of souls to prevail against thy Son, thy Spirit, and thy Word! O pity poor unconverted sinners, that have no hearts to pity themselves: Command the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, and let not sin and death be able to resist thee.—Awaken the secure, resolve the unresolved, confirm the wavering, and let the eyes of sinners, that read these lines, be next employed in weeping over their sins; and bring them to themselves and to thy Son, before their sins have brought them to perdition. If thou sayst but the word, these poor endeavours shall prosper to the winning of many a soul, to their everlasting joy, and everlasting glory. Amen. THE END.

2.00. Causes and Danger of Slighting

Causes and Danger of Slighting Christ and His Gospel by

Richard Baxter

Matthew 22:5 But they made light of it

Preface The Causes and Danger of Slighting Christ and His Gospel, &c.

Chapter I. What It Is to Make Light of Christ.

Chapter II. Why Christ Is Made So Light Of.

Chapter III. Considerations to Awaken Those Who Make Light of Christ.

Chapter IV. Considerations to Reform Those, Who Make Light of Christ.

Chapter V. Directions for Those Who Desire to Make Light of Christ No More.

Indexes Index of Pages of the Print Edition

2.00p. Preface

THE PREFACE THE Substance of the following Pages was first preached in the Parish Church at Kidderminster in the Course of the Author's stated Ministry. It was afterward preached in one of the largest Parish Churches in London, to an Auditory so much crouded, that one Nobleman was obliged to stand all the Time; and two others returned back, because they could not get within Hearing, tho' Mr. Baxter's Voice was remarkably loud and clear; and tho' he himself had sent the Day before to desire Room might be provided for his Noble Friend: Even the Incumbent of the Parish had no other Place left for him, but to sit in the Pulpit behind the Preacher. To this last Circumstance Mr. Baxter refers, in an Elegy which he wrote on the Death of that Reverend Brother, inserted amongst his Poetical Fragments, wherein he says, "At once one Pulpit held us both."

Here Indifference in Religion is traced up to its real Sources; its destructive Nature and Tendency faithfully represented; the best Remedies are applied, in Order, by a divine Blessing, to check its almost universal Prevalence. With what Propriety and Seriousness does the Author's Preface say,—"It is the ivslighting of Christ and Salvation, that undoes the World. O happy Man, Reader, if you escape but this Sin! Thousands split their Souls on the Rock, upon which they should be built. Look among Rich and Poor, High and Low, Young and Old, and see whether it appears not, by the whole Tendency of their Conversation, that they value something else more than Christ. Notwithstanding the Proclamations of his Grace in the Gospel, and the common Profession of being his Disciples, and of believing the glorious Things he has promised in another World; does it not appear, by Deceitfulness in his Service, by heartless Endeavours to obtain his Kingdom, and by busy and delightful Pursuits of the present World, that the Generality of such as are called Christians, are really making light of Christ? And if so, what Wonder if they perish by their Contempt? Will you but seriously read, and well consider as you read, till your Heart be sensible what a Sin it is to make light of Christ and your own Salvation, and till the Lord that bought you, be advanced in the Esteem and Affections of your Soul; this will fulfill my Desires."—And this will indeed fulfill the Desires of those who first requested this Abridgment, and also, of its Compiler.

2.01. Chapter 1 What It Is to Make Light of Christ.

CHAP. I.

What it is to make light of Christ. THE blessed Son of God, who thought it not enough to die for the World, but would himself also be the Preacher of Grace and Salvation, comprizes the Substance of his Gospel in the Parable to which the Text belongs. By the King, that is here said to make the Marriage, is meant God the Father, who, sent his Son into the World, to cleanse Men from their Sins, and espouse them to himself. By the King's Son, for whom the Marriage is made, is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who took to his Godhead the Nature of Man, that he might be capable of being their Redeemer when they had lost themselves in Sin. By the Marriage is meant the uniting of Christ to the Souls of Sinners, when he gives up himself to them to be their Saviour, and they give up themselves to him, as his redeemed, to be saved and ruled by him. The Perfection of this Marriage will be at the Day of Judgment, when the Union between Christ and his whole Church shall be publickly solemnized. The Word here translated Marriage, rather signifys the Marriage Feast, and intimates, that all Men are invited by the Gospel to come in and partake of Christ and Salvation, even all the peculiar Blessings of Christ's Disciples. The Invitation is from the blessed God. The Servants that invite, are the Preachers of the Gospel, who are sent by God for that Purpose. The Preparation, for the Feast, is the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the opening a Way for Sinners to return to God. Second Messengers are said to be sent, because God takes not the first Denial, but exercises his Patience till Sinners are obstinate. The first Persons invited, are theJews. But on their obstinate Refusal, and being sentenced to Punishment, the Gentiles are invited, and graciously prevailed with to come in. 'The Number of those that come in, is so great, that the House is filled with Guests. .Many come sincerely, regarding not only the Pleasure of the Feast, but the Honour of the Marriage; not only seeking the Pardon of Sin, and Deliverance from divine Wrath, but engaging themselves to Christ in all holy Obedience. Some come in only for the Feast, without having the Wedding-Garment; they only aim at Self, and not at glorifying, and serving their Redeemer. These last are sentenced to everlasting Misery, and speed as ill as those that refused to come in at all; for a Faith that will not work, is but like that of the Devils; and they that expect to be pardoned and saved by such a Faith, are mistaken. The Words of the Text describe the bad Entertainment which the Gospel finds with many to whom it is sent, even after a first and second Invitation. They make light of it, and are taken up with other Things. Tho' the Jews were the first that were thus guilty, yet too among us Gentiles follow them to this Day. The Text in Effect declares, that nowithstanding all the wonderful Love and Mercy God has manifested in giving his Son to be the Redeemer of the World, and his Son in giving himself, and in being a sufficient Sacrifice for Sin; notwithstanding all Christ's personal Excellencies, and the full and glorious Salvation he has purchased, and all his free Offers, and frequent and earnest Invitations to Sinners; yet many make light of, and despise all this, prefer their worldly Enjoyments before it." Not that all do so, or that they all continue to do so, who were once guilty of it. God has his Chosen, whom he will compel to come in. But till the Spirit of Grace overcome the Obstinacy of Men's Hearts, they hear the Gospel as a Tale that is told, and the great Things contained in it, are

disregarded. More distinctly to illustrate the Sentiments of the Text, this Chapter will shew what it is to make light of Christ; and (Chap. 2) why Christ is made so light of: Then (Chap. 3) will be suggested some Considerations to awaken those that make light of Christ; and also (Chap. 4) other Considerations to reform them: To which will be added (Chap. 5) Directions for those that desire to make light of Christ no more. That which carnal Hearers make light of, includes in it, Christ himself, and the Blessings, which he bestows.—Concerning Christ himself, the Gospel declares his Person and Nature, and the great Things he has done and suffered for Men, his redeeming us from the Wrath of God by his Blood, and purchasing a Grantof Salvation for us. The same Gospel makes an Offerof Christ to Sinners, that if they will accept him on his easy and reasonable Terms, he will be their Saviour, the Physician of their Souls, their Head, and their Husband.—the Blessings which Christ bestows upon Sinners, are the Pardon of all their past Sins, and Deliverance from the Wrath of God, and a sure Way of obtaining Pardon for all the Sins they shall commit hereafter, provided they obey sincerely, and turn not again to the Rebellion of their unregenerate State. They shall have the Holy Spirit to be their Guide and Sanctifier, to dwell in their Souls, to help them against their spiritual Enemies, and conform them more and more to a divine Likeness, to heal their spiritual Diseases, and bring them back to God. They shall, also have a right to everlasting Glory, when this Life is ended, and their Bodies shall be raised up to partake of it at the great Day. Besides these, they shall have many excellent Priviledges and Means, abundant Preservation and Provision in their Way, and the Foretaste of their future Joy. All these Blessings the Gospel offers to them that will accept of Christ on his reasonable Terms. For this is the Record, that God hath given to us eternal Life; and this Life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath Life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not Life. The Sin of making light of Christ and Salvation appears in the following Instances.

1. When Men take no great Heed to what the Gospel declares, as if it was not a certain Truth, or else was a Matter that little concerned them, or as if God had not written it for them.

2. When the Gospel does not affect Men, or go to their Hearts; but tho’ they seem to attend to what is said, yet they are not awakened by it from their Security, nor doth it in any Measure excite such holy Emotions in their Souls, as Things of such everlasting Consequence ought to do. We tell Men what Christ hath done and suffered for their Souls, and it scarce moves them. We tell them of keen and cutting Truths, but Nothing will pierce them. We can make them hear, but cannot make them feel. Our Words stop in the Porch of their Ears and Fancies, but enter not into their inward Parts. It is as if we spake to Men that have not Hearts. Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For the Heart of this People is waxed gross, and their Ears are dull of hearing, and their Eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Heart, and should be converted, and Christ should heal them.

3. Men make light of Christ, when they have no high Esteem for him and Salvation by him, but whatsoever they may say with their Tongues, or may speculatively believe, yet in their serious and practical Thoughts they have a higher Esteem for the Things of this World, than they have for Christ and the Salvation he hath purchased. It is despising Christ, to account his Doctrine but a Question of Words and Names, like Gallio; or a Superstition of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive, like Festus; or to ask the Preachers of the Gospel, as the Athenians did, What will this Babler say?

Men make light of Christ, when being informed of the Truths of the Gospel, on what Terms Christ and his Blessings may be had, how it is the Will of God they should believe and accept the Offer, and how he commands them to do it upon Pain of Damnation; and yet they will not consent, unless they could have Christ on Terms of their own. They will not part with their Portion in this World, nor lay down their Pleasures, Profits, and Honours at the Feet of Jesus, to be content to take only so much of them back, as is consistent with his Will and Interest, but think it a hard saying, to be resolved to forsake all for Christ. 'Tis a high Contempt Of Christ and everlasting Life, when Men might have their Part in him, if they would; but they will not, unless they may keep the World too, and are resolved to please their Flesh, whatever be the Consequence.

It is also a making light of Christ and Salvation, when Men will promise fair, and profess their Willingness, to have Christ upon his own Terms, and to forsake all for him; but they nevertheless cleave to the World, and to their sinful Courses, nor will suffer their Practice to be changed by all that Christ hath done or said.—This is the Sin of making light of Christ and Salvation.

2.02. Chapter 2 Why Christ is made so light of.

CHAP. II.

Why Christ is made so light of.

IT may seem a Wonder that ever Men, who have the Use of their Reason, should be so foolish as to make light of Things of infinite Importance. But the Causes are such as these—

1. Some Men understand not the Meaning of the Words in which the Gospel is expressed; and how can they value what they do not understand? Tho' we speak to them as plainly as we can, yet they have so estranged themselves from God, and the Concerns of their Souls, that they know not what we say. It is with them as if God in just Judgment had said, With stammering Lips and another Tongue will I speak to this People.

2. Some understand the Words we speak, but not the Matter, because they are carnal. For the natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The Things of the Spirit are not well known by bare Report, but by spiritual Taste, which none have but those that are taught by the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the Things that are freely given to us of God.

.3.. Carnal Minds apprehend not a Suitableness in these spiritual and heavenly Things, and therefore set light by them. Tell them of everlasting Glory, and they hear you, as if you, as if you was persuading them to go and play with the Sun. The Affairs of another World are out of their Element, and therefore they have no more Delight in them, than a Fish would have in the pleasantest Meadow, or a Swine in a Jewel. They that are after the Spirit, may mind the Things of the Spirit; but they that are after the Flesh, do mind the Things of the Flesh.

4. The chief Cause of slighting Christ and Salvation, is a secret Root of Unbelief. Whatsoever Men may pretend, they do not really believe the Word of God. They are taught in general to say, the Gospel is true; but they never saw the Evidence of its Truth, so as to be firmly persuaded of it; nor have they got their Souls settled on the Infallibility of God's Testimony; nor have they considered the Truth of the particular Doctrines revealed in Scripture. O Sinners, did you but really believe the Gospel Account of the Evil of Sin, of your Need of Christ, and what he hath done for you, and what you must be, and do; if ever you are saved by him, and what will become of you for ever, if you remain in Disobedience; 1 dare say this would cure the Contempt of Christ, and you would not make so light of your own Salvation! But Men do not believe, while they say so, and even while they themselves think so. There is in them an evil Heart of Unbelief, which makes them depart from the living God. Tell any Man he shall have a Gift of ten Thousand Pounds, if he will but go some Miles for it; if he believes you; he will go; if he believes not, he will not go. And if he will not go, supposing her is able, you may be sure he does not believe. I know a slight Belief may consist with a wicked Life; but a sincere Belief is inconsistent with so great Neglect of the Things that are believed.

5. Christ and Salvation are made light of, because of Men's Hardness of Heart. The Heart is naturally hard, and grows harder by Custom in Sin, especially by long Abuse of Mercy, Neglect of the Means of Grace, and resisting the Spirit of Grace. Hence it is that Men are turned into such Stones. And till God cure them of the Stone in the Heart, no Wonder if they feel not what they know, .nor regard what Preachers say, but make light of all. 'Tis hard preaching a Stone into Tears, or making a Rock to tremble. When Men's Hearts are like the Highway, that is trodden to Hardness; or like the Clay, that is hardened in the Fire; when no Mercies can melt them to Repentance; when they have Consciences seared with a hot Iron; then it is no Wonder if they be past Feeling, and work all Uncleanness with Greediness, so as to make light of Christ and everlasting Glory. O that this were not the Case of too many of our Hearers ! Had we but living Souls to speak to, they would hear, and feel, and not make light of what we say. I know they are naturally alive, but they are dead in Trespasses and Sins. Were there but one Spark of the Life of Grace in them, the Doctrine of Salvation, by Jesus Christ would appear to them to be the weightiest Business in the World. O how confident should I be to prevail with Men, to mind the Concerns of Eternity more than Time, if they had but Life, and Sense, and Reason! How deplorable is the Condition of their Souls, who are fallen under this fearful Judgment of spiritual Deadness, and Blindness, and Hardness of Heart!

6. Multitudes make light of Christ and Salvation, because they are wholly sensual. The Concerns of another World are out of Sight, and so far from their Senses, that they cannot regard them; but present Things are in their Eyes, and in their Hands. There must be a living Faith to prevail over Sense, before unseen Things will be duly regarded. Sense works with great Advantage, and therefore powerfully opposes Faith, where Faith itself is found; and no Wonder if it carries all before it, where there is no true and lively Faith to resist it, and to lead the Soul to higher Things. They, in the Text, who made light of Christ and Salvation, went their Ways, as it is added, one to his Farm, another to his Merchandise. Men have Houses and Lands to look after, Wife and Children, Body and outward Estate, and therefore they forget that they have a God, a Redeemer, a Soul to mind. These worldly Things are near at Hand, and therefore work naturally and forcibly; but the other are thought to be a great Way off, and therefore too distant to work on their Affections. Their Bodies have Life and Sense, and therefore if they want Meat, or Drink, or Cloaths, will feel their Wants, and make them known, and never rest till they are supplied. Men cannot make light of their bodily Necessities; but their Souls being spiritually dead, are insensible of their Wants, and will therefore be as quiet, when starving and languishing to Destruction, as if all were well and Nothing ailed them. Thus poor People are so attentive to their bodily Wants, as if they had Nothing else to mind; having their Trades and Callings to follow, and so much to do from Morning to Night, they can find no Tune for Christ and Salvation. Jesus would teach them, but they have no Leisure to hear him. The Bible is before them, but they cannot spare Time to read it. A Minister is in the Town with them, but they cannot go to ask him, What must we do to be saved? And when they do hear, their Hearts are so full of the World, they cannot mind what they hear, nor is there any Room to pour into them the Waters of Life. The Cares of the World choke the Word, and it becometh unfruitful. No Man can serve two Masters, God and Mammon. If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him. Men will set light by Christ and Salvation, while they so highly value any Thing upon Earth. This is the Ruin of many Thousand Souls! It would grieve the Heart of any serious Christian, to see how eagerly this vain World is every where followed, and the World to come neglected. To compare the Care Men take fur the World, with the Care of their

Souls; and the Time they spend about the World, with the Time they employ for their Salvation. To see how the World fills their Mouths, their Hands, their Houses, their Hearts, while Christ hath little more than a bare Title of Respect. To come into their Company, and hear no Discourse but of the World. To come into their Houses, and hear and see Nothing but for the World, as if this World would last for ever, or would purchase them another. If I ask the Ministers of the Gospel how their Labours succeed? They tell me, “People continue still the same, and give up themselves wholly to the World, so that they mind not what we say to them, nor will give a full Entertainment to the Word: and all because of the deluding World.” And O that too many Ministers themselves did not make light of that Christ whom they preach, thro’ being drawn away by the Love if this World! In a Word, Men of a worldly Disposition judge of Things according to worldly Advantages. Thus Christ is despised and rejected of Men, they hide as it were their Faces from him, and esteem him not, they see no Form, nor Comeliness, nor Beauty, that they should desire him.

7. Inconsideration is another Cause why Men make light of Christ. They do not soberly attend to the Truth and Importance of Soul-Concerns. They suffer not their Minds to dwell so long upon them, till they procure a due Esteem, and deeply affect their Hearts. If these Things are assented to, but not closely considered, how should they have their proper Influence? While Men have Reason given them to think and consider of the Things that most concern them, and yet they will not see it, this occasions their making light of such Things, and treating them with Contempt.

8. Christ and Salvation, are made light of, because Men remain insensible of their Sin and Misery. Their Eyes were never opened to see themselves as they are; nor their Hearts truly humbled in the Sense of their own Wretchedness. If this were done, they would soon be brought to value a Saviour. A Heart broken for Sin can no more make light of Christ and Salvation, than a hungry Man of his Food, or a sick Man of his Physician. When Sin and Guilt are groaned under, as an intolerable Burthen, then Nothing will serve the Turn but Christ. Till Men are deeply humbled, they can part with Christ and Salvation for a Lust, for a little worldly Gain, for that which is less than Nothing. But when God hath inlightened their Consciences, and broken their Hearts, then they would give a World for Christ; then they count all Things but Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. When they are once pricked in their Hearts for their Sin and Misery, then they cry out, Men and Brethren, what shall we do? When they are awakened by the Word or Providence of God, then they will ask with the Jailor, Sirs, what must we do to be saved? Thus God will bring Men low by Humiliation, before he bring them to Salvation.

9. Men take occasion to make light of Christ, because the Gospel is grown common to them. They hear of it every Day, and the Frequency dulls their Affections. Were it a Rarity, it might be more regarded; but now they plead, “We have these Things every Day.” They make not light of their Meat and Drink, their Health or Life, because they possess them every Day. They make not light of the Sun, because it shines every Day; at least they should not, for the Mercy is the greater by its Constancy. Yet Christ and Salvation are made light of, because they hear of them often. Pearls are trod in the Dirt, where they are common. The heavenly Manna is counted dry. The full Soul loatheth an Honey-Comb, but to the hungry Soul every bitter Thing is sweet.——Once more;

10. Christ is made light of, either because Men think he is theirs already, or because he may easily be theirs at any Time. It is true, that Grace is free, and the Offer is universal, where-ever the Gospel is preached. And it is true, that Men may have Christ whenever they are willing to comply

with his Terms. But if you are not willing now, how can you think you shall be willing hereafter? If you can make your own Heart willing, why not do it immediately? Can you do it better, when Sin hath more hardened it, and God may have given you over to yourself? O Sinners, you might do much, tho' you are not able of yourselves to come in; if you would but now subject yourselves to the Working of the Spirit, and set in while the Gales of Grace continue! Did you know what a hard Thing it is to be so much as willing to have Christ and Grace; when the Heart is given up to its own corrupt Bias, and the Spirit hath withdrawn its former Influences, you would not be so confident of your own Strength to believe and repent, nor would you from such foolish Confidence continue to make light of Christ. If indeed it be so easy a Matter, as you imagine, for a Sinner to believe and repent at any Time, how comes it to pass that it is done by so few, while Multitudes perish in their Impenitence, amidst all desireable Helps and Means? It must be allowed that the Thing is very reasonable and easy in itself to a pure Nature; but while Man is spiritually blind and dead, the Things are scarcely possible to him, which are ever so easy to others. To gracious Souls, it is the easiest and sweetest Life in the World, to live in the Love of God, and the Thoughts of that Life to come, where all their Hope and Happiness lieth. But it is as easy to remove Mountains, as to bring carnal Hearts to this. These Men however condemn themselves; for if they think it so easy a Matter to repent, and believe, and so have Christ and Salvation, they have then the less Excuse for neglecting what they thought so easy. O miserable impenitent Souls! What think you to reply, when God shall ask you, "Why did you not repent, and "love your Redeemer above the World, when you imagined you could easily do it at any Time?" Are such as these the Causes why Multitudes make light of Christ and Salvation? How great then is the Folly, and how contemptible are the Judgments of all carnal Men, and how little need have we to be discouraged by their Sneers or Insults! That Man must be foolish or mad, that knows no Difference between Dirt and Gold. And it is the Height of Folly and Madness, to set light by Christ and Salvation, and be daily toiling for the Dirt of this World. And yet how lamentably prone are many weak Persons to be ashamed of Godliness, if such Fools or Madmen do but deride them for it; and to think hardly of a holy Life, if such as these do but rail at it! On the contrary, if you perceive any setting light by Christ and Salvation, let their Wisdom and Words be light in your Esteem, and hear their Reproaches of a holy Life with the tender Compassion with which you would hear the Ravings of a Madman. Are the best Ministers of the Gospel despised, and do they complain of the ill Success of their Labours? Wonder not, since the Ministry of Apostles succeeded no better, tho' they had Miracles to second their Doctrines. If any Preachers could have shaken and torn in Pieces the Hearts of Sinners, they could have done it. If any could have made all cry out, as some did, What shall we do? it would have been Apostles. It is not therefore for Want of good Preachers, that Men make light of Christ and Salvation. The first News of Pardon for Sin, and the Hope of Glory, and the Danger of everlasting Misery, would turn the Hearts of Men within them, if they were as tractable in spiritual Matters, as in temporal. But, alas! it is far otherwise. Let it not seem strange to Ministers, nor let them be too much discouraged by it, if, when they have said all that they can desire in Order to win the Hearts of Men to Christ, the greatest Part still slight him, and tho' they bow the Knee to him, and honour him with their Lips, yet basely prefer every worldly and carnal Pleasure or Profit before him. While it it thus with many, blessed be God, it is not thus with all. But before we, that are Ministers, enquire after this great condemning Sin amongst our Hearers, we should take Care that we be not guilty of it ourselves. God forbid, that having undertaken the sacred Office of revealing the Excellencies of Christ to the World, we should make light of him ourselves, and slight

that Salvation which we daily preach. The Lord knows we are all of us so defective in our Esteem for Christ, and do our great Work so negligently, that we have Reason to be ashamed of our best Sermons; but should this Sin prevail in us, we are of all Men most miserable. I love not Censoriousness, Brethren; yet I dare not befriend so vile a Sin in myself, or others, under Pretence of avoiding it; especially when there is so great a Necessity first to heal it in us, who make it our Business to heal it in others. O that there were no Cause to complain that Christ is made light of by those that preach him!—Are not Studies neglected?—Are not Ministrations lifeless and formal?—How little is done out of the Pulpit, for reproving Sin, and saving Men's Souls?—Is there not a perpetual Neglect of those Things in which the Interest of Christ consists; even the healing. reforming, and enlarging his Churches?—Are not many made Preachers before they are Christians, and therefore, by their own covetous and worldly Lives, lose the most precious Advantages for doing good to Souls? If such Ministers believe the Scriptures which they preach, methinks their studying and preaching should fill them with Terror.

2.03. Chapter 3 Considerations to awaken those

CHAPT. III.

Considerations to awaken those who make light of Christ. THE Office God hath called me unto, is, by declaring the Glory of his Grace, to help under Christ to the saving of Men's Souls. I hope, my dear Readers, you think I am now engaged on no other Errand. The Lord knows I had not set Pen to Paper, but in Hope to succeed in this Work for your Souls. I have considered, and often considered, why so many Thousands should perish, when God hath done so much for their Salvation; and I find that which is mentioned in my Text, is the Cause. It is one of the Wonders of the World, that when God hath so loved the World as to give his Son, and Christ hath made a Satisfaction by his Death sufficient for all, and offereth the Benefits of it so freely to all, even without Money, and without Price, that nevertheless most of the World, should perish; yea, most of those that are thus called by his Word. Here is the Reason; when Christ hath done all this; Men make light of it. God hath shewed that he is not unwilling, and Christ hath shewed that he is not unwilling, that Men should be restored to divine Favour, and be saved; but Men are themselves actually unwilling. God hath no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way and live. But Men take such Pleasure in Sin, that they will die before they will turn. The Lord Jesus was content to be their Physician, and hath provided them a sufficient Remedy, even his own Blood; but if Men make light of it, and will not apply it, what Wonder if they perish after all? It is a most lamentable Thing to see how most Men spend their Care, their Time, their Pains for known Vanities, while God and Glory are cast aside! That he who is All, should seem to them as Nothing; and that which is Nothing, should seem to them as good as All! That God should set Mankind in such a Race, where Heaven or Hell is their certain End, and that they should sit down, and loiter, or run after the childish Toys of this World; and so much forget the Prize they should run for! Were it but possible for one of us to see the whole of this Business, as the All-feeing God does; to see at one View both Heaven and Hell, to which Men are so near, and see what most Men in the World are minding, and what they are doing every Day, it would be the saddest Sight that could be imagined. O how should we wonder at their Madness, and mourn over their Self-Delusion! O poor distracted World! What is it that you run after? And what is it that you neglect? If God had never told them what they were sent into the World to do, or whither they were going, or what was before them in another World, then they had been cxcuseable; but he hath told them over and over, till they are weary of it. Had he left it doubtful, there had been some Excuse; but it is his sealed Word, and they profess to believe it, and would take it ill of us if we should question whether they do believe it or not.

I accuse not any particular Persons of this Crime; but seeing, it is Abe most common Cause of Men's Destruction, I suppose you will judge it the fittest Matter for our Enquiry, and that the Cure of it deserves our greatest Care. Now it is the Case of most Sinners to think themselves freest from those Sins to which they are most enslaved. And one Reason why we cannot reform them, is, because we cannot convince them of their Guilt. It is the Nature of Sin so far to blind and stupify the Sinner, that he knows not what he does, but thinks he is free from it, when it reigns in him, or

when he is committing it. It brings Men to be so much unacquainted with themselves, that they know not what they think, what they mean and intend, nor what they love or hate, much, less what they are disposed or habituated to. They are alive to Sin, and dead to all the Reason, Consideration, and Resolution that should recover them; as if it were only by their Sinning that we must know they are alive. May I hope that you who now read, are but willing to know the Truth of your Case, and then I shall be encouraged to proceed to an Enquiry. God will judge impartially. And why should not we do so? Let me therefore by these following Questions try whether you are not Slighters of Christ and your own Salvation. And follow me, I beseech you, by putting them close to your own Hearts, and faithfully answering them.

1. Things that Men highly value, will be remembered, and will be the Matter of their freest and sweetest Thoughts. Do not those then make light of Christ and Salvation, who think of them so seldom and coldly, in Comparison with other Things? Follow thy own Heart, Man, and observe what it daily runs out after; and then judge whether it makes light of Christ. We cannot persuade Men to one Hour's sober Consideration what they should do for an Interest in Christ, or in Thankfulness for his Love, and yet they will not believe that they make light of him.

2. Things that we highly value, will be Matter of our Discourse. The Judgment and Heart will command the Tongue. Freely and delightfully will our Speech run after them. Do not those then make light of Christ and Salvation, that shun the Mention of his Name, unless it be in a vain or sinful Manner? And those that love not the Company where Christ and Salvation are much talked of, but think it .troublesome, and had rather hear some merry Jests, or idle Tales or talk of their worldly Affairs? If from Morning to Night they scarce speak a serious Word of Christ, judge whether they do not make light of him. O how earnestly do they talk of the World, and speak Vanity; but how heartlessly of Christ and Salvation!

3. The Things we highly value, we desire to secure to ourselves, and therefore do any Thing requisite to put them out of all Doubt and Fear. Do not those then make light of Christ and Salvation, who :have lived twenty or thirty Years in Uncertainty about their Interest in them, and never seek to have their Doubts resolved? Are you certain you shall be saved? O that you were! If you had not made light of Salvation; you could not have rested till you had made it sure, or done your best to make it so. Is there none to enquire of, to help you in such a Work? You have Ministers appointed to that Office; have you gone to them, and told them the Doubtfulness of your Case, and intreated their Help in judging of your Condition? Alas, Ministers may sit in their Studies from Year to Year, before ten Persons in a Thousand come to them on such an Errand! And do not the Generality therefore make light of Christ?

4. The 'Things we value, deeply affect us, and our Hearts will be moved according to our Esteem for them. If Men did not make light of spiritual and eternal Things, how would their Hearts work, when they hear or read of them?What strong Affections, what Melting of Heart, what Sorrow for Sin, what Astonishment in the View of their Misery, what Joy at the Tidings of Salvation by Christ, what Resolution on the Discovery of their Duty, would they be conscious to? What should we have, if it were not for this Sin? Whereas now we are more likely to weary them, fill them with Disgust, or lull them asleep, with Things of this unspeakable Importance: By their Carelessness, one would imagine they were not the Persons spoken to.

5. Our Estimation of Things will appear in our diligent Endeavours. What we most value, we shall think no Pains too great to obtain. Do not those then make light of Christ and Salvation, who think any Thing too much which they do for Christ, who murmur at his Service; and think it grievous, and say, “This is more than needs?” For the World, they will labour all the Day, and all their Lives; but for Christ and Salvation, they are afraid of doing too much. Let us preach to them ever so long, we cannot bring them to relish and resolve upon a Life of Holiness. In their Houses, you shall not hear them read a Chapter, or pray with their Families once a Day; nor will they allow God one Day in Seven, as he requires; but Pleasure, or worldly Business, or Idleness must have a Part. Many of them are even so far hardened, as to reproach all who will not be as mad as themselves. And is not Christ worth seeking? Is not everlasting Salvation worth more than all our Diligence in Duty? Let common Sense judge, if that Soul makes not light of Christ and Salvation, who prefers his Ease before them.

6. That which we most highly value, we think we cannot buy too dear. Christ and Salvation are freely given, and yet most Men go without them, because they cannot enjoy them and the present World together. They are only called to part with that which would hinder them from Christ, and they will not do it. They are called only to give God his own; and to reign all to his Will; and to forsake the Pleasures and Profits of this World, when they must either part with Christ or them; and they will not. They think this too dear a Bargain, and plead, “We cannot spare these Things. We must look to our Estates. We must keep up our Credit with Men; how else shall we live? We must have our Pleasure, whatever becomes of Christ and Salvation.” As if they were afraid of being Losers by Christ, or thought a Man would be profited, if he should gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul. Christ has solemnly declared, that whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be his Disciple. Far are those Men from forsaking all for Christ, and yet they would have it thought that they are his Disciples indeed.

7. That which Men highly esteem, they are desirous to help their Friends to, as well as themselves. And do not these Men make light of Christ and Salvation, who can take so much Care to leave their Children Portions on Earth, but do so little to help them to Heaven? Who provide outward Necessaries for their Families, but do Nothing for saving their Souls? Their neglected Children and Friends will testify, that Christ was made light of, or the Souls of Children and Friends would have been tenderly and faithfully regarded.

8. That which Men highly esteem, they will manifest by their successfully pursuing, if it be attainable. You may see how many make light of Christ, by the little Knowledge they have of him, and their little Communion with him, and their having no Graces communicated from him. Alas, how many Ministers can speak it with Sorrow of Heart, that many of their People know almost Nothing of Christ, tho’ they hear of him daily! They know not what they must do to be saved! And if we ask them an Account of these Things, they answer as if they understood not what we say, and tell us they are no Scholars, and therefore think their Ignorance will excuse them. If such Persons had not made light of Christ and Salvation, but had bestowed half as much Pains to know and enjoy the Lord, as they have done to understand their Trades and Affairs in the World, they would not have been so ignorant as they are. When Men in a few Years have learned a difficult Trade; but, perhaps in twenty or thirty, have not learned any easy Catechism, or the Meaning of their Creed, nor will bear to be examined about such Things; does not this shew that they have slighted them in their Hearts? How will these Despisers of Christ be able in the great Day to look him in the

Face, and give an Account of these Neglects!

After having suggested these Things for your Conviction, do not some of your Consciences by this Time smite you, and say, “I am the Man who have made light of my Salvation?” If Conscience does not say so, it is because you still make light of it, notwithstanding all that has been said to you.

2.04. Chapter 4 Considerations to reform those,

CHAP. IV.

Considerations to reform those, who make light of Christ.

FAIN would I have this damning Distemper cured, if it be the. Will of the Lord; and therefore I am very unwilling to leave you, Sinners, in such a desperate Condition; did I but know how to remedy it. I will now add some Considerations, which may move you to look better about you. If you are Men of Reason and Understanding, I beseech you weigh them, and make a faithful Use of them: lay open your Hearts to the Work of Grace, and seriously survey the dismal Case you are in, if you are really such as make light of Christ.

1. Consider you make light of him, who did not make light of you, tho' you deserved to be so treated by him. You were worthy of Nothing but Contempt. As Men, what are you but Worms to God? As Sinners you are far more vile than Toads. Yet Christ was so far from making light of you, and of your Happiness, that he humbled himself to put on mortal Flesh, lived a Life of Suffering, and offered himself a Sacrifice to the Justice which you had provoked, that your miserable Souls might have a Remedy. No less hath he shewed to us than Miracles of Love and Mercy, and yet shall we slight them? Angels, whom they less concern, desire to look into them; and shall redeemed Sinners make light of them? What more than devilish Ingratitude is this? The Devils never had a Saviour offered to them, but you have; and do you yet make light of him

2. Consider, the Work of Man's Salvation by Jesus Christ is the Master-Piece of all the Works of God, in which he designs his Love and Mercy to be magnified, as his Wisdom and Power were in Creation. For this Reason the Name of Jesus is Wonderful. Greater Love could none shew than this. How great was the Evil and Misery from which he delivered us and the Good he procured for us? All are Wonders, from his Birth to his Ascension. And from our new Birth to our Entrance into our Masters Joy, All are Wonders of matchless Mercy. And do you make light of them?

3. Confider, the Things you make light of are the most excellent and of the highest Importance. You slight you know not what. Had you well known, you could not have done it. If thou hadst known the Gift of God, and who it is that speaks to thee, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living Water; as our Lord argued with the Woman of Samaria. Had the Princes of this World known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. So had you known what Christ is, you would not have made light of him. Had you but seen what they possess in Heaven, and also what Miseries they endure who are shut out, you would never afterwards have made so light of Christ. O Sirs! the Gospel treats not of Things trifling, or to be jested with. I profess to you, when I have the most serious Thoughts of those Things, I am ready to wonder the Souls of Men are not overwhelmed with them; that the Greatness of the Subject does not even drive Men besides themselves; and especially, that Men should be so stupid, as to make light of them. O Lord, that Men did but know what everlasting Glory, and everlasting Torments are! Would they then hear, and read, and think of these Things as they do? Could they forbear crying out in

the Congregation, or rest till they have gone to their Minister, and learned what they should do to be saved, that this great Business might be put out of Doubt? Amazing, that an everlasting Heaven and Hell should work no more on Men! How can you forbear thinking, when you are alone, what it is to be everlastingly in Joy or Torment ? Why do not such Thoughts break your Sleep, and interrupt you in the Midst of your Labours? How can you have any Peace in your Minds? How can you eat, or drink, or sleep, till you have got some Ground of everlasting Consolations? Is that a Man, or a Corps, that is not affected with these momentous Things? That can sleep, rather than tremble, when he hears how he must stand at the Bar of God? That can follow his worldly Business, and make Nothing of the Business of Salvation or Damnation, even tho' he knows it is near at Hand?—Truly I wonder at the very best of God's Saints upon Earth, that they are no better, and do no more in so weighty an Affair. I wonder at those, whom the World accounts more holy than needs; and despises for making too much ado; that they do so little for Christ and their Souls; that they pour not out their Souls in every Supplication; that they are not more taken up with God and that their Thoughts are not more serious in Preparation for their last Account. I wonder they are not a hundred Times more strict in their Lives, and more laborious and unwearied in their striving for the Crown.—As for myself, I am ashamed of my dull and careless Heart, of my slow and unprofitable Course of Life, and of every Sermon I preach, to think what I have been speaking of, and who sent me, and how much the Salvation or Damnation of Men is concerned in it. I am ready to tremble, lest God should judge me as a Slighter of his Word; and of the Souls of Men, and lest in the best Sermon I should be guilty of their Blood. Methinks we should not speak a Word to Men, in Matters of such Consequence, without Tears, or without the greaten possible Earnestness; and we do not so, because we are too much guilty of the Sin which we reprove.

5. Confider who it is that sends this weighty Message to you. Is it not God himself? Shall the God of Heaven speak, and Men make light of it? You would not slight the Voice of an Angel or a Prince.

Confider whose Salvation you make light of. Is it not your own? Are you no more near or dear to yourselves, than to make light of your own Happiness or Misery? Are you in no Care whether you shall be saved or damned? Is Self Love lost? Are you turned your own Enemies? As he that slights his Food, slights his Life; so if you slight Christ, whatsoever you may think, you will find it was your own Salvation that you slighted. It is Christ who says, All they that hate me, love Death.

6. Confider how it aggravates your Sin in making light of the Gospel, that you profess to believe it. It is no Wonder a professed Infidel should make light of it, who neither believes that Christ ever died, or rose again, or that there is a Heaven or Hell. But you inexcusable, who make it your Creed and and Religion, call yourselves Christians, have been baptised into into this Faith, and seem to stand to it. What! believe that you shall live in endless joy or Torment, and yet make so light of escaping Torment, and obtaining Joy! What! believe that God will shortly judge you, and yet treat Preparation for it with Indifference! Either say plainly, "I am no Christian. I do not believe these wonderful Things. I will believe Nothing but what I see." Or else let your Hearts be affected with your Belief, and live as you say you believe, when you repeat the Creed, and mention Christ's Coming to Judgment, and the Life everlasting.

7. Confider what those Things are which you prefer before Christ and Salvation. Have you found a better Friend, or a greater and surer Happiness? Good God! What Dung is all that Men make so much of, while they let light by eternal Blessedness? What Joys are they daily taken up with, while

Matters of Life and Death are neglected? Had you every One a Kingdom in your Hopes, what were it, compared with an everlasting Kingdom? What is all the Glory and Dignity of this World, all its Lands and Lordships, its Crowns and Kingdoms, but like some poor Creature, that borrows fine Cloths, and mimicks the Part of a King on a Stage, and after a few Minutes comes down, and is stript of all his Finery? Were it not for God's Interest in the Authority of Magistrates, and the Service they might do him, all their Glory is but a Vapour. Death levels all. What Difference is there at Judgment, between your having been a rich Man or a poor Man; a Dives or a Lazarus? O that Men knew what a fleeting Shadow they catch at, while they neglect the everlasting Substance? The most powerful, rich, and prosperous Sinners only lay in Fuel for their Sorrows, while they are fancying it will will be a Treasure of Enjoyments. Alas, they are dreaming of Happiness, and when they awake, what a Change will they find! Their Crown is made of Thorns. Their Joy has such a Sting, as will pierce their Heart thro' all Eternity, except unfeigned Repentance prevent. O how sadly will these Wretches be convinced e'er long, what a foolish Bargain they made, in selling Christ and Salvation for these Trifles! Let your Farms and Merchandize then save you, if they can; and do that for you which Christ would have done. Cry then to your Baal to save you.

8. Consider that to set light by Christ and Salvation is a certain Sign you have no Part in them. If you continue to do so, Christ will set as light by you. Them that honour him, he will honour; and they that despise him, shall be lightly esteemed. You will feel one Day, that you cannot live without him. You will then confess your Need of him. And then you may look for a Saviour where you will, for he will be no Saviour to you, who refused to value him, and submit to him, while he was offered to you. Then who will be the Loser by your Contempt? O what will it be for a poor miserable Soul to cry to Christ for Help in the Day of Extremity, and to hear him say, "Thou didst set light by me in the Day of thy Prosperity, and I will now set as light by thee in thy Adversity. Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; But you have set at Nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof; I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh, when your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind; when Distress and Anguish come upon you. Then shall you call upon on me, but I will not answer; you shall seek me early, but you shall not find me. For you hated Knowledge; and did not chuse the Fear of the Lord. You would none of my Counsel, you despised all my Reproof. Therefore shall you eat of the Fruit of your own Way, and be filled with your own Devices. You that, as Esau, for one Morsel of Meat sold your Birthright, shall then find no Place for Repentance, tho' you seek it carefully with Tears." Do you think that Christ shed his Blood to save them who continue to make light of it, and that prefer their Lusts before his Salvation? Tho' you set so light by Christ and Salvation, God does not do so. He values the Blood of his Son, and everlasting Glory, and will make you value them, if ever you have them. All the World cannot save him who sets light by Christ. And can you find Fault for being denied what you yourselves made light of, and for missing the Salvation which you slighted?

9. Consider, the Time is near when Christ and Salvation will no more be made light of, as they now are.. When God hath shaken your careless Soul out of your Body, and you must answer for all your Sins in your own Name; O then, what would you give for a Saviour! When a Thousand Bills shall be brought against you, and not one to relieve you, you will then reflect, "Now would Christ have stood between me and the Wrath of God! Had Is not despised him, he would have answered every Demand!" When you see the World hath left you, your Companions in Sin have deceived

both themselves and you, and that all your merry Days are fled away; then, what would you give for the Christ and Salvation, which you now account not worth your Labour? When you shall see the Judgment-Day, and yourselves doomed to everlasting Perdition for your Wickedness, do you think you shall then make as light of Christ, as you do now? Why will you not judge now, as you know you shall judge then? Will Christ then be worth ten Thousand Worlds, and is he not now worth your highest Esteem, and your best Affections!

10. Consider, God will not only deny you the Salvation you made light of, but he will take from you all that which you preferred before it. He that loves Christ in Sincerity, shall with him have all Things, so far as here they will be for his good; and have Christ hereafter, when earthly Enjoyments shall have lost all their Value. He that esteems any Thing here more than Christ, shall have his Comforts on Earth imbittered to him, and be left comfortless for ever and ever. And what think you now? Does it not appear by these Considerations to be a heinous Sin to make light of Christ and Salvation? Ought you not to be careful lest this should prove your own wretched Condition? God knows it is too common. Whoever is found guilty at last of this Sin, good were it for that Man if he had never been born. He had better have been a Turk or a Savage, that never heard the Name of a Saviour, nor ever had the Offer of Salvation. Christ, whom you make light of, must be your Judge, and for this Sin will he judge you. And as Christ himself asks, how can you escape the Damnation of Hell? Or, as the Apostle asks, how shall you escape if you neglect so great Salvation? Can you escape without a Christ; or will a despised Christ then save you ? If he be cursed that setteth light by his Father, or his Mother; what then is he that setteth light by Christ? It is among the aggravated Sins of Jerusalem, that in her were those who set light by Father and Mother, but how much more aggravated to set light by the Father of Spirits? In the Name of God I beseech you to consider, how you will bear his final Displeasure, whom you now make light of. You that cannot make light of a little Sickness, or Want, or even of a Tooth-Ach, but groan as if you were undone; how can you make light of the Fury of the Lord, which will burn against the Contemners of his Grace? Is it not absolutely necessary to think of these Things before it be for ever too late?

2.05. Chapter 5 Directions for those who desire

CHAP. V.

Directions for those who desire to make light of Christ no more.

HAVING endeavoured to convince you of the Evil and Danger of this Sin, I now come to know what you are resolved, upon. What says Conscience? Will you set as light by Christ and Salvation, as you have formerly been doing? Are you resolved still to persist in the same sinful Course? I hope not. O let not your Ministers, who would fain save you, be brought Witnesses against you to condemn you. At least, I beseech you, put not this upon me. If the Lord than say to us at Judgment, “Did you never tell these Men what Christ hath done and suffered for their Souls, and their own need of him, and how nearly it concerned them to regard their own Salvation, and not make light of it?” We must then say, “Yes, Lord, we told them of it as plainly as we could. We would have done it upon our Knees to them, if we had thought thereby to have prevailed. We intreated them as earnestly as we could to consider these Things. They heard of these Things every Day; but alas, we could never fasten them on their Hearts! They gave us the Hearing, but they made light of all that we could say to them.” How wretched will your Condition be, if you force us to such an Answer as this!

Perhaps you may be secretly hoping that you are not in the Number of those who make light of Christ. And for fear you should deceive yourselves with false Hopes, let me excite your Caution and Jealousy by mentioning some of those Things on which false Hopes are commonly founded. As for Instance;—You may have a notional and speculative Knowledge of Christ, and of the Necessity of his Blood, and of the Excellency of Salvation; and yet may perish as Neglecters of Christ. This is too common amongst professing Christians.—-You may say all that other Men do of Christ. Even Balaam could utter some Evangelical Truths. A Devil could say, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; for the Devils also believe and tremble.—You may weep at the History of Christ’s Sufferings, when you read how he was abused by the Jews and the Romans; and yet you may make light of him, and perish for doing so.—You may have a Desire after the Word, and Ordinances of Christ. Herod heard the Word gladly; and so do many, who must nevertheless perish as Neglecters of Salvation.—You may have a longing after Christ to ease your present Distress, and to save you from the Wrath of God; and yet you may perish for making light of Christ.—You may do many Things in Obedience to Christ, so as to consist with your worldly Schemes and Interests, and may escape much of the Pollutions of the World thro’ the Knowledge of Christ; and yet may neglect him.—You may part with much of the World for Christ, as Ananias and Sapphira did. Many will lose some of their Profits and Pleasures in Hope of Salvation, who shall perish everlastingly, because they had no more Value for Salvation.—You may be esteemed and admired by others on Account of your Zeal for Christ: and yet perish for making light of him.—You may verily think of yourselves, that you prefer Christ and Salvation before every Thing else, and yet you may be mistaken, and may be judged Despisers of Christ. For Christ does not justify all them, who justify themselves.—You may zealously preach Christ and Salvation, and

reprove others for their Neglect, and lament this Sin in the greatest Part of the World, as I am often doing; and yet if you or I have no better Evidence to prove our sincere Esteem .for Christ and Salvation, we are utterly undone. But that your Hopes in a Matter of such infinite Importance may not deceive you, there are two Things which are absolutely necessary to be found in you. One Thing is this,—Your Esteem for Christ and Salvation must be greater than for all the Honours, Profits, or Pleasures of this World; or else you slight him. No les than this will be accounted sincere, or be accepted to your Salvation. Think not this hard, when there is no Comparison between the Things in Question. To esteem the greatest Glory on Earth, before Christ and everlasting Glory, is a greater Folly in itself, and a greater Injury to Christ, than to esteem a Dog before your Prince would be either foolish, or unjust. If any Man come to me, says our Lord, and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea, and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple.—You must likewise manifest this Esteem for Christ and Salvation in your daily Endeavours, by your seeking after Christ, and parting with any Thing that he shall require of you. God is a Spirit, and will not take an hypocritical Profession, instead of the Heart and spiritual Service which he commands. He will have the Heart, or Nothing; and even the chief Room in the Heart.—If, after considering these two Things, you still say, that you do not make light of Christ, or will do no more, let me farther try you in a few Particulars, whether you really mean as you say, and do not dissemble.

1. Will you for the Time to come make Christ and Salvation the chief Matter of your Care and Study? Thrust them not out of your Thoughts, as a needless or unprofitable Subject; nor allow them only some slight and transient Thoughts, which will not affect you. Will you make it your Business, at least once a Day, when you are alone, to think seriously, what Christ has done for you; or what he will do, if you do not make light of it; what it is to be everlastingly happy or miserable; what all Things in this World are in Comparison of your everlasting Salvation, how soon they will leave you, and what you will then think of them? Will you resolve to withdraw yourselves frequently from the World, and set yourselves to such Considerations as these? If you will not, are you not Slighters of Christ and Salvation, who will not be persuaded to think on them seriously?

2. Will you for the Time to come set a higher Value on the Word of God, which is the Discovery and Charter of your Salvation, and your Guide to it? You cannot esteem Christ, without esteeming his Word. Whoso despiseth the Word, shall be destroyed. Will you therefore attend to the publick Preaching of the Word? Will you daily read it? Will you resolve to obey it whatever it may cost you? If you will not do this, but will make light of the Word of God, you will be judged to have made light of Christ and Salvation, whatever you may fondly promise yourselves.

3. Will you for the Time to come set a higher Value on Christ’s Ministers, whom he has appointed to guide you to Salvation? And will you make Use of them for that End? Alas! it is not enough to speak well of your Ministers, and duly contribute to their Maintenance. They are to be as Physicians under Christ, to apply his Remedies to your spiritual Diseases, both in publick and in private; that you may go to them, for their Instructions and Advices, their Exhortations and Prayers. Will you go to them in private, and solicit their Help? And if you have not such near you as are rightly disposed to help you, will you go to such as are, and ask them, What you shall do to be saved, and how you shall prepare for Death and Judgment? Will you obey the Word of God in their Mouths? If you will not inquire of those that should teach you, nor use the Means Christ has appointed for your Help, your own Consciences shall one day witness against you, that you made

light of Christ and Salvation. If you doubt whether it be your Duty thus to ask Counsel of your Ministers, as sick Men do of their Physicians, let your own Necessities and the express Declarations of the Word of God resolve you. The Priest's Lips should keep Knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his Mouth; for he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts.

4. Will you for the Time to come make Conscience of daily fervent Prayer to God, that you may have a Part in Christ and Salvation? Do not go out of Doors in the Morning, nor lie down to Rest at Night, till you have first breathed out these Desires to God. Say not, "God knows my Necessities without praying so often." For tho' he does, yet be will have you to know and feel them, and have your Desires and all the Graces of his Spirit exercised in Prayer. It is he that commands you to pray without ceasing. Christ himself spent whole Nights in Prayer, and encourages us always to pray, and not to faint. And if you will not be persuaded to this, how can you say that you do not make light of Christ and Salvation?

5. Will you for the Time to come cast away your known Sins at the Command of Christ? If you have been proud or contentious, malicious and revengeful, be so no more. If you have been Adulterers, or Swearers, or Drunkards, be so no more. You cannot esteem Christ and Salvation, while any known Sin is cherished. What say you? Are you resolved to part with every Sin? If not, when you know it is the Will of Christ, and he has told you that such shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, are not you making light of him?

6. Will you for the Time to come serve God in the most expensive as well as the cheapest Part of his Service? Will you do it not only with your Tongues, but with your Estates, and all your Abilities? Shall the Poor find that you value Christ more than all the World? Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep yourselves unspotted from the World. Will you resolve to cleave to Christ, and make Salvation sure, tho' it cost you all you have in the World? If you think these Terms are too dear, you make light of Christ, and will be judged accordingly.

7. Will you for the Time to come value every Thing that tends to your Salvation, and use every Help that God offers you? Attend upon the Word, Sacraments and Prayer; instruct Children and Servants in the Knowledge of Christ; sanctify the Lord's Day; get into good Company, who set their Faces Heaven-ward; and take Heed of the Company of the Vain, the Voluptuous; the Scornful, or any that would hinder you in your sacred Work? Will you do these Things; or by neglecting them shew, that you are Slighters of Christ?

8. Will you do all these Particulars, not as your Toil, but as your Pleasure and Delight? Will you account it your highest Honour, to be the Disciples of Christ, to be admitted to serve and worship him, and to rejoice with holy Confidence in the Sufficiency of his Sacrifice; by which you may have Pardon of all Sin, and a Right to the Inheritance of the Saints in Light? If you will do these Things sincerely, you will shew your real Value for Christ and Salvation.

Dearly Beloved in the Lord, I have now done what I proposed on this weighty Subject; and what Effect it will have upon any Heart I know not; nor is it in my Power to accomplish what my Soul earnestly desires. Were it the Lord's Will that I might have my Wish, the Words you have been reading should so impress you, as to awaken you out of your Security, and prevent your perishing with those, who make light of Christ and Salvation. O that I could make every Man's Conscience a

faithful Preacher to himself, that being ever present with you it might prevail! O that the next Time you go prayerless to Bed, or into your Business, Conscience might cry out, “Have you no more value for Christ and Salvation!” O that the next Time you are tempted to think hardly of a holy Life, I will not say, to scoff at it as more than is needful, Conscience might loudly say, “Dare not to make light of Christ and Salvation!” O that the next Time you are ready to rush upon any known Sin, and to gratify corrupt Inclination against the Command of God, Conscience might earnestly ask you, “Is Christ and Salvation of no more Worth, than to cast them away for every vile Lust!” O that when you are following the World with your most eager Desires, and forgetting an eternal World, and the awful Change which is so near, Conscience might remind you of the infinite Worth of Christ and Salvation! And that when you are next spending the Lord’s Day in idleness, or in vain Amusements, Conscience might faithfully tell you what you are doing! In a Word, that in all your Neglects of Duty, and in all your cold and formal Prayers and religious Services, Conscience might tell you how unsuitable such Endeavours are to an eternal Reward, and that Christ and Salvation should not be so slighted! I will say no more but this, That it is most lamentable, when God has provided a Saviour for the World, when Christ has suffered so much for Sin, made such a compleat Atonement to Divine Justice, and purchased so glorious a Kingdom for his Saints; and when all this is ao freely offered to Sinners, to lost, undeserving, and Hell deserving Sinners; so many Millions should nevertheless perish everlastingly, because they make light of their Saviour and Salvation, and prefer this vain World and their own abominable Lusts! I have delivered my Message; may the Lord open many a Heart to receive it! I have endeavour’d to persuade with the Words of Truth and Soberness ; may the Lord persuade more effectually, or all I have said is in vain.

F I N I S.

2A.0.1. Dying Thoughts

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2A.0.2. THE PREFACE TO THE READER

THE PREFACE TO THE READER

READER,

I HAVE no other use for a preface to this book, but to give you a true excuse for its publication. I wrote it for myself, unresolved whether any one should ever see it, but at last inclined to leave that to the will of my executors, to publish or suppress it when I am dead, as they saw cause. But my person being seized on, and my library, and all my goods distrained on by constables, and sold, and I constrained to relinquish my house, (for preaching and being in London,) I knew not what to do with multitudes of manuscripts that had long lain by me; having no house to go to, but a narrow hired lodging with strangers: wherefore I cast away whole volumes, which I could not carry away, both controversies and letters practical, and cases of conscience, but having newly lain divers weeks, night and day, in waking torments, nephritic and colic, after other long pains and languor, I took this book with me in my removal, for my own use in my further sickness. Three weeks after, falling into another extreme fit, and expecting death, where I had no friend with me to commit my papers to, merely lest it should be lost, I thought best to give it to the printer. I think it is so much of the work of all men's lives to prepare to die with safety and comfort, that the same thoughts may be needful for others that are so for me. If any mislike the title, as if it imported that the author is dead, let him know that I die daily, and that which quickly will be, almost is: it is suited to my own use: they that it is unsuitable to, may pass it by. If those men's lives were spent in serious, preparing thoughts of death, who are now studying to destroy each other, and tear in pieces a distressed land, they would prevent much dolorous repentance.

RICHARD BAXTER. THE exercise of three sorts of love, to God, to others, and to myself, afford me a threefold satisfaction, conjunct, to be willing to depart.

I. I am sure my departure will be the fulfilling of that will which is love itself, which I am bound, above all things, to love and please, and which is the beginning, rule, and end of all. Antonine could hence fetch good thoughts of death.

The world dieth not with me when I die; nor the church, nor the praise and glory of God, which he will have in and from this world unto the end: and if I love others as myself, their lives and comforts will now be to my thoughts, as if I were to live myself in them. God will be praised and honoured by posterity when I am dead and gone. Were I to be annihilated, this would comfort me now, if I lived and died in perfect love.

But a better and glorious world is before me, into which I hope, by death, to be translated, whither all these three sorts of love should wrap up the desires of my ascending soul; even the love of myself, that I may be fully happy; the love of the triumphant church, Christ, angels, and glorified man, and the glory of all the universe, which I shall see; and above all, the love of the most glorious God, infinite life, and light, and love, the ultimate, amiable object of man's love; in whom to be perfectly pleased and delighted, and to whom to be perfectly pleasing for ever, is the chief and

ultimate end of me, and of the highest, wisest, and best of creatures. Amen.

2A.0.3. THE INTRODUCTION

THE INTRODUCTION For I am in a strait betwixt two.... Php 1:23

I WRITE for myself, and therefore, supposing the sense of the text, shall only observe what is useful to my heart and practice.

It was a happy state into which grace had brought this apostle, who saw so much, not only tolerable, but greatly desirable, both in living and dying. To live, to him, was Christ, that is, Christ's interest, or work. To die would be gain, that is, his own interest and reward. His strait was not whether it would be good to live or good to depart, both were good, but which was more desirable was the doubt.

I. Quest. But was there any doubt to be made between Christ's interest and his own? Answ. No, if it had been a full and fixed competition; but by Christ, or Christ's interest, he meaneth his work for his church's interest in this world; but he knew that Christ also had an interest in his saints above, and that he could raise up more to serve him here; yet, because he was to judge by what appeared, and he saw a defect of such on earth, this did turn the scales in his choice; and for the work of Christ and his church's good, he more inclined to the delay of his reward, by self-denial; yet knowing that the delay would tend to its increase. It is useful to me here to note,

That, even in this world, short of death, there is some good so much to be regarded, as may justly prevail with believers to prefer it before the present hastening of their reward.

I the rather note this, that no temptation carry me into that extreme, of taking nothing but heaven to be worthy of our minding or regard, and so to cast off the world in a sinful sort, on pretence of mortification, and a heavenly mind, and life.

I. As to the sense, the meaning is not that any thing on earth is better than heaven, or simply, and in itself, to be preferred before it. The end is better than the means as such, and perfection better than imperfection. But the present use of the means may be preferred sometimes before the present possession of the end, and the use of means for a higher end may be preferred before the present possession of a lower end, and every thing hath its season. Planting, and sowing, and building, are not so good as reaping, and fruit-gathering, and dwelling, but in their season, they must be first done.

II. Quest. But what is there so desirable in this life?

Answ. 1. While it continueth, it is the fulfilling of the will of God, who will have us here; and that is best which God willeth. The life to come dependeth upon this, as the life of man in the world upon his generation in the womb; or as the reward upon the work; or the runner's or soldier's prize upon his race or fighting; or as the merchant's gain upon his voyage. Heaven is won or lost on earth. The possession is there, but the preparation is here. Christ will judge all men according to their works on earth. "Well done, good and faithful servant," must go before "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course," goeth before "the crown of

righteousness which God, the righteous Judge, will give." All that ever must be done for salvation by us, must here be done. It was on earth that Christ himself wrought the work of our redemption, fulfilled all righteousness, became our ransom, and paid the price of our salvation, and it is here that our part is to be done. And the bestowing of the reward is God's work, who, we are sure, will never fail. There is no place for the least suspicion or fear of his misdoing, or failing, in any of his undertaken work. But the danger and fear is of our own miscarrying, lest we be not found capable of receiving what God will certainly give to all that are disposed receivers. To distrust God is heinous sin and folly, but to distrust ourselves we have great cause. So that if we will make sure of heaven, it must be by giving all diligence to make firm our title, our calling, and our election, here on earth. If we fear hell, we must fear being prepared for it. And it is great and difficult work that must be here done. It is here that we must be cured of all damning sin; that we must be regenerate and new born; that we must be pardoned and justified by faith. It is here that we must be united to Christ, made wise to salvation, renewed by his Spirit, and conformed to his likeness. It is here that we must overcome all the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh, and perform all the duties towards God and man, that must be rewarded. It is here that Christ must be believed in with the heart to righteousness, and with the mouth confessed to salvation. It is here that we must suffer with him, that we may reign with him, and be faithful to the death, that we may receive the crown of life. Here we must so run that we may obtain.

Yea, we have greater work here to do than mere securing our own salvation. We are members of the world and church, and we must labour to do good to many. We are trusted with our Master's talents for his service, in our places to do our best to propagate his truth, and grace, and church; and to bring home souls, and honour his cause, and edify his flock, and further the salvation of as many as we can. All this is to be done on earth, if we will secure the end of all in heaven.

Use 1. It is, then, an error (though it is but few, I think, that are guilty of it,) to think that all religion lieth in minding only the life to come, and disregarding all things in this present life, all true Christians must seriously mind both the end and the means, or way. If they mind not, believingly, the end, they will never be faithful in the use of means. If they mind not, and use not diligently, the means, they will never obtain the end. None can use earth well that prefer not heaven, and none come to heaven, at age, that are not prepared by well using earth. Heaven must have the deepest esteem, and habituated love, and desire, and joy; but earth must have more of our daily thoughts for present practice. A man that travelleth to the most desirable home, hath a habit of desire to it all the way, but his present business is his travel; and horse, and company, and inns, and ways, and weariness, &c., may take up more of his sensible thoughts, and of his talk, and action, than his home.

Use 2. I have oft marvelled to find David, in the Psalms, and other saints, before Christ's coming, to have expressed so great a sense of the things of this present life, and to have said so little of another. To have made so great a matter of prosperity, dominions, and victories, on one hand, and of enemies, success, and persecution, on the other. But I consider that it was not for mere personal, carnal interest, but for the church of God, and for his honour, word, and worship. And they knew that if things go well with us on earth, they will be sure to go well in heaven. If the militant church prosper in holiness, there is no doubt but it will triumph in glory. God will be sure to do his part in receiving souls, if they be here prepared for his receipt. And Satan doth much of his damning work by men; if we escape their temptations, we escape much of our danger. If idolaters

prospered, Israel was tempted to idolatry. The Greek church is almost swallowed up by Turkish prosperity and dominion. Most follow the powerful and prosperous side. And, therefore, for God's cause, and for heavenly, everlasting interest, our own state, but much more the church's, must be greatly regarded here on earth.

Indeed, if earth be desired only for earth, and prosperity loved but for the present welfare of the flesh, it is the certain mark of damning carnality, and an earthly mind. But to desire peace, and prosperity, and power, to be in the hands of wise and faithful men, for the sake of souls, and the increase of the church, and the honour of God, that his name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will done on earth, as it is in heaven. This is to be the chief of our prayers to God.

Use 3. Be not unthankful, then, O my soul, for the mercies of this present life, for those to thy body, to thy friends, to the land of thy nativity, and especially to the church of God.

I. This body is so nearly united to thee, that it must needs be a great help, or hinderance. Had it been more afflicted, it might have been a discouraging clog; like a tired horse in a journey, or an ill tool to a workman, or an untuned instrument in music. A sick or bad servant in an house is a great trouble, and a bad wife much more, but thy body is nearer thee than either, and will be more of thy concern. And yet if it had been more strong and healthful, sense and appetite would have been strong, and lust would have been strong, and therefore danger would have been greater, and victory and salvation much more difficult. Even weak senses and temptations have too oft prevailed. How knowest thou, then, what stronger might have done? When I see a thirsty man in a fever or dropsy, and especially when I see strong and healthful youths, bred up in fulness, and among temptations, how mad they are in sin, and how violently they are carried to it, bearing down God's rebukes, and conscience, and parents, and friends, and all regard to their salvation, it tells me how great a mercy I had, even in a body not liable to their case. And many a bodily deliverance hath been of great use to my soul, renewing my time, and opportunity, and strength, for service, and bringing frequent and fresh reports of the love of God.

If bodily mercies were not of great use to the soul, Christ would not so much have showed his saving love, by healing all manner of diseases, as he did. Nor would God promise us a resurrection of the body, if a congruous body did not further the welfare of the soul.

And I am obliged to great thankfulness to God for the mercies of this life which he hath showed to my friends; that which furthers their joy should increase mine. I ought to rejoice with them that rejoice. Nature and grace teach us to be glad when our friends are well, and prosper, though all in order to better things than bodily welfare.

And such mercies of this life to the land of our habitation must not be undervalued. The want of them are parts of God's threatened curse; and godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come, and so is profitable to all things. And when God sends on a land the plagues of famine, pestilence, war, persecution, especially a famine of the word of God, it is a great sin to be insensible of it. If any shall say, 'while heaven is sure, we have no cause to accuse God, or to cast away comfort, hope, or duty,' they say well; but if they say, 'because heaven is all, we must make light of all that befalleth us on earth,' they say amiss.

Good princes, magistrates, and public-spirited men that promote the safety, peace, and true prosperity of the commonwealth, do hereby very much befriend religion, and men's salvation; and

are greatly to be loved and honoured by all. If the civil state, called the commonwealth, do miscarry, or fall into ruin and calamity, the church will fare the worse for it, as the soul doth by the ruins of the body. The Turkish, Muscovite, and such other empires, tell us, how the church consumeth, and dwindles away into contempt, or withered ceremony and formality, where tyranny brings slavery, beggary, or long persecution on the subjects. Doubtless, divers passages in the Revelations contain the church's glorifying of God, for their power and prosperity on earth, when emperors became Christians: what else can be meant well by Revelation 9:10, "Hath made us kings and priests to God, and we shall reign on the earth". But that Christians shall be brought from under heathen persecution, and have rule and sacred honour in the world, some of them being princes; some honoured church guides; and all a peculiar, honoured people. And had not Satan found out that cursed way of getting wicked men, that hate true godliness and peace, into the sacred places of princes and pastors, to do his work against Christ, as in Christ's name; surely no good Christians would have grudged at the power of rulers of state, or church. Sure I am, that many, called fifth-monarchy-men, seem to make this their great hope, that rule shall be in the hands of righteous men; and I think, most religious parties would rejoice if those had very great power, whom they take to be the best and trustiest men; which shows that it is not the greatness of power in most princes, or sound bishops, that they dislike, but the badness, real or supposed, of those whose power they mislike: who will blame power to do good?

Sure the three first and great petitions of the Lord's prayer include some temporal welfare of the world and church, without which the spiritual rarely prospereth extensively, (though intensively in a few it may,) since miracles ceased.

Be thankful, therefore, for all the church's mercies here on earth; for all the protection of magistracy; the plenty of preachers; the preservation from enemies; the restraint of persecution; the concord of Christians; and increase of godliness; which in this land it hath had in our ages; notwithstanding all Satan's malignant rage, and all the bloody wars that have interrupted our tranquillity. How many psalms of joyful thanksgiving be there for Israel's deliverances, and the preservation of Zion, and God's worship in his sanctuary: pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love it; especially, that the gospel is continued, while so many rage against it, is a mercy not to be made light of.

Use 4. Be specially thankful, O my soul, that God hath made any use of thee, for the service of his church on earth. My God, my soul for this doth magnify thee, and my spirit rejoiceth in the review of thy great undeserved mercy! Oh! what am I, whom thou tookest up from the dunghill or low obscurity, that I should live, myself, in the constant relish of thy sweet and sacred truth, and with such encouraging success communicate it to others? That I must say now my public work seems ended, that these forty-three or forty-four years, I have no reason to think that ever I laboured in vain! O with what gratitude must I look upon all places where I lived and laboured; but, above all, that place that had my strength. I bless thee for the great numbers gone to heaven, and for the continuance of piety, humility, concord, and peace among them. And for all that by my writings have received any saving light and grace. O my God! let not my own heart be barren while I labour in thy husbandry, to bring others unto holy fruit. Let me not be a stranger to the life and power of that saving truth which I have done so much to communicate to others. O let not my own words and writings condemn me as void of that divine and heavenly nature and life, which I have said so much for to the world.

Use 5. Stir up, then, O my soul, thy sincere desires, and all thy faculties, to do the remnant of the work of Christ appointed thee on earth, and then joyfully wait for the heavenly perfection in God's own time. Thou canst truly say, "To live, to me, is Christ." It is his work for which thou livest: thou has no other business in the world; but thou dost his work with the mixture of many oversights and imperfections, and too much troublest thy thoughts distrustfully about God's part, who never faileth; if thy work be done, be thankful for what is past, and that thou art come so near the port of rest: if God will add any more to thy days, serve him with double alacrity, now thou art so near the end: the prize is almost within sight: time is swift, and short. Thou hast told others that there is no working in the grave, and that it must be now or never. Though the conceit of meriting of commutative justice be no better than madness, dream not that God will save the wicked, no, nor equally reward the slothful and the diligent, because Christ's righteousness was perfect. Paternal justice maketh difference according to that worthiness which is so denominated by the law of grace; and as sin is its own punishment, holiness and obedience is much of its own reward: whatever God appointeth thee to do, see that thou do it sincerely, and with all thy might: if sin dispose men to be angry because it is detected, disgraced, and resisted, if God be pleased, their wrath should be patiently borne, who will shortly be far more angry with themselves. If slander and obloquy survive, so will the better effects on those that are converted; and there is no comparison between these. I shall not be hurt, when I am with Christ, by the calumnies of men on earth; but the saving benefit will, by converted sinners, be enjoyed everlastingly: words and actions are transient things, and, being once past, are nothing; but the effect of them, on an immortal soul, may be endless. All the sermons that I have preached are nothing now; but the grace of God, on sanctified souls, is the beginning of eternal life. It is unspeakable mercy to be sincerely thus employed with success; therefore, I had reason, all this while, to be in Paul's strait, and make no haste in my desires to depart. The crown will come in its due time; and eternity is long enough to enjoy it, how long soever it be delayed: but if I will do that which must obtain it for myself and others, it must be quickly done before, my declining sun be set.

O that I had no worse causes of my unwillingness yet to die, than my desire to do the work of life for my own and other men's salvation; and to finish my course with joy, and the ministry committed to me by the Lord.

Use 6. And as it is on earth that I must do good to others, so it must be in a manner suited to their state on earth. Souls are here closely united to bodies, by which they must receive much good or hurt: do good to men's bodies, if thou wouldest do good to their souls; say not, things corporeal are worthless trifles, for which the receivers will be never the better; they are things that nature is easily sensible of; and sense is the passage to the mind and will. Dost not thou find what a help it is to thyself to have, at any time, any ease and alacrity of body? And what a burden and hinderance pains and cares are? Labour, then, to free others from such burdens and temptations, and be not regardless of them. If thou must rejoice with them that rejoice, and mourn with them that mourn, further thy own joy in furthering theirs; and avoid thy own sorrows, in avoiding or curing theirs.

But, alas! what power hath selfishness in most. How easily do we bear our brethren's pains, reproaches, wants, and afflictions, in comparison of our own: how few thoughts, and how little cost or labour, do we use for their supply, in comparison of what we do for ourselves. Nature, indeed, teacheth us to be most sensible of our own case; but grace tells us, that we should not make so

great a difference as we do, but should love our neighbours as ourselves.

Use 7. And now, O my soul, consider how mercifully God hath dealt with thee, that thy strait should be, between two conditions, so desirable. I shall either die speedily, or stay yet longer upon earth; whichever it be, it will be a merciful and comfortable state; that it is desirable to depart and be with Christ, I must not doubt, and shall anon more copiously consider. And if my abode on earth yet longer be so great a mercy as to be put in the balance against my present possession of heaven, surely it must be a state which obligeth me to great thankfulness to God, and comfortable acknowledgment; and surely it is not my pain, or sickness, my sufferings from malicious men, that should make this life on earth unacceptable, while God will continue it. Paul had his prick or thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, and suffered more from men (though less in his health) than I have done; and yet he gloried in such infirmities, and rejoiced in his tribulations, and was in a strait between living and dying, yea, rather chose to live yet longer.

Alas! it is another kind of strait that most of the world are in: the strait of most is between the desire of life for fleshly interest, and the fear of death, as ending their felicity: the strait of many is, between a tiring world and body, which maketh them weary of living, and the dreadful prospect of future danger, which makes them afraid of dying; if they live, it is in misery; if they must die, they are afraid of greater misery. Which way ever they look, behind or before them, to this world or the next, fear and trouble is their lot; yea, many an upright Christian, through the weakness of their trust in God, doth live in this perplexed strait; weary of living, and afraid of dying; between grief and fear, they are pressed continually; but Paul’s strait was between two joys; which of them he should desire most: and if that be my case, what should much interrupt my peace or pleasure? If I live, it is for Christ; for his work, and for his church; for preparation; for my own and others’ everlasting felicity: and should any suffering, which maketh me not unserviceable, make me impatient with such a work, and such a life? If I die presently, it is my gain; God who appointeth me my work, doth limit my time, and sure his glorious reward can never be unseasonable, or come too soon, if it be the time that he appointeth. When I first engaged myself to preach the gospel, I reckoned (as probable) but upon one or two years; and God hath continued me yet above forty-four: (with such interruptions as others in these times have had;) and what reason have I now to be unwilling, either to live or die? God’s service hath been so sweet to me, that it hath overcome the trouble of constant pains, or weakness, of the flesh, and all that men have said or done against me. But the following crown exceeds this pleasure, more than I am here capable to conceive. There is some trouble in all this pleasant work, from which the soul and flesh would rest; and blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord; even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them.

But, O my soul, what needest thou be troubled in this kind of strait? It is not left to thee to choose whether or when thou wilt live or die. It is God that will determine it, who is infinitely fitter to choose than thou. Leave, therefore, his own work to himself, and mind that which is thine; whilst thou livest, live to Christ; and when thou diest, thou shalt die to Christ; even into his blessed hands: so live that thou mayest say, "It is Christ liveth in me, and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me;" and then, as thou hast lived in the comfort of hope, thou shalt die unto the comfort of vision and fruition. And when thou canst say, "He is the God whose I am, and whom I serve," thou mayest boldly add, ’and whom I trust, and to whom I commend my departing soul; and I know whom I have trusted.’

2A.1. WHAT THERE IS DESIRABLE IN THE PRESENT LIFE

WHAT THERE IS DESIRABLE IN THE PRESENT LIFE For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. (Or, for this is much rather to be preferred, or better.) - Php 1:23

SECT. 1. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?" saith Job 14:1-3. As a watch when it is wound up, or as a candle newly lighted, so man, newly conceived or born, beginneth a motion, which incessantly hasteth to its appointed period: and an action, and its time that is past, is nothing; so vain a thing would man be, and so vain his life, were it not for the hopes of a more durable life, which this referreth to; but those hopes, and the means, do not only difference a believer from an infidel, but a man from a beast. When Solomon describeth the difference, in respect to the time and things, of this life only, he truly tells us, "that one end here befalling both, doth show that both are here but vanity, but man’s vexation is greater than the beasts’." And Paul truly saith of Christians, "That if our hope were only in this life, (that is, in the time and things of this life and world,) we were, of all men, the most miserable." Though even in this life, as related to a better, and as we are exercised about things of a higher nature than the concerns of temporal life, we are far happier than any worldlings.

Sect. 2. Being to speak to myself, I shall pass by all the rest of the matter of this text, and suppose its due explication, and spread before my soul only the doctrine and uses of these two propositions contained in it. I. That the souls of believers, when departed hence, shall be with Christ. II. That so to be with Christ is far better for them than to be here in the body.

Sect. 3. I. Concerning the first, my thoughts shall keep this order. 1. I shall consider the necessity of believing it. 2. Whether it be best believing it, without consideration of the proofs or difficulties. 3. The certainty of it manifested for the exercise of faith.

Sect. 4. I. Whether the words signify that we shall be in the same place with Christ (which Grotius groundlessly denieth) or only in his hand, and care, and love, I will not stay to dispute. Many other texts concurring, do assure us that "we shall be with him where he is." (John 12:26; John 17:24, &c.) At least, "with him," can mean no less than a state of communion, and a participation of felicity. And to believe such a state of happiness for departed souls, is of manifold necessity, or use.

Sect. 5. I. If this be not soundly believed, a man must live besides, or below, the end of life. He must have a false end, or be uncertain what should be his end.

I know it may be objected, that if I make it my end to please God, by obeying him, and doing all the good I can, and trust him with my soul and future estate, as one that is utterly uncertain what he will do with me, I have an end intended, which will make me godly, charitable, and just, and happy, so far as I am made for happiness; for the pleasing of God is the right end of all.

But, 1. Must I desire to please him no better than I do in this imperfect state, in which I have and do so much which is displeasing to him? He that must desire to please him, must desire to please him perfectly; and our desire of our ultimate end must have no bounds, or check. Am I capable of pleasing God no better than by such a sinful life as this?

God hath made the desire of our own felicity so necessary to the soul of man, that it cannot be expected that our desire to please him should be separated from this.

Therefore, both in respect of God, as the end, and of our felicity, as our second end, we must believe that he is the beatifying rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

For, 1. If we make such an ill description of God, as that he will turn our pleasing him to our loss, or will not turn it to our gain and welfare, or that we know not whether he will do so or not, it will hinder our love, and trust, and joy, in him, by which we must please him, and, consequently, hinder the alacrity, and soundness, and constancy, of our obedience.

And it will much dismiss that self-love which must excite us, and it will take off part of our necessary end. And I think the objectors will confess, that if they have no certainty what God will do with them, they must have some probability and hope before they can be sincerely devoted here to please him.

Sect. 6. And, 1. If a man be but uncertain what he should make the end of his life, or what he should live for, how can he pitch upon an uncertain end? And if he waver so as to have no end, he can use no means; and if end and means be all laid by, the man liveth not as a man, but as a brute: and what a torment must it be to a considering mind to be uncertain what to intend and do in all the tenour and actions of his life? Like a man going out at his door, not knowing whither or what to do, or which way to go: either he will stand still, or move as brutes do, by present sense, or as a windmill, or weathercock, as he is moved.

Sect. 7. 2. But if he pitch upon a wrong end, it may yet be worse than none; for he will but do hurt, or make work for repentance: and all the actions of his life must be formally wrong, how good soever, materially, if the end of them be wrong.

Sect. 8. 2. And if I fetch them not from this end, and believe not in God as a rewarder of his servants, in a better life, what motives shall I have, which, in our present difficulties, will be sufficient to cause me to live a holy, yea, or a truly honest, life? All piety and honesty, indeed, is good, and goodness is desirable for itself: but the goodness of a means is its aptitude for the end; and we have here abundance of impediments, competitors, diversions, and temptations, and difficulties, of many sorts; and all these must be overcome by him that will live in piety or honesty: and our natures, we find, are diseased, and greatly indisposed to unquestionable duties; and will they ever discharge them, and conquer all these difficulties and temptations, if the necessary motive be not believed? Duty to God and man is accidentally hard and costly to the flesh, though amiable in itself. It may cost us our estates, our liberties, our lives. The world is not so happy as commonly to know good men from bad, or to encourage piety and virtue, or to forbear opposing them. And who will let go his present welfare, without some hope of better, as a reward? Men use not to serve God for nought; nor that think it will be their loss to serve him.

Sect. 9. A life of sin will not be avoided upon lower ends and motives: nay, those lower ends, when alone, will be a constant sin themselves. A preferring vanity to glory, the creature to God, and a setting our heart on that which will never make us happy: and when lust and appetite incline men, strongly and constantly, to their several objects, what shall sufficiently restrain them, except the greater and more durable delights or motives fetched from preponderating things? Lust and appetite distinguish not between lawful and unlawful. We may see in the brutish politics of Benedictus Spinosa, in his Tractat. Theolog. Polit., whither the principles of infidelity tend. If sin so overspread the earth, that the whole world is as drowned in wickedness, notwithstanding all the hopes and fears of a life to come, what would it do were there no such hopes and fears?

Sect. 10. 3. And no mercy can be truly known and estimated, nor rightly used and improved, by him that seeth not its tendency to the end, and perceiveth not that it leadeth to a better life, and useth it not thereunto. God dealeth more bountifully with us than worldlings understand. He giveth us all the mercies of this life, as helps to an immortal state of glory, and as earnests of it. Sensualists know not what a soul is, nor what soul mercies are; and, therefore, not what the soul of all bodily mercies are, but take up only with the carcass, shell, or shadow. If the king would give me a lordship, and send me a horse, or coach, to carry me to it, and I should only ride about the fields for my pleasure, and make no other use of it, should I not undervalue and lose the principal benefit of my horse, or coach? No wonder if unbelievers be unthankful, when they know not at all that part of God's mercies which is the life and real excellency of them.

Sect. 11. 4. And, alas! how should I bear with comfort the sufferings of this wretched life, without the hopes of a life with Christ? What should support and comfort me under my bodily languishings and pains, my weary hours, and my daily experience of the vanity and vexation of all things under the sun, had I not a prospect of a comfortable end of all? I that have lived in the midst of great and precious mercies, have all my life had something to do to overcome the temptation of wishing that I had never been born, and had never overcome it but by the belief of a blessed life hereafter. Solomon's sense of vanity and vexation hath long made all the business, and wealth, and honour, and pleasure, of this world, as such, appear such a dream and shadow to me, that were it not for the end, I could not have much differenced men's sleeping and their waking thoughts, nor have much more valued the waking than the sleeping part of life, but should have thought it a kind of happiness to have slept from the birth unto the death. Children cry when they come into the world; and I am often sorry when I am awakened out of a quiet sleep, especially to the business of an unquiet day. We should be strongly tempted, in our considering state, to murmur at our Creator, as dealing much hardlier by us than by the brutes, if we must have had all those cares, and griefs, and fears, by the knowledge of what we want, and the prospect of death, and future evils, which they are exempted from, and had not, withal, had the hopes of a future felicity to support us. Seneca and his stoics had no better argument to silence such murmurers who believed not a better life, than to tell them, that if this life had more evil than good, and they thought God did them wrong, they might remedy themselves by ending it when they would. But that would not cure the repinings of a nature which found itself necessarily weary of the miseries of life, and yet afraid of dying. And it is no great wonder that many thought that pre-existent souls were put into these bodies as a punishment of something done in a former life, while they foresaw not the hoped end of all our fears and sorrows. 'O how contemptible a thing is man!' saith the same Seneca, 'unless he lift up himself above human things.' Therefore, saith Solomon, when he had glutted himself with

all temporal pleasures, "I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous to me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit." (Ecclesiastes 2:17.)

Sect. 12. II. I have often thought whether an implicit belief of a future happiness, without any search into its nature, and thinking of any thing that can be said against it, or the searching, trying way, be better. On the one side, I have known many godly women that never disputed the matter, but served God, comfortably, to a very old age, (between eighty and one hundred,) to have lived many years in a cheerful readiness and desire of death, and such as few learned, studious men do ever attain to in that degree, who, no doubt, had this as a divine reward of their long and faithful service of God, and trusting in him. On the other side, a studious man can hardly keep off all objections, or secure his mind against the suggestions of difficulties and doubts; and if they come in, they must be answered, seeing we give them half a victory if we cast them off before we can answer them. And a faith that is not upheld by such evidence of truth as reason can discern and justify, is oft joined with much secret doubting, which men dare not open, but do not, therefore, overcome, and its weakness may have a weakening deficiency, as to all the graces and duties which should be strengthened by it. And who knoweth how soon a temptation from Satan, or infidels, or our own dark hearts, may assault us, which will not, without such evidence and resolving light, be overcome? And yet many that try, and reason, and dispute most, have not the strongest, or most powerful faith.

Sect. 13. And my thoughts of this have had this issue. 1. There is a great difference between that light which showeth us the thing itself, and that artificial skill by which we have right notions, names, definitions, and formed arguments, and answers to objections. This artificial, logical, organical kind of knowledge is good and useful in its kind, if right; like speech itself: but he that hath much of this, may have little of the former: and unlearned persons that have little of this, may have more of the former, and may have those inward perceptions of the verity of the promises and rewards of God, which they cannot bring forth into artificial reasonings to themselves or others; who are taught of God, by the effective sort of teaching which reacheth the heart, or will, as well as the understanding, and is a giving of what is taught, and a making us such as we are told we must be. And who findeth not need to pray hard for this effective teaching of God, when he hath got all organical knowledge, and words and arguments in themselves most apt, at his fingers' ends, as we say? When I can prove the truth of the word of God, and the life to come, with the most convincing, undeniable reasons, I feel need to cry and pray daily to God, to increase my faith, and to give me that light which may satisfy the soul, and reach the end.

Sect. 14. 2. Yet man, being a rational wight, is not taught by mere instinct and inspiration, and therefore this effective teaching of God doth ordinarily suppose a rational, objective, organical teaching and knowledge. And the foresaid unlearned Christians are convinced, by good evidence, that God's word is true, and his rewards are sure, though they have but a confused conception of this evidence, and cannot word it, nor reduce it to fit notions. And to drive these that have fundamental evidence, unseasonably and hastily to dispute their faith, and so to puzzle them by words and artificial objections, is but to hurt them, by setting the artificial, organical, lower part, which is the body of knowledge, against the real light and perception of the thing, (which is as the soul,) even as carnal men set the creatures against God, that should lead us to God, so do they by logical, artificial knowledge.

Sect. 15. But they that are prepared for such disputes, and furnished with all artificial helps, may make good use of them for defending and clearing up the truth to themselves and others, so be it they use them as a means to the due end, and in a right manner, and set them not up against, or instead of, the real and effective light.

Sect. 16. But the revealed and necessary part must here be distinguished from the unrevealed and unnecessary. To study till we, as clearly as may be, understand the certainty of a future happiness, and wherein it consisteth, (in the sight of God's glory, and in perfect, holy, mutual love, in union with Christ, and all the blessed,) this is of great use to our holiness and peace. But when we will know more than God would have us, it doth but tend (as gazing on the sun) to make us blind, and to doubt of certainties, because we cannot be resolved of uncertainties. To trouble our heads too much in thinking how souls out of the body do subsist and act, sensitively or not, by organs, or without; how far they are one, and how far still individuate, in what place they shall remain, and where is their paradise, or heaven; how they shall be again united to the body, whether by their own emission, as the sunbeams touch their objects here, and whether the body shall be restored, as the consumed flesh of restored, sick men, aliunde, or only from the old materials. A hundred of these questions are better left to the knowledge of Christ, lest we do but foolishly make snares for ourselves. Had all these been needful to us, they had been revealed. In respect to all such curiosities and needless knowledge, it is a believer's wisdom implicitly to trust his soul to Christ, and to be satisfied that he knoweth what we know not, and to fear that vain, vexatious knowledge, or inquisitiveness into good and evil, which is selfish, and savoureth of a distrust of God, and is that sin, and fruit of sin, which the learned world too little feareth.

Sect. 17. III. That God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and that holy souls shall be in blessedness with Christ, these following evidences, conjoined, do evince, on which my soul doth raise its hopes.

Sect. 18. I. The soul, which is an immortal spirit, must be immortally in a good or bad condition; but man's soul is an immortal spirit, and the good are not in a bad condition. Its immortality is proved thus: A spiritual, or most pure, invisible substance, naturally endowed with the power, virtue, or faculty of vital action, intellection, and volition, which is not annihilated nor destroyed by separation of parts, nor ecaseth, or loseth, either its power, species, individuation, or action, is an immortal spirit. But such is the soul of man, as shall be manifested by parts.

Sect. 19. I. The soul is a substance, for that which is nothing can do nothing; but it doth move, understand, and will. No man will deny that this is done by something in us, and by some substance, and that substance is it which we call the soul. It is not nothing, and it is within us.

Sect. 20. As to them that say, it is the temperament of several parts conjunct, I have elsewhere fully confuted them, and proved, 1. That it is some one part that is the agent on the rest, which all they confess that think it to be the material spirits, or fiery part. It is not bones and flesh that understand, but a purer substance, as all acknowledge.

What part soever it be, it can do no more than it is able to do, and a conjunction of many parts, of which no one hath the power of vitality, intellection, or volition, formally, or eminently, can never by contemperation do those acts, for there can be no more in the effect than is in the cause, otherwise it were no effect.

The vanity of their objections that tell us, a lute, a watch, a book, perform that by co-operation which no one part can do, I have elsewhere manifested. 1. Many strings, indeed, have many motions, and so have many effects on the ear and fantasy, which in us are sound, and harmony: but all is but a percussion of the air by strings, and were not that motion received by a sensitive soul, it would be no music or melody; so that there is nothing done but what each part had power to do. But intellection and volition are not the conjunct motions of all parts of the body, receiving their form in a nobler intellective nature, as the sound of the strings maketh melody in man: if it were so, that receptive nature still would be as excellent as the effect importeth. 2. And the watch, or clock, doth but move according to the action of the spring, or poise; but that it moveth in such an order as becometh to man a sign and measure of time, this is from man who ordereth it to that use. But there is nothing in the motion but what the parts have their power to cause; and that it signifieth the hour of the days to us, is no action, but an object used by a rational soul as it can use the shadow of a tree, or house, that yet doth nothing. 3. And so a book doth nothing at all, but is a mere objective ordination of passive signs, by which man's active intellect can understand what the writer or orderer did intend; so that here is nothing done beyond the power of the agent, nor any thing in the effect which was not in the cause, either formally or eminently. But for a company of atoms, of which no one hath sense or reason, to become sensitive and rational by mere conjunct motion, is an effect beyond the power of the supposed cause.

Sect. 21. But as some think so basely of our noblest acts as to think that contempered agitated atoms can perform them, that have no natural intellective, or sensitive, virtue or power in themselves, so others think so highly of them, as to take them to be the acts only of God, or some universal soul, in the body of man; and so that there is no life, sense, or reason in the world but God himself (or such an universal soul); and so that either every man is God, as to his soul, or that it is the body only that is to be called man, as distinct from God. But this is the self-ensnaring and self-perplexing temerity of busy, bold, and arrogant heads, that know not their own capacity and measure. And, on the like reasons, they must at last come, with others, to say, that all passive matter also is God, and that God is the universe, consisting of an active soul, and passive body. As if God were no cause, and could make nothing, or nothing with life, or sense, or reason.

Sect. 22. But why depart we from things certain, by such presumptions as these? Is it not certain, that there are baser creatures in the world than men or angels? Is it not certain that one man is not another? Is it not certain that some men are in torment of body and mind? And will it be a comfort to a man in such torment to tell him that he is God, or that he is part of an universal soul? Would not a man on the rack, or in the stone, or other misery, say, 'Call me by what name you please, that caseth not my pain. If I be a part of God, or an universal soul, I am sure I am a tormented, miserable part. And if you could make me believe that God hath some parts which are not serpents, toads, devils, or wicked or tormented men, you must give me other senses, and perceptive powers, before it will comfort me to hear that I am not such a part. And if God had wicked and tormented parts on earth, why may he not have such, and I be one of them, hereafter? And if I be a holy and happy part of God, or of an universal soul on earth, why may not I hope to be such hereafter?'

Sect. 23. We deny not but that God is the continued, first cause of all being whatsoever; and that the branches and fruit depend not, as effects, so much on the causality of the stock and roots, as the creature doth on God; and that it is an impious conceit to think that the world, or any part of it,

is a being independent, and separated totally from God, or subsisting without his continued causation. But cannot God cause, as a creator, by making that which is not himself? This yieldeth the self-deceiver no other honour nor happiness but what equally belongeth to a devil, to a fly, or worm, to a dunghill, or to the worst and miserablest man!

Sect. 24. II. As man's soul is a substance, so is it a substance differenced formally from all inferior substances, by an innate (indeed essential) power, virtue, or faculty, of vital action, intellection, and free will: for we find all these acts performed by it, as motion, light, and heat are by the fire or sun. And if any should think that these actions are like those of a musician, compounded of the agents (principal and organical several) parts, could he prove it, no more would follow, but that the lower powers (the sensitive, or spirits) are to the higher as a passive organ, receiving its operations; and that the intellectual soul hath the power of causing intellection and volition by its action on the inferior parts, as a man can cause such motions of his lute, as shall be melody (not to it, but) to himself: and consequently, that as music is but a lower operation of man, (whose proper acts of intellection and volition are above it,) so intellection and volition in the body are not the noblest acts of the soul, but it performed them by an eminent power, which can do greater things. And if this could be proved, what would it tend to the unbeliever's ends, or to the disadvantage of our hopes and comforts?

Sect. 25. III. That man's soul, at death, is not annihilated, even the atomists and epicureans will grant, who think that no atom in the universe is annihilated: and we that see, not only the sun and heavens continued, but every grain of matter, and that compounds are changed by dissolution of parts, and rarefaction, or migration, &c., and not by annihilation, have no reason to dream that God will annihilate one soul (though he can do it if he please, yea, and annihilate all the world): it is a thing beyond a rational expectation.

Sect. 26. IV. And a destruction, by the dissolution of the parts of the soul, we need not fear. For, 1. Either an intellectual spirit is divisible and partible, or not; if not, we need not fear it; if it be, either it is a thing that nature tendeth to, or not: but that nature doth not tend to it, is evident. For, 1. There is naturally so strange and strong an inclination to unity, and averseness to separation in all things, that even earth and stones, that have no other (known) natural motion, have yet an aggregate motion in their gravitation: but if you will separate the parts from the rest, it must be by force. And water is yet more averse from partition without force, and more inclined to union than earth, and air than water, and fire than air; so he that will cut a sunbeam into pieces, and make many of one, must be an extraordinary agent. And surely spirits, even intellectual spirits, will be no less averse from partition, and inclined to keep their unity, than fire, or a sunbeam is; so that naturally it is not a thing to be feared, that it should fall into pieces.

And he that will say, that the God of nature will change, and overcome the nature that he hath made, must give us good proofs of it, or it is not to be feared. And if he should do it as a punishment, we must find such a punishment somewhere threatened, either in his natural or supernatural law, which we do not, and therefore need not fear it.

Sect. 27. 3. But if it were to be feared, that souls were partible, and would be broken into parts, this would be no destruction of them, either as to their substance, powers, form, or action, but only a breaking of one soul into many: for being not compounded of heterogeneal parts, but, as simple elements, of homogeneal only, as every atom of earth is earth, and every drop of water in the sea

is water, and every particle of air and fire is air and fire, and have all the properties of earth, water, air, and fire; so would it be with every particle of an intellectual spirit. But who can see cause to dream of such a partition, never threatened by God?

Sect. 28. V. And that souls lose not their formal powers, or virtues, we have great reason to conceive; because they are their natural essence, not as mixed, but simple substances: and though some imagine that the passive elements may, by attenuation or incrassation, be transmuted one into another, yet we see that earth is still earth, and water is water, and air is air; and their conceit hath no proof: and, were it proved, it would but prove that none of these are a first or proper element: but what should an intellectual spirit be changed into? how should it lose its formal power? Not by nature; for its nature hath nothing that tendeth to deterioration, or decay, or self-destruction. The sun doth not decay by its wonderful motion, light, and heat: and why should spirits? Not by God's destroying them, or changing their nature: for, though all things are in constant motion or revolution, he continueth the natures of the simple beings, and showeth us, that he delighteth in a constancy of operations, insomuch that, hence, Aristotle thought the world eternal. And God hath made no law that threateneth to do it as a penalty. Therefore, to dream that intellectual spirits shall be turned into other things, and lose their essential, formal powers, which specify them, without and against all sober reason. Let them first but prove that the sun loseth motion, light, and heat, and is turned into air, or water, or earth. Such changes are beyond a rational fear.

Sect. 29. VI. But some men dream that souls shall sleep, and cease their acts, though they lose not their powers. But this is more unreasonable than the former. For it must be remembered that it is not a mere obediential, passive power that we speak of; but an active power consisting in as great an inclination to act, as passive natures have to forbear action. So that if such a nature act not, it must be because its natural inclination is hindered by a stronger: and who shall hinder it?

God would not continue an active power, force, and inclination in nature, and forcibly hinder the operation of that nature which he himself continueth; unless penally for some special cause; which he never gave us any notice of by any threatening, but the contrary.

Objects will not be wanting, for all the world will be still at hand, and God above all. It is, therefore, an unreasonable conceit to think that God will continue an active, vital, intellective volitive nature, form, power, force, inclination, in a noble substance, which shall use none of these for many hundred or thousand years, and so continue them in vain.

Nay, 3. It is rather to be thought that some action is their constant state, without which the cessation of their very form would be inferred.

Sect. 30. But all that can be said with reason is, that separated souls, and souls hereafter in spiritual bodies, will have actions of another mode, and very different from these that we now perceive in flesh: and be it so. They will yet be, radically, of the same kind, and they will be formally or eminently such as we now call, vitality, intellection, and volition; and they will be no lower or less excellent, if not far more; and then what the difference will be, Christ knoweth, whom I trust, and in season I shall know. But to talk of a dead life, and an unactive activity, or a sleeping soul, is fitter for a sleeping than a waking man.

Sect. 31. It is true that diseases or hurts do now hinder the soul's intellectual perceptions in the body, and in infancy and sleep they are imperfect. Which proveth, indeed, that the acts, commonly called intellection and volition, have now something in them also of sensation, and that sensitive operations are diversified by the organs of the several senses. And that bare intellection and volition, without any sensation is now scarce to be observed in us, though the soul may have such acts intrinsically, and in its profundity. For it is now so united to this body, that it acteth on it as our form; and, indeed, the acts observed by us cannot be denied to be such as are specified, or modified, at least, by the agents, and the recipients, and subagents' parts conjunct. But, 1. As the sun would do the same thing ex parte sui, if in vacuo only it sent forth its beams, though this were no illumination, or calefaction, because there were no recipient to be illuminated and heated by it. And it would lose nothing by the want of objects; so the soul, had it no body to act on, would have its profound immanent acts of self-living, self-perceiving, and self-loving; and all its external acts on other objects, which need not organs of sense for their approximation. And, 2. Its sensitive faculty is itself, or such as it is not separated from, though the particular sorts of sensation may be altered with their uses: and therefore it may still act on or with the sense: and if one way of sensation be hindered, it hath another. 3. And how far this lantern of flesh doth help, or hinder, its operations, we know not yet, but shall know hereafter. Sondius de Orig. Animæ, (though an heretical writer), hath said much to prove that the body is a hinderance, and not a help, to the soul's intuition. And if ratiocination be a compound act, yet intuition may be done for ever by the soul alone. 4. But as we are not to judge what powers the soul hath when the acts are hindered, but when they are done; nor what souls were made by God for, by their state in the womb, or infancy, or diseases, but by our ordinary, mature state of life; so we have little reason to think that the same God who made them for life, intellection, and volitions here, will not continue the same powers to the same, or as noble uses hereafter, whether with organs, or without, as pleaseth him. If in this flesh our spirits were not inactive and useless, we have no reason to think that they will be so hereafter, and that for ever.

Sect. 32. This greatest and hardest of all objections, doth make us confess (with Contarenus, contra Pomponatium de Anim. Immortalit.,) that though, by the light of nature, we may know the immortality of souls, (and that they lose not their powers or activity,) yet, without supernatural light, we know not what manner of action they will have in their separated state, or in another world, because here they act according to objective termination, and the receptivity of the sense and fantasy, and recipitur ad modum recipients; and its the womb we perceive not that it acteth intellectually at all. But we know, That, 1. If even then it differed not in its formal power from the souls of brutes, it would not so much afterward differ in act: and it would never be raised to that which was not virtually in its nature at the first. 2. And we find that even very little children have quick and strong knowledge of such objects as are brought within their reach; and that their ignorance is not for want of an intellectual power, but for want of objects, or images of things, which time, and use, and conversation among objects, must furnish their fantasies and memories with. And so a soul in the womb, or in an apoplexy, hath not objects of intellection within its reach to act upon; but is as the sun to a room that hath no windows to let in its light. 3. And what if its profound vitality, self-perception, and self-love, be by a kind of sensation and intuition, rather than by discursive reason: I doubt not but some late philosophers make snares to themselves and others, by too much vilifying sense and sensitive souls, as if sense were but some loseable accident of contempered atoms: but sensation (though diversified by organs and uses, and so far

mutable) is the act of a noble, spiritual form and virtue. And as Chambre, and some others, make brutes a lower rank of rationals, and man another higher species, as having his nobler reason for higher ends; so for man to be the noblest order (here) of sensitives, and to have an intellect to order, and govern sensations, and connect them and improve them, were a noble work, if we had no higher. And if intellection and volition were but a higher species of internal sensation than imagination, and the fantasy and memory are, it might yet be a height that should set man specifically above the brutes. And I am daily more and more persuaded, that intellectual souls are essentially sensitive and more, and that their sensation never ceaseth. 4. And still I say, that it is to nature itself a thing unlikely, that the God of nature will long continue a soul that hath formally or naturally an intellective power, in a state in which it shall have no use of it. Let others that will inquire whether it shall have a vehicle or none to act in, and whether aërial, or igneous, and ethereal, and whether it be really an intellectual sort of fire, as material as the solar fire, whose (not compounding, but) inadequaté-conceptus objectivi are, an igneous substance, and formal virtue of life, sense, and intellection, with other such puzzling doubts; it satisfieth me, that God will not continue its noblest powers in vain; and how they shall be exercised, is known to him; and that God's word tells us more than nature. And withal, life, intuition, and love (or volition) are acts so natural to the soul, (as motion, light and heat, quoad actum to fire) that I cannot conceive how its separation should hinder them, but rather that its incorporation hindereth the two latter, by hiding objects, whatever be said of abstractive knowledge and memory.

Sect. 33. VII. But the greatest difficulty to natural knowledge is, whether souls shall continue their individuation, or rather fall into one common soul, or return so to God that gave them, as to be no more divers (or many) individuals as now; as extinguished candles are united to the illuminated air, or to the sunbeams; but of this I have elsewhere said much for others; and for myself, I find I need but this: 1. That, as I said before, either souls are partible substances or not; if not partible, how are they unible? If many may be made one, by conjunction of substances, then that one may (by God) be made many again by partition. Either all (or many) souls are now but one, (individuate only by matter, as many gulfs in the sea, or many candles lighted by the sun,) or not; if they are not one now in several bodies, what reason have we to think that they will be one hereafter, any more than now? Augustine (de Anim.) was put on the question,

Whether souls are one, and not many. And that he utterly denieth.

Whether they are many, and not one. And that it seemeth he could not digest.

Whether they were at once both one and many. Which he thought would seem to some ridiculous, but he seemeth most to incline to. And as God is the God of nature, so nature (even of the devils themselves) dependeth on him, as I said, more than the leaves of fruit do on the tree; and we are all his offspring, and live, and move, and are in him. (Acts 17:1-34) But we are certain for all this, 1. That we are not God. 2. That we are yet many individuals, and not all one soul, or man. If our union should be as near as the leaves and fruit on the same tree, yet those leaves and fruit are numerous, and individual leaves and fruits, through parts of the tree. And were this proved of our present or future state, it would not alter our hopes or fears; for as now, though we all live, move, and be in God, (and, as some dream, are parts of a common soul,) yet it is certain, that some are better and happier than others; some wise and good; and some foolish and evil; some in pain and misery; and some at ease, and in pleasure; and (as I said) it is now no ease to the miserable, to be

told that, radically, all souls are one; no more will it be hereafter, nor can men reasonably hope for, or fear such an union, as shall make their state the same. We see in nature, (as I have elsewhere said,) that if you graft many sorts of scions, (some sweet, some bitter, some crabs,) on the same stock, they will be one tree, aad yet have diversity of fruit. If souls be not unible, nor partible substances, there is no place for this doubt: if they be, they will be still what they are, notwithstanding any such union with a common soul. As a drop of water in the sea is a separable part, and still itself; and as a crab upon the foresaid stock, or tree. And the good or bad quality ceaseth not by any union with others.

Sure we are, that all creatures are in God, by close dependence, and yet that the good are good, and the bad are bad; and that God is good, and hath no evil; and that when man is tormented, or miserable, God suffereth nothing by it, (as the whole man doth, when but a tooth doth ache,) for he would not hurt himself were he passive. Therefore, to dream of any such cessation of our individuation by any union with a creature, as shall make the good less good or happy, or the bad less bad or miserable, is a groundless folly.

Sect. 34. Yet it is very probable, that there will be a nearer union of holy souls with God and Christ, and one another, than we can here conceive of: but this is so far from being to be feared, that it is the highest of our hopes. 1. God himself (though equally every where in his essence) doth operate very variously on his creatures. On the wicked he operateth as the first cause of nature, as his sun shineth on them. On some he operateth by common grace: to some he giveth faith to prepare them for the in-dwelling of his spirit. In believers he dwelleth by love, and they in him; and if we may use such a comparison, as Satan acteth on some only by suggestions, but on others so despotically, as that it is called his possessing them; so God's Spirit worketh on holy souls, so powerfully and constantly, as is called his possessing them. And yet, on the human nature of Christ, the divine nature of the second person hath such a further, extraordinary operation, as is justly called a personal union; which is not by a more essential presence, (for that is everywhere,) but by a peculiar operation and relation: and so holy souls being under a more felicitating operation of God, may well be said to have a nearer union with him than now they have.

Sect. 35. 2. And I observe that (as is aforesaid) all things have naturally a strong inclination to union and communion with their like: every clod and stone inclineth to the earth: water would go to water, air to air, fire to fire; birds and beasts associate with their like: and the noblest natures are most strongly thus inclined; and therefore I have natural reason to think that it will be so with holy souls.

Sect. 36. 3. And I find, that the inordinate contraction of man to himself, and to the interest of this individual person, with the defect of love to all about us, according to every creature's goodness, and especially to God, the infinite good, whom we should love above ourselves, is the very sum of all the pravity of man. And all the injustice and injury to others; and all the neglect of good works in the world; and all our daily terrors, and self-distracting, self-tormenting cares, and griefs, and fears, proceed from this inordinate love and adhesion to ourselves; therefore I have reason to think, that in our better state, we shall perfectly love others as ourselves, and the selfish love will turn into a common and a divine love, which must he by our preferring the common, and the divine good and interest.

Sect. 37. And I am so sensible of the power and plague of selfishness, and how it now corrupteth, tempteth, and disquieteth me, that when I feel any fears, lest individuation cease, and my soul fall into one common soul, (as the stoics thought all souls did at death,) I find great cause to suspect, that this ariseth from the power of this corrupting selfishness; for reason seeth no cause at all to fear it, were it so.

Sect. 38. 4. For I find also, that the nature of love is to desire as near a union as possible; and the strongest love doth strongliest desire it. Fervent lovers think they can scarce be too much one: and love is our perfection, and therefore so is union.

Sect. 39. 5. And I find, that when Christians had the first and full pourings out of the Spirit, they had the ferventest love, and the nearest union, and the least desire of propriety and distance.

Sect 40. 6. And I find, that Christ's prayer for the felicity of his disciples, is a prayer for their unity. (John 17:22-23.) And in this he placeth much of their perfection.

Sect. 41. 7. And I find also, that man is of a sociable nature, and that all men find by experience, that conjunction in societies is needful for their safety, strength, and pleasure.

Sect. 42. 8. And I find, that my soul would fain be nearer God, and that darkness and distance is my misery, and near communion is it that would answer all the tendencies of my soul; why then, should I fear too near a union.

Sect. 43. I think it utterly improbable, that my soul should become more nearly united to any creature than to God; (though it be of the same kind with other souls, and infinitely below God;) for God is as near me, as I am to myself; I still depend on him, as the effect upon its total, constant cause; and that not as the fruit upon the tree, which borroweth all from the earth, water, air, and fire, which it communicateth to its fruit; but as a creature on its Creator, who hath no being but what it receiveth totally from God, by constant communication. Hence Antonine, Seneca, and the rest of the stoics, thought that all the world was God, or one great animal, consisting of divine spirit and matter, as man of soul and body; sometimes calling the supposed soul of the world, God; and sometimes calling the whole world, God; but still meaning that the universe was but one spirit and body united, and that we are all parts of God, or of the body of God, or accidents, at least.

Sect. 44. And even the popish mystical divines, in their pretensions to the highest perfection, say the same in sense; such as Benedict. Anglus, in his Regula Perfectionis, (approved by many doctors,) who placed much of his supereminent life in our believing verily that there is nothing but God, as the beams are to the sun, and as the heat is to the fire; (which really is itself;) and so teaching us to rest in all things as good, as being nothing but God's essential will, which is himself (resolving even our sins and imperfections accordingly into God, so that they are God's, or none).

Sect. 45. And all these men have as fair a pretence for the conceits of such an union with God now, as for such an union after death: for their reason is, 1. That God being infinite, there can be no more beings than his own; but God and the smallest being distinct, would be more entity than God alone; but infinity can have no addition. 2. Because ens et bonum convertuntur; but God only is good. And if we are, notwithstanding all this, distinct beings from God now, we shall not be so advanced as to be deified, and of creatures, or distinct beings, turned into a being infinitely above us. If we be not parts of God now, we shall not be so then. But if they could prove that we are so

now, we should quickly prove to them, 1. That then God hath material, divisible parts (as the stoics thought). 2. And that we are no such parts as are not distinct from one another; but some are tormented, and some happy. And, 3. That (as is said) it will be no abatement of the misery of the tormented, nor of the felicity of the blessed, to tell them that they are all parts of God: for, though the manner of our union with him, and dependence on him, be past our comprehension; yet that we are distinct and distant from each other, and have each one a joy or misery of his own, is past all doubt. Therefore, there is no union with God to be feared by holy souls, but the utmost possible to be highliest desired.

Sect. 46. And if our union with God shall not cease our individuation, or resolve us into a principle to be feared, we may say also of our union with any common soul, or many: if we be unible, we are partible, and so have a distinct, though not a divided substance, which will have its proper accidents. All plants are parts of the earth, really united to it, and radicated in it, and live, and are nourished by it; and yet a vine is a vine; and an apple is an apple; and a rose is a rose; and a nettle is a nettle. And few men would be toiled horses, or toads, if it were proved that they are animated by a common soul.

Sect. 47. But God letteth us see, that though the world be one, yet he delighteth in a wonderful diversity, and multiplicity of individuals. How various and numerous are they in the sea, and on the land, and in the air. And are there none in the other world? How come the stars therein to be so numerous, which are of the same element? And though, perhaps, Saturn, or some other planets, or many stars, may send forth their radiant effluvia, or parts, into the same air, which the sunbeams seem totally to fill and illuminate, yet the rays of the sun, and of other stars, are not the same, how near soever in the same air.

Sect. 48. Were there now no more contraction by egoity, or propriety among men, nor mine and thine did signify no more, nor the distance were greater than that of the several drops of water in the sea, or particles of light in the illuminated air, but I had all my part in such a perfect unity and communion with all others, and knew that all were as happy as I, so that there were no divisions by cross interests or minds, but all were one, certainly it would make my own comforts greater by far, than they are now? Are not an hundred candles set together and united, as splendid a flame as if they were all set asunder? So one soul, one love, one joy would be.

Sect. 49. Object. But it is only the fomes that individuateth lights: as when the same sun, by a burning glass, lighteth a thousand candles, they are individuate only by the matter contracting, being still all united parts of the same sunbeams. And when they are extinct, they are nothing, or all one again.

Answ. They were, before they were extinct, both one and many, none but fools think that extinction annihilateth them, or any part of them; they are after as much substance, and as much solar fire, though diffused, and as much and no more one than before, but not, indeed, many as before, but parts of one. Nature hath made the equal diffused sunbeams to be to the air and surface of the earth as the blood equally moving in the body; and our candles and fires seem to be like the same blood contracted in a bile or inflammation, which indeed is more felt than the equally diffused blood, but it is as the pain of a disease; and so when our fires go out, they are but like a healed, scattered inflammation, and the same substance is more naturally and equally diffused. And if the individuation of souls were only by corporeal matter, and the union thus as great at their departure,

it would not diminish, if it did not too much increase, their perfection and felicity; for there would be no diminution of any substance, or power, or activity, or perfection whatsoever.

Sect. 50. And this would confute their fond opinion, who think that separated souls sleep in nudá potentiá, for want of an organized body to operate in; for no doubt, but if all holy souls were one, this world, either in heaven or earth, hath a common body, enough for such a soul to operate in. Even those stoics that think departed souls are one, do think that that one soul hath a nobler operation than ours, in our narrow bodies, and that when our souls cease animating this body, they have the nobler and sweeter work, in part, of animating the whole world; and those that thought several orbs had their several souls, of which the particular wights participated, said the like of separated souls, as animating the bodies of their globes and orbs. And though all these men trouble their heads with their own vain imaginations, yet this much the nature of the matter tells us, which is considerable, that whereas the utmost fear of the infidel is, that souls departed lose their individuation or activity, and are resolved into one common soul, or continue in a sleepy potentiality, for want of a body to operate in, they do but contradict themselves, seeing it is a notorious truth, 1. That if all holy souls were one, no one would be a loser by the union, but it would be a greater gain than we must hope for; for a part of one is as much and as noble, and as active a substance, as if it were a separated person (and annihilation, or loss of specific powers, is not to be rationally feared). 2. And that one soul is now either self-subsisting without a body, or animateth a suitable body (as some ancients thought the angels stars). If that one soul can act without a body, so may ours, whether as parts of it, or not; if that one soul animate a suitable body, ours, were they united parts of it, would have part of that employment; so that hereby they confute themselves.

Sect. 51. Obj. But this would equalize the good and bad, or at least, those that were good in several degrees; and where then were the reward and punishment?

Answ. It would not equal them at all, any more than distinct personality would do: for, 1. The souls of all holy persons may he so united, as that the souls of the wicked shall have no part in that union. Whether the souls of the wicked shall he united in one sinful, miserable soul, or rather but in one sinful society, or he greatlier separate, disunited, contrary to each other, and militant, as part of their sin and misery, is nothing to this case. 2. Yet natural and moral union must he differenced. God is the root of nature to the worst, and however in one sense it is said, that there is nothing in God but God, yet it is true, that in him all live, and move, and have their being; but yet the wicked's in-being in God doth afford them no sanctifying or beatifying communion with him, as experience showeth us in this life; which yet holy souls have, as being made capable recipients of it. As I said, different plants, briars, and cedars, the stinking and the sweet, are implanted parts (or accidents) of the same world or earth. 3. And the godly themselves may have as different a share of happiness in one common soul, as they have now of holiness, and so as different rewards (even as roses and rosemary, and other herbs, differ in the same garden, and several fruits in the same orchard, or on the same tree). For if souls are unible, and so partible substances, they have neither more nor less of substance or holiness for their union; and so will each have his proper measure. As a tun of water east into the sea will there still be the same, and more than a spoonful cast into it.

Sect. 52. Obj. But spirits are not as bodies extensive and quantitative, and so not partible or divisible, and therefore your supposition is vain.

Answ. 1. My supposition is but the objectors': for if they confess that spirits are substances, (as cannot with reason be denied; for they that specify their operations by motion only, yet suppose a pure proper substance to be the subject or thing moved,) then when they talk of many souls becoming one, it must be by conjunction and increase of the substance of that one: or when they say, that they were always one, they will confess withal that they now differ in number, as individuate in the body. And who will say, that millions of millions are no more than one of all those millions? Number is a sort of quantity; and all souls in the world are more than Cain's or Abel's only; one feeleth not what another feeleth; one knoweth not what another knoweth. And indeed, though souls have not such corporeal extension, as passive, gross, bodily matter hath, yet, as they are more noble, they have a more noble sort of extension, quantity, or degrees, according to which all mankind conceive of all the spiritual substance of the universe; yea, all the angels, or all the souls on earth, as being more, and having more substance than one man's soul alone. 2. And the fathers, for the most part, especially the Greeks, (yea, and the second council of Nice,) thought that spirits created, had a purer sort of material being, which Tertullian called a body; and doubtless, all created spirits have somewhat of passiveness; for they do recipere vel pati from the divine influx; only God is wholly impassive. We are moved when we move, and acted when we act; and it is hard to conceive, that (when matter is commonly called passive) that which is passive should have no sort of matter in a large sense taken; and if it have any parts distinguishable, they are by God divisible. 3. But if the contrary be supposed, that all souls are no more than one, and so that there is no place for uniting or partition, there is no place then for the objection of all souls becoming one, and of losing individuation, unless they mean by annihilation.

Sect. 53. But that God who (as is said) delighteth both in the union, and yet in the wonderful multiplicity of creatures, and will not make all stars to be only one; though fire have a most uniting or aggregative inclination, hath further given experimental notice that there is individuation in the other world as well as here, even innumerable angels and devils, and not one only: as apparitions and witches, and many other evidences prove, of which more anon. So that, all things considered, there is no reason to fear that the souls shall lose their individuation or activity, (though they change their manner of action,) any more than their being or formal power: and so it is naturally certain that they are immortal.

Sect. 54. And if holy souls are so far immortal, I need not prove that they will be immortally happy; for their holiness will infer it; and few will ever dream that it shall there go ill with them that are good, and that the most just and holy God will not use those well whom he maketh holy.

Sect. 1. II. That holy souls shall be hereafter happy, seemeth to be one of the common notices of nature planted in the consciences of mankind; and it is therefore acknowledged by the generality of the world that freely use their understandings. Most, yea almost all the heathen nations at this day believe it, besides the Mahometans; and it is the most barbarous cannibals and Brazilians that do not, whose understandings have had the least improvement, and who have rather an inconsiderate nescience of it, than a denying opposition. And though some philosophers denied it, they were a small and contemned party: and though many of the rest were somewhat dubious, it was only a certainty which they professed to want, and not a probability or opinion that it was true;

and both the vulgar and the deep-studied men believed it, and those that questioned it were the half-studied philosophers, who, not resting in the natural notice, nor yet reaching full intellectual evidence of it by discourse, had found out matter of difficulty to puzzle them, and came not to that degree of wisdom as would have resolved them.

Sect. 2. And even among apostates from Christianity, most, or many, still acknowledge the soul's immortality, and the felicity and reward of holy souls, to be of the common notices, known by nature to mankind. Julian was so much persuaded of it, that, on that account, he exhorteth his priests and subjects to great strictness and holiness of life, and to see that the Christians did not exceed them: and, among us, the Lord Herbert de Veritate, and many others that seem not to believe our supernatural revelations of Christianity, do fully acknowledge it. Besides, those philosophers who most opposed Christianity, as Porphyrius, Maximus, Tyrius, and such others.

Sect. 3. And we find that this notice hath so deep a root in nature, that few of those that study and labour themselves into bestiality (or sadducism) are able to excuse the fears of future misery, but conscience overcometh, or troubleth them much at least, when they have done the worst they can against it. And whence should all this be in man and not in beasts, if man had no further reason of hopes and fears than they? Are a few Sadducees wiser by their forced or crude conceits, than all the world that are taught by nature itself.

Sect. 1. III. If the God of nature have made it every man's certain duty to make it his chief care and work in this life, to seek for happiness hereafter, then such a happiness there is for them that truly seek it. But the antecedent is certain, as I have elsewhere proved. Ergo, &c.

Sect. 2. As to the antecedent. The world is made up of three sorts of men, as to the belief of future retribution, 1. Such as take it for a certain truth; such are Christians, Mahometans, and most heathens.

Such as take it for uncertain, but most probable or likeliest to be true. 3. Such as take it for uncertain, but rather think it untrue. For as none can be certain that it is false, which indeed is true, so I never yet met with one that would say he was certain it was false: so that I need not trouble you with the mention of any other party or opinion; but if any should say so, it is easy to prove that he speaketh falsely of himself.

Sect. 3. And that it is the duty of all these, but especially of the two former sorts, to make it their chief care and work to seek their happiness in the life to come, is easily proved thus: natural reason requireth every man to seek that which is best for himself, with the greatest diligence; but natural reason saith that a probability or possibility of the future everlasting happiness is better and more worthy to be sought, than any thing attainable in this present life (which doth not suppose it). Ergo, &c.

Sect. 4. The major is past doubt. Good and felicity being necessarily desired by the will of man, that which is best, and known so to be, must be most desired. And the minor should be as far past doubt to men that use not their sense against their reason. For, 1. In this life there is nothing certain to be continued one hour. 2. It is certain that all will quickly end, and that the longest life is short. 3. It is certain that time and pleasure past are nothing, properly nothing; and so no better to us than if they had never been. 4. And it is certain that, while we possess them, they are poor, unsatisfactory things, the pleasure of the flesh being no sweeter to a man than to a beast, and the

trouble that accompanieth it much more. Beasts have not the cares, fears, and sorrows, upon foresight, which man hath. They fear not death upon the foreknowledge of it, nor fear any misery after death, nor are put upon any labour, sufferings, or trials, to obtain a future happiness, or avoid a future misery. All which considered, he speaketh not by reason, who saith this vain, vexatious life is better than the possibility or probability of the everlasting glory.

Sect. 5. Now, as to the consequence, or major, of the first argument, it is evident of itself, from God's perfection, and the nature of his works. God maketh it not man's natural duty to lay out his chief care and labour of all his life, on that which is not, or to seek that which man was never made to attain: for then, 1. All his duty should result from mere deceit and falsehood, and God should govern all the world by a lie, which cannot he his part who wanteth neither power, wisdom, nor love, to rule them by truth and righteousness, and who hath printed his image both on his laws and on his servants; in which laws lying is condemned, and the better any man is, the more he hateth it; and liars are loathed by all mankind. 2. And then the better any man is, and the more he doth his duty, the more deluded, erroneous, and miserable should he be. For he should spend that care and labour of his life upon deceit, for that which he shall never have, and so should lose his time and labour: and he should deny his flesh those temporal pleasures which bad men take, and suffer persecutions and injuries from the wicked, and all for nothing, and on mistake: and the more wicked, or more unbelieving, any man is, the wiser and happier should he be, as being in the right, when he denieth the life to come, and all duty and labour in seeking it, or in avoiding future punishment; and while he taketh his utmost pleasure here, he hath all that man was made for. But all this is utterly unsuitable to God's perfection, and to his other works: for he maketh nothing in vain, nor can he lie, much less will he make holiness itself, and all that duty and work of life which reason itself obligeth all men, to be not only vain but hurtful to them. But of this argument I have been elsewhere larger.

Sect. 1. IV. Man differeth so much from brutes in the knowledge of God, and of his future possibilities, that it proveth that he differeth as much in his capacity and certain hopes. 1. As to the antecedent, man knoweth that there is a God by his works. He knoweth that this God is our absolute Lord, our ruler, and our end. He knoweth that, naturally, we owe him all our love and obedience. He knoweth that good men use not to let their most faithful servants be losers by their fidelity; nor do they use to set them to labour in vain. He knoweth that man's soul is immortal, or, at least, that it is far more probable that it is so; and therefore that it must accordingly be well or ill for ever, and that this should be most cared for. 2. And why should God give him all this knowledge more than to the brutes, if he were made for no more enjoyment than the brutes, of what he knoweth. Every wise man maketh his work fit for the use that he intendeth it to: and will not God? So that the consequence also is proved from the divine perfection; and if God were not perfect, he were not God. The denial of a God, therefore, is the result of the denial of man's future hopes.

Sect. 2. And, indeed, though it be but an analogical reason that brutes have, those men seem to be in the right who place the difference between man and brutes more in the objects, tendency, and work of our reason, than in our reason itself as such, and so make animal religiosum to be more of his description than animal rationale. About their own low concerns, a fox, a dog, yea, an ass, and a goose, have such actions as we know not well how to ascribe to any thing below some kind of reasoning, or a perception of the same importance. But they think not of God, and his government, and laws, nor of obeying, trusting, or loving him, nor of the hopes or fears of another

life, nor of the joyful prospect of it. These are that work that man was made for, which is the chief difference from the brutes: and shall we unman ourselves?

Sect. 1. V. The justice of God, as governor of the world, inferreth different rewards hereafter, as I have largely elsewhere proved. 1. God is not only a mover of all that moveth, but a moral ruler of man by laws, and judgment, and executions, else there were no proper law of nature, which few are so unnatural as to deny; and man should have no proper duty, but only motion as he is moved. And then, how cometh a government by laws to be set up under God by men? And then there were no sin or fault in any; for if there were no law and duty, but only necessitated motion, all would be moved as the mover pleased, and there could be no sin; and then there would be no moral good, but forced or necessary motion. But all this is most absurd; and experience telleth us that God doth de facto, morally govern the world; and his right is unquestionable.

Sect. 2. And if God were not the ruler of the world, by law and judgment, the world would have no universal laws, for there is no man that is the universal ruler: and then kings and other supreme powers would be utterly lawless and ungoverned, as having none above them to give them laws, and so they would be capable of no sin or fault, and of no punishment; which yet neither their subjects' interest, nor their own consciences will grant, or allow them thoroughly to believe.

Sect. 3. And if God be a ruler, he is just; or else he were not perfect, nor so good, as he requireth princes and judges on earth to be. An unjust ruler or judge is abominable to all mankind. Righteousness is the great attribute of the universal King.

Sect. 4. But how were he a righteous ruler, 1. If he drew all men to obey him by deceit? 2. If he obliged them to seek and expect a felicity or reward which he will never give them? 3. If he make man's duty his misery? 4. If he require him to labour in vain? 5. If he suffer the wicked to prosecute his servants to the death, and make duty costly, and give no after recompense? 6. If he let the most wicked on the earth pass unpunished, or to escape as well hereafter as the best, and to live in greater pleasure here? The objections fetched from the intrinsical good of duty I have elsewhere answered.

Sect. 1. VI. But God hath not left us to the light of mere nature, as being too dark for men so blind as we. The gospel revelation is the clear foundation of our faith and hopes. Christ hath brought life and immortality to light. One from heaven that is greater than an angel was sent to tell us what is there, and which is the way to secure our hopes. He hath risen, and conquered death, and entered before as our captain and forerunner into the everlasting habitations. And he hath all power in heaven and earth, and all judgment is committed to him, that he might give eternal life to his elect. He hath frequently and expressly promised it them, that they shall live because he liveth, and shall not perish but have everlasting life. (Matthew 28:18; John 5:22; John 17:2; John 12:26; John 3:16; Romans 8:35-38.) And how fully he hath proved and sealed the truth of his word and office to us, I have so largely opened in my 'Reasons of the Christian Religion,' and 'Unreasonableness of Infidelity,' and in my 'Life of Faith,' &c.; and since, in my 'Household Catechising,' that I will not here repeat it.

Sect. 2. And as all his word is full of promises of our future glory at the resurrection, so we are not without assurance that at death the departing soul doth enter upon a state of joy and blessedness. "They that died to (or in) the flesh according to men, do live in the Spirit according to God." (1

Peter 4:6.) For,

He expressly promised the penitent, crucified thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43.)

He gave us the narrative or parable of the damned sensualist, and of Lazarus, (Luke 16,) to instruct us, and not to deceive us.

He tells the Sadducees that God is not the God of the dead (as his subjects and beneficiaries) but of the living. (Matthew 22:32.)

Enoch and Elias were taken up to heaven, and Moses that died, appeared with Elias on the mount. (Matthew 17.)

He telleth us, (Luke 12:4,) that they that kill the body, are not able to kill the soul. Indeed, if the soul were not immortal, the resurrection were impossible. It might be a new creation of another soul, but not a resurrection of the same, if the same be annihilated. It is certain that the Jews believed the immortality of the soul, in that they believed the resurrection and future life of the same man.

And Christ's own soul was commended into his Father's hands, (Luke 23:46,) and was in paradise, when his body was in the grave, to show us what shall become of ours.

And he hath promised, that where he is, there shall his servants be also. (John 12:26.) And that the life here begun in us is eternal life, and that he that believeth in him shall not die, but shall live by him, as he liveth by the Father, for he dwelleth in God, and God in him, and in Christ, and Christ in him. (John 17:3; John 6:54; John 3:16; John 3:36; John 6:47; John 6:50; John 6:56-57; 1 John 4:12-13; Luke 17:21; Romans 14:17.)

And accordingly, Stephen that saw heaven opened, prayed the Lord Jesus to receive his Spirit. (Acts 7:55; Acts 7:59.)

And we are come to Mount Sion, &c., to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of the just made perfect. (Hebrews 12:22-23.)

And Paul here desireth to depart and be with Christ as far better. And to be absent from the body, and be present with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:8.)

And the dead that die in the Lord are blessed, from henceforth, that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them.

And if the disobedient spirits be in prison, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, (1 Peter 3:19; Jude 1:7,) then the just have eternal life. And if the Jews had not thought the soul immortal, Saul had not desired the witch to call up Samuel to speak with him. The rest I now pass by. We have many great and precious promises on which a departed soul may trust.

And (Luke 16:9) Christ expressly saith, that when we fail, (that is, must leave this world,) we shall be received into the everlasting habitations.

Sect. 1. VII. And it is not nothing to encourage us to hope in him that hath made all these promises, when we find how he heareth prayers in this life, and thereby assureth his servants that

he is their true and faithful Saviour. We are apt in our distress to cry loud for mercy and deliverances, and when human help faileth, to promise God, that if he now will save us, we will thankfully acknowledge it his work, and yet when we are delivered, to return not only to security, but to ingratitude, and think that our deliverance came but in the course of common providence, and not indeed as an answer to our prayers. And therefore God in mercy reneweth both our distresses and our deliverances, that what once or twice will not convince us of, many and great deliverances may. This is my own case. Oh, how oft have I cried to him when men and means were nothing, and when no help in second causes did appear, and how oft, and suddenly, and mercifully hath he delivered me! What sudden case, what removal of long afflictions have I had! such extraordinary changes, and beyond my own and others' expectations, when many plain-hearted, upright Christians have, by fasting and prayer, sought God on my behalf, as have over and over convinced me of special providence, and that God is indeed a hearer of prayers. And wonders I have seen done for others also, upon such prayers, more than for myself, yea, and wonders for the church and public societies. Though I and others are too like those Israelites, (Psalms 78:1-72) who cried to God in their troubles, and he oft delivered them out of their distress, but they quickly forgot his mercies, and their convictions, purposes, and promises, when they should have praised the Lord for his goodness, and declared his works with thanksgiving to the sons of men. And what were all these answers and mercies but the fruits of Christ's power, fidelity, and love, the fulfillings of his promises, and the earnest of the greater blessings of immortality, which the same promises give me title to.

I know that no promise of hearing prayer setteth up our wills in absoluteness, or above God's, as if every will of ours must be fulfilled if we do but put it into a fervent or confident prayer; but if we ask any thing through Christ, according to his will, expressed in his promise, he will hear us. If a sinful love of this present life, or of case, or wealth, or honour, should cause me to pray to God against death, or against all sickness, want, reproach, or other trials, as if I must live here in prosperity for ever if I ask it, this sinful desire and expectation is not the work of faith, but of presumption. What if God will not abate me my last, or daily pains? What if he will continue my life no longer, whoever pray for it, and how earnestly soever? Shall I therefore forget how oft he hath heard prayers for me? and how wonderfully he hath helped both me and others? My faith hath oft been helped by such experiences, and shall I forget them? or question them without cause at last?

Sect. 1. VIII. And it is a subordinate help to my belief of immortality with Christ, to find so much evidence that angels have friendly communion with us here, and therefore we shall have communion with them hereafter. (Psalms 34:7; Psalms 91:11-12; Luke 15:10; 1 Corinthians 11:10; Hebrews 1:14; Hebrews 12:22; Hebrews 13:2; Matthew 18:10; Matthew 25:31; Matthew 13:39; Matthew 13:49; Acts 5:19; Acts 8:26; Acts 12:7; Acts 12:23.) They have charge of us, and pitch their tents about us; they bear us up; they rejoice at our repentance; they are the regardful witnesses of our behaviour; they are ministering spirits for our good; they are our angels beholding the face of our heavenly Father. They will come with Christ in glorious attendance at the great and joyful day, and, as his executioners, they will separate the just from the unjust. And it is not only the testimony of Scripture by which we know their communion with us, but also some degree of experience. Not only of old did they appear to the faithful as messengers from God, but of late times there have been testimonies of their ministration for us. Of which see Zanchy de Angelis, and Mr. J. Ambrose, of our communion with angels. Many a mercy doth God give us by their

ministry, and they that are now so friendly to us, and suitable to our communion and help, and make up one society with us, do hereby greatly encourage us to hope that we are made for the same region, work, and company with these our blessed, loving friends. They were once in a life of trial, it seems, as we are now, though not on earth. (Jude 1:6; 2 Peter 2:4.) And they that overcame and are confirmed rejoice in our victory and confirmation. It is not an uninhabited world which is above us, nor such as is beyond our capacity and hope. We are come to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of the perfected just, who together have discreet quantity, or numerical difference, notwithstanding their happy union and communion.

Sec. 1. IX. And Satan himself, though unwillingly, hath many ways helped my belief of our immortality and future hopes. 1. I have had many convincing proofs of witches, the contracts they have made with devils, and the power which they have received from them. Beside the volumes of Remigius and Bodin, and the Mallei Maleficorum, Danæus, and others, we had many score of them detected, and many executed in one year in Suffolk and Essex, about 1644. And I have at this present a flint-stone, which was one of about 160, which was voided by the urinary passage, by a bewitched child in Evesham, yet living, some of near an ounce weight, which was fully proved, the witch executed, and the child, upon her imprisonment, freed. To pass by many others.

Sect. 2. 2. And I have had convincing testimony of apparitions, besides that famous one, the devil of Mascon, and that in the shape of lieutenant-colonel Bowen, in Wales, mentioned elsewhere, and besides many testimonies of haunted houses, (however many, or most such reports, are but deceits).

Sect. 3. From both these I gather, 1. That there are individual inhabitants of the invisible world, and that spirits have their numerical differences, whatever unity is among them, and therefore we have reason to judge the same of separated souls. 2. That our souls are designed to future happiness or misery, which is implied in the foresaid contracts and endeavours of devils for our ruin. 3. That faith and holiness are the way of life, and unbelief and sin the way to misery, which also is in these implied.

Sect. 4. 3. And I have both read, and partly seen, convincing evidence, that there is such an exercise of diabolical power as we commonly call possession. Whether all, or most madmen are under such a power, as some think, I determine not, but that some are under it is evident. The motions of the body, which I have seen, seem beyond man’s natural power. The telling of secrets and things absent, the speaking of languages never learned, the vomiting of nails, glass, hairs, &c., and other such effects, which the most learned, sober, impartial physicians profess to have seen, are credible testimonies.

Sect. 5. 4. And I have felt, and heard, and known from others, of such sorts of temptations, as show themselves to be the acts of malicious spirits, enemies to mankind. The advantages that Satan taketh of a corrupted fancy, which hath once taken in such an image as may be his matter to work upon, is very remarkable. I have known a worthy, learned, pious person, who from his youth to old age, upon such an advantage, hath been so tempted, with pleasure, to torment himself, even his own flesh, as that for many years together, in a partial melancholy, at divers fits he was not able (though conscience also tormented him for it) to forbear. Many, by an immodest look or touch, have given Satan such a power upon their fancies, as no reason, conscience, or resolution could of a long time overcome. Few men, I think, that observe themselves, have not at

some time had experience of such inward temptations, as show that the author of them is an invincible enemy. All which tells us, 1. That there are individual spirits. 2. Yea, devils that seek man's misery. 3. And that by the way of sin, and consequently that a future happiness or misery must be expected by us all.

Sect. 1. X. But the great and sure prognostics of our immortal happiness, is from the renewing operations of the Spirit of holiness on the soul. 1. That such a renewing work there is, all true believers in some measure feel. 2. And that it is the earnest of heaven, is proved thus.

Sect. 2. 1. If it be a change of greatest benefit to Man 1:2. And if heaven be the very sum and end of it. 3. And if it overcome all fleshly, worldly opposition. 4. And can be wrought by none but God. 5. And was before promised by Jesus Christ to all sound believers. 6. And is universally wrought in them all, either only, or eminently above all others. 7. And was promised them as a pledge and earnest of glory; then it can be no less than such a pledge and earnest; but the former are all true, &c.

Sect. 3. 1. That the change is of grand importance unto man, appeareth in that it is the renovation of his mind, and will, and life. It repaireth his depraved faculties, it causeth man to live as man, who is degenerated to a life too like to brutes. By God's permitting many to live in blindness, wickedness, and confusion, and to be tormenters of themselves and one another, by temptations, injuries, wars, and cruelty, we the fuller see what it is that grace doth save men from, and what a difference it maketh in the world. Those that have lived unholy in their youth, do easily find the difference in themselves when they are renewed. But to them that have been piously inclined from their childhood, it is harder to discern the difference, unless they mark the case of others. If man be worth any thing, it is for the use that his faculties were made, and if he be not good for the knowledge, love, and service of his Creator, what is he good for? And certainly the generality of ungodly worldlings are undisposed to all such works as this, till the Spirit of Christ effectually change them. Men are slaves to sin till Christ thus make them free. (John 8:32-33; John 8:36; Romans 6:18; Acts 26:18; Romans 8:2.) But where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (2 Corinthians 3:17.) If the divine nature and image, and the love of God shed abroad on the heart, be not our excellency, health, and beauty, what is? And that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:6.) Without Christ and his Spirit, we can do nothing. Our dead notions and reason, when we see the truth, have not power to overcome temptations, nor to raise up man's soul to its original and end, nor to possess us with the love and joyful hopes of future blessedness. It were better for us to have no souls, than that those souls should be void of the Spirit of God.

Sect. 4. 2. And that heaven is the sum and end of all the Spirit's operations, appeareth in all that are truly conscious of them in themselves, and to them and others by all God's precepts, which the Spirit causeth us to obey, and the doctrine which it causeth us to believe, and by the description of all God's graces which he worketh in us. What is our knowledge and faith, but our knowledge and belief of heaven, as consisting in the glory and love of God there manifested, and as purchased by Christ, and given by his covenant? What is our hope but the hope of glory. (See Hebrews 11:1, and throughout; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 6:11; Hebrews 6:18-19; Hebrews 3:6; Titus 2:13; Titus 3:7; Colossians 1:5; Colossians 1:23; Colossians 1:27.) And through the Spirit, we wait for all this hope. (Galatians 5:5.) What is our love but a desire of communion with the blessed God

initially here, and perfectly hereafter? As the sum of Christ's gospel was, "Take up the cross, forsake all here, and follow me, and thou shalt have a reward in heaven." (Luke 14:26; Luke 14:33; Luke 18:22-23.) And the consolation of his gospel is, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven." (Matthew 5:11-12.) So the same is the sum of his Spirit's operations, for what he teacheth and commandeth that he worketh. For he worketh by that word, and the impress must be like the signet, what arm soever set it on. He sendeth not his Spirit to make men craftier than others for this world, but to make them wiser for salvation, and to make them more heavenly and holy. For the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. Heavenliness is the Spirit's special work.

Sect. 5. 3. And in working this it conquereth the inward undisposedness and averseness of a fleshly, worldly mind and will, and the customs of a carnal life; and the outward temptations of Satan, and all the allurements of the world. Christ first overcame the world, and teacheth and causeth us to overcome it; even its flatteries and its frowns: our faith is our victory. Whether this victory be easy, and any honour to the Spirit of Christ, let our experience of the wickedness of the ungodly world, and of our own weakness, and of our falls when the Spirit of God forsaketh us, be our informer.

Sect. 6. 4. And that none but God can do this work on the soul of man, both the knowledge of causes and experience prove. The most learned, wise, and holy teachers cannot (as they confess and show); the wisest and most loving parents cannot, and therefore must pray to him that can; the greatest princes cannot; evil angels neither can nor will. What good angels can do on the heart we know not; but we know that they do nothing, but as the obedient ministers of God. And (though we have some power on ourselves, yet) that we ourselves cannot do it: that we cannot quicken, illuminate, or sanctify ourselves, and that we have nothing but what we have received, conscience and experience fully tell us.

Sect. 7. 5. And that Christ promised this Spirit in a special measure to all true believers, that it should be in them his advocate, agent, seal, and mark, is yet visible in the gospel; yea, and in the former prophets. (Isaiah 44:3-4; Ezekiel 36:26; Ezekiel 37:14; Joel 2:28-29; Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 18:31; Ephesians 1:13; John 3:5; John 4:23-24; John 6:63; John 7:39; John 1:33; John 14:16; John 14:26; Acts 1:5; Acts 1:8; John 15:26; John 16:7-9, &c.) Indeed the Spirit here, and heaven hereafter, are the chief of all the promises of Christ.

Sect. 8. 6. And that this Spirit is given (not to hypocrites that abuse Christ, and do not seriously believe him, nor to mere pretending, nominal Christians, but) to all that sincerely believe the gospel, is evident not only to themselves in certainty, (if they are in a condition to know themselves,) but to others in part by the effects: they have other ends, other affections, other lives, than the rest of mankind have; though their heavenly nature and design be the less discerned and honoured in the world, because their chiefest difference is out of the sight of man, in the heart, and in their secret actions, and because their imperfections blemish them, and because the malignant world is by strangeness and enmity an incompetent judge, yet it is discernible to others, that they live upon the hopes of a better life, and their heavenly interest is it that over-ruleth all the adverse interests of this world, and that in order thereunto they live under the conduct of divine authority, and that God's will is highest and most prevalent with them, and that to obey and please him as far as they know it is the greatest business of their lives, though ignorance and adverse flesh do make

their holiness and obedience imperfect. The universal noise and opposition of the world against them, do show that men discern a very great difference, which error, and cross interests, and carnal inclinations, render displeasing to those who find them condemned by their heavenly designs and conversations.

Sect. 9. But whether others discern it, or deny it, or detest it, the true believer is conscious of it in himself: even when he groaneth to be better, to believe, and trust, and love God more, and to have more of the heavenly life and comforts, those very desires signify another appetite and mind, than worldlings have; and even when his frailties and weaknesses make him doubt of his own sincerity, he would not change his governor, rule, or hopes, for all that the world can offer him. He hath the witness in himself, that there is in believers a sanctifying Spirit, calling up their minds to God and glory, and warring victoriously against the flesh; (1 John 5:9-11; Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:1-25; Php 3:7-15;) so that to will is present with them; and they love and delight in a holy conformity to their rule, and it is never so well and pleasant with them, as when they can trust and love God most; and in their worst and weakest condition, they would fain be perfect. This Spirit, and its renewing work, so greatly different from the temper and desires of worldly men, is given by Christ to all sound believers.

Sect. 10. It is true, that some that know not of an incarnate Saviour, have much in them that is very laudable; whether it be real saving holiness, and whether Abraham were erroneous in thinking that even the Sodoms of the world were likely to have had fifty righteous persons in them, I am not now to inquire: but it is sure, 1. That the world had really a Saviour, about four thousand years before Christ's incarnation; even the God of pardoning mercy, who promised and undertook what after was performed, and shall be to the end. 2. And that the Spirit of this Saviour did sanctify God's elect from the beginning; and gave them the same holy and heavenly dispositions (in some degree) before Christ's incarnation, as is given since; yea, it is called "The Spirit of Christ," which was before given. (1 Peter 1:11; 1 Peter 1:3.) That this Spirit was then given to more than the Jews. 4. That Christ hath put that part of the world that hear not of his incarnation into no worse a condition than he found them in: that as the Jews' covenant of peculiarity was no repeal of the universal law of grace, made by God with fallen mankind, in Adam and Noah; so the covenant of grace of the second edition, made with Christ's peculiar people, is no repeal of the foresaid law in the first edition, to them that hear not of the second. 5. That all that wisdom and goodness, that is in any without the christian church, is the work of the Spirit of the Redeemer; as the light which goeth before sun-rising, and after sun-setting, and in a cloudy day, is of the same sun which others see, even to them that see not the sun itself. 6. That the liker any without the church are to the sanctified believers, the better they are, and the more unlike the worse; so that all these six things being undeniable, it appeareth, that it is the same Spirit of Christ, which now giveth all men what real goodness is any where to be found. But it is notorious that no part of the world is, in heavenliness and virtue, comparable to true and serious Christians.

Sect. 11. 7. And let it be added, that Christ, (Ephesians 1:14; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:5; Romans 8:23; 2 Timothy 2:19; Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30; 1 John 5:9-10; Hebrews 10:15,) who promised the greatest measures of the Spirit, (which he accordingly hath given,) did expressly promise this, as a means and pledge, first-fruits, and earnest, of the heavenly glory: and, therefore, it is a certain proof, that such a glory we shall have. He that can and doth give us a spiritual change or renovation, which in its nature and tendency is heavenly, and sets our hopes

and hearts on heaven, and turneth the endeavours of our lives to the seeking of a future blessedness, and told us, before-hand, that he would give us this preparatory grace, as the earnest of that felicity, may well be trusted to perform his word in our actual glorification.

Sect. 12, And now, O weak and fearful soul! why shouldest thou draw back, as if the case were yet left doubtful? Is not thy foundation firm? Is not the way of life, through the valley of death, made safe by him that conquereth death? Art thou not yet delivered from the bondage of thy fears, when the gaoler and executioner, who had the power of death, hath, by Christ, been put out of his power, as to thee? Is not all this evidence true and sure? Hast thou not the witness in thyself? Hast thou not found the motions, the effectual operations, the renewing changes, of this spirit in thee, long ago? And is he not still the agent and witness of Christ, residing and operating in thee? Whence else are thy groanings after God; thy desires to be nearer to his glory; to know him better; to love him more? Whence came ail the pleasure thou hast had in his sacred truth, and ways, and service? Who else overcame thy folly, and pride, and vain desires, so far as they are overcome? Who made it thy choice to sit at the feet of Christ, and hear his word, as the better part, and to despise the honours and preferments of the world, and to account them all as dung and dross? Who breathed in thee all those requests that thou hast sent up to God? Overvalue not corrupted nature, it bringeth not forth such fruits as these: if thou doubt of that, remember what thou wast in the hour of temptation, even of poor and weak temptations. And how small a matter hath drawn thee to sin, when God did but leave thee to thyself. Forget not the days of youthful vanity: overlook not the case of the miserable world, even of thy sinful neighbours, who, in the midst of light still live in darkness, and hear not the loudest calls of God: look about on thousands that, in the same land, and under the same teaching, and after the greatest judgments and deliverance, run on to all excess of riot, and, as past feeling, as greedily vicious and unclean. Is it no work of Christ's Spirit that hath made thee to differ? Thou hast nothing to boast of, and much to be humbled for; but thou hast also much to be thankful for. Thy holy desires are, alas! too weak; but they are holy: thy love hath been too cold; but it is holiness, and the most holy God, that thou hast loved. Thy hopes in God have been too low; but it is God thou hast hoped in, and his love and glory that thou hast hoped for. Thy prayers have been too dull and interrupted; but it is holiness and heaven that thou hast most prayed for. Thy labours and endeavours have been too slothful; but it is God, and glory, and the good of mankind, that thou hast laboured for. Though thy motion were too weak and slow, it hath been Godward; and, therefore, it was from God. O bless the Lord, that hath not only given thee a word that beareth the image of God, and is sealed by uncontrolled miracles, to be the matter of thy belief, but hath also fulfilled his promises so oft and notably to thee, in the answer of prayers, and in great and convincing deliverances of thyself and many others; and hath, by wonders, oft assisted thy faith! Bless that God of light and love, who, besides the universal attestation of his word, long ago given to all the church, hath given thee the internal seal, the nearer in-dwelling attestation, the effects of power, light, and love, imprinted on thy nature, mind, and will, the witness in thyself, that the word of God is not a human dream, or lifeless thing; that by regeneration hath been here preparing thee for the light of glory, as by generation he prepared thee to see this light, and converse with men. And wilt thou yet doubt and fear against all this evidence, experience, and foretaste?

Sect. 13. I think it not needless labour to confirm my soul in the full persuasion of the truth of its own immortal nature, and of a future life of joy or misery to mankind, and of the certain truth of the

christian faith; the being of God, and his perfection, hath so great evidence, that I find no great temptation to doubt of it, any more than whether there be an earth, or a sun; and the atheist seemeth to me to be in that no better than mad. The christian verity is known only by supernatural revelation; but by such revelation it is so attested externally to the world, and internally to holy souls, as maketh faith the ruling, victorious, consolatory principle, by which we must live, and not by sight; but the soul's immortality and reward hereafter is of a middle nature, viz., of natural revelation, but incomparably less clear than the being of a God; and therefore, by the addition of evangelical (supernatural) revelation, is made to us much more clear and sure. And I find among the infidels of this age, that most who deny the christian verity, do almost as much deny or question the retribution of a future life. And they that are fully satisfied of this, do find Christianity so excellently congruous to it, as greatly facilitateth the work of faith. Therefore, I think, that there is scarce any verity more needful to be thoroughly digested into a full assurance, than this of the soul's immortality, and hope of future happiness.

Sect. 14. And when I consider the great unlikeness of men's hearts and lives to such a belief, as we all profess, I cannot but fear, that not only the ungodly, but most that truly hope for glory, have a far weaker belief (in habit and act) of the soul's immortality, and the truth of the gospel, than they seem to take notice of in themselves. Can I be certain, or fully persuaded, (in habit and act) of the future rewards and punishments of souls, and that we shall be all shortly judged, as we have lived here, and yet not despise all the vanities of this world, and set my heart, with resolution and diligence, to the preparation which must be made by a holy, heavenly, fruitful life, as one whose soul is taken up with the hopes and fears of things of such unspeakable importance. Who could stand dallying, as most men do, at the door of eternity, that did verily believe his immortal soul must be shortly there? Though such an one had no certainty of his own particular title to salvation, the certainty of such a grand concernment (that joy or misery is at hand) would surely awaken him to try, cry, or search; to beg, to strive, to watch, to spare no care, or cost, or labour, to make all sure in a matter of such weight; it could not be but he would do it with speed, and do it with a full resolved soul, and do it with earnest zeal and diligence. What man, that once saw the things which we hear of, even heaven and hell, would not afterwards, (at least in deep regard and seriousness,) exceed the most resolved believer that you know. One would think, in reason, it should be so thought: I confess a wicked heart is very senseless.

Sect. 15. I do confess, that there is much weakness of the belief of things unseen, where yet there is sincerity; but surely there will be some proportion between our belief and its effects. And where there is little regard, or fear, or hopes, or sorrow, or joy, or resolved diligence, for the world to come, I must think that there is (in act at least) but little belief of it, and that such persons little know themselves, how much they secretly doubt, whether it be true. I know that most complain, almost altogether, of the uncertainty of their title to salvation, and little of their uncertainty of a heaven and hell; but were they more certain of this, and truly persuaded of it at the heart, it would do more to bring them to that serious, resolved faithfulness in religion, which would help them more easily to be sure of their sincerity, than long examinations, and many marks talked of, without this, will do.

Sect. 16. And I confess, that the great wisdom of God hath not thought meet, that in the body we should have as clear, and sensible, and lively apprehensions of heaven and hell, as sight would cause. For that would be to have too much of heaven or hell on earth; for the gust would follow the

perception, and so full a sense would be some sort of a possession, which we are not fit for in this world. And, therefore, it must be a darker revelation than sight would be, that it may be a lower perception, lest this world and the next should be confounded; and faith and reason should be put out of office, and not duly tried, exercised, and fitted for reward; but yet faith is faith, and knowledge is knowledge; and he that verily believeth such great, transcendent things, though he see them not, will have some proportionable affections and endeavours.

Sect. 17. I confess also, that man's soul, in flesh, is not fit to bear so deep a sense of heaven and hell as sight would cause; because it here operateth on and with the body, and according to its capacity, which cannot bear so deep a sense without distraction, by screwing up the organs too high, till they break, and so overdoing, would undo all; but yet there is an overruling seriousness, which a certain belief of future things must needs bring the soul to, that truly hath it: and he that is careful and serious for this world, and looketh after a better, but with a slight, unwilling, half-regard, and, in the second place, must give me leave to think, that he believeth but as he liveth, and that his doubting, or unbelief, of the reality of a heaven and hell, is greater than his belief.

Sect. 18. O, then, for what should my soul more pray, than for a clearer, and stronger faith? I believe, Lord, help my unbelief! I have many a thousand times groaned to thee under the burden of this remnant of darkness and unbelief; I have many a thousand times thought of the evidences of the christian verity, and of the great necessity of a lively, powerful, active faith: I have begged it; I have cried to thee night and day, Lord increase my faith! I have written and spoken that to others which might be most useful to myself, to raise the apprehensions of faith yet higher, and make them liker those of sense; but yet, yet Lord, how dark is this world! What a dungeon is this flesh! How little clearer is my sight, and little quicker are my perceptions, of unseen things, than long ago! Am I at the highest that man on earth can reach, and that when I am so dark and low? Is there no growth of these apprehensions more to be expected? Doth the soul cease its increase in vigorous perception, when the body ceaseth its increase, or vigour, of sensation? Must I sit down in so low a measure, while I am drawing nearer to the things believed; and am almost there, where belief must pass into sight and love? Or must I take up with the passive silence and inactivity, which some friars persuade us is nearer to perfection; and, under pretence of annihilation and receptivity, let my sluggish heart alone, and say, that in this neglect I wait for thy operations? O let not a soul, that is driven from this world, and weary of vanity, and can think of little else but immortality, that seeks and cries both night and day for the heavenly light, and fain would have some foretaste of glory, and some more of the first-fruits of the promised joys, let not such a soul either long, or cry, or strive in vain! Punish not my former grieving of thy Spirit, by deserting a soul that crieth for thy grace, so near its great and inconceivable change. Let me not languish in vain desires, at the door of hope; nor pass with doubtful thoughts and fears, from this vale of misery. Which should be the season of triumphant faith, and hope, and joy, if not when I am entering on the world of joy? O thou that hast left us so many consolatory words of promise, that our joy may be full; send, oh! send, the promised Comforter, without whose approaches and heavenly beams, when all is said, and a thousand thoughts and strivings have been assayed, it will still be night and winter with the soul.

Sect. 19. But have I not expected more particular and more sensitive conceptions of heaven, and the state of blessed souls, than I should have done, and remained less satisfied, because I expected such distinct perceptions to my satisfaction, which God doth not ordinarily give to souls

in flesh? I fear it hath been too much so; a distrust of God, and a distrustful desire to know much (good and evil) for ourselves, as necessary to our quiet and satisfaction, was that sin which hath deeply corrupted man's nature, and is more of our common pravity, than is commonly observed; I find that this distrust of God, and my Redeemer, hath had too great a hand in my desires of a distineter and more sensible knowledge. I know that I should implicitly, and absolutely, and quietly, trust my soul into my Redeemer's hands; (of which I must speak more anon;) and it is not only for the body, but also for the soul, that a distrustful care is our great sin and misery. But yet we must desire that our knowledge and belief may be as distinct and particular as God's revelations are; and we can love no further than we know; and the more we know of God and glory, the more we shall love, desire, and trust him. It is a known, and not merely an unknown God and happiness, that the soul doth joyfully desire; and if I may not be ambitious of too sensible and distinct perceptions here, of the things unseen; yet must I desire and beg the most fervent and sensible love to them that I am capable of. I am willing (in part) to take up with that unavoidable ignorance, and that low degree of such knowledge, which God confineth us to in the flesh, so be it he will give me but such consolatory foretastes in love and joy, which such a general, imperfect knowledge may consist with, that my soul may not pass with distrust and terror, but with suitable, triumphant hopes to the everlasting pleasures.

O Father of lights! who givest wisdom to them that ask it of thee, shut not up this sinful soul in darkness! leave me not to grope in unsatisfied doubts, at the door of the celestial light! or, if my knowledge must be general, let it be clear and powerful; and deny me not now the lively exercise of faith, hope, and love, which are the stirrings of the new creature, and the dawnings of the everlasting light, and the earnest of the promised inheritance.

Sect. 20. But we are oft ready to say, with Cicero, when he had been reading such as Plato, that, while the book is in our hands, we seem confident of our immortality, and when we lay it by, our doubts return; so our arguments seem clear and cogent, and yet when we think not of them with the best advantage, we are oft surprised with fear, lest we should be mistaken, and our hopes be vain; and hereupon (and from the common fear of death, that even good men too often manifest) the infidels gather, that we do but force ourselves into such a hope as we desire to be true, against the tendency of man's nature, and that we were not made for a better world.

Sect. 21. But this fallacy ariseth from men's not distinguishing, 1. Sensitive fears from rational uncertainty, or doubts. 2. And the mind that is in the darkness of unbelief, from that which hath the light of faith. I find in myself too much of fear, when I look into eternity, interrupting and weakening my desires and joy. But I find that it is very much an irrational, sensitive fear, which the darkness of man's mind, the greatness of the change, the dreadful majesty of God, and man's natural averseness to die, do, in some degree, necessitate, even when reason is fully satisfied that such fears are consistent with certain safety. If I were bound with the strongest chains, or stood on the surest battlements, on the top of a castle or steeple, I could not possibly look down without fear, and such as would go near to overcome me; and yet I should be rationally sure that I am there fast and safe, and cannot fall. So is it with our prospect into the life to come: fear is oft a necessitated passion: when a man is certain of his safe foundation, it will violently rob him of the comfort of that certainty: yea, it is a passion that irrationally doth much to corrupt our reason itself, and would make us doubt because we fear, though we know not why: and a fearful man doth hardly trust his own apprehensions of his safety, but, among other fears, is still ready to fear lest he be deceived:

like timorous, melancholy persons about their bodies, who are ready still to think that every little distemper is a mortal symptom, and that worse is still nearer them than they feel, and they hardly believe any words of hope.

Sect. 22. And Satan, knowing the power of these passions, and having easier access to the sensitive than to the intellective faculties, doth labour to get in at this backdoor, and to frighten poor souls into doubt and unbelief: and in timorous natures he doth it with too great success, as to the consolatory acts of faith. Though yet God's mercy is wonderfully seen in preserving many honest, tender souls from the damning part of unbelief, and, by their fears, preserveth them from being bold with sin: when many bold and impudent sinners turn infidels, or atheists, by forfeiting the helps of grace.

Sect. 23. And, indeed, irrational fears have so much power to raise doubts, that they are seldom separated; insomuch that many scarce know, or observe, the difference between doubts and fears: and many say they not only fear but doubt, when they can scarce tell why, as if it were no intellectual act which they meant, but an irrational passion.

Sect. 24. If, therefore, my soul see undeniable evidence of immortality; and if it be able, by irrefragable argument, to prove the future blessedness expected; and if it be convinced that God's promises are true, and sufficiently sealed and attested by him, to warrant the most confident belief; and if I trust my soul and all my hopes upon this word, and evidences of truth, it is not, then, our averseness to die, nor the sensible fears of a soul that looketh into eternity, that invalidate any of the reasons of my hope, nor prove the unsoundness of my faith.

Sect. 25. But yet these fears do prove its weakness; and were they prevalent against the choice, obedience, resolutions, and endeavours of faith, they would be prevalent against the truth of faith, or prove its nullity; for faith is trust; and trust is a securing, quieting thing. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" was a just reproof of Christ to his disciples, when sensible dangers raised up their fears. For the established will hath a political or imperfect, though not a despotical and absolute, power over our passions. And therefore our fears do show our unbelief, and stronger faith is the best means of conquering even irrational fears; "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted in me? trust in God," &c. (Psalms 42:1-11) is a needful way of chiding a timorous heart.

Sect. 26. And though many say that faith hath not evidence, and think that it is an assent of the mind, merely commanded by the empire of the will, without a knowledge of the verity of the testimony; yet, certainly, the same assent is ordinarily in the Scriptures called, indifferently, knowing and believing: and, as a bare command, will not cause love, unless we perceive an amiableness in the object, so a bare command of the law, or of the will, cannot alone cause belief, unless we perceive a truth in the testimony believed: for it is a contradiction; or an act without its object. And truth is perceived only so far as it is some way evident: for evidence is nothing but the objective perceptibility of truth; or that which is metaphorically called light. So that we must say that faith hath not sensible evidence of the invisible things believed; but faith is nothing else but the willing perception of the evidence of truth in the word of the assertor, and a trust therein. We have, and must have, evidence that Scripture is God's word, and that his word is true, before, by any command of the word or will, we can believe it.

Sect. 27. I do, therefore, neither despise evidence as unnecessary, nor trust to it alone as the sufficient total cause of my belief: for if God's grace do not open mine eyes, and come down in power upon my will, and insinuate into it a sweet acquaintance with the things unseen, and a taste of their goodness to delight my soul, no reasons will serve to stablish and comfort me, how undeniable soever: reason is fain first to make use of notions, words, or signs; and to know terms, propositions, and arguments, which are but means to the knowledge of things, is its first employment, and that, alas! which multitudes of learned men do take up with: but it is the illumination of God that must give us an effectual acquaintance with the things spiritual and invisible, which these notions signify, and to which our organical knowledge is but a means.

Sect. 28. To sum up all, that our hopes of heaven have a certain ground appeareth, I. From nature: II. From grace: III. From other works of gracious providence.

I. From the nature of man: 1. Made capable of it. 2. Obliged, even by the law of nature, to seek it before all. 3. Naturally desiring perfection, 1. Habitual: 2. Active: And, 3. Objective.

And from the nature of God. 1. As good and communicative. 2. As holy and righteous. 3. As wise; making none of his works in vain.

Sect. 29. II. From grace, 1. Purchasing it. 2. Declaring it by a messenger from heaven, both by word, and by Christ's own (and others') resurrection. 3. Promising it. 4. Sealing that promise by miracles there. 5. And by the work of sanctification, to the end of the world.

Sect. 30. III. By subordinate providence. 1. God's actual governing the world by the hopes and fears of another life. 2. The many helps which he giveth us for a heavenly life, and for attaining it (which are not vain). 3. Specially the ministration of angels, and their love to us, and communion with us. 4. And, by accident, devils themselves convince us. 1. By the nature of their temptations. 2. By apparitions, and haunting houses. 3. By witches. 4. By possessions; which though it be but a satanical operation on the body, yet is so extraordinary an operation, that it differeth from the more usual, as (if I may so compare them) God's Spirit's operations on the saints, that are called his dwelling in them, or possessing them, are different from his lower operations on others.

Sect. 1. II. Having proved that faith and hope have a certain, future happiness to expect, the text directeth me next to consider why it is described by "being with Christ;" viz. I. What is included in our "being with Christ." II. That we shall be with him. III. Why we shall be with him.

Sect. 2. To be with Christ, includeth, 1. Presence. 2. Union. 3.

Communion, or participation of felicity with him.

Sect. 3. 1. Quest. Is it Christ's godhead, or his human soul, or his human body, that we shall be present with, and united to, or all? Answ. It is all, but variously.

Sect. 4. 1. We shall be present with the divine nature of Christ. Quest. But are we not always so? And are not all creatures so? Answ. Yes, as his essence comprehendeth all place and beings; but not as it is operative, and manifested in and by his glory. Christ directeth our hearts and tongues to pray "Our Father, which art in heaven:" and yet he knew that all place is in and with God; because it is in heaven that he gloriously operateth and shineth forth to holy souls: even as man's soul is eminently said to be in the head, because it understandeth and reasoneth in the head, and not in

the foot, or hand, though it be also there. And as we look a man in the face when we talk to him, so we look up to heaven when we pray to God. God who is, and operateth as, the root of nature, in all the works of creation, (for in him, we live, and move, and are,) and by the way of grace in all the gracious, doth operate, and is, by the works and splendour of his glory, eminently in heaven: by which glory, therefore, we must mean some created glory: for his essence hath no inequality.

Sect. 5. 2. We shall be present with the human nature of Christ, both soul and body: but here our present narrow thoughts must not too boldly presume to resolve the difficulties which, to a distinct understanding of this, should be overcome: for we must not here expect any more than a dark and general knowledge of them: as, 1. What is the formal difference between Christ's glorified body, and his flesh on earth?

Where Christ's glorified body is, and how far it extendeth.

Wherein the soul and the glorified body differ, seeing it is called a spiritual body: these things are beyond our present reach.

Sect. 6. 1. For what conceptions can we have of a spiritual body, save that it is pure, incorruptible, invisible to mortal eyes, and fitted to the most perfect state of the soul? How near the nature of it is to a spirit, (and so to the soul,) and how far they agree, or differ, in substance, extensiveness, divisibility, or activity, little do we know.

Sect. 7. 2. Nor do we know where and how far Christ's body is present by extent. The sun is commonly taken for a body, and its motive, illuminative, and calefactive beams, are, by the most probable philosophy, taken to be a real emanant part of its substance, and so that it is essentially as extensive as those beams; that is, it at once filleth all our air, and toucheth the surface of the earth; and how much further it extendeth we cannot tell. And what difference there is between Christ's glorified body and the sun, in purity, splendour, extent, or excellency of nature, little do poor mortals know: and so of the rest.

Sect. 8. Let no man, therefore, cavil, and say, 'How can a whole world of glorified bodies be all present with the one body of Christ, when each must possess its proper room?' for, as the body of the solar beams, and the extensive air, are so compresent, as that none can discern the difference of the places which they possess, and a world of bodies are present with them both, so may all our bodies be with Christ's body, and that without any real confusion.

Sect. 9. 2. Besides presence with Christ, there will be such an union as we cannot now distinctly know. A political, relative union is past doubt, such as subjects have in one kingdom with their king; but little know we how much more. We see that there is a wonderful, corporeal continuity, or contract, among the material works of God; and the more spiritual, pure, and noble, the more inclination each nature hath to union. Every plant on earth hath an union with the whole earth in which it liveth; they are the real parts of it. And what natural conjunction our bodies shall have to Christ's, and what influence from it, is past our knowledge. Though his similitudes in John 15:1-27, John 6:1-71, and Ephesians 5:1-33, and 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, seem to extend far, yet being but similitudes, we cannot fully know how far.

Sect. 10. The same, variatis variandis, we may say of our union with Christ's human soul. Seeing souls are more inclinable to union than bodies, when we see all vegetables to be united parts of

one earth, and yet to have each one its proper individuating form and matter, we cannot, though animals seem to walk more disjunct, imagine that there is no kind of union or conjunction of invisible souls; though they retain their several substances and forms: nor yet that our bodies shall have a nearer union with Christ's body than our souls with his soul. But the nature, manner, and measure of it, we know not.

Sect. 11. Far be it from us to think that Christ's glorified, spiritual body, is such in forms, parts, and dimensions, as his earthly body was. That it hath hands, feet, brains, heart, stomach, liver, intestines, as on earth: or, that it is such a compound of earth, water, and air, as here it was, and of such confined extent: for then, as his disciples and a few Jews only were present with him, and all the world besides were absent, and had none of his company, so it would be in heaven. But it is such as not only Paul, but all true believers in the world, from the creation to the end, shall be with Christ, and see his glory: and though inequality of fitness, or degrees of holiness, will make an inequality of glory, no man can prove an inequality, by local distance, from Christ; or, if such there be, for it is beyond our reach, yet none in heaven are at such a distance from him as not to enjoy the felicity of his presence.

Sect. 12. Therefore, when we dispute against them that hold transubstantiation, and the ubiquity of Christ's body, we do assuredly conclude that sense is judge, whether there be real bread and wine present, or not; but it is no judge, whether Christ's spiritual body be present or not, no more than whether an angel be present. And we conclude that Christ's body is not infinite, or immense, as is his godhead; but what are its dimensions, limits, or extent, and where it is absent, far be it from us to determine, when we cannot tell how far the sun extendeth its secondary substance, or emanant beams; nor well what locality is as to Christ's soul, or any spirit, if to a spiritual body.

Sect. 13. Their fear is vain and carnal, who are afraid lest their union with Christ, or one another, will be too near; even lest thereby they lose their individuation, as rivers that fall into the sea, or extinguished candles, whose fire is after but a sunbeam, or part of the common element of fire in the air, or as the vegetative spirits which, in autumn, retire from the leaves into the branches and trunk of the tree. I have proved before, that our individuation, or numerical existence, ceaseth not; and that no union is to be feared, were it never so sure, which destroyeth not the being, or formal powers, or action of the soul; and that it is the great radical disease of selfishness, and want of holy love to God and our Saviour, and one another, which causeth these unreasonable fears, even that selfishness which now maketh men so partially desirous of their own wills and pleasure in comparison of God's, and their own felicity in comparison of others, and which maketh them so easily bear God's injuries, and the sufferings of a thousand others, in comparison of their own. But he that put a great desire of the body's preservation into the soul, while it is its form, will abate that desire when the time of separation is come, because there is then no use for it till the resurrection; else it would be a torment to the soul.

Sect. 14. 3. And as we shall have union, so also communion, with the divine and human nature of Christ respectively; both as they will be the objects of our soul's most noble and constant acts, and as they will be the fountain or communicative cause of our receptions.

Sect. 15. 1. We find now that our various faculties have various objects, suitable to their natures. The objects of sense are things sensible, and the objects of imagination things imaginable, and the objects of intellection things intelligible, and the objects of the will things amiable. The eye, which

is a nobler sense than some others, hath light for its object, which, to other senses, is none: and so of the rest. Therefore we have cause to suppose, that as far as our glorified souls and our spiritual, glorified bodies will differ, so far Christ's glorified soul and body will, respectively, be their several objects; and beholding the glory of both will be part of our glory.

Sect. 16. Yet is it not hence to be gathered, that the separated soul, before the resurrection, shall not have Christ's glorified body for its objects; for the objects of the body are also the objects of the soul, or, to speak more properly, the objects of sense are also the objects of intellection and will, though all the objects of the intellect and will are not objects of sense. The separated soul can know Christ's glorified body, though our present bodies cannot see a soul, But how much our spiritual bodies will excel in capacity and activity these passive bodies, that have so much earth and water, we cannot tell.

Sect. 17. And though now our souls are as a candle in a lantern, and must have extrinsic objects admitted by the senses before they can be understood, yet it followeth not that therefore a separated soul cannot know such objects: 1. Because it now knoweth them abstractively, per species, because its act of ratiocination is compound as to the cause (soul and body). But it will then know such things intuitively, as now it can do itself, when then the lantern is cast by. 2. And whatever many of late, that have given themselves the title of ingenious, have said to the contrary, we have little reason to think that the sensitive faculty is not an essential, inseparable power of the same soul that is intellectual, and that sensation ceaseth to separated souls, however the modes of it may cease with their several uses and organs. To feel intellectually, or to understand, and will feelingly, we have cause to think, will be the action of separate souls: and if so, why may they not have communion with Christ's body and soul, as their objects in their separated state? 3. Besides that, we are uncertain whether the separated soul have no vehicle or body at all. Things unknown to us must not be supposed true or false. Some think that the sensitive soul is material, and, as a body to the intellectual, never separated. I am not of their opinion that make them two substances; but I cannot say I am certain that they err. Some think that the soul is material, of a purer substance than things visible, and that the common notion of its substantiality meaneth nothing else but a pure, (as they call it,) spiritual materiality. Thus thought not only Tertullian, but almost all the old Greek doctors of the church that write of it, and most of the Latin, or very many, as I have elsewhere showed, and as Faustus reciteth them in the treatise answered by Mammertus. Some think that the soul, as vegetative, is an igneous body, such as we call other, or solar fire, or rather of a higher, purer kind; and that sensation and intellection are those formal faculties which specifically difference it from inferior mere fire, or other. There were few of the old doctors that thought it not some of these ways material; and, consequently, extensive and divisible per potentiam divinam, though not naturally, or of its own inclination, because most strongly inclined to unity: and if any of all these uncertain opinions should prove true, the objections in hand will find no place. To say nothing of their conceit, who say, that as the spirit that retireth from the falling leaves in autumn, continueth to animate the tree, so man's soul may do when departed, with that to which it is united, to animate some more noble, universal body. But as all these are the too bold cogitations of men that had better let unknown things alone, so yet they may be mentioned to refel that more perilous boldness which denieth the soul's action, which is certain, upon, at best, uncertain reasons.

Sect. 18. I may boldly conclude, notwithstanding such objections, that Christ's divine and human nature, soul and body, shall be the felicitating objects of intuition and holy love to the separated soul before the resurrection; and that to be with Christ is to have such communion with him, and not only to be present where he is.

Sect. 19. 2. And the chief part of this communion will be that in which we are receptive: even Christ's communications to the soul. And as the infinite, incomprehensible Deity is the root, or first cause, of all communication, natural, gracious, and glorious, to being, motion, life, rule, reason, holiness, and happiness; and the whole creation is more dependent on God, than the fruit on the tree, or the plants on the earth, or the members on the body; (though yet they are not parts of the Deity, nor deified, because the communication is creative;) so God useth second causes in his communication to inferior natures. And it is more than probable, that the human soul of Christ, primarily, and his body, secondarily, are the chief second cause of influence and communication both of grace and glory, both to man in the body, and to the separated soul. And as the sun is first an efficient, communicative, second cause of seeing to the eye, and then is also the object of our sight, so Christ is to the soul. For as God, so the Lamb is the light and glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, and in his light we shall have light. Though he give up the kingdom to the Father, so far as that God shall be all in all, and his creature be fully restored to his favour, and there shall be need of a healing government no more, for the recovering of lapsed souls to God; yet sure he will not cease to be our Mediator, and to be the church's head, and to be the conveying cause of everlasting life, and light, and love, to all his members. As now we live because he liveth, even as the branches in the vine, and the Spirit that quickeneth, enlighteneth, and sanctifieth us, is first the Spirit of Christ before it is ours, and is communicated from God, by him, to us; so will it be in the state of glory, for we shall have our union and communion with him perfected, and not destroyed, or diminished. And unless I could be so proud as to think that I am, or shall be, the most excellent of all the creatures of God, and therefore nearest him, and above all others, how could I think that I am under the influence of no second cause, but have either grace or glory from God alone?

Sect. 20. So far am I from such arrogancy, as to think I shall be so near to God, as to be above the need and use of Christ and his communications, as that I dare not say that I shall be above the need and help of other subordinate causes; as I am now lower than angels, and need their help, and as I am under the government of my superiors, and, as a poor weak member, am little worth in comparison of the whole body, the church of Christ, and receive continual help from the whole, so, how far it will be thus in glory, I know not; but that God will still use second causes for our joy, I doubt not, and also that there will not be an equality; and that it will be consistent with God's all-sufficiency to us, and our felicity in him, that we shall for ever have use for one another, and that to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and to be in Abraham's bosom, and sit at Christ's right and left hand, in his kingdom, and to be ruler over ten cities, and to join with the heavenly host, or choir, in the joyful love and praise of God, and of the Lamb, and many such like, are not false nor useless notes and notions of our celestial glory.

Sect. 21. And, certainly, if I be with Christ, I shall be with all that are with Christ; even with all the heavenly society. Though these bodies of gross, passive matter must have so much room, that the earth is little enough for all its inhabitants; and those at the antipodes are almost as strange to us as if they were in another world; and those of another kingdom, another province, or county, and oft another parish, yea, another house, are strangers to us; so narrow is our capacity of

communion here. Yet we have great cause to think, by many Scripture expressions, that our heavenly union and communion will be nearer, and more extensive; and that all the glorified shall know each other, or, at least, be far less distant, and less strange, than now we are. As I said before, when I see how far the sunbeams do extend, how they penetrate our closest glass, and puzzle them that say that all bodies are impenetrable; when I see how little they hinder the placing or presence of other creatures, and how intimately they mix themselves with all, and seem to possess the whole region of the air, when yet the air seemeth itself to fill it, &c., I dare not think that glorified spirits, (no, nor spiritual bodies,) will be such strangers to one another, as we are here on earth.

Sect. 22. And I must needs say, that it is a pleasant thought to me, and greatly helpeth my willingness to die, to think that I shall go to all the holy ones, both Christ and angels, and departed, blessed souls. For, 1. God hath convinced me that they are better than I (each singly), and therefore more amiable than myself. 2. And that many are better than one, and the whole than a poor, sinful part, and the New Jerusalem is the glory of the creation. 3. God hath given me a love to all his holy ones, as such. 4. And a love to the work of love and praise, which they continually and perfectly perform to God. 5. And a love to the celestial Jerusalem, as it is complete, and to his glory shining in them. 6. And my old acquaintance, with many a holy person gone to Christ, doth make my thoughts of heaven the more familiar to me. O, how many of them could I name! 7. And it is no small encouragement to one that is to enter upon an unseen world, to think that he goeth not an untrodden path, nor enters into a solitary or singular state; but followeth all from the creation to this day, that have passed by death to endless life. And is it not an emboldening consideration, to think that I am to go no other way, nor to no other place or state, than all the believers and saints have gone to before me, from the beginning to this time? Of this more anon.

2A.2. DEPARTING TO BE WITH CHRIST

DEPARTING TO BE WITH CHRIST

Sect. 1. But I must be loosed, or depart, before I can thus be with Christ. And I must here consider, I. From what I must depart. II. And how, or in what manner: and I must not refuse to know the worst.

Sect. 2. I. And, 1. I know that I must depart from this body itself, and the life which consisteth in the animating of it. These eyes must here see no more; this hand must move no more; these feet must walk no more; this tongue must speak no more. As much as I have loved and over-loved this body, I must leave it to the grave. There must it lie and rot in darkness, as a neglected and a loathed thing.

Sect. 3. This is the fruit of sin, and nature would not have it so: I mean the nature of this compound man; but what, though it be so?

1. It is but my shell, or tabernacle, and the clothing of my soul, and not itself.

2. It is but an elementary composition dissolved; and earth going to earth, and water to water, and air to air, and fire to fire, into that union which the elementary nature doth incline to.

It is but an instrument laid by when all its work is done, and a servant dismissed when his service is at an end. And what should I do with a horse, when I shall need to ride or travel no more, or with a pen, when I must write no more? It is but the laying by the passive receiver of my soul's operations, when the soul hath no more to do upon it; as I cast by my lute, or other instrument, when I have better employment than music to take up my time.

Or, at most, it is but as flowers die in the fall, and plants in winter, when the retiring spirits have done their work, and are undisposed to dwell in so cold and unmeet a habitation, as the season maketh their former matter then to be. And its retirement is not its annihilation, but its taking up a fitter place.

It is but a separation from a troublesome companion, and putting off a shoe that pinched me; many a sad and painful hour I have had in this frail and faltering flesh; many a weary night and day: what cares, what fears, what griefs, and what groans, hath this body cost me! Alas! how many hours of my precious time have been spent to maintain it, please it, or repair it! How considerable a part of all my life hath been spent in necessary sleep and rest; and how much in eating, drinking, dressing, physic; and how much in labouring, or using means, to procure these and other necessaries! Many a hundred times I have thought, that it costeth me so dear to live, yea, to live a painful, weary life, that were it not for the work and higher ends of life, I had little reason to be much in love with it, or to be loth to leave it. And had not God put into our nature itself a necessary, unavoidable, sensitive love of the body, and of life, as he puts into the mother, and into every brute, a love of their young ones, how unclean, and impotent, and troublesome soever, for the propagation and continuance of man on earth? Had God but left it to mere reason, without this

necessary pre-engagement of our natures, it would have been a matter of more doubt and difficulty than it is, whether this life should be loved and desired; and no small number would daily wish that they had never been born: a wish that I have had much ado to forbear, even when I have known that it is sinful, and when the work and pleasure of my life have been such to overcome the evils of it as few have had.

Yea, to depart from such a body, is but to be removed from a foul, uncleanly, and sordid habitation. I know that the body of man and brutes is the curious, wonderful work of God, and not to be despised, nor injuriously dishonoured, but admired, and well used; but yet it is a wonder to our reason, that so noble a spirit should be so meanly housed; and we may call it "our vile body," as the apostle doth. (Php 3:21.) It is made up of the airy, watery, and earthly parts of our daily food, subacted and actuated by the fiery part, as the instrument of the soul. The greater part of the same food which, with great cost, and pomp, and pleasure, is first upon our tables, and then in our mouths, to-day, is to-morrow a fœtid, loathsome excrement, and cast out into the draught, that the sight and smell of that annoy us not, which yesterday was the sumptuous fruit of our abundance, and the glory of that which is called great housekeeping, and the pleasure of our eyes and taste. And is not the rest that turneth into blood and flesh, of the same general kind with that which is turned into loathsome filth? The difference is, that it is fitter for the soul by the fiery spirits, yet longer to operate on and keep from corruption; our blood and flesh are as stinking and loathsome a substance as our filthiest excrements, save that they are longer kept from putrefaction. Why then should it more grieve me, that one part of my food, which turneth into flesh, should not and stink in the grave, than that all the rest should daily stink in the draught? Yea, while it is within me, were it not covered from my sight, what a loathsome mass would my intestines appear! If I saw what is in the guts, the mesentery, the ventricles of the brain, what filth, what bilious or mucous matter, and, perhaps, crawling worms, there are in the most proud or comely person, I should think that the cover of a cleaner skin, and the borrowed ornaments of apparel, make no great difference between such a body and a careass (which may be also covered with an adorned coffin and monument, to deceive such spectators as see but outsides); the change is not so great of corruptible flesh, replete with such fœtid excrements, into corrupted flesh, as some fools imagine.

Yet more: to depart from such a body is but to be loosed from the bondage of corruption, and from a clog and prison of the soul. I say not that God put a pre-existent soul into this prison penally, for former faults; I must say no more than I can prove, or than I know; but that body which was an apt servant to innocent man’s soul, is become as a prison to him now; what alteration sin made upon the nature of the body, as whether it be more terrene and gross than else it would have been, I have no reason to assert: of earth or dust it was at first, and to dust it is sentenced to return. But no doubt but it hath its part in that dispositive deprivation which is the fruit of sin. We find that the soul, as sensitive, is so imprisoned, or shut up, in flesh, that sometimes it is more than one door that must be opened before the object and the faculty can meet. In the eye, indeed, the soul seemeth to have a window to look out at, and to be almost itself visible to others; and yet there are many interposing tunicles, and a suffusion, or winking, can make the clearest sight to be as useless for the time as if it were none; and if sense be thus shut up from its object, no wonder if reason also be under difficulties from corporeal impediments; and if the soul that is yoked with such a body can go no faster than its heavy pace.

Yet further: to depart from such a body, is but to be separated from an accidental enemy, and one of our greatest and most hurtful enemies; though still we say, that it is not by any default in the work of our Creator, but by the effects of sin, that it is such; what could Satan, or any other enemy of our souls, have done against us without our flesh? What is it but the interest of this body, that standeth in competition against the interest of our souls and God? What else do the profane sell their heavenly inheritance for, as Esau his birthright? No man loveth evil, as evil, but as some way a real or seeming good; and what good is it but that which seemeth good for the body? What else is the bait of ambition, covetousness, and sensuality, but the interest and pleasure of this flesh? What taketh up the thoughts and care which we should lay out upon things spiritual and heavenly, but this body and its life? What pleasures are they that steal away men's hearts from the heavenly pleasures of faith, hope, and love, but the pleasures of this flesh? This draweth us to sin; this hindereth us from and in our duty. This body hath its interest which must be minded, and its inordinate appetite which must be pleased; or else what murmurings and disquiet must we expect. Were it not for bodily interest, and its temptations, how much more innocently and holily might I live! I should have nothing to care for, but to please God, and to be pleased in him, were it not for the care of this bodily life. What employment should my will and love have, but to delight in God, and love him and his interest, were it not for the love of the body, and its concerns? By this the mind is darkened, and the thoughts diverted; by this our wills are perverted and corrupted, and, by loving things corporeal, contract a strangeness and aversation from things spiritual; by this, heart and time are alienated from God; our guilt is increased, and our heavenly desire and hopes destroyed; life made unholy and uncomfortable, and death made terrible; God and our souls separated, and life eternal set by, and in danger of being utterly lost. I know that it is the sinful soul that is in all this the chief cause and agent; but what is it but bodily interest that is its temptation, bait, and end? What but the body, and its life, and its pleasure, is the chief, objective, alluring cause of all this sin and misery? And shall I take such a body to be better than heaven, or be loth to be loosed from so troublesome a yoke-fellow, or to be separated from so burdensome and dangerous a companion?

Sect. 3. Obj. But I know this habitation, but the next I know not I have long been acquainted with this body, and this world, but the next I am unacquainted with.

Ans. 1. If you know it, you know all that of it which I have mentioned before; you know it to be a burden and snare; I am sure I know, by long experience, that this flesh hath been a painful lodging to my soul, and this world as a tumultuous ocean, or like the uncertain and stormy region of the air. And well he deserveth bondage, pain, and enmity, who will love them because he is acquainted with them, and is loth to leave them because he hath had them long, and is afraid of being well because he hath been long sick.

And do you not know the next and better habitation? Is faith no knowledge? If you believe God's promise, you know that such a state there is; and you know, in general, that it is better than this world; and you know that we shall be in holiness and glorious happiness with Christ: and is this no knowledge?

3. And what we know not, Christ, that prepareth and promiseth it, doth know; and is that nothing to us, if really we trust our souls to him? He that knoweth not more good by heaven than by earth is yet so earthly and unbelieving, that it is no wonder if he be afraid and unwilling to depart.

Sect. 4. II. In departing from this body and life, I must depart from all its ancient pleasures: I must taste no more sweetness in meat, or drink, or rest, or sport, or any such thing, that now delighteth me; house and lands, and goods, and wealth, must all be left; and the place where I live must know me no more. All my possessions must be no more to me, nor all that I laboured for, or took delight in, than if they had never been at all. And what though it must be so? Consider, O my soul! 1. Thy ancient pleasures are all past already; thou losest none of them by death, for they are all lost before, if immortal grace have not, by sanctifying them, made the benefits of them to become immortal. All the sweet draughts, and morsels, and sports, and laughters; all the sweet thoughts of thy worldly possessions, or thy hopes, that ever thou hadst till this present hour, are passed by, dead, and gone already. All that death doth to such as these is, to prevent such, that on earth thou shalt have no more.

And is not that the case of every brute, that hath no comfort from the prospect of another life, to repair his loss; and yet as our dominion diminisheth their pleasure while they live, by our keeping them under fear and labour, so, at our will, their lives must end. To please a gentleman's appetite for half an hour, or less, birds, beasts, and fishes, must lose life itself, and all the pleasure which light might have afforded them for many years; yea, perhaps many of these (birds and fishes at least) must die to become but one feast to a rich man, if not one ordinary meal. And is not their sensual pleasure of the same nature as ours? Meat is as sweet to them, and case as welcome, and lust as strong (in season); and the pleasure that death depriveth our flesh of, is such as is common to man with brutes; why then should it seem hard to us to lose that in the course of nature, which our wills deprive them of at our pleasure? When, if we are believers, we can say, that we do but exchange these delights of life for the greater delights of a life with Christ, which is a comfort which our fellow creatures (the brutes) have not.

And, indeed, the pleasures of life are usually embittered with so much pain, that to a great part of the world doth seem to exceed them; the vanity and vexation is so great and grievous as the pleasure seldom countervaileth. It is true, that nature desireth life, even under sufferings that are but tolerable, rather than to die; but that is not so much from the sensible pleasure of life, as from mere natural inclination; which God hath laid so deep, that free-will hath no power against it. As before I said, that the body of man is such a thing, that could we see through the skin (as men may look through a glass hive upon the bees) and see all the parts and motion, the filth and excrements, that are in it, the soul would hardly be willing to actuate, love, and cherish such a mass of unclean matter, and to dwell in such a loathsome place, unless God had necessitated it by nature (deeper than reason or sense) to such a love and such a labour, by the pondus or spring of inclination; even as the cow would not else lick the unclean calf, nor women themselves be at so much labour and trouble with their children, while there is little of them to be pleasing, but uncleanness, and crying, and helpless impatiency, to make them wearisome, had not necessitating inclination done more hereto than any other sense or reason; even so I now say of the pleasure of living, that the sorrows are so much greater to multitudes than the sensible delight, that life would not be so commonly chosen and endured under so much trouble, were not men determined thereto by natural necessitating inclination; (or deterred from death by the fears of misery to the separated soul;) and yet all this kept not some, counted the best and wisest of the heathens, from taking it for the valour and wisdom of a man to make away his life in time of extremity, and from making this the great answer to them that grudge at God for making their lives

so miserable, 'If the misery be greater than the good of life, why dost thou not end it? Thou mayest do that when thou wilt.' Our meat and drink is pleasant to the healthful, but it costeth poor men so much toil, and labour, and care, and trouble to procure a poor diet for themselves, and their families, that, I think, could they live without eating and drinking, they would thankfully exchange the pleasure of it all, to be eased of their care and toil in getting it. And when sickness cometh, even the pleasantest food is loathsome.

And do we not willingly interrupt and lay by these pleasures every night, when we betake ourselves to sleep? It is possible, indeed, a man may then have pleasant dreams; but I think few go to sleep for the pleasure of dreaming; either no dreams, or vain, or troublesome dreams, are much more common. And to say that rest and case is my pleasure, is but to say, that my daily labour and cares are so much greater than my waking pleasure, that I am glad to lay by both together. For what is case but deliverance from weariness and pain? For in deep and dreamless sleep there is little positive sense of the pleasure of rest itself. But, indeed, it is more from nature's necessitated inclination to this self-casing and repairing means, than from the positive pleasure of it, that we desire sleep. And if we can thus be contented every night to die, as it were, to all our waking pleasures, why should we be unwilling to die to them at once?

If it be the inordinate pleasures forbidden of God, which you are loth to leave, those must be left before you die, or else it had been better for you never to have been born, yea, every wise and godly man doth cast them off with detestation. You must be against holiness on that account, as well as against death, and, indeed, the same cause which maketh men unwilling to live a holy life, hath a great hand in making them unwilling to die, even because they are loth to leave the pleasure of sin. If the wicked be converted, he must be gluttonous and drunken no more; he must live in pride, vain-glory, worldliness, and sensual pleasures, no more, and therefore he draweth back from a holy life, as if it were from death itself. And so he is the lother to die, because he must have no more of the pleasures of his riches, pomp, and honours, his sports, and lust, and pleased appetite, for ever. But what is this to them that have mortified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof?

Yea, it is these forbidden pleasures which are the great impediments both of our holiness and our truest pleasures; and one of the reasons why God forbiddeth them, is, because they hinder us from better. And if for our own good we must forsake them when we turn to God, it must be supposed that they should be no reason against our willingness to die, but rather that to be free from the danger of them, we should be the more willing.

But the great satisfying answer of this objection is, that death will pass us to far greater pleasures, with which all these are not worthy to be compared. But of this more in due place.

Sect. 5. III. When I die, I must depart, not only from sensual delights, but from the more manly pleasures of my studies, knowledge, and converse with many wise and godly men, and from all my pleasure in reading, hearing, public and private exercises of religion, &c. I must leave my library, and turn over those pleasant books no more. I must no more come among the living, nor see the faces of my faithful friends, nor be seen of man. Houses, and cities, and fields, and countries, gardens, and walks, will be nothing as to me. I shall no more hear of the affairs of the world, of man, or wars, or other news, nor see what becomes of that beloved interest of wisdom, piety, and peace, which I desire may prosper, &c.

Answ. 1. Though these delights are far above those of sensual sinners, yet, alas! how low and little are they! How small is our knowledge in comparison of our ignorance! And how little doth the knowledge of learned doctors differ from the thoughts of a silly child! For from our childhood we take it in by drops, and as trifles are the matter of childish knowledge, so words, and notions, and artificial forms, do make up more of the learning of the world, than is commonly understood, and many such learned men know little more of any great and excellent things themselves, than rustics that are contemned by them for their ignorance. God, and the life to come, are little better known by them, if not much less, than by many of the unlearned. What is it but a child-game, that many logicians, rhetoricians, grammarians, yea, metaphysicians, and other philosophers, in their eagerest studies and disputes, are exercised in? Of how little use is it to know what is contained in many hundred of the volumes that fill our libraries! Yea, or to know many of the most glorious speculations in physics, mathematics, &c., which have given some the title of Virtuosi, and Ingeniosi, in these times, who have little the more wit or virtue to live to God, or overcome temptations from the flesh and world, and to secure their everlasting hopes. What pleasure or quiet doth it give to a dying man to know almost any of their trifles?

Yea, it were well if much of our reading and learning did us no harm, nay, more than good. I fear lest books are to some but a more honourable kind of temptation than cards and dice, lest many a precious hour be lost in them, that should be employed on much higher matters, and lest many make such knowledge but an unholy, natural, yea, carnal pleasure, as worldlings do the thoughts of their lauds and honours, and lest they be the more dangerous by how much the less suspected. But the best is, it is a pleasure so fenced from the slothful with thorny labour of hard and long studies, that laziness saveth more from it than grace and holy wisdom doth. But, doubtless, fancy and the natural intellect may, with as little sanctity, live in the pleasure of reading, knowing, disputing, and writing, as others spend their time at a game at chess, or other ingenious sport.

For my own part, I know that the knowledge of natural things is valuable, and may be sanctified, much more theological theory, and when it is so, it is of good use; and I have little knowledge which I find not some way useful to my highest ends. And if wishing or money could procure more, I would wish and empty my purse for it; but yet if many score or hundred books which I have read, had been all unread, and I had that time now to lay out upon higher things, I should think myself much richer than now I am. And I must earnestly pray, the Lord forgive me the hours that I have spent in reading things less profitable, for the pleasing of a mind that would fain know all, which I should have spent for the increase of holiness in myself and others! and yet I must thankfully acknowledge to God, that from my youth he taught me to begin with things of greatest weight, and to refer most of my other studies thereto, and to spend my days under the motives of necessity and profit to myself, and those with whom I had to do. And I now think better of the course of Paul, that determined to know nothing but a crucified Christ, among the Corinthians, that is, so to converse with them as to use, and glorying as if he knew nothing else, and so of the rest of the apostles and primitive ages. And though I still love and honour, (and am not of Dr. Colet's mind, who, as Erasmus saith, most slighted Augustine,) yet I less censure even that Carthage council which forbade the reading of the heathens' books of learning and arts, than formerly I have done. And I would have men savour most that learning in their health, which they will, or should, savour most in sickness, and near to death.

And, alas! how dear a vanity is this knowledge! That which is but theoretic and notional, is but a tickling delectation of the fancy or mind, little differing from a pleasant dream. But how many hours, what gazing of the wearied eye, what stretching thoughts of the impatient brain must it cost us, if we will attain to any excellency? Well saith Solomon, "Much reading is a weariness to the flesh, and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow." How many hundred studious days and weeks, and how many hard and tearing thoughts, hath my little, very little knowledge, cost me; and how much infirmity and painfulness to my flesh, increase of painful diseases, and loss of bodily case and health! How much pleasure to myself of other kinds, and how much acceptance with men have I lost by it, which I might easily have had in a more conversant and plausible way of life! And when all is done, if I reach to know any more than others of my place and order, I must differ so much (usually) from them, and if I manifest not that difference, but keep all that knowledge to myself, I sin against conscience and nature itself. The love of man, and the love of truth, oblige me to be soberly communicative. Were I so indifferent to truth and knowledge, as easily to forbear their propagation, I must also be so indifferent to them, as not to think them worth so dear a price as they have cost me (though they are the free gifts of God). As nature is universally inclined to the propagation of the kind by generation, so is the intellectual nature to the communication of knowledge, which yet hath its lust and inordinacy in proud, ignorant, hasty teachers and disputers, as the generating faculty hath in fornicators and adulterers.

But if I obey nature and conscience in communicating that knowledge which containeth my difference aforesaid, the dissenters too often take themselves disparaged by it, how peaceably soever I manage it; and as bad men take the piety of the godly to be an accusation of their impiety, so many teachers take themselves to be accused of ignorance, by such as condemn their errors by the light of truth: and if you meddle not with any person, yet take they their opinions to be so much their interest, as that all that is said against them they take as said against themselves. And then, alas! what envyings, what whispering disparagements, and what backbitings, if not malicious slanders and underminings, do we meet with from the carnal clergy! And O that it were all from them alone! and that among the zealous and suffering party of faithful preachers, there were not much of such iniquity, and that none of them preached Christ in strife and envy! It is sad that error should find so much shelter under the selfishness and pride of pious men, and that the friends of truth should be tempted to reject and abuse so much of it in their ignorance, as they do: but the matter of fact is too evident to be hid.

But, especially, if we meet with a clergy that are high, and have a great deal of worldly interest at the stake: or, if they be in councils and synods, and have got the major vote, they too easily believe that either their grandeur, reverence, names, or numbers, must give them the reputation of being orthodox, and in the right, and will warrant them to account and defame him as erroneous, heretical, schismatical, singular, factious, or proud, that presumeth to contradict them, and to know more than they. Of which not only the case of Nazianzen, Martin, Chrysostom, are sad proofs, but also the proceedings of too many general and provincial councils. And so our hard studies and darling truth must make us as owls, or reproached persons, among those reverend brethren, who are ignorant at easier rates, and who find it a far softer kind of life to think and say as the most best-esteemed do, than to purchase reproach and obloquy so dearly. And the religious people of the several parts will say as they hear their teachers do, and be the militant followers of their too militant leaders: and it will be their house talk, their shop talk, their street talk, if not their church

talk, that such an one is an erroneous, dangerous man, because he is not as ignorant and erroneous as they, especially if they be the followers of a teacher much exasperated by confutation, and engaged in the controversy; and also if it should be suffering confessors that are contradicted, or men most highly esteemed for extraordinary degrees of piety: then, what cruel censures must he expect, who ever so tenderly would suppress their errors?

Oh! what sad instances of this are, 1. The case of the confessors in Cyprian's days, who, as many of his epistles show, became the great disturbers of that church. 2. And the Egyptian monks at Alexandria, in the days of Theophilus, who turned Anthropomorphites, and raised abominable tumults, with woful scandal, and odious bloodshed. 3. And O that this age had not yet greater instances to prove the matter than any of these!

And, now, should a man be loth to die, for fear of leaving such troublesome, costly learning and knowledge, as the wisest men can here attain?

But the chief answer is yet behind. No knowledge is lost, but perfected, and changed for much nobler, sweeter, greater knowledge. Let men be never so uncertain in particular de modo, whether acquired habits of intellect and memory die with us, as being dependent on the body; yet, by what manner soever, that a far clearer knowledge we shall have than is here attainable, is not to be doubted of. And the cessation of our present mode of knowing, is but the cessation of our ignorance and imperfection: as our wakening endeth a dreaming knowledge, and our maturity endeth the trifling knowledge of a child: for so saith the Holy Ghost. (1 Corinthians 13:8-12.) Love never faileth, and we can love no more than we know; but whether there be prophecies they shall fail (that is, cease): whether there be tongues they shall cease: whether there be knowledge, notional and abstractive, such as we have now, it shall vanish away: "When I was a child I spake as a child, understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things: for now we see through a glass (per species) darkly," as men understand a thing by a metaphor, parable, or riddle, "but then face to face;" even creatures intuitively, as in themselves naked and open to our sight. "Now, I know in part;" (not rem sed aliquid rei; in which sense Sanchez truly saith, 'nihil scitur;') "but then I shall know, even as I am known; not as God knoweth us:" for our knowledge and his must not be so comparatively likened; but as holy spirits know us both now and for ever, we shall both know and be known by immediate intuition.

If a physician be to describe the parts of a man, and the latent diseases of his patient, he is fain to search hard, and bestow many thoughts of it, besides his long reading and converse, to make him capable of knowing: and when all is done, he goeth much upon conjectures, and his knowledge is mixed with many uncertainties, yea, and mistakes; but when he openeth the corpse, he seeth all, and his knowledge is more full, more true, and more certain; besides that, it is easily and quickly attained, even by a present look. A countryman knoweth the town, the fields, and rivers, where he dwelleth, yea, and the plants and animals, with case and certain clearness, when he that must know the same things by the study of geographical writings and tables, must know them but with a general, an unsatisfactory, and oft a much mistaking kind of knowledge. Alas! when our present knowledge hath cost a man the study of forty, or fifty, or sixty years, how lean and poor, how doubtful and unsatisfactory is it after all! But when God will show us himself, and all things, and when heaven is known as the sun by its own light, this will be the clear, sure, and satisfactory knowledge: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" (Matthew 5:1-48) "And without

holiness none can see him." (Hebrews 12:14.) This sight will be worthy the name of wisdom, when our present glimpse is but philosophy, a love and desire of wisdom. So far should we be from fearing death, through the fear of losing our knowledge, or any of the means of knowledge, that it should make us rather long for the world of glorious light, that we might get out of this darkness, and know all that with an easy look, to our joy and satisfaction, which here we know with troublesome doubtings, or not at all. Shall we be afraid of darkness in the heavenly light, or of ignorance, when we see the Lord of glory?

Sect. 6. And as for the loss of sermons, books, and other means, surely it is no loss to cease the means when we have attained the end. Cannot we spare our winter clothes, as troublesome, in the heat of summer, and sit by the hot fire without our gloves? Cannot we sit at home without a horse or a coach, or set them by at our journey's end? Cannot we lie in bed without boots and spurs? Is it grievous to us to cease our physic when we are well. Even here, he is happier that hath least of the creature, and needeth least, than he that hath much and needeth much; because all creature commodities and helps have also their discommodities and troublesomeness; and the very applying and using so many remedies of our want is tedious of itself: and as God only needeth nothing, but is self-sufficient, and therefore only perfectly and essentially happy, so those are likest God that need least from without, and have the greatest plenitude of internal goodness. What need we to preach, hear, read, pray, to bring us to heaven, when we are there?

Sect. 7. And as for our friends, and our converse with them, as relations, or as wise, religious, and faithful to us, he that believeth not that there are far more, and far better, in heaven, than are on earth, doth not believe, as he ought, that there is a heaven. Our friends here are wise, but they are unwise also; they are faithful, but partly unfaithful; they are holy, but also, alas! too sinful; they have the image of God, but blotted and dishonoured by their faults; they do God and his church much service, but they also do too much against him, and too much for Satan, even when they intend the honour of God; they promote the gospel, but they also hinder it: their weakness, ignorance, error, selfishness, pride, passion, division, contention, scandals, and remissness, do oft so much hurt, that it is hard to discern, whether it be not greater than their good to the church, or to their neighbours. Our friends are our helpers and comforters; but how oft also are they our hinderers, troubles, and grief? But in heaven they are altogether wise, and holy, and faithful, and concordant, and have nothing in them, nor there done by them, but what is amiable to God and man.

And, with our faithful friends, we have here a mixture, partly of useless and burdensome persons, and partly of unfaithful hypocrites, and partly of self-conceited factious wranglers, and partly of malicious, envious underminers, and partly by implacable enemies; and how many of all these, set together is there for one worthy, faithful friend! And how great a number is there to trouble you, for one that will indeed comfort you! But in heaven there are none but the wise and holy; no hypocrites, no burdensome neighbours, no treacherous, or oppressing, or persecuting enemies are there. And is not all good and amiable better than a little good, with so troublesome a mixture of noisome evils?

Christ loved his disciples, his kindred; yea, and all mankind, and took pleasure in doing good to all, and so did his apostles; but how poor a requital had he or they from any but from God? Christ's own brethren believed not in him, but wrangled with him, almost like those that said to him on the

cross, "If thou be the Son of God, come down, and we will believe." Peter himself was once a Satan to him; (Matthew 16:1-28) and after, with cursing and swearing, denied him: and all his disciples forsook him, and fled; and what, then, could be expected from others? No friends have a perfect suitableness to each other; and roughness and inequalities that are nearest us are most troublesome. The wonderful variety and contrariety of apprehensions, interest, educations, temperaments, and occasions, and temptations, &c., are such, that while we are scandalised, at the discord and confusions of the world, we must recall ourselves, and admire that all-ruling providence, which keepeth up so much order and concord as there is: we are, indeed, like people in crowded streets, who, going several ways, molest each other with their jostling oppositions; or, like boys at football, striving to overthrow each other for the ball; but it is a wonder of divine power and wisdom, that all the world is not continually in mortal war.

If I do men no harm, yet if I do but cross their wills, it goeth for a provoking injury; and when there are as many wills as persons, who is it that can please them all? Who hath money enough to please all the poor that need it, or the covetous that desire it? Or, who can live with displeased men, and not feel some of the fruits of their displeasure? What day goeth over my head, in which abundance desire not, or expect not, impossibilities from me? And how great is the number of them that expect unrighteous things! By nothing do I displease so many, as by not displeasing God and my conscience; and for nothing am I so deeply accused of sin as for not sinning. And the world will not think well of any thing that crosseth their opinion and carnal interest, be it never so conform to God’s commands; I must confess, that while I suffer from all sides, few men have more common and open praises from their persecutors, than I: but while they praise me in general, and for other particulars, they aggravate my non-conformity to their opinions and wills, and take me to be so much the more hurtful to them. The greatest crimes that have been charged on me, have been for the things which I thought to be my greatest duties; and for those parts of my obedience, to my conscience and God, which cost me dearest; and where I pleased my flesh least, I pleased the world least. At how cheap a rate to my flesh could I have got the applause of factious men, if that had been my end and business. Would I have conformed to their wills, and taken a bishopric, and the honours and riches of the world, how good a man had I been called by the diocesan party. And oh, what praise I should have with the papists, could I turn papist; and all the backbiting and bitter censures of the antinomians, anabaptists, and separatists, had been turned into praise, could I have said as they, or not contradicted them. But otherwise there is no escaping their accusations; and is this tumultuous, militant, yea, malignant world, a place that I should be loth to leave?

Alas! our darkness, and weakness, and passions are such, that it is hard for a family, or a few faithful friends, to live so evenly in the exercise of love, as not to have oft unpleasant jars. What, then, is to be expected from strangers, and from enemies? Ten thousand persons will judge of abundance of my words and actions, who never knew the reasons of them. Every one’s conceptions are as the report and conveyance of the matter to them is; and while they have a various light, and false reports, (and defectiveness will make them false,) what can be expected, but false injurious censures?

Sect. 8. And though no outward thing on earth is more precious than the holy word, and worship, and ordinances of God, yet even here I see that which pointeth me up higher, and telleth me it is much better to be with Christ. 1. Shall I love the name of heaven better than heaven itself? The

holy Scriptures are precious, because I have there the promise of glory; but is not the possession better than the promise? If a light and guide thither through this wilderness be good, surely the end must needs be better. And it hath pleased God, that all things on earth, and therefore, even the sacred Scriptures should bear the marks of our state of imperfection: imperfect persons were the penmen; and imperfect human language is the conveying, signal, organical part of the matter; and the method and phrase (though true and blameless) are far short of the heavenly perfection. Else so many commentators had not found so hard a task of it to expound innumerable difficulties, and reconcile so many seeming contradictions; nor would infidels find matter of so strong temptation, and so much cavil as they do; nor would Peter have told us of the difficulties of Paul's epistles, and such occasions of men's wresting them to their own destruction. Heaven will not be made, to perfect spirits, the occasion of so many errors, and controversies, and quarrels, as the Scriptures are to us imperfect men on earth; yea, heaven is the more desirable, because there I shall better understand the Scriptures, than here I can ever hope to do. All the hard passages, now misunderstood, will be there made plain, and all the seeming contradictions reconciled; and, which is much more, that God, that Christ, that new Jerusalem, that glory, and that felicity of souls, which are now known but darkly and enigmatically in the glass, will then be known intuitively as we see the face itself, whose image only the glass first showed us. To leave my bible, and go to the God and the heaven that is revealed, will be no otherwise a loss to me, than to lay by my crutches, or spectacles, when I need them not, or to leave his image for the presence of my friend.

Much less do I need to fear the loss of all other books, or sermons, or other verbal informations. Much reading hath oft been a weariness to my flesh; and the pleasure of my mind is much abated by the great imperfection of the means. Many books must be partly read, that I may know that they are scarce worth the reading; and many must be read, to enable us to satisfy other men's expectations, and to confute those who abuse the authority of the authors against the truth: and many good books must be read, that have little to add to what we have read in many others before; and many that are blotted with ensuaring errors; which, if we detect not, we leave snares for such as see them not; and if we detect them, (never so tenderly, if truly,) we are taken to be injurious to the honour of of the learned, godly authors, and proudly to overvalue our own conceits. And so lamentable is the case of all mankind, by the imperfections of human language, that those words which are invented for communication of conceptions, are so little fitted to their use, as rather to occasion misunderstanding and contentions; there being scarce a word that hath not many significations, and that needeth not many more words to bring us to the true notice of the speaker's mind; and when every word is a signum, that hath three relations, 1. To the matter spoken of. 2. To the mind of the speaker, as signifying his conceptions of that matter. 3. And to the mind of the hearer, or reader, which is to be informed by it, it is so hard to find and use words that are fitted indeed to all these uses, and to have store of such, and mix no other, that few, if any, in the world were ever so happy as to attain it. 1. And if words be not fitted to the matter or things, they are false as to their first and proper use; and yet the penury of apt words, and the redundancy of others, and the authority of the masters of sciences, imposing arbitrary terms and notions on their disciples, and the custom of the vulgar, who have the empire, as to the sense of words, have all conspired to make words inapt, and of very uncertain signification. So that when students have learned words by long and hard studies, they are oft little the nearer the true knowledge of the things; and too oft, by their inaptitude, misled to false conceptions. And so their saying is too often true, that a great book is a great evil, while it containeth so great a number of uncertain words,

which become the matter of great contentions.

And when the mind of the speaker or writer is no better informed by such notions, but his conceptions of things are some false, some confused and undigested, what wonder if his words do no otherwise express his mind to others, when even men of clearest understanding find it difficult to have words still ready to communicate their conceptions with truth and clearness. To form true sentiments of things into apt, significant words, is a matter of mere art, and requireth an apt teacher, and a serious learner, and long use (and too many take their art of speaking, in prayer, conference, or preaching, to have more in it of wisdom and piety, than it hath; and some too much condemn the unaccustomed that want it).

And if we could fit our words well to the matter, and to our minds, (with that double verity,) yet still it is hard to fit them to the reader or hearer; for want of which they are lost as to him; and his information being our end, they are therefore so far lost to us. And that which is spoken most congruously to the matter, is seldom fitted to the capacity of the receiver. And recipitur ad modum recipientis, et pro capiu lectoris, &c. Some readers or hearers, (yea, almost all,) are so used to unapt words and notions, obtruded on mankind, by the master of words, that they cannot understand us if we change their terms and offer them fitter, and yet least understand those which they think that they best understand; and all men must have long time to learn the art of words, before they can understand them as well as before they can readily use them. And the duller any man is, and of less understanding, the more words are necessary to make him understand; and yet his memory is the less capable of retaining many. This is our difficulty, not only in catechising, but in all other writings and teaching, a short catechism, or a short style, the ignorant understand not: and a long one they remember not. And he that will accommodate one judicious reader or hearer, with profound matter, or an accurate style, must incommodate multitudes that are incapable of it; and, therefore, such must be content with few approvers, and leave the applause of the multitude to the more popular, unless he be one that can seasonably suit himself to both.

A man that resolveth not to be deceived by ambiguous words, and maketh it his first work, in all his readings and disputings, to difference between words, and sense, and things, and strictly to examine each disputed term, till the speaker’s meaning be distinctly known, will see the lamentable case of the church, and all mankind, and what shadows of knowledge deceive the world, and in what useless dreams the greatest part of men, yea, of learned men, do spend their days: much of that which some men unweariedly study, and take to be the honour of their understandings, and their lives; and much of that, which multitudes place their piety and hopes of salvation in, being a mere game at words, and useless notions; and as truly to be called vanity and vexation, as is the rest of the vain show, that most men walk in. My sad and bitter thoughts of the heathen, infidel, Mahometan world, and of the common corruptions of rulers and teachers, cities and countries, senates and councils, I will not here open to others, lest they offend; nor cry out as Seneca, Omnes mali sumus, or Stultorum plena sunt omnia, nor describe the furious spirits of the clergy, and their ignorance, and unrighteous calumnies and schisms, as Gregory Nazianzen and others do, nor voluminously lament the seeming hopeless case of earth, by the boldness, blindness, and fury of men that make use of such sad considerations, to loosen my love from such a world, and make me willing to be with Christ.

And if other men's words and writings are blemished with so much imperfection, why should I think that my own are blameless? I must for ever be thankful for the holy instructions and writings of others, notwithstanding human frailty, and contentious men's abuse of words: and so I must be thankful that God hath made any use of my own, for the good of souls, and his church's edification. But with how many allays are such comforts here mixed? We are not the teachers of a well-ruled school, where learners are ranked into several forms, that every one may have the teaching which is agreeable to his capacity; but we must set open the door to all that will crowd in, and publish our writings to all sorts of readers: and there being as various degrees of capacity as there are men and women, and consequently great variety and contrariety of apprehensions, it is easy ab antecedente to know what various reception we must expect: we cast out our doctrine almost as a football is turned out among boys in the street, in some congregations: few understand it, but every one censureth it. Few come as learners, or teachable disciples, but most come to sit as judges on their teacher's words; and yet have not either the skill, or the patience, or the diligence, which is necessary in a just trial, to a righteous judgment. But as our words agree or disagree with the former conceptions of every hearer, so are they judged to be wise or foolish, sound or unsound, true or false, fit or unfit. Few sermons that I preach, but one extolleth them, and wisheth they were printed, and another accuseth them of some heinous fault: some men are pleased with clearness and accurateness of doctrine; and others account it too high, and say we shoot over the hearers' heads, and like nothing but the fervent application of what they knew before: most hearers are displeased with that which they most need: if they err, they reproach that doctrine as erroneous that would cure them: if they are guilty of any prevailing distemper and sin, they take that application to be injurious to them, which would convince them, and save them from that guilt. Most are much pleased with plain and zealous reproof of sin; but it must be other men's sins, and not their own. The poor love to hear of the evil of oppression and unmercifulness, of pride, fulness, and idleness, and all the sins of the rich: subjects love to hear of their ruler's faults, and say, O this man is no flatterer; he dares tell the greatest of their sins: but if they hear of their own, they take it for an injury. Rulers like a sermon for submission and obedience, but how few love to hear of the evil of injustice and oppression, or pride and sensuality, or to read Luke 16:1-31 or Luke 12:1-59 or James 5:1-20; to hear of the necessity of holiness, justice, and temperance, and of death, and judgment, and the life to come! Every sectary and dogmatist delighteth to have his own opinion cried up, and his party praised as the chiefest saints: but all that tendeth to the praise of those that he dissenteth from, and accounteth adversaries to the truth, is distasteful to him, as a complying with iniquity, and a strengthening of the enemies of Christ: and all that uncharitableness which he expecteth from us against others, is as much expected by others against him, and such as he.

This day, while I am writing these words, my pockets are full of letters sent me, on one side importunately charging it on me as my duty to conform to the oaths, declarations, covenants, and practices, now imposed, or else to give over preaching (which would please them); and on the other side vehemently censuring me as guilty of grievous sin, for declaring my judgment for so much of conformity as I have done; and charging me by predictions as guilty of the sufferings of all that are otherwise minded, for communicating in the sacrament, and the common prayers of the church; and others in the mid-way, persuading me equally to bear my testimony against unjust separation and persecution, and to endeavour still, if possible, to save a self-destroying people from the tearing fury of these two extremes. And how should I answer these contrary expectations,

or escape the censures of such expectants? And it hath pleased God, who thirty years and more had tried me by human applause, of late in this city (where multitudes of persons of contrary minds are, like passengers in crowded streets, still jostling and offending one another) to exercise me with men's daily backbitings and cavils: and so many have chosen me for the subject of their discourse, that I may say as Paul, (1 Corinthians 4:9-10, &c.,) "We are made a spectacle (or theatre) to the world, and to angels, and to men: we are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ," &c. Did I not live out of the noise in retirement, taken up with pain, and expectations of my change, what an annoyance to me would it be to hear religious persons, that have a God, a Christ, a heaven, to talk of, to abuse their time and tongues in so much talking of one so inconsiderable, and that hath so little to do with them, or they with him; while with some overvaluing me, and others still quarrelling, I am the matter of their idle, sinful talk. The persecutors, for divers years after, first silencing, (if not still,) and the separatists for two or three years last past, have been possessed with so strange a jealousy and quarrelsome a disposition against me, that they seem to take it for their interest to promote my defamation, and for much of their work to search what may afford them any matter of accusation in every sermon that I preach, and every book that I write. And though the fury of the persecutors be such as maketh them much incapable of such converse and sober consideration as is needful to their true information and satisfaction; yet most of the more religious cavillers are satisfied as soon as I have spoken with them, and all endeth in a putarem or non putarem: for want of accurateness and patience, they judge rashly before they understand, and when they understand, confess their error; and yet many go on and take no warning after many times conviction of their mistake. Even in books that are still before their ayes (as well as in transient words and sermons) they heedlessly leave out, or put in, or alter and misreport plain words, and, with confidence, affirm those things to have been said that never were said, but, perhaps, the contrary. And when all people will judge of the good or evil of our words, as they think we have reason to use them or forbear them, how can we satisfy men that are out of our hearing, and to whom we cannot tell our reasons? Most men are of private, narrow observation, and judge of the good or hurt that our words do by those that they themselves converse with: and when I convince them that my decisions of many questions (which they are offended at) are true, they say, it is an unseasonable and a hurtful truth: and when I have called them to look further abroad in the world, and told them my reasons; they say, 'Had these been all set down, men would have been satisfied.' And on how hard terms do we instruct such persons, whose narrow understandings cannot know obvious reasons of what we say till they are particularly told them? And so to tell men the reasons of all that such can quarrel with, will make every book to swell with commentaries to such a bigness as they can neither buy nor read: and they come not to us to know our reasons; nor have we leisure to open them to every single person: and thus suspicious men, when their understandings want the humbling acquaintance with their ignorance, and their consciences that tenderness which should restrain them from rash judging, go on to accuse such needful truths of which they know not the use and reason. And what man living hath the leisure and opportunity to acquaint all the ignorant persons in city and country with all the reasons of all that he shall say, write, or do? Or who, that writeth not a page instead of a sentence, can so write that every unprepared reader shall understand him? and what hopes hath that tutor or schoolmaster of preserving his reputation, who shall be accounted erroneous, and accused of unsound or injurious doctrine, by every scholar that understandeth not his words, and all the reasons of them? But God in great mercy to me hath made this my lot (not causing, but permitting,

the sins of the contentious) that I might before death be better weaned from all below: had my temptations from inordinate applause had no allay, they might have been more dangerously strong. Even yet while church-dividers, on both extremes, do make me the object of their daily obloquy, the continued respects of the sober and peaceable, are so great, as to be a temptation strong enough, to so weak a person, to give a check to my desires to leave the world. It is long since riches and worldly honour appeared to me as they are, as not rendering the world much lovely or desirable. But the love and concord of religious persons hath a more amiable aspect: there is so much holiness in these, that I was loth to call them vanity and vexation: but yet as flesh and blood would refer them to selfish ends, and any way value them as a carnal interest, I must so call them, and number them with the things that are loss and dung. (Php 3:7-8.) Selfishness can serve itself upon things good and holy: and if good men, and good books, and good sermons, would make the world seem over-lovely to us, it will be a mercy of God to abate the temptation: and if my soul, looking toward the heavenly Jerusalem, be hindered as Paul was in his journey to Jerusalem, (Acts 20:1-38, Acts 21:1-40) by the love of ancient friends and hearers, I must say, 'What mean you to weep and break my heart! I am ready to leave the dearest friends on earth, and life, and all the pleasures of life, for the presence of far better friends with Christ, and the sweeter pleasures of a better life.' That little amiableness which is in things below, is in godly men as life in the heart, which dieth last: when that is all gone, when we are dead to the love of the godly themselves, and to learning, books, and mediate ordinances, so far as they serve a selfish interest, and tempt down our hearts from heavenly aspirings, the world is then crucified to us, indeed, and we to it. I rejoice to tread in the footsteps of my Lord, who had some, indeed, weeping about his cross, but was forsaken by all his disciples, while in the hour of temptation they all fled! But my desertion is far less, for it is less that I am fit to bear. If God will justify, who shall condemn? If he be for me, who shall be against me? O may I not be put to that dreadful case, to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And may nothing separate me from his love! And then were I forsaken of the sober and peaceable, as I am, in part, of some quarrelsome dividers, how tolerable a trial would it be? Man is as dust in the balance, that addeth little to it, and signifieth nothing when God is in the other end. But I suspect still that I make too much account of man, when this case hath taken up too much of my observation.

And of all things, surely a departing soul hath least cause to fear the losing of its notice of the affairs of the world; of peace, or wars, or church, or kingdoms? For, 1. If the sun can send forth its material beams, and operate by motion, light, and heat, at such a distance as this earth, why should I think that blessed spirits are such local, confined, and impotent substances, as not to have notice of the things of earth? Had I but bodily eyes, I could see more from the top of a tower or hill, than any one that is below can do. And shall I know less of earth from heaven than I do now? It is unlike that my capacity will be so little, and if it were, it is unlike that Christ and all the angels will be so strange to me, as to give me no notice of things that so much concern my God and my Redeemer, (to whom I am united,) and the holy society of which I am a part, and myself as a member of Christ and that society! I do not think that the communion of the celestial inhabitants is so narrow and slow, as it is of walking clods of earth, and of souls that are confined to such dark lanterns as this body is. Stars can shine one to another, and we on earth can see them so far off in their heaven. And sure then if they have a seeing faculty each of them can see many of us; even the kingdoms of the world. Spirits are most active, and of powerful and quick communication. They need not send letters, or write books to one another, nor lift up a voice to make each other hear;

nor is there any unkindness, division, or unsociable selfishness among them, which may cause them to conceal their notices or their joys; but as activity, so unity is greatest where there is most perfection; they will so be many, as yet to be one; and their knowledge will be one knowledge, and their love one love, and their joy one joy. Not by so perfect a unity as in God himself, who is one and but one; but such as is suitable to created imperfection, which participate of the perfection of the Creator, as the effect doth of the virtue of the cause, and therefore hath some participation of his unity. (O foolish soul! if I shall fear this unity with God, Christ, and all the holy spirits, lest I should lose my present separate individuation, when perfection and union are so near a-kin.) In a word, I have no cause to think that my celestial advancement will be a diminution of any desirable knowledge, even of things on earth; but contrarily, that it will be inconceivably increased.

But if indeed I shall know less of things below, it will be because that the knowledge of them is a part of vanity and vexation, which hath no place in heaven. So much knowledge of good and evil in lower matters, as came to us by sin, is unworthy of our fond tenaciousness, and fear of losing it. Surely the sad tidings which we have weekly in our news books, our lamentable notices of heathen and infidel kingdoms, of the overspreading prevalency of barbarousness, idolatry, ignorance, and infidelity; of the rage and success of cruel tyrants; of the bloody wars of proud, unquiet, worldly men; of the misery of the oppressed, desolate countries, the dissipated churches, the persecuted, innocent Christians, are no such pleasing things as that we should be afraid to hear of such no more. To know or hear of the poor in famine, the rich in folly, the church distracted, the kingdom discontented, the godly scandalous by the effects of their errors, imperfections, and divisions; the wicked outrageous, and waxing worse, the falseness, or miscarriages, or sufferings of friends, the fury or success of enemies. Is this an intelligence which I cannot spare? What is the daily tidings that I hear, but of bloody wars, the undone countries, the persecuted churches, the silenced, banished, or imprisoned preachers; of the best removed in judgment from an unworthy world by death, and worse succeeding in their rooms, of the renewed designs and endeavours of the church's enemies; the implacable rage of the worldly and unquiet clergy, and the new divisions of self-conceited sectaries, and the obloquy and backbitings of each party against the other? How oft hear I the sad tidings of this friend's sickness or death, and that friend's discontent, and of another's fall, and of many, very many's sufferings? My ears are daily filled with the cries of the poor, whom I cannot relieve; with the endless complaints of fearful, melancholy, despairing persons; with the wranglings of the ignorant and proud professors, and contentious divines, who censure most boldly where they are most erroneous or dark; or with the troublesome discontents of those that I converse with; and should I be afraid of the ending of so sad a tragedy, or of awaking out of such an unpleasant dream? Have I not many times thought of the privilege of the deaf, that hear not these troublesome and provoking things; and of the blind that see not the vanities and temptations of this world. It is one part of the benefit of solitude, or a private life and habitation, to free me from many of these unpleasing objects; and a great part of the benefit of sleep, that with my clothes I may lay by these troublesome thoughts.

Sect. 11. But other men tell me, the church cannot yet spare you; there is yet this and that necessary work to be done; there is this and that need, &c.

But, 1. Is it we or God that must choose his servants, and cut out their work? Whose work am I doing? Is it my own or his? If his, is it not he that must tell me what, and when, and how long? And will not his will and choice be best? If I believe not this, how do I take him for my God? Doth God or

I know better what he hath yet to do? And who is fittest to do it? The church's service and benefits must be measured out by our Master and Benefactor, and not by ourselves.

What am I to those more excellent persons whom, in all ages, he hath taken out of the world? And would men's thoughts of the church's needs detain them? The poor heathen, infidel, Mahometan nations have no preachers of the Gospel. And if their need prove not that God will send them such, no country's need will prove that God will continue them such. Many more useful servants of Christ have died in their youth: John Janeway preached but one sermon; Joseph Allen (and many other excellent men) died in the midst of his vigorous, successful labours; both of them far more fit for God's work, and likely to win souls, and glorify God, than I am, or ever was, however their greater light was partly kindled from my lesser. Yet did both these, under painful consuming languishings of the flesh, die as they had long lived, in the lively triumphant praises of their Redeemer, and joyful desires and hopes of glory. And shall I, at seventy-six years of age, after such a life of unspeakable mercies, and almost fifty-three years of comfortable help in the service of my Lord, be now afraid of my reward, and shrink at the sentence of death, and still be desiring to stay here, upon pretence of further service? We know not what is best for the church as God doth; the church and the world are not ours but his; not our desires, but his will must measure out its mercies. We are not so merciful as he is. It is not unmeet for us to desire many things which God will not give, nor seeth it meet to grant the particulars of such desires. Nothing ever lay so heavy on my heart, as the sin and misery of mankind, and to think how much the world lieth in folly and wickedness! And for what can I pray so heartily as for the world's recovery? and it is his will that I should show a holy and universal love by praying, "Let thy name he hallowed, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven;" and yet alas, how unlike is earth to heaven, and what ignorance, sin, confusions, and cruelties, here reign and prosper! And unless there he a wonderful change to be expected, even as by a general miracle, how little hope appeareth that ever these prayers should be granted in the things! It maketh us better to desire that others may be better; but God is the free disposer of his own gifts: and it seemeth to be his will, that the permitted ignorance and confusions of this world should help us the more to value and desire that world of light, love, and order, which he calleth us to prefer and hope for.

And if I am any way useful to the world, it is undeserved mercy that hath made me so, for which I must be thankful; but how long I shall be so, is not my business to determine, but my Lord's. My many sweet and beautiful flowers arise and appear in their beauty and sweetness, but for one summer's time, and they murmur not that they flourish for so short a space. The beasts, and birds, and fishes, which I feed on, do live till I will have them die; and as God will be served and pleased by wonderful variety at once of animals and vegetables, &c., so will he by many successive generations. If one flower fall or die, it sufficeth that others shall, summer after summer, arise from the same root: and if my pears, apples, plums, &c., fall or serve me when they are ripe, it sufficeth that not they, but others, the next year, shall do the same; God will have other generations to succeed us. Let us thank him that we have had our time: and could we overcome the grand (too little observed) crime of selfishness, and could love others as ourselves, and God, as God, above all the world, it would comfort us at death, that others shall survive us, and the world shall continue, and God will be still God, and be glorified in his works: and love will say, I shall live in my successors, and I shall more than live in the life of the world, and yet most of all in the eternal life and glory of God. And God, who made us not gods, but poor creatures, as it pleased him, doth

know best our measures, and he will not try us with too long a life of temptations, lest we should grow too familiar where we should be strangers, and utterly strangers to our home. No wonder if that world was ready for a deluge, by a deluge of sin, in which men lived to six, seven, eight, and nine hundred years of age. Had our great sensualists any hope of so long a life, they would be more like incarnate devils, and there would be no dwelling near them for the holy seed. If angels were among them, they would, like the Sodomites, seek furiously to abuse them. Nor will God tire us out with too long a life of earthly sufferings. We think short cares, and fears, and sorrows, persecutions, sickness, and crosses to be long, and shall we grudge at the wisdom and love which shorteneth them? Yea, though holy duty itself be excellent and sweet, yet the weakness of the flesh maketh us liable to weariness, and abateth the willingness of the spirit, and our wise and merciful God will not make our warfare, or our race, too long, lest we be wearied and faint, and fall short of the prize. By our weariness, and complaints, and fears, and groans, one would think that we thought this life too long, and yet when we should yield to the call of God, we draw back as if we would have it everlasting.

Sect. 12. Willingly submit, then, O my soul. It is not thou, but this flesh, that must be dissolved; this troublesome, vile, and corruptible flesh. It is but the other half of thy meat and drink, which thy presence kept longer uncorrupted, going after the excremental part. Thou diest not when man (the compositum) dieth, by thy departure. And as thou livest not to thyself, thou diest not to thyself; whether I live or die, I am the Lord's; he that set up the candle, knoweth how long he hath use for the light of it. Study thy duty, and work while it is day, and let God choose thy time, and willingly stand to his disposal. The gospel dieth not when I die. The church dieth not. The praises of God die not. The world dieth not, and perhaps it shall grow better, and those prayers shall be answered which seemed lost. Yea, and it may be some of the seed that I have sown, shall spring up to some benefit of the dark un-peaceable world when I am dead. And is not this much of the end of life? And is not that life good which attaineth its end? If my end was to do good and glorify God, if good be done, and God glorified when I am dead, yea, though I were annihilated, is not my end attained? Feign not thyself to be God, whose interest (that is, the pleasing of his will) is the end of all things, and whose will is the measure of all created good. Feign not thyself to he all the world: God hath not lost his work; the world is not dissolved when I am dissolved. Oh, how strong and unreasonable a disease is this inordinate selfishness! Is not God's will infinitely better than mine, and fitter to be fulfilled? Choose the fulfilling of his will, and thou shalt always have thy choice. If a man be well that can always have his will, let this always be thy will, that God's will may be done, and thou shalt always have it.

Lord, let thy servant depart in peace; even in thy peace, which passeth understanding, and which Christ, the prince of peace, doth give, and nothing in the world can take away. Oh, give me that peace which beseemeth a soul, which is so near the harbour, even the world of endless peace and love, where perfect union (such as I am capable of) will free me from all the sins and troubles which are caused by the convulsions, divulsions, and confusions of this divided, selfish world. Call home this soul by the encouraging voice of love, that it may joyfully hear, and say, 'It is my Father's voice.' Invite it to thee by the heavenly messenger. Attract it by the tokens and the foretastes of love. The messengers that invited me to the feast of grace, compelled me to come in without constraint. Thy effectual call did make me willing, and is not glory better than preparing grace? Shall I not come more willingly to the celestial feast? What was thy grace for, but to make

me willing of glory, and the way to it? Why didst thou dart down thy beams of love, but to make me love thee, and to call me up to the everlasting centre? Was not the feast of grace as a sacrament of the feast of glory? Did I not take it in remembrance of my Lord until he come? Did not he that told me, "All things are ready," tell me also that "he is gone to prepare a place for us?" and it is his will that we shall be with him, and see his glory. They that are given him, and drawn to him by the Father on earth, do come to Christ. Give, now, and draw my departing soul to my glorified Head; and, as I have glorified thee on earth, in the measure that thy grace hath prevailed in me, pardon the sins by which I have offended thee, and glorify me in the beholding and participation of the glory of my Redeemer. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, with fuller life, and light, and love, into this too dead, and dark, and disaffected soul, that it may come with joyful willingness unto thee.

Sect. 13. Willingly depart, O lingering soul! It is from a Sodom, though in it there be righteous Lots, who yet are not without their woful blemishes! Hast thou so oft groaned for the general blindness and wickedness of the world, and art thou loth to leave it for a better? How oft wouldest thou have rejoiced to have seen but the dawning of a day of universal peace and reformation? And wouldest thou not see it where it shineth forth in fullest glory? Would a light at midnight have pleased thee so well? Hast thou prayed and laboured for it so hard? And wouldest thou not see the sun? Will the things of heaven please thee no where but on earth, where they come in the least and weakest influences, and are terminated in gross, terrene, obscure, and unkind recipients? Away, away, the vindictive flames are ready to consume this sinful world! Sinners that blindly rage in sin must quickly rage in the effects of sin and of God’s justice. The pangs of lust prepared for these pangs! They are treasuring up wrath against this day. Look not, then, behind thee. Away from this unhappy world! Press on unto the mark. (Philippians 3.) "Looking towards, and hastening to the coming of the day of God." (2 Peter 3:10-12.) As this world hath used thee, it would use thee still, and it will use others. If thou hast sped well in it, no thanks to it, but unto God. If thou hast had manifold deliverances, and marvellous preservations, and hast been fed with angel’s food, love not this wilderness for it, but God and his angel, which was thy guide, protector, and deliverer. And hath this troublesome flesh been so comfortable a companion to thee, that thou shouldest be so loth to leave it? Have thy pains, thy weariness, thy languishings, thy labours, thy cares and fears about this body, been pleasing to thee? And art thou loth that they should have an end? Didst thou not find a need of patience to undergo them? And of greater patience than mere nature gave thee? And canst thou hope now for better when nature faileth, and that an aged, consumed, more diseased body, should be a pleasanter habitation to thee than it was heretofore? If from thy youth up it hath been both a tempting and a troublesome thing to thee, surely, though it be less tempting, it will not be less troubling, when it is falling to the dust, and above ground savoureth of the grave! Had things sensible been never so pleasant in thy youth, and hadst thou glutted thyself in health with that sort of delight, in age thou art to say by nature, "I have no pleasure in them." Doth God in great mercy make pain and feebleness the harbingers of death, and wilt thou not understand their business? Doth he mercifully, beforehand, take away the pleasure of all fleshly things, and worldly vanities, that there may be nothing to relieve a departing soul, (as the shell breaketh when the bird is hatched, and the womb relaxed when the infant must be born,) and yet shall we stay when nothing holdeth us, and still be loth to come away? Wouldest thou dwell with thy beloved body in the grave, where it will rot and stink in loathsome darkness? If not, why should it now, in its painful languor, seem to thee a more pleasant habitation than the glorious presence of thy Lord? In the grave it will be at rest, and not tormented as now it is, nor wish at night, oh, that it were morning!

nor say at morning, when will it be night? And is this a dwelling fit for thy delight? Patience in it, while God will so try thee, is thy duty, but is such patience a better and sweeter life than rest and joy?

Sect. 14. But, alas! how deaf is flesh to reason. Faith hath the reason which easily may shame all contrary reasoning, but sense is unreasonable, and especially this inordinate, tenacious love of present life. I have reason enough to be willing to depart, even much more willing than I am. Oh, that I could be as willing as I am convinced that I have reason to be! Could I love God as much as I know that I should love him, then I should desire to depart, and to be with Christ, as much as I know that I should desire it. But God, in nature, hath there laid upon me some necessity of aversation, (though the inordinateness came from sin,) else Christ had not so feared, and deprecated the cup. Death must be a penalty, even where it is a gain, and therefore it must meet with some unwillingness: because we willingly sinned, we must unwillingly suffer. The gain is not the pain or dissolution in itself, but the happy consequents of it. All the faith and reason in the world will not make death to be no penalty, and therefore will not take away all unwillingness. No man ever yet reasoned or believed himself into a love of pain and death, as such, but seeing that the gain is unspeakably greater than the pain and loss, faith and holy reason may make our willingness to be greater than our unwillingness, and our hope and joy than our fear and sorrow. And it is the deep and effectual notice of goodness, which is God's way, in nature and grace, to change and draw the will of man. Come then, my soul, and think, believingly, what is best for thee. And wilt thou not love and desire most that which is certainly the best?

2A.3. WHY IT IS FAR BETTER TO BE WITH CHRIST

WHY IT IS FAR BETTER TO BE WITH CHRIST

Sect. 1. To say and hear that it is far better to be with Christ, is not enough to make us willing. Words and notions are such instruments as God useth to work on souls, but the convincing, satisfying, powerful light, and the inclining love, are other things. The soul now operateth ut forma hominis, on and with the corporeal spirits and organs, and it perceiveth now its own perceptions, but it is a stranger to the mode of its future action, when separated from the body, and can have no formal conception of such conceptions as yet it never had. And therefore, its thoughts of its future state must be analogical and general, and partly strange. But general notices, when certain, may be very powerful, and satisfy us in so much as is needful to our consent, and to such a measure of joy as is suitable to this earthly state. And such notices we have from the nature of the soul, with the nature of God, the course of Providence, and government of mankind, the internal and external conflicts which we perceive about men's souls, the testimony and promises of the word of God, the testimony of conscience, with the witness of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, and in it the earnest and the foretaste of glory, and the beginnings of life eternal here, all which I have before considered.

Sect. 2. The Socinians, who would interpret this of the state of resurrection only, against plain evidence, violate the text: seeing Paul expressly speaketh of his gain by death, which will be his abode with Christ, and this upon his departure hence: which (in 2 Corinthians 5:7-8) he calleth, his being absent from the body, and present with the Lord: and Christ, to the penitent thief, calleth his being with him in Paradise: and (Luke 16:1-31) in the parable of the steward, Christ intimateth to us, that wise preparers, when they go hence, are received into the everlasting habitations; as he there further tells us Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom.

Sect. 3. Goodness is primaria el mensurans, vel secundaria et mensuraia: the first is God's perfect essence and will: the second is either properly and simply good, or analogical. The former is the creature's conformity to the will of God, or its pleasingness to his will: the latter is, 1. The greater, which is the welfare or perfection of the universe. 2. The lesser, which is the several parts of the universe, either, 1. In the nobler respect, as they are parts contributing to the perfection of the whole; or, 2. In the lower respect, as they are perfect or happy in themselves, or, 3. In the lowest respect of all, as they are good to their fellow-creatures which are below themselves.

Sect. 4. Accordingly, it is far better to be with Christ, I. Properly and simply, as it is the fulfilling of God's will. II. Analogically, as it tendeth to the perfection of the universe and the church. III. And as it will be our own good or felicity. IV. And as it will be good to our inferior fellow-creatures; though this last be most questionable, and seemeth not included in the meaning of this text. Somewhat of these in order.

Sect. 5. I. It is an odious effect of idolatrous selfishness, to acknowledge no goodness above our own felicity, and, accordingly, to make the goodness of God to be but formally his usefulness,

benevolence, and beneficence, to his creatures, which is by making the creature the ultimate end, and God but the means; to make the creature to be God, and deny God, indeed, while we honour his name: as also it is to acknowledge no higher goodness formally in the creature, than in its own felicity as such: as if neither the pleasing of God's will, nor the perfection of the church and world, were better than we are: we are not of ourselves, and therefore we are not chiefly for ourselves; and, therefore, we have a higher good to love. That is simply best which God willeth. Therefore, to live here is best whilst I do live here; and to depart is best when the time of my departure cometh: that is best which is, for it is the work of God: the world cannot be better at this instant than it is, nor any thing better, which is of God, because it is as he willeth it to be: but when God hath changed them, it will then be best that they are changed. Were there no other good in my departure hence, but this simple good, the fulfilling of God's will, my reason telleth me that I should be fully satisfied in it: but there is also a subordinate sort of good.

Sect. 6. II. For my change will tend to the perfection of the universe; even that material good or perfection, which is its aptitude for the use to which God hath created, and doth preserve it: as all the parts, the modes, the situation, the motions, of a clock, a watch, or other engine, do to the ends of the artificer. Though God hath not told me particularly, why every thing, and mode, and motion, is as it is, I know it is all done in perfect wisdom, and suited to its proper use and end: if the hen or bird knoweth how to make her nest, to lay her eggs secretly together, when and how to sit on them till they are hatched, and how to feed them and preserve them, and when to forsake them, as sufficient for themselves without her help, &c. If the bee knoweth when, and whence, and how, to gather her honey and wax, and how to form the repository combs, and how to lay it up, and all the rest of her marvellous economy, shall I think that God doth he knoweth not what, or what is not absolutely the best? Doth he want either skill, or will, or power? And should the stone grudge to be hewed, the brick to be burnt, the trees to be cut down, and sawed and framed, the lead and iron to be melted, &c., when it is but to form an useful edifice, and to adapt and compose every part to the perfecting of the whole? Shall the waters grudge that they must glide away, and the plants that they must die, and half die every winter, and the fruits and flowers that they must fall, or the moon that it must have its changing motions, or the sun that it must rise and set so oft, &c., when all is but the action and order which maketh up that harmony and perfection which was designed by the Creator, and is pleasing to his will?

Sect. 7. III. But lawful self-love is yet further herein gratified: the goodness expressed in the text is that analogical, subordinate good, which is mihi bonum, my own felicity, and that which tendeth thereunto: it is most reasonable to love God best, and that next which is likest him (if known), and why should it not be the easiest and the sweetest? But experience findeth it so easy to love ourselves, that certainly, if I firmly believe that it is best for me, I shall desire to depart, and to be with Christ. And have I not reason to believe it?

Sect. 8. The reasons of it I will consider in this order: I. The general reason from the efficients and the means. II. The final reasons. III. The constitutive reasons from the state of my intellect, and its action and fruition there. IV. The constitutive reasons from the state of my will. V. The constitutive reasons from my practice there, leaving out those which the resurrection will give me, because I am speaking but of my present departure unto Christ.

Sect. 9. And, I. That is best for me, which love itself, my heavenly Father designeth, and chooseth, for my good. I hope I shall never dare to think, or say, that he is mistaken, or that he wanted skill or love, or that I could have chosen better for myself than he doth, if he had left all to my choice. Many a time the wise and good will of God hath crossed my foolish, rebellious will on earth; and afterward I have still perceived that it was best; usually for myself, but always for a higher good than mine. It is not an enemy, nor a tyrant, that made me, that hath preserved me, and that calls me hence. He hath not used me as an enemy: the more I have tried him, the better I have found him: had I better obeyed his ruling will, how happy had I been! And is not his disposing and rewarding will as good? Man's work is like man, and evil corrupteth it; but God's work is like God, and uncorrupted: if I should not die till my dearest friend would have it, much more till I myself would choose it, (not constrained by misery,) I should rejoice, and think my life were safe! O foolish, sinful soul! if I take it not to be far better to be at God's choice, than at my own, or any man's! and if I had not rather that he choose the time than I. Be of good cheer, then, O my soul! it is thy Father's voice that calleth thee hence: his voice that called thee into the world, and bid thee live; that called thee out of a state of sin and death, and bid thee live hereafter unto him; that called thee so oft from the grave, and, forgiving thy sins, renewed thy strength, restored thee to the comforts of his house and service; and that so graciously led thee through this howling wilderness, and brought thee almost to the sight of the promised land. And wilt thou not willingly go, when infinite, fatherly love doth call thee? art thou not desirous of his presence? art thou afraid to go to him who is the only cure of thy fears? What was it but this glory to which he did finally elect thee? Where dost thou read that he elected thee to the riches and honours of this world, or to the pleasures of the flesh? But he elected us in Christ to the heavenly inheritance. (Ephesians 1:3-4, &c.) Indeed, he elected thee also to bear the cross, and to manifold sufferings here: but is it that which thou preferrest before the crown? That was but as a means unto the kingdom, that thou mightest be conformed to Christ, and reign with him when thou hast suffered with him. If God choose thee to blessedness, refuse it not thyself, nor behave thyself like a refuser.

Sect. 10. 2. And surely that state is my best which my Saviour purchased and promised me as best: as he bought me not with silver and gold, so neither to silver and gold: did he live and die to make me rich or advanced in the world? Surely his incarnation, merits, sacrifice, and intercession, had a low design, if that were all! And who hath more of these than they that have least of Christ? But he purchased us to an incorruptible crown; to an inheritance undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, that are kept, by God's power, through faith unto salvation. (1 Peter 1:1-25) And is it heaven that cost so dear a price for me, and is the end of so wonderful a design of grace, and shall I be unwilling now to receive the gift?

Sect. 11. 3. That sure is best for me, for which God's holy Spirit is preparing me; that for which he is given to believers; and that which is the end of all his holy operations on my soul. But it is not to love this world that he is persuading me from day to day; but to come off from such love, and to set my heart on the things above. Is it to love this life and fleshly interest, this vanity and vexation, or rather to love the invisible perfection, that this blessed Spirit hath done so much to work my heart? And would I now undo all, or cross and frustrate all his operations? Hath grace been so long preparing me for glory, and shall I be loth to take possession of it? If I am not willing, I am not yet sufficiently prepared.

Sect. 12. 4. If heaven be not better for me than earth, God's word and ordinances have been all in vain? Surely that is my best which is the gift of the better covenant, and which is secured to me by so many sealed promises, and which I am directed to by so many sacred precepts, doctrines, and examples; and for which I have been called to hear, and read, and meditate, and pray, and watch so long. Was it the interest of the flesh on earth, or a longer life of worldly prosperity, which the gospel covenant secured to me; which the sacraments and Spirit sealed to me; which the bible was written to direct me to; which ministers preached to me; which my books were written for; which I prayed for; and for which I served God? Or was it not for his grace on earth, and glory in heaven? And is it not better for me to have the end of all these means, than lose them all, and lose my hopes? Why have I used them, if I would not attain their end?

Sect. 13. 5. That is my best state, which all the course of God's fatherly providences tend to: all his sweeter mercies, and all his sharper corrections, are to make me partaker of his holiness, and to lead me to glory in the way that my Saviour and all his saints have gone before me: all things work together for the best to me, by preparing me for that which is best, indeed. Both calms and storms are to bring me to this harbour: if I take them but for themselves, and this present life, I mistake them, and understand them not, but unthankfully vilify them, and lose their end, and life, and sweetness: every word and work of God; every day's mercies, and changes, and usages, do look at heaven, and intend eternity. God leadeth me no other way: if I follow him not, I forsake my hope in forsaking him: if I follow him, shall I be unwilling to be at home, and come to the end of all this way?

Sect. 14. 6. Surely that is best for me which God hath required me principally to value, love, and seek, and that as the business of all my life, referring all things else thereto: that this is my duty, I am fully certain, as is proved elsewhere, and before. Is my business in the world only for the things of this world? How vain a creature, then, were man; and how little were the difference between waking and sleeping! Life and death: no wonder if he that believeth that there is no life but this to seek or hope for do live in uncomfortable despair, and only seek to palliate his misery with the brutish pleasures of a wicked life, and if he stick at no villany which his fleshly lusts incline him to; especially tyrants and multitudes who have none but God to fear. It is my certain duty to seek heaven with all the fervour of my soul, and diligence of my life; and is it not best to find it?

Sect. 15. 7. That must needs be best for me, which all other things must be forsaken for: it is folly to forsake the better for the worse: but Scripture, reason, and conscience, tell me, that all this world, when it stands in competition, or opposition, should be forsaken for heaven; yea, for the least hopes of it: a possible, everlasting glory should be preferred before a certainly perishing vanity. I am sure this life will shortly be nothing to me; and therefore it is next to nothing now. And must I forsake all for my everlasting hopes, and yet be unwilling to pass unto the possession of them.

Sect. 16. 8. That is like to be our best which is our maturest state. Nature carrieth all things towards their perfection: our apples, pears, grapes, and every fruit, are best when they are ripe; and though they then hasten to corruption, that is, through the incapacity of the corporeal materials, any longer to retain the vegetative spirit, which is not annihilated at its separation; and being not made for its own felicity, but for man's, its ripeness is the state in which man useth it, before it doth corrupt of itself, and that its corruption may be for his nutriment; and the spirits and

best matter of his said food doth become his very substance. And doth God cause saints to grow up unto ripeness, only to perish and drop down unto useless rottenness? It is not credible. Though our bodies become but like our filthiest excrements, our souls return to God that gave them: and though he need them not, he useth them in their separated state; and that to such heavenly uses as the heavenly maturity and mellowness hath disposed them to. Seeing, then, love hath ripened me for itself, shall I not willingly drop into its hand?

Sect. 17. 9. That is like to be the best which the wisest and holiest, in all ages of the world, have preferred before all, and have most desired: and which also almost all mankind do acknowledge to be best at last. It is not like that all the best men in the world should be most deceived, and be put upon fruitless labours and sufferings by this deceit, and be undone by their duty; and that God should, by such deceits, rule all (or almost all) mankind: and also that the common notices of human nature, and conscience's last and closest documents, should be all in vain. But it is past all doubt, that no men usually are worse than those that have no belief or hopes of any life but this: and that none are so holy, just, and sober, so charitable to others, and so useful to mankind, as those that firmliest believe and hope for the state of immortality: and shall I fear that state which all that were wise and holy, in all ages, have preferred and desired?

Sect. 18. 10. And it is not unlike that my best state is that which my greatest enemies are most against: and how much Satan doth to keep me and other men from heaven; and how much worldly honour, and pleasure, and wealth, he could afford us to accomplish it, I need not here again be copious in reciting, having said so much of it in the 'Treatise of Infidelity.' And shall I be, towards myself, so much of Satan's mind? He would not have me come to heaven: and shall I also be unwilling? All these things tell me that it is best to be with Christ.

II. The Final Reasons

Sect. 1. II. 1. Is it not far better to dwell with God in glory, than with sinful men, in such a world as this? Though he be every where, his glory, which we must behold to our felicity, and the perfecting operations and communications of his love are in the glorious world, and not on earth. As the eye is made to see the light, and then to see other things by the light, so is man's mind made to see God, and to love him; and other things, as in, by, and for him. He that is our beginning is our end; and our end is the first motive of all moral action, and for it is that all means are used: and the end attained is the rest of souls. How oft hath my soul groaned under the sense of distance, and darkness, and estrangedness from God! How oft hath it looked up, and gasped after him, and said, 'Oh! when shall I be nearer and better acquainted with my God?' "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalms 42:1.) And would I not have my prayers heard, and my desires granted? What else is the sum of lawful prayers, but God himself? If I desire any thing more than God, what sinfulness is in those desires, and how sad is their signification. How oft have I said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee? It is good for me to draw near to God." (Psalms 73:25; Psalms 73:28.) Wo to me, if I did dissemble! If not, why should my soul draw back? Is it because that death stands in the way? Do not my fellow-creatures die for my daily food; and is not my passage secured by the love of my Father, and the resurrection and intercession of my Lord? Can I see the light of heavenly glory in this darksome shell and womb of flesh?

Sect. 2. All creatures are more or less excellent and glorious, as God is more or less operative and refulgent in them, and, by that operation, communicateth most of himself unto them. Though he be immense and indivisible, his operations and communications are not equal: and that is said to be nearest to him which hath most of those operations on it; and that without the intervenient causality of any second, created cause; and so all those are in their order near unto him, as they have noblest natures, and fewest intervenient causes.

Far am I from presuming to think that I am, or shall be, the best and noblest of God's creatures, and so that I shall be so near him as to be under the influx of no second or created causes, of which more anon. But to be as near as my nature was ordained to approach, is but to attain the end and perfection of my nature.

Sect. 3. And as I must not look to be the nearest to him, as he is the first efficient, no more must I, as he is the first dirigent, or governing cause. As now I am under the government of his officers on earth, I look for ever to be under sub-governors in heaven. My glorified Saviour must be my Lord and ruler, and who else under him I know not. If angels are not equal in perfection, nor, as is commonly supposed, equal in power, nor without some regimental order among themselves, I must not conclude that no created angel or spirit shall have any government over me, but it will be so pure and divine, as that the blessed effects of God's own government will be sweetly powerful therein. If the law was given by angels, and the angel of God was in the burning bush, and the angel conducted the people through the wilderness, and yet all these things are ascribed to God, much more near and glorious will the divine regiment there be, whoever are the administrators.

Sect. 4. And as I must expect to be under some created, efficient and dirigent causes there, so must I expect to have some subordinate ends: else there would not be a proportion and harmony in causalities. Whatever nobler creatures are above me, and have their causalities upon me, I must look to be finally for these nobler creatures. When I look up and think what a world of glorious beings are now over me, I dare not presume to think that I shall finally, any more than receptively, be the nearest unto God, and that I am made for none but him. I find here that I am made, and ruled, and sanctified, for the public or common good of many as above my own, of which I am past doubt; and I am sure that I must be, finally, for my glorified Redeemer; and for what other spiritual beings, or intelligences, that are above me, little do I know: and God hath so ordered all his creatures, as that they are mutually ends and means for and to one another, though not in an equality, nor in the same respects. But whatever nearer ends there will be, I am sure that he who is the first efficient, and dirigent, will be the ultimate, final cause: and I shall be, in this respect, as near him as is due to the rank and order of my nature. I shall be useful to the ends which are answerable to my perfection.

Sect. 5. And if it be the honour of a servant to have an honourable master, and to be appointed to the most honourable work; if it be some honour to a horse above swine, or a worm, or fly, that he serveth more nearly for the use of man, yea, for a prince, will it not be also my advancement to be ultimately for God, and subordinately for the highest created natures, and this in such services as are suitable to my spiritual and heavenly state?

Sect. 6. For I am far from thinking that I shall be above service, and have none to do, for activity will be my perfection and my rest: and all such activity must be regular in harmony, and order of causes, and for its proper use; and what, though I know not now fully what service it is that I must

do, I know it will be good and suitable to the blessed state which I shall be in; and it is enough that God and my Redeemer know it; and that I shall know it in due time, when I come to practise it; of which more afterward.

Sect. 7. The inordinate love of this body and present composition seduceth souls to think that all their use and work is for its maintenance and prosperity, and when the soul hath done that, and is separated from flesh, it hath nothing to do, but must lie idle, or be as nothing, or have no considerable work or pleasure. As if there were nothing in the whole world, but this little fluid mass of matter, for a soul to work upon; as if itself, and all the creatures, and God, were nothing, or no fit objects for a soul: and why not hereafter, as well as now: or, as if that which, in our compounded state, doth operate on and by its organs, had no other way of operation without them; as if the musician lost all his power, or were dead, when his instrument is out of tune, or broken, and could do nothing else but play on that: as if the fiery part of the candle were annihilated, or transmutate, as some philosophers imagine, when the candle goeth out, and were not fire, and in action still: or as if that sunbeam which I shut out, or which passeth from our horizon, were annihilated, or did nothing, when it shineth not with us. Had it no other individual to illuminate, or to terminate its beams or action, were it nothing to illuminate the common air? Though I shall not always have a body to operate in and upon, I shall always have God, and a Saviour, and a world of fellow-creatures; and when I shine not in this lantern, and see not by these spectacles, nor imaginarily in a glass, I shall yet see things suitable intuitively, and as face to face. That which is essentially life, as a living principle, will live; and that which is essentially an active, intellective, volitive principle, force, and virtue, will still be such while it is itself, and is not annihilated, or changed into another thing (which is not to be feared); and that which is such can never want an object till all things be annihilated.

Sect. 8. Reason assureth me, that were my will now what it should be, and fully obsequious herein to my understanding, to fulfil God's will would be the fulfilling my own will, for my will should perfectly comply with his, and to please him perfectly would be my perfect pleasure: and it is the unreasonable adhesion to this body, and sinful selfishness, which maketh any one think otherwise now. I am sure that my soul shall live, for it is life itself; and I am sure that I shall live to God, and that I shall fulfil and please his blessed will; and this is, as such, incomparably better than my felicity, as such: and yet so far as I am pleased in so doing, it will be my felicity.

Sect. 9. I begin now to think, that the strange love which the soul hath to this body (so far as it is not inordinate) is put into us of God, partly to signify to us the great love which Christ hath to his mystical, political body, and to every member of it, even the least: he will gather all his elect out of the world, and none that come to him shall be shut out, and none that are given him shall be lost: as his flesh is to them meat indeed, and his blood is to them drink indeed, and he nourisheth them for life eternal: (his Spirit in them, turning the sacrament, the word, and Christ himself, in esse objectivo, as believed in, into spirit and life to us, as the soul and our natural spirits turn our food into flesh, and blood, and spirits, which, in a dead body, or any lifeless repository, it would never be:) so as we delight in the ease and prosperity of our body, and each member, and have pleasure in the pleasant food that nourisheth it, and other pleasant objects which accommodate it; Christ also delighteth in the welfare of his church, and of all the faithful, and is pleased when they are fed with good and pleasant food, and when hereby they prosper: Christ loveth the church, not only as a man must love his wife, but as we love our bodies; and no man ever hated his own flesh.

(Ephesians 5:27, &c.) And herein I must allow my Saviour the pre-eminence, to overgo me in powerful, faithful love: he will save me better from pain and death than I can save my body: and will more inseparably hold me to himself. If it please my soul to dwell in such a house of clay, and to operate on so mean a thing as flesh, how greatly will it please my glorified Lord, to dwell with his glorified body, the triumphant church, and to cherish and bless each member of it! It would be a kind of death to Christ to be separated from his body, and to have it die. Whether Augustine, and the rest of the fathers, were in the right or no, who thought, that as our bodies do not only shed their hairs, but, by sicknesses and waste, lose much of their very flesh; so Christ's militant body doth not only lose hypocrites, but also some living, justified members; yet, certain it is, that confirmed members, and most certain, that glorified members, shall not be lost: heaven is not a place for Christ or us to suffer such loss in. And will Christ love me better than I love my body? Will he be more loth to lose me than I am to lose a member, or to die? Will he not take incomparably greater pleasure in animating and actuating me for ever, than my soul doth in animating and actuating this body? O, then, let me long to be with him! And though I am naturally loth to be absent from the body, let me be by his Spirit more unwilling to be absent from the Lord; and though I would not be unclothed, had not sin made it necessary, let me not groan to be clothed upon with my heavenly habitation, and to become the delight of my Redeemer, and to be perfectly loved, by love itself.

Sect. 10. And even this blessed receptivity of my soul, in terminating the love and delight of my glorified Head, must needs be a felicity to me. The insensible creatures are but beautified by the sun's communication of its light and heat; but the sensitives have also the pleasure of it. Shall my soul be senseless? Will it be a clod or stone? Shall that, which is now the form of man, be then more lifeless, senseless, or uncapable, than the form of brutes is now? Doubtless, it will be a living, perceiving, sensible recipient of the felicitating love of God, and my Redeemer; I shall be loved as a living spirit, and not as a dead and senseless thing, that doth not comfortably perceive it.

Sect. 11. And if I must rejoice with my fellow-servants that rejoice, shall I not be glad to think that my blessed Lord will rejoice in me, and in all his glorified ones? Union will make his pleasure to be much mine; and it will be aptly said by him to the faithful soul, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matthew 25:21.) His own active joy will objectively be ours, as ours will be efficiently his, or from him. Can that be an ill condition to me, in which my Lord will most rejoice? it is best to him, and, therefore, best to me.

Sect. 12. And the heavenly society will joyfully welcome a holy soul. If there be now "Joy in heaven among the angels, for one sinner that repenteth," (Luke 15:10,) who hath yet so little holiness, and so much sin; what joy will there be over a perfected, glorified soul? Surely, if our angels there behold our Father's face, they will be glad, in season, of our company. The angels that carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom, no doubt rejoiced in their work, and their success. And is the joy of angels, and the heavenly host, as nothing to me? Will not love and union make their joy to be my own; if love here must make all my friends and neighbours comforts to become my own? And as their joy, according to their perfection, is greater than any that I am now capable of, so the participation of so great a joy of theirs will be far better than to have my little separated apartment. Surely, that will be my best condition, which angels and blessed spirits will be best pleased in, and I shall rejoice most in that which they most rejoice in.

III. The constitutive Reasons from the intellective State

Sect. 1. Though the tempter would persuade men, because of the case of infants in the womb, apoplectics, &c., that the understanding will be but an unactive power, when separated from these corporeal organs, I have seen before sufficient reasons to repel this temptation. I will suppose, that it will not have such a mode of conception, as it hath now by these organs; but, 1. The soul will be still essentially a vital, intellective substance, disposed to act naturally; and that is to those acts which it is formally inclined to, as fire to illuminate and heat. And as it cannot die, (while it is what it is in essence,) because it is life itself, that is, the vital substance; so it cannot but be intellective, (as to an inclined power,) because it is such, essentially; though God can change, or annihilate any thing, if he would. 2. And it will be among a world of objects. 3. And it will still have its dependence on the first cause, and receive his continual, actuating influx. 4. And no man can give the least show of true reason, to prove that it shall cease sensation, (whether the sensitive faculties be in the same substance which is intellective, which is most probable, or in one conjunct, as some imagine,) though the species and modes of sensation cease, which are denominated from the various organs.

Yea, no man can prove that the departing soul doth not carry with it its igneous spirits, which, in the body, it did immediately actuate. If it were ever so certain that those Greek fathers were mistaken, (as well as hypocrites,) who took the soul itself to be a sublime, intellectual fire.

And as to the objection some hold, that the soul pre-existed before it was in the body; others, and most, that it then received its first being: if the first were true, it would be true that the soul had its intellectual activity before, though the soul itself, incorporate, remember it not, because it operateth but ut forma hominis, (and its oblivion they take to be part of its penalty,) and they that think it a radius of the anima mundi vel systematis, must think that then it did intellectually animate hunc mundum, vel mundi partem: and to do so again, is the worst they can conjecture of it. As the rays of the sun, which heat a burning glass, and by it set a candle on fire, are the same rays still diffused in the air, and illuminating, heating, and moving it, and terminated on some other body, and not annihilated, or debilitated, when their contracted operation ceaseth by breaking the glass, or putting out the candle; and as the spirit of a tree still animateth the tree, when it retires from the leaves, and lets them fall. But this being an unproved imagination of men’s own brains, we have no further use of it, than to confute themselves. But if the soul existed not till its incorporation, what wonder if it operate but ut forma, when it is united to the body for that use? What wonder if its initial operations, like a spark of fire in tinder, or the first lighting of a candle, be weak, and scarce by us perceptible? What wonder if it operate but to the uses that the creation did appoint it; and first, as vegetative, fabricate its own body, as the maker’s instrument, and then feel, and then understand? And what wonder if it operate no further than objects are admitted? And, therefore, what wonder if, in apoplexies, &c., such operations are intercepted? But the departing soul is, 1. In its maturity. 2. No more united to this body, and so not confined to sense and imagination in its operations, and the admission of its objects. 3. And it is sub ratione meriti, and as a governed subject is ordinate to its reward; which it was not capable of receiving in the womb, or in an apoplexy. And as we have the reasons before alleged to hold, 1. That it shall not be annihilated. 2, Nor dissolved. 3. Nor lose its essential faculties or powers. 4. Nor those essential powers be continued useless by the wise and merciful Creator, though, by natural revelation, we know not in what manner they shall act; whether on any other body, and by what conjunction, and how far; so by supernatural revelation

we are assured, that there is a reward for the righteous, and that holy souls are still members of Christ, and live because he liveth, and that in the day of their departure they shall be with him in Paradise, and being absent from the body, shall be present with the Lord; and that Christ, therefore, died, rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living, that is, of those that, being dead, hence do live with him, and of those that yet live in the body; for he that said, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," that is, stands not related to them as his people, as a king to his subjects, is not himself the Lord of the absolute dead, but of the living.

Therefore, (as Contarenus against Pomponatius de Immortal. Anim. saith,) the immortality of the soul is proveable by the light of nature, but the manner of its future operation must be known by faith. And blessed be the Father of spirits, and our Redeemer, who hath sent and set up this excellent light, by which we see further than purblind infidels can do!

Sect. 2. But I deny not but even the Scripture itself doth tell us but little of the manner of our intellection when we are out of the body; and it is not improbable that there is more imperfection in this mode of notional, organical, abstractive knowledge which the soul exerciseth in the body, than most consider of. And that as the eye hath the visive faculty in sleep, and when we wink, and an internal action of the visive spirits, (no doubt,) and yet seeth not any thing without till the eyelids are opened, (and was not made to see its own sight,) so the soul in the body is as a winking eye to all things that are not, by the sense and imagination, intromitted, or brought within its reach. And whether (sicut non video visum, neque facultatem neque substantiam videntem, videndo tamen certo percipio me videre, so it may be said, Non intelligo immediate ipsam intellectionem, neque facultatem, aut substantiam intelligentem. Intelligendo tamen certo percipio me intelligere, quia actus intellectus in spiritus sensitivos operans sentitur; or whether we must further say, with Ockam, that Intellectus tum intuitivè tum ubstractivè se intelligit, I leave to wiser men to judge, but I am very suspicious that the body is more a lantern to the soul than some will admit; and that this Lusus notionum secundurum, or abstractive knowledge of things by organical images, names, and notions, is occasioned by the union of the soul with the body ut formæ, and is that childish knowledge which the apostle saith shall be done away. And how much of man’s fall might consist in such a knowing of good and evil, I cannot tell, or in the overvaluing such a knowledge. And I think that when vain philosophy at Athens had called the thoughts and desires of mankind from great realities to the logical and philological game at words and notions, it was Socrates’ wisdom to call them to more concerning studies, and Paul’s greater wisdom to warn men to take heed of such vain philosophy, and to labour to know God and Jesus Christ, and the things of the Spirit, and not to over value this ludicrous, dreaming, worldly wisdom. And if I have none of this kind of notional, childish knowledge when I am absent from the body, the glass and spectacles may then be spared, when I come to see with open face, or as face to face. Our future knowledge is usually, in Scripture, called seeing. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8.) "We shall see face to face." (1 Corinthians 13:12.) "We shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2.) "Father, I will that those which thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me," &c. (John 17:24.) An intuitive knowledge of all things, as in themselves immediately, is a more excellent sort of knowledge than this, by similitudes, names, and notions, which our learning now consisteth in, and is but an art acquired by many acts and use.

Sect. 3. If the sun were, as the heathens thought it, an intellective animal, and its emitted rays were vitally visive, and when one of those rays were received by prepared seminal matter (as in insects) it became the soul of an inferior animal, in this case, the said ray would operate in that insect, or animal, but according to the capacity of the recipient matter; whereas the sun itself, by all its emitted rays, would see all things intellectually, and with delight, and when that insect were dead, that ray would be what it was, an intellective, intuitive emanation. And though the soul in flesh do not know itself how it shall be united to Christ, and to all other holy souls, and to God himself, nor how near, or just of what sort that union will be, yet united it will be, and therefore will participate accordingly of the universal light or understanding to which it is united. The soul now, as it is, or operateth, in the foot or hand, doth not understand, but only us it is, and operateth, in the head. And yet the same soul which is in the hand, understandeth in the head, and the soul operateth not so selfishly or dividedly in the hand as to repine there because it understandeth not there; but it is quiet in that it understandeth in the head, and performeth its due operation in the hand. But this diversity of operations seemeth to be from the organs, and body's use, or need, but souls dismissed from the body seem to be as all eye, or intuitive light. Therefore, though it might content us to say that our Head seeth all things, and we are united to him, yet we may say further, that we ourselves shall see God, and all things that are meet for us to see.

Sect. 4. And seeing it is most certain that the superior glorious regions are full of blessed spirits, who do see God and one another, having much more perfect operations than we have, (whose effects we mortals find here below,) why should I, that find an intellective nature in myself, make any doubt of my more perfect operations when I am dismissed hence, being satisfied that a soul will not lose its simple essence? Either those superior spirits have ethereal bodies to act in (or are such themselves) or not. If they are, or have such, why should I doubt of the like, and think that my substance or vehicle will not be according to the region of my abode? If not, why should I think that my departed soul may not know or see without an igneous or ethereal body or vehicle, as well as all those worlds of spirits. And the certainty of apparitions, possessions, and witches, do tell us, not only that there are such inhabitants of other regions, ordinarily invisible to us, but also that we are in the way to that happiness or misery which is in our invisible state.

Sect. 5. These things reviewed, (being partly mentioned before,) assuring me that I shall have actual intellection in my separated state, the region, with the objects, but, above all, the holy Scriptures, will tell me as much as it is meet that I should here know, what it is that I shall intuitively understand. The apostle (1 Corinthians 13:10-12.) doth distinguish our knowing in part, and knowing perfectly, knowing as a child, and as a man, knowing darkly and enigmatically, as in a glass, and knowing face to face as we are known. The great question is, when this time of perfection is? Whether he mean at death, or at the resurrection. If the observation of Dr. Hammond and Mr. Beverly, in his 'Great Soul of Man,' hold, that ■ν■σασις; in Scripture, when 'the flesh or body' is not joined with it, signifies that life which the soul doth enter upon immediately after our death, and so that the soul hath that (after living) which is signified by the very word which we translate resurrection, then it will lead men to think that there is less difference between man's state at his first departure, and at his last resurrection, than most think, even than Calvin himself thought. But the difference between our first and last state of after-life or resurrection cannot be now distinctly known. What difference there is now between Enoch, Elias, and those who rose at Christ's resurrection, and the rest of the saints, even the spirits of the perfected just, and whether

the first have as much greater glory than the rest, as it is conceived that we shall have at the resurrection above that which immediately followeth death, what mortal man can tell? I am past doubt that flesh and blood (formally so called, and not only ab accidente, as sinful) shall not inherit the kingdom of God, (vid. Hammond in loc.,) but that our natural bodies shall be made spiritual bodies: and how a spiritual body differeth from a spirit or soul, I pretend not well to understand, but must stay till God, by experience, or fuller light, inform me. But surely the difference is not like to be so great, as that a soul in flesh shall know in part, and a soul in a spiritual body shall know perfectly, and a soul between both shall not know at all. If it be perfection which we shall have in our spiritual body, it is like that we are nearer to that perfection, in knowledge and felicity, while we are between both, than when we are in the flesh.

Sect. 6. And sure a soul that (even Solomon saith) goeth upward, and to God that gave it, is liker to know God than that which is terminated in flesh, and operateth ut forma, according to its capacity and state; and a soul that is with Christ, is liker to know Christ, and the Father in him, than that which is present with the body, and absent from the Lord. What less can the promise of being with him signify?

Sect. 7. And, 1. As to the kind of knowledge, how excellent and more satisfactory a way will that of intuition, or intellective sense, be, than is our present way of abstraction, similitudes, and signs. What abundance of time, thoughts, and labour, doth it cost us now to learn our grammar, our rhetoric, and our logic. Our artes loquendi, dicendi and disserendi; to learn our wordy rules and axioms, in metaphysics, physics, &c. And when we have learned them all, (if all can be learned,) bow little the nearer are many to the knowing of the signified realities. We oft get but a set of words to play with, to take up our time, and divert us from the matter; even as carnal men use the creatures which signify God, and are made to lead them up to him, to entangle them, and be the greatest and most pernicious diversion of their souls from God; so do too many learned men do by their organical, signal knowledge. They use it as men do cards, and romances, and plays, to delight their fancies, but they know less of the things that are worth their knowing, than many unlearned persons do, as I said before. Had not much of the Athenian learning been then a mere game, for men to play away their precious time at, and to grow proud of, while they were ignorant of saving realities, Christ and his apostles had not so much neglected it as they did, nor Paul so much warned men to take heed of being deceived by that vain kind of philosophy, in which he seemeth to me to have greater respect to the universally esteemed Athenian arts, than, as Dr. Hammond thought, to the mere gnostic pretensions. This poor, dreaming, signal, artificial knowledge is, 1. Costly. 2. Uncertain. 3. Contentious. 4. Unsatisfactory, in comparison of intuitive knowledge.

It is costly, as to the hard labour and precious time which must be laid out for it, as aforesaid. We grow old in getting us horses, and boots, and spurs, for our journey, and it is well if we begin it at the last; like a man that would study the new-found planets, and the shape of Saturn’s and Jupiter’s satellites, and the Viam Lacteam, &c.; and he spends his whole life in getting him the best tubes, or telescopes, and never useth them to his ends; or like one that, instead of learning to write, doth spend his life in getting the best ink, paper, and pens; or rather like one that learneth to write and print exactly, and not to understand what any of his words do signify. Men take their spectacles instead of eyes.

And when this learning is got, how uncertain are we whether the words have no ambiguity; whether they give us the true notice of the speaker's mind, and of the matter spoken of. As I said before, what penury, and yet redundancy of words have we: of how various and uncertain signification; changed by custom, or arbitrary design; sometimes by the vulgar use, and sometimes by learned men that, being conscious of the defectiveness of the speaking art, are still tampering, and attempting to amend it. And some men speak obscurely en purpose, to raise in their readers a conceit of their subtle and sublime conceptions. And he that understandeth things most clearly, and speaketh them most plainly, (which are the parts of true learning,) shall have much ado to get the matter out of dark and bewildering uncertainties, and to make others understand both it and him.

And hence come the greatest part of the contentions of the world, which are hottest among men that most pretend to wordy knowledge; as in traffic and converse, the more men and business we have to do with, usually the more quarrels and differences we have; so the more of this wordy learning, instead of realities, men pretend to, the more disputes and controversies they make; and the instruments of knowledge prove the instruments of error and contention. And, alas! how many applauded volumes are the snares and troublers of the world! and how great a part of our libraries are vain janglings, and strife of words, and traps for the more ingenious sort, that will not be taken with cards and dice, robbing us of our time, destroying our love, depressing our minds, that should ascend to God, and diverting them from the great and holy things which should be the matter of our thoughts and joys; and filling the church with sects and strife, while every one striveth for the pre-eminence of his wit and notions, and few strive for holy love, and unity, and good works.

And all this while, alas! too many learned men do but lick the outside of the glass, and leave the wine within untasted. To know God, and Christ, and heaven, and holiness, do give the soul a nourishing and strengthening kind of pleasure, like that of the appetite in its food; but this game at words is but a knowing of images, signs, and shadows, and so is but an image and shadow of true knowledge. It is not that grace which Austin's definition saith, Nemo male utitur; but it is that which the sanctified use well, and the unsanctified are puffed up by, and use to the opposition of truth, the ostentation of a foolish wit, and the deceit of their own souls. And if it be sanctified knowledge, it is but mediate, in order to our knowledge of things thus signified; and it is the real good which contenteth and beatifieth, though the notions may be a subordinate recreation; and intuition feasteth on these realities.

Sect. 9. II. And as to the objects of this intuition, their excellency will be the excellency of our knowledge. I. I shall know God better. II. I shall know the universe better. III. I shall know Christ better. IV. I shall know the church, his body, better, with the holy angels. V. I shall better know the methods and perfection of the Scripture, and all God's dirigent word and will. VI. I shall know the methods and sense of disposing providence better. VII. I shall know the divine benefits, which are the fruits of love, better. VIII. I shall know myself better. IX. I shall better know every fellow-creature, which I am concerned to know. X. And I shall better know all that evil, sin, Satan, and misery, from which I am delivered.

Sect. 10. I. Aquinas, and many others, took it for the chief, natural proof of the soul's immortality, that man, by nature, desireth not only to knew effects, and second causes, but to rise up to the knowledge of the first cause; and, therefore, was made for such knowledge in the state of his

perfection; but grace hath much more of this desire than nature. Not that we must not be content to be without a great deal of knowledge, which would be unmeet for us, useless, troublesome, or dangerous to us; nor must we aspire to that which is above our capacity, and to know the unsearchable things of God; but not to know God, is to know nothing, and to have an understanding worse than none. I presume not to pry into the secrets of the Almighty, nor to pretend to know more of God than, indeed, I do; but, O that I might know more of his glorious perfections, of his will, and love, and ways, with that knowledge which is eternal life! Blessed be that love that sent the Son of God from heaven, to reveal him to us in the gospel, as he hath done; but all that hear the same words, and believe them, have not the same degree of light or faith. If an angel from heaven came down on earth to tell us all of God that we would know, and might lawfully desire and ask him, who would not turn his back on libraries, and universities, and learned men, to go and discourse with such a messenger? What travel should I think too far, what cost too great, for one hour's talk with such a messenger? But we must have here but such intimations as will exercise faith, and excite desire, and try us under the temptations of the world and flesh. The glorious light is the reward of the victory obtained by the conduct of the light of grace. God, in great mercy, even here beginneth the reward. They that are true to the initial light, and faithfully follow on to know the Lord, do find, usually, such increase of light (not of vain notions, but of quickening and comforting knowledge of God) as greatly encourageth them still on to seek for more. It is very pleasant here to increase in holy knowledge, though it usually bring an increase of malignant opposition, and so of sorrows to the flesh. The pleasure that the mind hath in common knowledge, brings men through a great deal of labour to attain it. How many years' travel over land and sea do some men take, to see and know more of this lower world; though it is little that they bring home, but more acquaintance with sin, and vanity, and vexation. How many more years do thousands spend in the reading multitudes of tedious volumes, that they may know what others knew before them. Printers and booksellers live by our desire of knowledge. What soul, then, on earth can possibly conceive how great a pleasure it will be for a glorified soul to see the Lord? Though I cannot now conceive what that intuition of God himself will be, and whether it will not be a glorious kind of concluding or abstractive knowledge; whether the glory which we shall see be only a created appearance of God, or be his very essence, it satisfieth me that it will be as perfect a knowledge as is fit for me to desire; and I shall then desire no more than is fit: and what it is I shall then know by itself, for it is not otherwise to be clearly known. And all the pleasure that I shall have in heaven, in knowing any of the works of God, will be in my beholding God himself, his being, his vital power and action, his wisdom, and his love and goodness, in those works; for he is the life and glory of them all. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

And, doubtless, it will be no small part of my delight to see and know God's perfect works, I mean the universe itself. I cannot say that I shall have so large a capacity as to comprehend all the world, or know it perfectly, and with an adequate knowledge; but I shall know it in such perfection as is suitable to my capacity. It is exceeding pleasant to know the least particles of the works of God. With what diligence and delight have men endeavoured to anatomise a body, yea, a small part of a carcass, and to know and describe poor worms and insects, plants and minerals; and no man ever yet perfectly knew the least of them all. No herbalist or physician ever yet knew the nature and uses of any one herb with an adequate knowledge. With what delight and diligence are physical searches carried on in the world, though still we are all but groping in the dark, and ignorant of many things for one that we know, and, therefore, know no one perfectly, because we

are ignorant of the rest. But if, indeed, we were above our dreaming, erroneous hypothesis, and saw the nature of every creature, even in sea and land—this little spot of God's creation, and the compages of all, oh! what a delightful spectacle would it be! How much more to see the whole creation, yea, or one vortex or system of the globes, and to know their union and communion and to behold their beauteous symmetry, and hear them, in concord and melodious harmony, praising the glory of their great, wise, amiable Creator. This were a delectable sight indeed. I shall have as much of this as I shall be capable of; and the wonders and glories of the works of God shall wrap up my soul in admiring, joyful praise for ever: and though here it be but little of God's works that we know, I have great reason to think that it will be far otherwise there. 1. Because the state of perfection must far excel our dark and infant state of imperfection. We have now desires after such a knowledge. His works are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein: and these desires, being of God, shall not be frustrate. 2. Because there will be a proportionableness of the parts of our perfection; and therefore, as our love to God and his works will be there perfected, so will be our knowledge. 3. Because we shall know God himself as much as we are capable, and therefore we shall know his works in him, or by a subordinate knowledge, the less being in the greater. 4. Because God hath made his works to be known to his glory: but it is little that is here known of them by mortals; therefore they are known by them in heaven, who are fitted to improve that knowledge to his praise.

If Christ, who is the wisdom of God, will teach me the true philosophy, how to love God, and live here in all well-pleasing unto him, I shall quickly, in heaven, be a perfect philosopher; and experience will tell me that the surest way to be truly learned, and know the wonderful works of God, was to know, love, and serve the great Creator; and in him we shall have all, and without him we know nothing, and have nothing at all.

Satan tempted Christ, by showing him the "kingdoms and glory of the world," and promising them all to him if he would have worshipped him: but God will show me more than Satan could show, and give me more of that which is best, than Satan could give.

And that in heaven I shall better know Jesus Christ, and all the mystery of our redemption by him, will not be the least of my felicity; for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom: and to know the mystery of his eternal godhead, in the second person, and his created nature, and the union of these, and to see God's wonderful design and work of grace in him laid open to our clearest view, O what beatifying knowledge would this be! All dark texts concerning his person, his office, and his works, will then be expounded and fully understood. All those strange and difficult things which were the great exercise and honour of faith, will then be plain. Difficulties will no more be Satan's advantage to tempt us to unbelief, or doubting. The sight of the glory of my Lord will be my glory. (John 17:24.) If Paul had not then attained to perfection in the knowledge of Christ, and the power of his resurrection, but was pressing forward to reach that crown in the life to come, which he calleth "the resurrection of the dead," (Php 3:9-12,) such as I must not expect here to attain it; but when that which is perfect is come, this imperfect knowledge of faith will be done away, as childish knowledge is in manhood: and the glass and riddle shall be laid aside, when we "shall see face to face, and shall know as we are known," (1 Corinthians 13:10-12,) as to our sight and knowledge of Christ and his triumphant body: for I dare not apply that phrase to the sight and knowledge of the divine essence, nor yet deny it.

If now, though we see not Christ, yet, believing, we love him, and rejoice in him with unspeakable, glorying joy. What love and joy will the everlasting sight of our blessed Head excite there in the souls of all the glorified!

IV. I shall better, oh! much better, know the heavenly Jerusalem, the triumphant church, the blessed angels, and glorified saints; and as my love to them, so my knowledge of them, will not be the least part of my heavenly delight. As strangely as I now look upward to that world, because I cannot see it with these eyes, it shall be my well known everlasting habitation. Oh! what a sight, what a joyful sight, will death show me by drawing aside the veil, or rather the Lord of Life, by turning death to my advantage! When I am there at home, I shall no more think with confusion, fear, or doubting, of that blessed place or state. My fears, which now come from the smallness of my faith, will end when faith, is turned into vision. As I know the several rooms in my house, and houses in the street, and streets in the city, so shall I then know the many mansions which Christ hath said are in his Father's house. Words now give me so poor, imperfect a conception of the world and things which I never saw, as that sometimes I can scarcely tell whether the joy of my faith, or the trouble of my dark apprehensions, he the greater. But when I shall see the place and persons, the glory which I heard of, that will he the delightful satisfying and possessing kind of knowledge. If Nehemiah, and the godly Jews, made so great a matter of seeing the walls of Jerusalem repaired; and others, of the imperfect re-edifying of the temple, O what a joyful sight to me will the heavenly Jerusalem then be! The most glorious sight will be at the great marriage-day of the Lamb, when Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that now believe: but the next to that will be the day of my particular deliverance, when I shall come to Christ, and see the saints admiring him in glory.

If I were of the opinion of those Greek fathers, who thought that stars were angels, or had intellectual souls, (matters unknown to us,) I should love them as my guardians, and take it to be yet more of my concernment to be advanced to the fuller knowledge of them. But seeing I know that angels love us, and by office do attend and keep us, and rejoice at our good, and at our repentance, and, which is far more, are more holy and excellent creatures than we are, it is, therefore, my comfort to think that I shall better know them, and live in near and perpetual acquaintance and communion with them, a more sensible and sweet communion than we can have with them here. Devils are aërial, and near to this dark and sinful world, and oftener appear to men than angels. But the angels affect not such descending appearances, till love and obedience to their Lord make it pleasing to them: and therefore we have but little knowledge, even of those that know, and love, and keep us. But when we come home to their nearest society and converse, to know them will be sweet and joyful knowledge: for they are more excellent creatures than the most glorious that are below the intellective nature. They are full of light, and full of love to God and man. Had God bid me pray to them, I would not have refused it, but taken it for my honour; but seeing he hath not, I will do that which he hath bid me, even love them, and rejoice in my relation to the innumerable company of them, in the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, (Hebrews 12:22,) and long to know and love them more; expecting, ore long, to bear my part in the praises of God and of the Lamb, in the same choir where they are the precentors. And that I shall know the spirits of the perfected just, and be of their communion, will be no small addition to my joy. How sweet hath one wise and holy, though weak and blemished, companion been to me here on earth! And how lovely have God's graces in such, though sullied, appeared to

me. Oh! then, what a sight will it be when we shall see the millions of souls that shine in perfect wisdom and holiness with Christ. To see a garden that hath some beautiful flowers in it, is something: but if you saw whole fields and countries shining with them, it would be a glory, though fading, to the earth. A well-built city is a pleasanter sight than a single house, and a navy than a ship, and an army than one man. And if this poor, low world did all consist of wise, and just, and holy persons, O what an orderly, lovely world would it be! If one kingdom consisted (prince, magistrates, pastors, and people) all of such, what a blessed kingdom would that be. The plague of wicked men's deceits, and falsehoods, oppressions, and iniquities, may help to make us sensible of this. It would be a great temptation to us to be loth to die, and leave such a country, were it not that the more the beauty of goodness appeareth, the more the state of perfection is desired. It is pleasant to me to pray in hope, as Christ hath commanded me, that earth may be made liker unto heaven, which now is become so like to hell. But when I shall see the society perfected in number, in holiness, in glory, in heavenly employment, the joyful praises of Jehovah, the glory of God, and the Lamb shining on them, and God rejoicing over them as his delight, and myself partaking of the same, that will be the truly blessed day. And why doth my soul, imprisoned in flesh, no more desire it?

V. I shall better understand all the word of God, the matter, and the method of it: though I shall not have that use for it as I have now in this life of faith, yet I shall see more of God's wisdom and his goodness, his love, mercy, and justice, appearing in it, than ever man on earth could do! As the creatures, so the Scriptures, are perfectly known only by perfect spirits. I shall then know how to solve all doubts, and reconcile all seeming contradictions, and to expound the hardest prophecies: that light will show me the admirable methods of those sacred words, where dark minds now suspect confusion! How evident and clear then will every thing appear to me? Like a small print when the light comes in, which I could not lead in the glimmering twilight. How easily shall I then confute the cavils of all our present unbelievers! and how joyfully shall I praise that God and Saviour that gave his church so clear a light to guide them through this darksome world, and so sure a promise to support them till they came to life eternal! How joyfully shall I bless him that by that immortal seed did regenerate me to the hopes of glory, and that ruled me by so holy and just a law!

VI. In that world of light I shall better understand God's present and past works of providence, by which he ordereth the matters of this world: the wisdom and goodness of them is little understood in little parcels; it is the union and harmony of all the parts which showeth the beauty of them, when the single parcels seem deformed, or are not understood. And no one can see the whole together but God, and they that see it in the light of his celestial glory: it is a prospect of that end, by which we have here any true understanding of such parcels as we see. Then I shall know clearly why, or to what use, God prospered the wicked, and tried the righteous by so many afflictions: I shall know why he set up the ungodly, and put the humble under their feet; why he permitted so much ignorance, ungodliness, pride, lust, oppression, persecution, falsehood, deceit, and other sins in the world: I shall know why the faithful are so few; and why so many kingdoms of the world are left in heathenism, Mahometanism, and infidelity. The strange permissions which now so puzzle me, and are the matter of my astonishment, shall all be then as clear as day: I shall know why God disposed of me as he did through all my life; and why I suffered what I did; and how many great deliverances I had, which I understood not here, and how they were accomplished. All

our misinterpretations of God's works and permissions will be then rectified: and all our controversies about them, which Satan hath made so great advantage of, (by a pretended zeal for some truths of God,) will then be reconciled, and at an end: and all the works of Divine Providence, from the beginning of the world, will then appear a most delectable, beauteous frame.

VII. And among all these works, I shall specially know more the nature and excellency of God's mercies and gifts of love, which here we too unthankfully undervalued and made light of. The special works of love should be the matter of our most constant, sweet, and serious thoughts, and the fuel of our constant love and gratitude: the lively sense of love and mercy maketh lively Christians, abounding in love to God, and mercy to others: but the enemy of God and man most laboureth to obscure, diminish, and disgrace God's love and mercies to us, or to make us disrelish them, that they may be unfruitful, as to their excellent ends and uses. Little do most Christians know how much they wrong God and themselves, and how much they lose by the diminutive, poor thoughts which they have of God's mercies: ingratitude is a grievous misery to the sinner, as gratitude is a very pleasant work. Many a thousand mercies we now receive, which we greatly undervalue. But when I come to the state and work of perfect gratitude, I shall have a more perfect knowledge of all the mercies which ever I received in my life, and which my neighbours, and friends, and God's church, and the world, did ever receive: for though the thing be past, the use of it is not past. Mercies remembered must be the matter of our everlasting thanks: and we cannot be perfectly thankful for them, without a perfect knowledge of them: the worth of a Christ, and all his grace, the worth of the gospel, the worth of our church privileges, and all God's ordinances, the worth of our books and friends, and helps of our life and health, and all conveniences, will be better understood in heaven than the most holy and thankful Christian here understandeth them.

VIII. And it will be some addition to my future happiness, that I shall then be much better acquainted with myself; both with my nature, and with my sin and grace. I shall then better know the nature of a soul, and its formal faculties (three in one): I shall know the nature and way of its operations, and how far its acts are simple, or compound, or organical. I shall know how far memory, fancy, and sense, internal and external, belong to the rational soul, and whether the sensitive and rational are two or one; and what senses will perish, and what not. I shall know how the soul doth act upon itself, and what acts it hath that are not felt in sleep, in apoplexies, and in the womb. I shall know whether the vegetative nature be any thing else than fire; and whether it be of the same essence with the soul (sensitive or rational); and whether fire eminenter be a common fundamental substance of all spirits, diversely specified by the forms, (mental, sensitive, and vegetative,) or whether it be as a body or vehicle to spirits, or rather a nature made for the copulation of spirits and bodies, and the operation of the former on the latter, as between both: and whether fire (and of what sort) be the active forma telluris, and of other globes: I shall know how far souls are one, and yet many, and how they are individuate; and whether their quantitas discreta, in being numerically many, do prove that they have any quantitatem continuam, and whether they are a purer sort of bodies, as the Greek fathers, Tertullian, and others, thought, and what immateriality signifieth; and what substantiality of spirits; and how substantia and materia differ; and how far they are penetrable and indivisible; and whether a soul be properly pars; and whether individual souls are parts of any common soul; and how far the individuation doth continue; and whether, separated from the body, they operate in and by any other vehicle, or without, and how; and whether they take with them any of the fiery nature, as a vehicle, or as a

constitutive part. I shall know how God produceth souls; and how his production by emanation or creation does consist with generation; and how forms are multiplied; and what causality the parent's soul hath to the production of the child's; whether by communication of substance, or only by disposing the recipient matter. I shall know whether all souls came from Adam's own substantiality; and whether there be more substance in all than in that one; and whether one substance cause more by generation; or whether it be so as to the souls of brutes; or whether any anima communis inform many organical bodies of the brutes, as the sun lighteth many candles which are individuate by matter to which (as parts of one) they variously are contracted, and on which they operate; and whether they were individuate in preexistence, or shall be individuate after separation: I shall know how far the semen in generation is animated; and how the animated semina of two make one; and if animated, what becomes of the anima seminis perditi, and of an abortive; and whether the body be animated as vegetative or sensitive before the entrance of the rational soul; or rather the same soul which in its faculty is rational, being one with the sensitive and vegetative, be the constitutive form of the first animated body, and the fabricator of its own domicilium. I shall know how far the soul is receptive, and what the causa finalis doth to it; and what each object is to the constitution or production of the act; yea, and what an act is, and what a habit; and how a soul, acting or habited, differeth from itself not acting or habited; and how its acts are many, and yet but one; or its faculties at least. Many other such difficulties will all be solved, which now philosophers contend about in the dark, and pass but under doubtful conjectures; or, at least, are known to very few. And I shall know how God's Spirit operateth on souls; and how it is sent from Christ's human nature to work on man; and whether grace be properly, or only metaphorically, called a nature (a new nature, a divine nature) in us. I shall know what free-will is, and how man's will can be the first determiner of any act of its own in specie morali (good or evil) without being such a causa prima, as none but God can be: and so how far free acts are necessitated or not. I shall know what power the intellect hath on the will, and the will on the intellect; and what power the sense and fancy hath on either; and what any intellectus agens doth; whether it be to our intellection as the sun is to our sight. I shall know what is meant by the degrees of acts and habits in the soul; and whether there be divers degrees of substantiality, or of the virtus vel facultas formalis of several souls: I shall know better the difference of habits called acquired and infused; and what common grace is, and what it doth; and what nature can do of itself, or by common grace, without that which is proper to the justified; and how far any degrees of grace are lost.

I shall know what measure of grace I had myself; and how far I was mistaken in myself; and what acts were sincere; and how much that was not sound was mixed; and what was of myself and sin.

I shall know much more of my sins than here I ever knew, the number and the greatness of them; that so I may know, with greatest thankfulness and love, how much I am beholden to pardoning and healing grace.

Yea, I shall know more of my body, as it was the habitation of my soul, or the organical matter on which unitedly it worked. I shall know how far it helped or hindered me; and what were all those obscure diseases that puzzled all the physicians, and myself; and how marvellously God sustained, preserved, and oft delivered me; and what of my actions was to be imputed to the body, and what of them to the soul.

IX. And every fellow-creature, which I am concerned to know, I shall know far better than now I do, both things and persons: the good and bad, the sincere and the hypocrites, will be there discerned: and many an action that here went for honourable, covered or coloured with wit or worldly advantages, or false pretences, will then be found to be odious and unjust: and wickedness will be flattered or extenuated no more: and many a good and holy work which false men, through wickedness and worldly interest, reproached as some odious crime, will there be justified, honoured, and rewarded. All sciences are there perfect, without our ambiguous terms, or imperfect axioms, and rules of art.

X. And, lastly, I shall better know from what enemies, what sins, what dangers, I was here delivered: what contrivances and malicious endeavours of Satan and his instruments God defeated; how many snares I escaped: and I shall better know how great my deliverance is by Christ from the wrath to come. Though we shall not know hell by painful sense, we shall know it so far as is necessary to fill us with gratitude to our Redeemer: yea, we shall know much of it far better than the damned spirits that feel it. For we shall know, by sweet and full fruition, what the joy and blessedness is which they have lost; when they have no such kind of knowledge of it.

All this knowledge will be thus advanced to my glorified soul beyond what I can here conceive in flesh: and is it not then far better to be with Christ?

IV. The constitutive reasons from the state of my will

Sect. 1. But it is the will that is to the soul what the heart is to the body: as it is the prime seat of morality, so is it the chief seat of felicity. My greatest evil is there; and my greatest subjective good will be there. Satan did most against it, and God will do most for it. And will it not be better to be with Christ than here?

It will not there be tied to a body of cross interests and inclinations, which is now the greatest snare and enemy to my soul; which is still drawing my love, and care, and fears, and sorrows, to and for itself, and turning them from my highest interest. How great a deliverance will it be to be freed from the temptations, and the inordinate love, and cares, and fears for this corruptible flesh!

My will shall not there be tempted by a world of inferior good, which is the bait and provision for the flesh, where meat, and sleep, and possessions, house, lands, and friends, are all become my snares and danger. God’s mercies will not be made there the tempter’s instruments. I shall not there have the flatteries or frowns, promises or threatenings, of the tyrants of the world, to tempt me: bad company will not infect me, nor divert me: the errors of good men will not seduce me; nor reputation or reverence of the wise, learned, or religious, draw me to imitate them in any sin.

I shall there have none of Satan’s solicitations, to pervert my will: he will not have that advantage by my sense and fancy, nor that access unto me, as now he hath. But of this I spake before.

Sect. 2. My will shall there be better than here, I. Negatively, because,

There will be nothing in it that is displeasing to God: no sinful inclination, habit, or act: nothing to strive against God’s Spirit; nor grudge at any word or work of God: no principles of enmity or rebellion left. 2. There will be nothing that is against the good of others: no inclinations to injury, or any thing that is against my neighbour’s or the common good. 3. There will be nothing in it that is cross to itself; no more war or striving in me; not a law in my mind, and a law in my members, that

are contrary to each other: no crossness between sense and reason, nor between the sensitive appetite and the rational: all will be at unity and peace within.

Sect. 3. II. Positively, Christ will have finished his cure on my will. The work of sanctification will be perfect, and, I. My will shall there, by union and communion, be made comformable to the will of Christ, and so unto the Father's will. This must needs be meant (whatever more) in the prayer of Christ, where he prayeth, "That they may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us, that they may be one, even as we are one." (John 17:21-22.) The will of Christ, and of the Father, will be my will, that is, I shall love and will (dispositively and actually) the same that God loveth and willeth (in the measure of a creature, infinitely below him). And if so, I. How can the will of man have greater honour, than to be the same with the will of God? Assimilation to a king, among us poor mortals, goeth for honour; assimilation to angels is much more. That we shall be like, or equal to, angels, is a high part of the blessed's praise; but how much more is it, to be thus far like to God. Indeed, God's image, and the divine in us here, can be no less than this similitude to God's will in the degree that we have it. But, alas! that degree is so very low, as that we can hardly tell whether our similitude or dissimilitude be the more; I mean, whether our wills are for more, that God willeth, or against more. Oh, how many thousand wishes and desires have we had, which are against the will of God! But there we shall have the full impression of God's will, upon our wills, as face answereth face in a glass, or as the wax answereth the seal; as the finger on the outside answereth to the motion of the clock within, so, in all things which belong to our duty and perfection, we shall answer the will of God. As the echo answereth the voice, defectively, but truly, without contradiction or discord, so will our wills be as the echo of God's will.

And then I am sure that there will be nothing in my will but good; for God willeth no evil.

And this will be virtually all obedience; for all sin is voluntary, and all mortal good is primarily in the will.

And then there can be no matter of disquiet in me, but all will be in perfect peace; for all that is like God will be pleasing, both to God and me; no troubling crossness will remain.

And how easy and sweet then will all my obedience be, when I shall perfectly will it, without any reluctancy or averseness? All will be my very pleasure that I do.

Sect. 4. II. And seeing my will shall be the same with the will of God, it followeth that it shall never be frustrate, but I shall have all whatsoever I would have, and shall be and do whatsoever I would be and do. For I shall desire nothing but what God willeth, and God's will shall certainly be done. I shall have as much love and joy as I would have; I shall be as happy as I would be; I shall desire nothing for others but it shall be done. Indeed, if God's will were there unknown to me, I might ignorantly go against it, as I do here; but there, before I will or desire any thing, I shall know whether it be God's will or not, so that I shall never wish any thing which shall not be accomplished. And as it is God's perfection to have his will always done, (though all his laws be not obeyed,) so my perfection shall consist in this likeness unto God, that my will shall be still fulfilled. And then Christ's promises will be perfectly performed, "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:16; John 16:23; John 14:13-14; John 15:7.) While their will was the same with the will of Christ: but he saith not that it shall all be given us here. We ask for perfection, and we shall have it, but

not here.

Sect. 5. III. Yea, my will itself shall be my fruition, for it shall not be the will of one in need; a desire of what I want, for I shall want nothing; therefore, it is said that we shall thirst no more: but it will be a complacency in what I do possess, and in this also my perfection will be the image of God's perfection: not but that all creatures still receive from God, and in that sense may be said to need, in that they have nothing of themselves, but all by gift and communication from him; but being still and full possessors, they cannot properly be said to want. Complacency in that which we possess is love and pleasure in one act; and, indeed, pleasure and love are the same thing. To love any thing, is to have that thing to be pleasing to my mind. Even when it is wanted, it is thought on as a pleasing thing, and therefore desired, so that the desiring act of the will is but a second act occasioned by want, and following the first act, which is complacency, or simple love. I desire it because I love it. Rightly, therefore, is the will itself called love, for in the first act, love, will, and rational appetite, are all words of the same signification. My will, therefore, must needs be perpetually full of perfect joy, when enjoying love and pleasure will be my will itself. Thus shall I have in me the spring of living waters, and the comforter will then perfectly do his work, when my constant will itself shall be comfort. Well, therefore, is glory said to be the perfection of sanctifying grace, when this grace is the beginning of that love and joy which glory is the perfection of; and perfection is the Spirit's work.

Sect. 6. IV. And it will be much of my felicity that my will shall be confirmed and fixed in this conformity to the will of God, and holy love will be its nature. Now both understanding and will are so lamentably mutable, that further than God promiseth to uphold us, we know not one day what we shall think, judge, or will the next. But when love is as a fixed nature in us, we shall be still the same, adhering to amiable goodness, without intermission or cessation. It will be as easy to us (and more) to love God and holiness, as it is to the hungry and thirsty to love meat and drink, or to the proud to love praise or domination, yea, or to any man to love his life. And we shall be no more weary of loving, than the sun is of shining, or than the hungry is of feasting, or a friend of friendly love and converse. Nay, the comparison is quite too low, for all creatures here have a fading vanity which wearieth the satiated or failing appetite, but there is no such thing in heaven.

Sect. 7. II. And as from the nature of that act, so much more from the nature of the object, my love will appear to be my happiness. The objects (which are the matter of the act) will be these:—

God himself will be the full and everlasting object of my love. And he that could but understand as well as those in heaven do, what this word signifieth, 'to love God, and be beloved of him,' would say, that there needs no other description of perfect happiness: perfect, joyful complacency in God is the heaven which I desire and hope for. This is my felicity, and much more. As I am the agent of love to God, and the object of God's love to me, it is my felicity. As God is the ultimate object of my love, and the agent of his love to me, (that is, of the effects of it,) so it is unspeakably more high and excellent than to be my felicity. Love is the closure of the wills of God and man, and as it is God's part or interest, (efficiently or objectively) it is infinitely more excellent than as it is my part and interest.

Sect. 8. In God there is all that love can desire for its full, everlasting feast. 1. He is infinitely good in himself, that is, most amiable: and the nature of man's will is to love good as good. Could we love God with a love that is adequate to the object, we should be God ourselves, which is

impossible, none but God can adequately know God or love him. In God's love to himself, both the act and object are infinite, and, indeed, are both one, there being not that formally which we know by the name of act and object; but 'act and object' are our analogical, inadequate conceptions of that act of God which is his essence. But in our love to God the act is finite, and infinitely below the object; yea, the object, which in reality is itself infinite, yet proximately as the esse cognitum is the object of our love, is finite there. It is the conception or idea of God in the intellect, which is the proper and nearest object of the will, and this is as a face in a glass, a shadow, even the finite little shadow of an infinite Being. The same infinite good is a felicity to divers persons in divers degrees, according as they diversely love him, and are receptive of his love.

Sect. 9. 2. God, who is infinitely good in himself, will be that most suitable good to me, and meetest for the dearest embracements of my will. For, 1. He hath all in himself that I need or can desire. There is no room, nothing above him, or beyond him, or without him, for love to cleave to. Though below him the creature, though not being without him, is loved without him, by the deception of the mind.

Sect. 10. 2. He is willing to be loved by me. He disdaineth not my love. He might have refused to be embraced by such affections as have so oft and sinfully polluted themselves by embracing vanity and filth. As persons of state, and stately cleanliness, will not be touched by filthy hands, much less let dogs or dirty swine leap on them which come from wallowing in the mire. God might have driven me away from the happiness of loving him, and have denied me the leave for so high a work, but he commandeth my love, and maketh it my greatest duty. He inviteth and entreateth me, as if he were a gainer by my happiness. He seeketh to me to seek to him, and as he is the first, so is he the most earnest suitor. He is far readier to receive my love than I am to give it him. All the compassionate invitations which I have had from him here, by his word and mercies, assure me that he will there receive me readily; he that so valued my poor, cold, imperfect love to him on earth, will not reject my perfect love in heaven. He that made it the great work of his Spirit to effect it, will not refuse it when it is made perfect by himself.

Sect. 11. 3. And he is near to me, and not a distant God out of my reach, and so unsuitable to my love. Blind unbelievers may dream that he is far off, but he is as near us, even now, as we are to ourselves. He is not far from any of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being. The light of the sun is not so near my eyes, as God will be for ever to my mind. When he would sanctify us to love him, he bringeth us nigh to him in Christ. As we love ourselves easily as being, as they say, the nearest to ourselves, so we shall as easily love God as ourselves, when we see that he is as near us as we are to ourselves, as well as that he is infinitely more amiable in himself.

Sect. 12. 4. And because of the imparity of the creature and the Creator, he hath provided such means to demonstrate to us his nearness, as are necessary to the exercise of our love. We shall see his glory, and taste his love, in our glorified Mediator, and in the glory of the church and world. God will condescend to show himself to us according to our capacities of beholding him. Here we see him in his works and word, and there we shall see him in the glory of all his perfect works. But this leadeth me to the second object of my love.

Sect. 13. II. Under God, as I shall see, so I shall delightfully love, the glorious perfection of the universe, even the image of God in all the world; as my love will be my delight, so I shall love best that which is best, and most delight in it: and the whole is better than any part; and there is a

peculiar beauty and excellency in the whole world, as perfect, compaginate, harmonious, which is not to be found in any part, no, not in Christ himself, as man, nor in his church. The marvellous inclination that all things have to union, even the inanimates, might persuade me, if I felt it not certainly in myself, that it is most credible that man also shall have the like inclination, and such as is agreeable to the nature of his faculties; and therefore our love and delight in all things is that uniting inclination in man.

Sect. 14. III. And I shall have a special love to the holy society, the triumphant, universal church, consisting of Christ, angels, and saints, as they are specially amiable in the image and glory of God. God himself loveth them more than his inferior works; that is, his essence, which is love, and hath no degrees or change, doth send forth fuller streams of good upon them, or maketh them better and happier than the rest. And my love will imitate the love of God, in my capacity. And if societies on earth, more holy and wise than others, though imperfectly, are very amiable, what then will the heavenly society be? Of this I spake before (of knowing them).

Sect. 15. 1. Think here, O my soul, how sweet a state unto thee it will be to love the Lord Jesus, thy glorified Head, with perfect love! When the glory of God, which shineth in him, will feast thy love with full and everlasting pleasure, the highest created perfection of power, wisdom, and goodness, refulgent in him, will not give leave to thy love to cease, or intermit, or abate its fervour. When thou shalt see in the glorified church the precious fruits of Christ's redemption, grace, and love, this also will feed thy love to him, from whom this heavenly glory cometh. And when thou shalt feel thyself possessed of perfect happiness, by his love to thee, will not this also do its part? Yea, the remembrance of all his former love, what he did for thee, and what he did in thee here on earth, how he called thee with an holy calling; how he washed thee in his blood from all thy sins; how he kindled in thee those desires which tended to that perfect glory; how he renewed thy nature; how he instructed, and guided, and preserved thee from thy childhood; and how many and how great sins, enemies, dangers, and sufferings, he saved thee from; all this will constrain thee everlastingly to love him. Thus, (though he give the kingdom to the Father, as ceasing his mediatory, healing, saving work of acquisition,) he will be to thee the Mediator of fruition. God in him will he accessible, and condescend to a suitable communion with us. (John 17:24.) And as Christ is thy life, radically and efficiently, as he is the giver of grace and Spirit of love, so he will be objectively thy life as he is lovely, and it will be formally thy life to love him, and God in him, for ever.

Sect. 16. 2. Think, also, O my soul, how delectable it will be to love (as well as to know) those angels that most fervently love the Lord! They will be lovely to thee as they have loved thee, and more as they have been lovers and benefactors to the church and to mankind; but far more as they are so many refulgent stars, which continually move and shine, and burn in purest love to their Creator. O blessed difference between that amiable society of holy spirits, and this dark, mad, distracted, wicked world! Here devils tempt me within, and devils incarnate persecute me without. Blaspheming of God, reviling godliness, deriding the sacred Scriptures, and sacred exercises, malignant slandering of the servants of God, hating, persecuting, silencing, and saying all manner of evil falsely of them, for their righteousness' sake, while such crimes are pretended, as they once falsely charged on Christ himself. This is the conversation of those that I have long dwelt with in the world: atheism, infidelity, papal church tyranny, bloody wars, destroying the righteous, oppressing the poor, adultery and fornication, stigmatising perjury, ambition, violence,

covetousness, deceit, sottish ignorance, wilfulness in sin, hatred of reproof, revengeful malice; these, and such like, are the fruits of the soil where I have long sojourned (though, through the grace of Christ, among the faithful, there have been better fruits). And is not the company of holy angels better than this? With whom God is all; who are even made up of shining wisdom, and holy love, and beneficent activity; who are the blessed choir that melodiously sing forth the high praises of their Maker. Among whom God dwelleth as in his presence-chamber, or his temple, and in whom he taketh his great delight. With these I shall see or hear no evil. No mixture of fools or wicked ones do pollute or trouble their society. There will be no false doctrine, no evil example, no favouring wickedness, no accusing goodness, no hurtful violence, but holy, powerful, operative love, will be all, and do all, as their very nature, life, and work. And is it not better to be a door-keeper there, than to dwell in the palaces of wickedness? And is not a day with them better than a thousand here?

Sect. 17. 3. And with the holy angels I shall love holy souls that are made like unto them, and joined with them in the same society; and it is likely with them judge, that is, rule the world. All their infirmities are there put off with the flesh; they also are spirits made up of holy life, and light, and love. There is none of their former ignorance, error, imprudence, selfishness, contentiousness, impatience, or any other troubling, hurtful thing. When I think with what fervent love to God, to Jesus Christ, and to one another, they will be perfectly united there, alas, how sad and how shameful is it, that they should here be prone to disaffections and divisions, and hardly agree to call each other the servants of God, or to worship God in the same assemblies; but the remnants of dividing principles, viz., pride, error, and uncharitableness; will be all left behind. Society with imperfect saints is sweet; the imperfect image of God upon them is amiable; but their frailties here are so vexatious, that it is hard to live with some of them in peace. But perfect love will make them one; and oh, how delightful will that communion of saints be! I can never forget how sweet God hath made the course of my pilgrimage, by the fragrancy and usefulness of his servants' graces; how sweet have my bosom friends been, though mutable! How sweet have the neighbourhood of the godly been! How sweet have the holy assemblies been; and how many hours of comfort have I there had! How profitable have their writings, their conference, and their prayers been! What then will it be, to live in the union of perfect love with perfect saints in heaven for ever, and with them concordantly to love the God of love?

Sect. 18. III. And as the act and the object of love will constitute my felicity, so will my reception from the love of God and his creatures, be sweeter to me than my own activity can be; for it is mutual love that makes it up. I shall not be the fountain of my own delights; nor can I act till I am acted, nor offer any thing to God, but what I have first received from him. And receive I shall abundantly and continually, and from thence shall overflow to God, and receiving and returning are now, and will be, the circular, endless motion, and our true perpetual life and happiness.

Sect. 19. I. All my receivings shall he from God. His love is not a mere immanent will, nor a wish which toucheth not the object; but it is what heat is in, or from, the sun or fire; it is an efflux of goodness: it is the most powerful, sweet, communicating principle, or work. All love is communicative; but none in comparison of God's; as there is none primitively and simply good but God. How much doth love in the affairs of men? All that is pleasant in the world is it, or its effects. Were it not for sensual love, there would be no generation of man or brutes; God hath made it a generating principle. Hatred causeth not congress, but fighting with, or flying from, one another.

Were it not for natural love, mothers would never endure the pain, and trouble, and care, which is necessary to human birth and education; were it not for love, parents would never labour all their lives to leave their children well instructed, and well provided for, when they are gone. My food would not please me did I not love it, and I should neglect it to the neglect of my life. Did I not love my books, and learning itself, I should never have bestowed so much of seventy years in poring on them, and searching for knowledge, as I have done; did I not love my house, my conveniences and necessaries, I should neglect them, and they would be to me of small use; did I not love my friends, I should be less profitable to them, and they to me; did I not love my life, I should neglect it, and never have endured the labour and cost about it as I have done. If a man love not his country, posterity, and the common good, he will be as a burdensome drone in the hive, or as pernicious vermin. What is done in the world that is good, but by love? And if created love be so necessary, so active, so communicative, how much more will the infinite love of the Creator be! His love is now the life of the world; his love is the life of nature in the living, the life of holiness in saints, and the life of glory in the blessed. In this infinite love it is that I, and all the saints, shall dwell for evermore. And if I dwell in love, and love in me, surely I shall have its sweet and plenteous communication, and shall ever drink of the rivers of pleasure. It is pleasant to nature to he beloved of others, especially of the great, and wise, and good; much more to have all the communications of love, in converse and gifts, in plenty and continuance, which may be still expressing it to our greatest benefit! Had I a friend now that did for me but the hundredth part of what God doth, how dearly should I love him! Think then, think believingly, seriously, constantly, O my soul, what a life thou shalt live for ever in the presence, the face, the bosom of infinite, eternal love. He now shineth on me by the sun, and on my soul by the Son of righteousness; but it is as through a lantern, or the crevices of my darksome habitation; but then he will shine on me, and in me, openly, and with the fullest streams and beams of love.

Sect. 20. God is the same God in heaven and earth, but I shall not be the same man. Here I receive comparatively little, but live in darkness, doubtful and frequent sorrows, because my receptivity is less; the windows of my soul are not open to his light; sin hath raised clouds, and consequently storms, against my comforts; the entrances to my soul by the straits of flesh and sense are narrow; and they are made narrower by sin than they were by nature. Alas, how often would love have spoken comfortably to me, and I was not at home to be spoken with, but was abroad among a world of vanities, or was not at leisure, or was asleep, and not willing to be awaked! How oft would love have come in and dwelt with me, and I have unkindly shut my doors against him; how oft would he have been with me in secret, where he freely would embrace me, but I had some pleasing company or business which I was loth to leave; how oft would he have feasted me, and had made all ready, but I was taken up and could not come. Nay, when his table hath been spread before me, Christ, grace, and glory, have been offered to me, my appetite hath been gone, or dull, and all hath been almost neglected by me, and hath scarce seemed pleasant enough to be accepted, or to call off my mind from luscious poison. How oft would he have shined upon me, and I have shut my windows or mine eyes; he was jealous indeed, and liked not a partner; he would have been all to me, if I would have been all for him. But I divided my heart, my thoughts, my love, my desires, and my kindnesses; and, alas, how much did go besides him, yea against him, to his enemies, even when I knew that all was lost, and worse than lost, which was not his. What wonder then, if so foolish and unkind a sinner had little pleasure in his love; and if so great ingratitude and neglect of sovereign goodness were punished with such strangeness, and

fears, and faintings, as I have long with groans lamented. Recipitur ad modum recipientis. But in heaven I shall have none of these obstructions; all old unkindness and ingratitude will be forgiven; the great Reconciler in whom I am beloved will then have perfected his work; I shall then be wholly separated from the vanity which here deceived me; my open soul will be prepared to receive the heavenly influx; with open face I shall behold the open face of glorifying love; I shall joyfully attend his voice, and delightfully relish the celestial provisions. No disease will corrupt my appetite; no sluggishness will make me guilty again of my old neglects; the love of the Father, by the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, will have got the victory over all my deadness, folly, and disaffection, and my God-displeasing and self-undoing averseness and enmity will be gone for ever. The perfect love, which God doth first effect in me, will be my everlasting receptivity of the fullest love of God. Benevolent love will make me good; that is, a holy lover of God; and then pleased love will make me his delight, and benevolence will still maintain me in my capacity.

Study this heavenly work of love, O my soul; these are not dead or barren studies, these are not sad, unpleasant studies, it is only love that can relish love and understand it; the will here hath its gust, so like to an understanding, as make some philosophers say, that voluntas percipit is a proper phrase. What can poor, carnal worldlings know of glorious love, who study it without love? What sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, a lifeless voice, are they that preach of God, and Christ, and heavenly glory, without love; but gazing upon the face of love in Christ, and tasting of its gifts, and looking up to its glorious reign, is the way to kindle the sacred fire in thee. Look upwards, if thou wouldest see the light that must lead thee upwards. It is not for nothing that Christ hath taught us to begin our prayers with "Our Father, which art in heaven;" it is fatherly love that must win our hearts, and that must comfort them; and it is in heaven where this is gloriously manifested. As I said before, as the soul is in all the body, but yet understandeth not in the hand as it doth in the head, and rejoiceth not in the foot as it doth in the heart; so God, that is everywhere, doth not everywhere glorify his love as he doth it in heaven. Thither, therefore, the mind and eye are even by nature taught to look up as to God, as we look a man in the face when we speak to him, rather than to his feet, though his soul be also there. My sinful heart hath needed sorrow. My careless, rash, presumptuous soul hath needed fears; and I have had some part of these. Mercy saw it good for me, as necessary to prevent my dangerous deceits and lapses: and O that in the hour of sensual temptations I had feared more, and departed from evil. But it is holy love that must be my life; or else I am dead notwithstanding fear.

Oh, come, then, and study the life of love. It is more of a holy nature than of art; but yet study must do much to prepare thee to receive it. This is the great use of a heavenly conversation. It is the contemplation, belief, and hope of the glorious state of love hereafter, that must make us like it, and kindle it in us here. The burning glass must be turned directly to the sun, if you will have it set any thing on fire. There is a carnal or common love to God, which is kindled in men by carnal pleasures; but a holy love, like that in heaven, must be studiously fetched from heaven, and kindled by the foresight of what is there, and what we shall be there for ever. Faith must ascend, and look within the veil. Thou must not live as a stranger to thy home, to thy God, and Saviour, and thy hopes. The fire that must warm thee is in heaven, and thou must come near it, or open thyself to its influence, if thou wilt feel its powerful efficacy. It is night and winter with carnal minds, when it is day and summer with those that set their faces heavenward.

Sect. 21. II. But, though all my receivings will be from God, they will not be from him alone. We must live in perfect union also with one another, and with all the heavenly society; and therefore as we must love them all, so shall we be beloved by them all: and this will be a subordinate part of our blessedness. God there will make use of second causes, even in communicating his love and glory.

Sect. 22. 1. The Lord Jesus Christ will not only be the object of our delightful love, but will also love us with an effectual, operative love for ever. His love will be as the vital heat and motion of the heart to all the members, the root of our life and joy. The love of our Redeemer will flow out into us all as the vital spirits, and his face of glory will be the sun of the heavenly Jerusalem, and will shine upon us, and show us God; and in his light we shall have light. Did his tears for a dead Lazarus make men say, 'Behold how he loved him!' O, then, what will the reviving beams of heavenly life make us say of that love which filleth us with the pleasures of his presence, and turneth our souls into joy itself. He comforteth us now by the teaching of his word; but, surely, the fruition of salvation will be more gladdening than the tidings of it. When he that told us of glory, in his gospel, shall give it us, we shall not only believe, but feel that he loveth us.

Sect. 23. Believe, O my soul, thy Saviour's love, that thou mayest foretaste it, and be fit to feel it. We were incapable, in sinful flesh, of seeing him otherwise than as clothed with flesh, and his consolations were administered by a word of promise suitable to his appearance; but when he withdrew his bodily presence, the Comforter was sent with a fuller consolation. But all that was but the earnest, and the first-fruits, of what he will be to us for ever. Be not seldom, nor unbelieving, nor slight, in the thoughts of thy Saviour's love, for it is he that is the way to the infinite love. Let thy believing be so much of thy daily work, that thou mayest say that he "dwelleth in thy heart by faith;" (Ephesians 3:17;) and that while thou livest here it is Christ that liveth in thee; and that thy life in the flesh is not a fleshly life, but by the faith of the Son of God that hath loved thee, and given himself for thee. (Galatians 2:20.) And that though thou see him not, yet, believing, thou lovest him also with unspeakable joy, as believing the unspeakable perfect joy which his love will communicate to thee for ever.

Look upon the sun, and think thus with thyself: 'How wonderful is the emanation of this sun: its motion, light, and heat, communicated to so many millions of creatures all over the earth, and in the seas. What, if all these beams of light and heat were proportionable beams of perfect knowledge, love, and joy; and that all creatures that are under the sun had, from its influx, as much wisdom, love, and joy, as they have light, heat, and motion. Would not then this earth be as a world of angels, and a heaven? O what a blessed world would it be; and what a benefactor would the sun be to the world! Why, even such will Jesus Christ be to the celestial world. He is the sun of glory. His influence will send forth life and light, and joyful love upon all the blessed, from the face of God, as the sun sends forth from God its motion, light, and heat, upon this world. Now, therefore, begin, and live upon him: live upon the influence of his grace, his teaching, love-kindling, and quickening grace, that thou mayest have his name and mark, and he may find in thee something of himself, or of his own, when thou comest to his righteous trial. His grace is not in my power, nor at my command. It is not meet it should be so; but he hath not bid me seek and beg in vain. If he had never told me that he will give it me, it is equal to a promise if he do but bid me seek and ask. But I have more. He teacheth me to pray: he maketh my prayers: he writeth me out a prayer-book on my heart: he giveth me desires, and he loveth to be importuned by them: his Spirit

is first a spirit of supplication, and after of consolation, and in both a spirit of adoption. So far is he from being loth to be troubled with my importunity, that he seeketh me to seek his grace, and is displeased with me that I will ask and have no more.

All this is true: but how then cometh my soul to be yet so low, so dark, so fond of this wretched flesh and world, and so backward to go home, and dwell with Christ? Alas! a taste of heaven on earth is a mercy too precious to be cast away upon such as have long grieved and quenched the Spirit, and are not, by diligent and patient seeking, prepared to receive it. He that proclaimeth a general peace, will give peace only to the sons of peace. If, after such unkind neglects, such wilful sins as I have been guilty of, I should expect to be suddenly in my Saviour's arms, and to be feasted presently with the first-fruits of heaven, I should look that the Most Holy should too little manifest his hatred of my sin. My conscience remembereth the follies of my youth, and many a later odious sin; and telleth me that if heaven were quite hid from my sight, and I should never have a glimpse of the face of glorious, eternal love, it were but just. I look upward from day to day; I groan to see his pleased face, and better to know my God and my home. I cry to him daily, 'My God, this little is better than all the pleasures of sin. My hopes are better than all the possessions of this world. Thy gracious looks have oft revived me, and thy mercies have been immeasurable to my soul and body. But, oh, how far short am I of what, even fifty years ago, I hoped sooner to have attained! Where is the peace that passeth understanding, that should keep my heart and mind in Christ? Oh! where is the seeing, the longing, the rejoicing, and triumphing faith? Where is that pleasant familiarity above, that should make a thought of Christ and heaven to be sweeter to me than the thoughts of friends, or health, or all the prosperity and pleasure of this world? Do those that dwell in God, and God in them, and have their hearts and conversations in heaven, attain to no more clear and satisfying perceptions of that blessed state than I have yet attained? Is there no more acquaintance above to be here expected; no livelier sense of future joys, nor sweeter foretaste; no fuller silencing of doubts and fears? I am not so loth to go to a friend, nor to the bed where I oft spend the night in restless pains and rolling, as I have too often been to come to thee. Alas! how many of thy servants are less afraid to go to a prison than to their God, and had rather be banished to a land of strangers than sent to heaven. Lord, must I, that am called thy child, and an heir of heaven, and a co-heir with Christ, have no more acquaintance with my glorified Lord, and no more love to thee that art my portion, before I go hence, and come before thee? Shall I have no more of the heavenly life, and light, and love? Alas! I have scarce enough in my meditations to denominate them truly heavenly meditations. I have scarce enough in a prayer to make it indeed a heavenly prayer, or in a sermon to make it a heavenly sermon: and shall I have no more when I come to die? Must I go hence so like a stranger to my home? Wilt thou take strangers into heaven, and know them as thine that do not better know thee here? O my God, vouchsafe a sinner yet more of his Spirit that came down on earth to call up earthly minds to God, and to open heaven to all believers! O what do I beg for so frequently, so earnestly, for the sake of my Redeemer, as the spirit of life and consolation, which may show me the pleased face of God, and unite all my affections to my glorified Head, and draw up this dark and drowsy soul to love and long to be with thee?'

But, alas! though these are my daily groans, how little yet do I ascend. I dare not blame the God of love; he is full and willing. I dare not blame my blessed Saviour; he hath showed that he is not backward to do good. I dare not accuse the Holy Spirit; it is his work to sanctify and comfort souls.

If I knew no reason of this, my low and dark estate, I must needs conclude that it is somewhat in myself. But, alas! my conscience wants not matter to satisfy me of the cause. Sinful resistance of the Spirit, and unthankful neglects of grace and glory, are undoubtedly the cause. But are they not a cause that mercy can forgive, that grace can overcome? And may I not yet hope for such a victory before I die?

Lord, I will lie at thy doors and groan: I will pour out my moans before thee. I will beg, and whatever thou wilt, do thou with me. Thou describest the kindness of the dogs to a Lazarus that lay at a rich man's door in sores: thou commendest the neighbourly pity of a Samaritan, that took care of a wounded man: thou condemnest those that wilt not show mercy to the poor and needy: thou biddest us be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. If we see our brother have need, and shut up the bowels of our compassion from him, it is because thy love dwelleth not in us: and shall I wait, then, at thy doors in vain, and go empty away from such a God; when I beg but for that which thou hast commanded me to ask, and without which I cannot serve thee, or come to thee, live or die in a habit beseeming a member of Christ, a child of God, and an heir of heaven? O give me the wedding garment, without which I shall but dishonour thy bounteous feast. Let me wear a livery which becometh thy family, even a child of God. How oft hast thou commanded me to rejoice; yea, to rejoice with exceeding and unspeakable joy; and how fain would I in this obey thee. O that I had more faithfully obeyed thee in other preparatory duties, in ruling my senses, my fancy, my tongue, and in diligent using all thy talents! Then I might more easily have obeyed thee in this. Thou knowest, Lord, that love and joy are duties that must have more than a command. O bid me do them with an effecting word. How can I rejoice in death and darkness? When the bridegroom is absent I must fast and mourn. While I look towards heaven but through the crevices of this dungeon flesh, my love and joy will be but answerable to my light. How long is it since I hoped that I had been translated from the kingdom of darkness, and delivered from the power of the Prince of Darkness, and brought into that light which is the entrance of the inheritance of saints. And yet, alas! darkness, darkness is still my misery. There is light round about me, in thy word and works, but darkness is within me: and if my eye be dark, the sun will be no sun to me. Alas! my Lord, it is not all the learning in the world; no, not of theology, that consisteth in the knowledge of words and methods, which I can take for the satisfactory, heavenly light. To know what thou hast written in the sacred book, is not enough to make me know my glorified Saviour, my Father, and my home. It must be a light from heaven that must show me heaven, and a light accompanied with vital heat that must turn to love and joy within me. O let me not have only dreaming knowledge of words and signs, but quickening light, to show the things which these words do signify, to my mind and heart. Surely, the faith by which we must live, must be a living faith, and must reach further than to words, how true soever. Can faith live in the dark? What is it but an effect of thine illumination? What is my unbelief but the darkness of my soul? Lord Jesus, scatter all these mists! Make thy way, O thou Sun of Righteousness, into this benighted mind! O send thine advocate to silence every temptation that is against thy truth and thee; and thine agent to prosecute thy cause against thine enemies and mine, and to be the resident witness of thy verity, and my sonship and salvation. Hearing of thee is not satisfactory to me: it must be the presence and operation of thy light and love, shed abroad by thy Spirit on my heart, that must quiet and content my soul. I confess, with shame, that I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am unworthy to have any glimpse or taste of heaven; but so did many that are now entertained and feasted by thy love in glory. My Lord, I know that heaven is not far from me: it is not, I believe, one day's or hour's

journey to a separated soul. How quick is the communion of my eyes with the sun, that seems far off; and couldst thou not show it me in a moment? Is not faith a seeing grace? It can see the invisible God, the unseen world, the new Jerusalem, the innumerable angels, and the Spirits of the perfected just, if it be animated by thine influx; without which it can do nothing, and is nothing. Thou that oft healedst the blind here in the flesh, didst tell us that it is much more thy work to illuminate souls. It is but forgiving all my sins, and removing this film that sin hath gathered, and my illuminated soul will see thy glory. I know that the veil of flesh must be also rent before I shall see thee with open face, and know my fellow-citizens above as I am known. It is not heaven on earth that I am begging for, but that I may see it from Mount Nebo, and have the bunch of grapes, the pledge and the first-fruits: that faith and hope which may kindle love and desire, and make me run my race in patience, and live and die in the joy which beseemeth an heir of heaven. But if my part on earth must be no greater than yet it is, let it make me the wearier of this dungeon, and groan more fervently to be with thee, and long for the day when all my longing shall be satisfied, and my soul be filled with thy light and love.

Sect. 24. And, doubtless, as I shall love the angels and saints in heaven, so I shall some way, in subordination to Christ, be a receiver from them. Our love will be mutual; and which way soever I owe duty, I shall expect some answerable return of benefit. The sun shineth upon the stars, as well as upon the earth, and stars on one another. If angels are greatly useful to me here, it is like they will be much more there, where I shall be a more capable receiver. It will be no diminution to Christ's honour, that he there maketh use of my fellow-creatures to my joy, no more than it is here. The whole creation will still be one compaginated frame; and the heavenly society will for ever retain their relation to each other, and their aptitude and disposition to the duties and benefits of those relations. And as we shall be far fitter for them than here we are, so shall we have far more comfort in them. How gloriously will God shine in the glory of the blessed! How delightful will it be to see their perfection, in wisdom, holiness, love, and concord! What voices they use, or what communication, instead of voices, we shall shortly know; but surely there is a blessed harmony of minds, and wills, and practice. All are not equal; but all accord to love and praise their glorious God, and readily to obey him, and perfectly to love each other. There is no jarring, or discordant spirit that is out of tune; no separation or opposition to each other. As God's love in Christ is our full and final happiness, so nature, which hath made us sociable, teacheth us to desire to be loved of each other, but especially by wise and worthy persons. Saints and angels in heaven will love incomparably better than our dearest friends on earth can do, and better than they did themselves when we were on earth; for they will love that best which is best, and where there is most of God appearing; else it were not intellectual love. And therefore they will love us as much better when we come to heaven, as we shall be better. If we go from loving friends on earth, we shall go to them that love us far more. The love of those here doth but pity us in our pains, and go weeping with our carcasses to the grave; but the love of those above will joyfully convoy, or welcome, our souls to their triumphant society. All the holy friends that we thought we had lost, that went before us, we shall find rejoicing there with Christ. And oh, what a glorious state will be that common uniting, and united love! If two or three candles joined together make a greater flame and light, what would ten thousand stars united do? When all the love of angels and saints in full perfection shall be so united, as to make one love, to God that is one, and to one another, who are there all one In Christ; O what a glorious love will that be! That love and joy will be the same thing; and that one universal love will be one universal joy.

Little know we how great a mercy it is to be here commanded to love our neighbours as ourselves; and much more, to be effectually taught of God so to love one another. And did we all here live in such unfeigned love, we should be like to heaven, as bearing the image of the God of Love; but, alas! our societies here are small; our goodness, which is our amiableness, wofully imperfect and mixed with loathsome sin and discord; but there, a whole heaven full of blessed spirits will flame for ever, in perfect love to God, to Christ, and one another.

Go then, go willingly, O my soul! Love joineth with light, to draw up thy desires! Nature inclineth all things unto union: even the lifeless elements have an aggregative motion, by which the parts, when violently separated, do hastily return to their natural adhesion. Art thou a lover of wisdom, and wouldest thou not be united to the wise? Art thou a lover of holiness, and wouldest thou not be united to the holy, who are made of love? Art thou a hater of enmity, discord, and divisions, and a lover of unity here on earth, and wouldest thou not be where all the justare one? It is not an unnatural union to thy loss; nothing shall be taken from thee by it: thou shalt receive by it more than thou canst contribute; it shall not be forced against thy will; it is but a union of minds and wills; a perfect union of loves. Let not natural or sinful selfishness cause thee to think suspiciously or hardly of it, for it is thy happiness and end. What got the angels that fell to selfishness, from unity? and what got Adam, that followed them herein? The further any man goeth from unity, by selfishness, the deeper he falleth into sin and misery from God. And what doth grace but call us back from sin and selfishness, to God's unity again? Doat not, then, on this dark, divided world. Is not thy body, while the parts by an uniting soul are kept together, and make one, in a better state, than when it is crumbled into lifeless dust? And doth not death creep on thee by a gradual dissolution? Away, then, from this sandy, incoherent state; the further from the centre, the further from unity. A unity indeed there is of all things; but it is one heavenly life and light and love, which is the true felicitating union.

We dispute here whether the aggregative motion of separated parts (as in descensu grarium,) be from a motive principle in the part, or by the attraction of the whole, or by any external impulse. It is like that there is somewhat of all these; but sure the greatest cause is like to do most to the effect. The body of the earth hath more power to attract a clod, or stone, than the intrinsic principle to move it downwards; but intrinsic gravity is also necessary. The superior attractive love and loveliness must do more to draw up this mind to God, than my intrinsic holiness to move it upward; but without this holiness, the soul would not be capable of feeling that attractive influx. Every grace cometh from God, to fit and lead up my soul to God. Faith, therefore, believeth the heavenly state, and love doth, with some delight, desire it, and hope gapeth after it, that I may at last attain it.

They that have pleaded against propriety, and would have all things common in this world, have forgotten that there is a propriety in our present egoity, and natural constitution, which rendereth some accidental propriety necessary to us. Every man hath his own bodily parts, and inherent accidents; and every man must have his own food, his own place, clothing, and acquisitions; his own children, and, therefore, his own wife, &c. But that the greatest perfection is most for community, as far as nature is capable of it, God would show us, in making the first receivers of the extraordinary pourings-out of his Spirit, to sell all, and voluntarily make all common, none saying, This or that is my own; which was not done by any constraining law but by the law or power of uniting love: they were first all as of one heart and soul. (Acts 4:32.) Take not, then, thy inordinate desire of propriety for thy health, but for thy sickness; cherish it not, aud be not afraid to

lose it, and measure not the heavenly felicity by it: spirits are penetrable; they claim not so much as a propriety of place, as bodies do. It is thy weakness and state of imperfection now which maketh it so desirable to thee that thy house should be thine, and no one's but thine; thy land be thine, and no one's but thine; thy clothes, thy books, yea, thy knowledge and grace, be thine, and no one's but thine. How much more excellent a state were it, (if we were here capable of it,) if we could say, that all these are as the common light of the sun, which is mine, and every one's as well as mine! Why are we so desirous to speak all languages, but that we might understand all men, and be understood of all, and so might make our sentiments as common as is possible? Whence is it that men are so addicted to talkativeness; but that nature would make all our thoughts and passions as common as it can? And why else are learned men so desirous to propagate their learning, and godly men so desirous to make all others wise and godly? It seemeth one of the greatest calamities of this life, that when a man hath, with the longest and hardest study, attained to much knowledge, he cannot bequeath it, or any part of it, to his heir, or any person when he dieth, but every man must acquire it for himself; and when God hath sanctified the parents, they cannot communicate their holiness to their children (though God promise to bless them on their account). Much less can any man make his grace or knowledge common: nature and grace incline us to desire it; but we cannot do it. For this end we talk, and preach, and write; for this end we study to be as plain, and convincing, and moving as we can, that we may make our knowledge and affections as common to our hearers and readers as we can. And oh, what a blessed work should we take preaching and writing for, if we could make them all know, but what we know, and love what we are persuading them to love! There would then be no need of schools and universities: a few hours would do more than they do in an age. But, alas! how rare is it for a father of excellent learning and piety, to have one son like himself, after all his industry! Is not the heavenly communion, then, desirable, where every man shall have his own, and yet his own be common to all others? My knowledge shall be my own, and other men's as well as mine; my goodness shall be my own and theirs; my glory and felicity shall be mine and theirs; and theirs also shall be mine as well as theirs. The knowledge, the goodness, the glory, of all the heavenly society, shall be mine, according to my capacity; grace is the seed of such a state, which maketh us all one in Christ, (neither Barbarian nor Scythian, circumcision nor uncircumcision, bond nor free,) by giving us to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to love both our neighbours and ourselves for Christ, and Christ in all: well might Paul say, all things are yours. But it is here but as in the seed; the perfect union and communion is hereafter. Earth and heaven must be distinguished; we must not extend our hopes or pretensions here beyond the capacity of our natures. As perfect holiness and knowledge, so perfect unity and concord, is proper to heaven, and is not here to be expected. The papal pretensions, of an impossible union in one governor of all the earth, is the means to hinder that union which is possible. But the state of perfection is the state of perfect union and communion. Hasten then upwards, O my soul, with the ferventest desires, and breathe after that state with the strongest hopes; where thou shalt not be rich, and see thy neighbours poor about thee, nor be poor, while they are rich; nor be well while they are sick, or sick while they are well; but their riches, their health, their joy, will be all thine, and thine will be all theirs, as the common light; and none will have the less for the participation of the rest; yea, communion will be part of every one's felicity; it constituteth the very being of the city of God. This celestial communion of saints in one holy church, above what is here to be attained, is now an article of our belief; but believing will soon end in seeing and enjoying.

V. The constitutive reasons from the heavenly life or practice

Sect. 1. Seeing and loving will be the heavenly life; but yet it seemeth that, besides these, there will be executive powers, and, therefore, some answerable practice. There are good works in heaven, and far more and better than on earth. For, 1. there will be more vital activity, and, therefore, more exercise for it; for the power is for action. 2. There will be more love to God and one another; and love is active. 3. There will be more likeness to God and our Redeemer, who is communicative, and doth good, as he is good. 4. Our union with Christ, who will be everlastingly beneficent, as well as benevolent, will make us in our places also beneficent. 5. Our communion in the city of God will prove that we shall all bear our part, as the members of the body, in contributing to the welfare of the whole, and in the common returns to God.

Sect. 2. But what are the heavenly works we must perfectly know when we come thither? In general we know; 1. That they will be the works of love to God and to his creatures; that is, such as love inclineth us to exercise. 2. And they will be works of obedience to God; that is, such as we shall do to please his will, and because he willeth them to be our duty. 3. They will be useful works to others. 4. They will be pleasant to ourselves, and part of our felicity. 5. And they will carry all to God, our end.

Sect. 3. And somewhat of them is particularly described in the Holy Scriptures: as, 1. We shall in concord with the holy society, or choir, give thanks and praise to God and our Redeemer. (Revelation 19:5; 1 Peter 4:11; Revelation 7:4; Revelation 4:7; Revelation 4:11; Revelation 5:13; Revelation 7:12; Revelation 19:1; Php 4:20.) Whether there be any voice, or only such spiritual activity and exultation as to man, in flesh, is not to be clearly understood, is not fit for us here to presume to determine: it will be somewhat more high and excellent than our vocal praise and singing is; and of which this beareth some analogical resemblance or signification. As all passions earnestly desire vent and exercise, so specially do our holy affections of love, joy, and admiration of God Almighty. And there is in us a desire of communion with many in such affections and expressions: methinks when we are singing or speaking God’s praise in the great assemblies, with joyful and fervent souls, I have the liveliest foretaste of heaven on earth: and I could almost wish that our voices were loud enough to reach through all the world, and unto heaven itself: nor could I ever be offended (as many are) at the organs, and other convenient music, soberly and seasonably used, which excite and help to tune my soul in so holy a work, in which no true assistance is to be despised. No work more comforteth me in my greatest sufferings, none seemeth more congruous and pleasant to me while I wait for death, than psalms, and words of praise to God; nor is there any exercise in which I had rather end my life: and should I not then willingly go to the heavenly choir, where God is praised with perfect love, and joy, and harmony? Had I more of a praising frame of soul, it would make me long more for that life of praise. For I never find myself more willing to be there than when I most joyfully speak or sing God’s praise. Though the dead praise not God in the grave, and dust doth not give him thanks; yet living souls in heaven do it joyfully, while their fleshly clothing turns to dust.

Lord, tune my soul to thy praises now, that sweet experience may make me long to be where I shall do it better! I see where any excellent music is, nature maketh men flock to it; and they that are but hearers, yet join by a concurrent fancy and delight: surely, if I had once heard the heavenly choir, I should echo to their holy songs, though I could not imitate them; and I should think it the

truest blessedness to be there, and bear my part. My God, the voice of thy comforting Spirit, speaking thy love effectually to my soul, would make such holy music in me, that would incline me to the celestial consort; and without it all these thoughts and words will be in vain. It is the inward melody of thy Spirit and my conscience, that must tune me to desire the heavenly melody. O speak thy love first to my heart, and then I shall joyfully speak it to my brethren, and shall ambitiously seek that communion of them that praise thee better than sinful, groaning mortals can: and though my sins here make a loathed jar and discord in my songs, I hope my groans for those sins, and their effects, will make no discord: sighs and tears have had the honour to be accepted by thee, who despisest not a contrite soul: but if thy Spirit will sing and speak within me, and help me against the discordant murmurs of my unbelieving heart, and pained flesh, I shall offer thee that which is more suitable to thy love and grace. I confess, Lord, that daily tears and sighs are not unsuitable to the eyes and voice of so great a sinner, who is under thy correcting rod! What better could I expect when I grieved thy Spirit, than that it should prove my grief? Yea, this is far better than the genuine effects of sin. But this is not it that is meetest to be offered to the God of love: he that offereth praise doth glorify thee: and is not this the spiritual sacrifice acceptable through Christ, for which we were made priests to God. (1 Peter 2:5.) I refuse not, Lord, to lie in tears and groans when thou requirest it; and do not thou refuse those tears and groans; but O give me better, that I may have better of thine own to offer thee: and by this prepare me for the far better, which I shall find with Christ: and that which is best to us thy creatures will be accepted as best by thee, who art glorified and pleased in the perfection of thy works.

Sect. 4. II. It is, at least, very probable that God maketh glorified spirits his agents and ministers of much of his beneficence to the creatures that are below them. For, 1. We see that where he endueth any creature with the noblest endowments, he maketh most use of that creature to the benefit of others: we shall in heaven be most furnished to do good; and that furniture will not be unused. 2. And Christ tells us that we shall be like, or equal to, the angels; which though it mean not simply and in all things, yet it meaneth more than to be above carnal generation; for it speaketh of a similitude of nature and state as the reason of the other. And that the angels are God's ministers for the good of his chosen in this world, and administrators of much of the affairs on earth, is past all doubt.

The Apostle telleth us that the saints shall judge the world and angels: and judging in Scripture is oft put for ruling. It is therefore probable, at least, that the devils, and the damned, shall be put under the saints, and that, with the angels, they shall be employed in some ministerial oversight of the inhabitants and affairs of the promised new earth. 4. And when even the more noble superior bodies, even the stars, are of so great use and influx to inferior bodies, it is like that accordingly superior spirits will be of use to the inhabitants of the world below them.

Sect. 5. But I think it not meet to venture here upon uncertain conjectures beyond the revelation of God's word, and therefore shall add no more, but conclude that God knoweth what use to make of us hereafter as well as here, and that if there were no more for us to do in heaven, but with perfect knowledge, love, and joy, to hold communion with God and all the heavenly society, it were enough to attract a sensible and considerate soul to fervent desires to be at home with God.

Sect. 6. And here I must not over-pass my rejection of the injurious opinion of too many philosophers and divines, who exclude all sense and affection from heaven, and acknowledge

nothing there but intellect and will: and this is because they find sense and affection in the brutes; and they think that the souls of brutes are but some quality, or perishing temperament, of matter; and, therefore, that sense and affection is in us no better.

Sect. 7. But, 1. What felicity can we conceive of without any affection of delight or joy: certainly bare volition now without these doth seem to be no felicity to us; nor knowledge neither, if there were no delight in knowing.

Sect. 8. 2. Yea, I leave it to men's experience to judge, whether there be now any such thing in us as proper willing, which is not also some internal sense of, and affection to, the good which we will: if it be complacency or the pleasedness of the will, this signifies some pleasure; and love, in the first act, is nothing else but such an appetite: if it be desire, it hath in it a pleasedness in the thing desired, as in esse cognito, as it is thought on by us; and what is love without all sense and affection?

Sect. 9. 3. Why doth the Scripture ascribe love and joy to God and angels if there were not some reason for it? Doubtless there is great difference between the heavenly love and joy, and ours here in the body: and so there is also between their knowledge and ours, and their will and ours: but it is not that theirs is less or lower than ours, but somewhat more excellent, which ours giveth us some analogical, or imperfect, formal notion of.

Sect. 10. 4. And what though brutes have sense and affection, doth it therefore follow that we have none now? or that we shall have none hereafter? Brutes have life: and must we therefore have no life hereafter, because it is a thing that is common to brutes? Rather, as now we have all that the brutes have, and more, so shall we then have life, and sense, and affection of a nobler sort than brutes, and more. Is not God the living God? Shall we say that he liveth not because brutes live? or rather, that they live a sensitive life, and man a sensitive and intellectual, because God is essential, transcendent, infinite life, that makes them live.

Sect. 11. 5. But if they say that there is no sensation or affection but by bodily organs, I answered before to that: the body feeleth nothing at all, but the soul in the body: the soul uniteth itself most nearly to the igneous aërial parts, called the spirits; and in them it feeleth, seeth, tasteth, smelleth, &c. And that soul that feeleth and seeth, doth also inwardly love, desire, and rejoice: and that soul which doth this in the body, hath the same power and faculty out of the body: and if they judge by the cessation of sensation, when the organs are undisposed, or dead, so they might as well conclude against our future intellection and will, whose operation in an apoplexy we no more perceive than that of sense. But I have before showed that the soul will not want exercise for its essential faculties, for want of objects, or bodily organs; and that men conclude basely of the souls of brutes, as if they were not an enduring substance, without any proof or probability: and tell us idle dreams, that they are but vanishing temperaments, &c., which are founded on another dream, that fire (or the motive, illuminative, calefactive cause) is no substance neither; and so our unnatural somatists know none of the most excellent substances, which actuate all the rest, but only the more base and gross, which are actuated by them: and they think they have well acquitted themselves, by telling us of subtle, active matter and motion, without understanding what any living, active, motive, faculty, or virtue is. And because no man knoweth what God doth with the souls of brutes, (whether they are only one common sensitive soul of a more common body, or whether individuate still, and transmigrant from body to body, or what else:) therefore they make

ignorance a plea for error, and feign them to be no substances, or to be annihilated.

Sect. 12. I doubt not but sensation (as is aforesaid) is an excellent operation of the essential faculties of real substances, called spirits; and that the highest and noblest creatures have it in the highest excellency: and though God, that fitteth every thing to its use, hath given, e.g. a dog more perfect sense of smelling than a man, yet man's internal sense is far more excellent than the brutes, and thereby is an advantage to our intellection, volition, and joy here in the flesh: and that in heaven we shall have not less, but more, even more excellent sense and affections of love and joy, as well as more excellent intellection and volition; but such as we cannot now clearly conceive of.

Sect. 13. Therefore there is great reason for all those analogical collections which I have mentioned in my book called 'The Saint's Rest' from the present operations and pleasures of the soul in flesh, to help our conceptions of its future pleasures: and though we cannot conclude that they will not inconceivably differ in their manner from what we now feel, I doubt not but feel and rejoice we shall, as certainly as live, and that the soul is essential life, and that our life, and feeling, and joy, will be inconceivably better.

2A.4. GOD MAKES US WILLING TO DEPART

GOD MAKES US WILLING TO DEPART

Sect. 1. I am convinced that it is far better to depart and be with Christ, than to be here: but there is much more than such conviction necessary to bring up my soul to such desires. Still there resisteth, I. The natural averseness to death, which God hath put into every animal, and which is become inordinate and too strong by sin. II. The remnants of unbelief, taking advantage of our darkness here in the flesh, and our too much familiarity with this visible world. III. The want of more lively foretastes in a heavenly mind and love, through weakness of grace, and the fear of guilt. These stand up against all that is said; and words will not overcome them: what then must be done? Is there no remedy?

Sect. 2. There is a special sort of the teaching of God, by which we must learn "so to number our days as to apply our hearts to wisdom;" without which we shall never, effectually, practically, and savingly, learn either this or any the most common, obvious, and easy lesson. When we have read and heard, and spoken, and written, the soundest truth and certainest arguments, we know yet as if we knew not, and believe as if we believed not, with a slight and dreaming kind of apprehension, till God, by a special illumination, bring the same things clearly to our minds, and awaken the soul by a special suscitation, to feel what we know, and suit the soul to the truth revealed by an influx of his love, which giveth us a pleasing sense of the amiableness and congruity of the things proposed. Since we separated ourselves from God, there is a hedge of separation between our senses and our understandings, and between our understandings and our wills and affections, so that the communion between them is violated, and we are divided in ourselves by this schism in our faculties. All men still see the demonstrations of divine perfections in the world, and every part thereof; and yet how little is God known. All men may easily know that there is a God, who is almighty, omniscient, goodness itself, eternal, omnipresent, the Maker, Preserver, and Governor of all, who should have our whole trust, and love, and obedience; and yet how little of this knowledge is to be perceived in men’s hearts to themselves, or in their lives to others. All men know that the world is vanity, that men must die, that riches then profit not, that time is precious, and that we have only this little time to prepare for that which we must receive hereafter; and yet how little do men seem to know, indeed, of all such things as no man doubts of. And when God doth come in with his powerful awakening light and love, then all these things have another appearance of affecting reality than they had before; as if but now we began to know them; words, doctrines, persons, things, do seem as newly known to us.

All my best reasons for our immortality and future life are but as the new-formed body of Adam, before God breathed into him the breath of life. It is he that must make them living reasons. To the Father of Lights, therefore, I must still look up, and for his light and love I must still wait, as for his blessing on the food which I have eaten, which must concoet it into my living substance. Arguments will be but undigested food, till God’s effectual influx do digest them. I must learn both as a student and a beggar; when I have thought, and thought a thousand times, I must beg thy

blessing, Lord, upon my thoughts, or they will all be but dulness, or self-distraction. If there be no motion, light, and life here, without the influx of the sun, what can souls do, or receive, or feel, without thy influx This world will be to us, without thy grace, as a grave or dungeon, where we shall lie in death and darkness. The eye of my understanding, and all its thoughts, will be useless or vexatious to me, without thine illuminating beams. O shine the soul of thy servant into a clearer knowledge of thyself and kingdom, and love him into more divine and heavenly love, and then he will willingly come to thee.

Sect. 3. I. And why should I strive, by the fears of death, against the common course of nature, and against my only hopes of happiness? Is it not appointed for all men once to die? Would I have God to alter this determinate course, and make sinful man immortal upon earth? When we are sinless, we shall be immortal. The love of life was given to teach me to preserve it carefully, and use it well, and not to torment me with the continual, troubling foresight of death. Shall I make myself more miserable than the vegetatives and brutes? Neither they nor I do grieve that my flowers must fade and die, and that my sweet and pleasant fruits must fall, and the trees be unclothed of their beauteous leaves, until the spring. Birds, and beasts, and fishes, and worms, have all a self-preserving fear of death, which urgeth them to fly from danger; but few, if any of them, have a tormenting fear arising from the forethoughts that they must die. To the body, death is less troublesome than sleep; for in sleep I may have disquieting pains or dreams; and yet I fear not going to my bed. But of this before.

If it be the misery after death that is feared, oh! what have I now to do, but to receive the free, reconciling grace that is offered me from heaven, to save me from such misery, and to devote myself totally to him who hath promised that those that come to him he will in nowise cast out.

Sect. 4. But this cometh by my selfishness. Had I studied my duty, and then remembered that I am not mine own, and that it is God’s part, and not mine, to determine of the duration of my life, I had been quiet from these fruitless fears. But when I fell to myself, from God, I am fallen to care for myself, as if it were my work to measure out my days; and now I trust not God as I should do with his own. And had my resignation and devotedness to him been more absolute, my trust in him would have been more easy. But, Lord, thou knowest that I would fain be thine, and wholly thine; and it is to thee that I desire to live; therefore let me quietly die to thee, and wholly trust thee with my soul.

Sect. 5. II. And why should my want of formal conceptions of the future state of separated souls, and my strangeness to the manner of their subsistence and operations, induce me to doubt of those generals, which are evident, and beyond all rational doubting? That souls are substances and not annihilated, and essentially the same, when they forsake the body, as before, I doubt not. Otherwise neither the Christian’s resurrection, nor the Pythagorean’s transmigration, were a possible thing. For if the soul cease to be, it cannot pass into another body, nor can it re-enter into this. If God raise this body, then it must be by another soul. For the same soul to be annihilated, and yet to begin again to be, is a contradiction; for the second beginning would be by creation, which maketh a new soul, and not the same that was before. It is the invisible things that are excellent, active, operative, and permanent. The visible (excepting light, which maketh all things else visible) are of themselves but lifeless dross. It is the unseen part of plants and flowers which causeth all their growth and beauty, their fruit and sweetness. Passive matter is but moved up and

down by the invisible active powers, as chess-men are moved from place to place by the gamester's hands. What a loathsome corpse were the world, without the invisible spirits and natures that animate, actuate, or move it. To doubt of the being or continuation of the most excellent, spiritual parts of the creation, when we live in a world that is actuated by them, and where every thing demonstrates them, as their effects, is more foolish than to doubt of the being of these gross materials which we see.

Sect. 6. How oft have I been convinced that there are good spirits with whom our souls have as certain communion, though not so sensible, as our life hath with the sun, and as we have with one another. And that there are evil and envious spirits that fight against our holiness and peace, as certain narratives of apparitions and witches, and too sad experience of temptations, do evince. And the marvellous diversity of creatures on earth, for kind and number; yea, the diversity of stars in heaven, as well as the diversities of angels and devils, do partly tell me, that though all be of one, and through one, and to one, yet absolute unity is the divine prerogative, and we must not presume to expect such perfection as to lose our specific or numerical diversity, by any union which shall befall our souls. Nor can I reasonably doubt that so noble and active a nature as souls dwelling above in the lucid regions, in communion with their like, and with their betters, shall be without the activity, the pleasure, and felicity, which is suitable to their nature, their region, and their company. And my Saviour hath entered into the holiest, and hath assured me that there are many mansions in his Father's house; and that when we are absent from the body we shall be present with the Lord.

Sect. 7. Organical sight is given me for my use here in the body; and a serpent, or hawk, hath as much or more of this than I have. Mental knowledge reacheth further than sight, and is the act of a nobler faculty, and for a higher use. Though it be the soul itself embodied in the igneous spirits that seeth, yet it is by a higher and more useful faculty than it understandeth; and faith is not an understanding act; it knoweth things unseen, because they are revealed. Who can think that all believing, holy souls, that have passed hence from the beginning of the world, have been deceived in their faith and hope? And that all the wicked, worldly infidels, whose hope was only in this life, have been the wisest men, and have been in the right? If virtue and piety are faults or follies, and brutish sensuality be best, then why are not laws made to command sensuality, and forbid piety and virtue? To say this, is to deny humanity, and the wisdom of our Creator, and to feign the world to be governed by a lie, and to take the perfection of our nature for its disease, and our greatest disease for our perfection. But if piety and virtue be better than impiety and vice, the principles and necessary motives of them are certainly true, and the exercise of them is not in vain. What abominable folly and wickedness were it to say that the wicked only attain their ends, and that they all lose their lahour, and live and die in miserable deceit, who seek to please God in hope of a better life to come, believing that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Would not this justify the foolish Manichees, that thought a bad God made this world; yea, and would infer that he not only made us for a mischief, but ruleth us to our deceit and hurt, and giveth us both natural and supernatural laws, in ill-will to us, to mislead us to our misery, and to fill our lives with needless troubles. Shall I not abhor every suggestion that containeth such inhuman absurdities as these?

Wonderful, that Satan can keep up so much unbelief in the world, while he must make men such fools, that he may make them unbelievers and ungodly.

Sect. 8. III. That my soul is no more heavenly, and my foretaste of future blessedness is so small, is partly the fruit of those many wilful sins by which I have quenched the Spirit that should be my comforter: and it is partly from our common state of darkness and strangeness, while the soul is in the flesh, and operateth as the body's form, according to its interest and capacity. Affections are more easily stirred up to things seen, than to things that are both unseen, and known only very defectively, by general, and not by clear, distinct apprehensions. And yet this, O this, is the misery and burden of my soul! Though I can say that I love God's truth and graces, his work, and his servants, and whatever of God I see in the world, and that this is a love of God in his creatures, word, and works; yet that I have no more desiring and delightful love of heaven, where his loveliness will be more fully opened to my soul, and that the thoughts of my speedy appearing there are no more joyful to me than they are, is my sin, and my calamity, and my shame. And if I did not see that it is so with other of the servants of Christ, as well as with me, I should doubt whether affections, so unproportionable to my profession, did not signify unsoundness in my belief. It is strange and shameful, that one that expecteth quickly to see the glorious world, and to enter the holy, celestial society, should be no more joyfully affected with these hopes, and that I should make any great matter of the pain, and languishing, and perishing of the flesh, when it is the common way to such an end. O hateful sin! that hath so darkened and corrupted souls as to estrange and indispose them to the only state of their hoped happiness. Alas! what did man, when he forsook the love and obedience of his God? How just it is, that this flesh and world should become our prison, which we would make our home, and would not use as our Lord appointed us, as our servant and way to our better state. Though our way must not be our home, our Father would not have been so strange to us in the way, if we had not unthankfully turned away from his grace and love.

Sect. 9. It is to us that know not the mysteries of infinite wisdom, the saddest thought that ever doth possess our minds, to consider that there is no more grace and holiness, knowledge of God, and communion with him in this world. That so few are saints, and those few so lamentably defective and imperfect. That when the sun shineth on all the earth, the Sun of Righteousness shineth on so small a part of it, and so few live in the love of God, and the joyful hopes of future blessedness; and those few have so low a measure of it, and are corrupted and troubled with so many contrary affections. Infinite goodness is not undisposed to do good. He that made us capable of holy and heavenly affections, gave us not that capacity in vain; and yet, alas! how little of God and glory taketh up the hearts of men! But man hath no cause to grudge at God. The devils, before their fall, were not made indefectible; divine wisdom is delighted in the diversity of his works, and maketh them not all of equal excellency. Free will was to act its part; hell is not to be as good as heaven: and sin hath made earth to be next to hell: so much sin, so much hell. What is sin but a wilful forsaking of God? And can we forsake him, and yet love him, and enjoy his love? God's kingdom is not to be judged of by his gaol or gibbets. We wilfully forsook the light, and made the world a dungeon to ourselves. And, when recovering light doth shine unto us, how unthankfully do we usually entertain it? We cannot have the conduct and comfort of it while we shut our eyes, and turn away. And what though God give not all men an overcoming measure, nor to the best so much as they desire: the earth is but a spot, or print, of God's creation; not so much as an ant hillock to a kingdom, or, perhaps, to all the earth. And who is scandalised because the world hath an heap of ants in it, yea, or a nest of snakes, that are not men? The vast, unmeasurable worlds of light which are above us, are possessed by inhabitants suitable to their

glory. A casement, or crevice of light, or a candle, in this darksome world, is an unspeakable mercy; yea, that we may but hear of a better world, and may seek it in hope. We must not grudge that in our prison we have not that presence of our King, and pleasures of the kingdom, as innocent and free subjects have: hope of pardon, and a speedy deliverance, are great mercies to malefactors.

Sect. 10. And if my want of the knowledge and love of God, and joyful communion with the heavenly society, be my prison, and as the suburbs of hell, should it not make me long for the day of my redemption, and the glorious liberty of the sons of God? My true desires of deliverance, and of holiness and perfection, are my evidences that I shall obtain them. As the will is the sinner, so it is the obstinate continuance of a will to sin, which is the bondage, and the cause of continued sin: and a continued hell is continued sin, as to the first part at least. Therefore, they that continue in hell, do continue in a sinning will, and so continue in a love and willingness of so much of hell. So far as God maketh us willing to be delivered from sin, so far we are delivered; and our initial, imperfect deliverance is the way to more. If pains, then, make me groan for case, and sickness make me wish for health, why should not my remnants of ignorance, unbelief, and strangeness to God, occasion me to long for the day of my salvation? This is the greatest of all my troubles; and should it not, then, be the greatest wearying burden from which I should earnestly desire to be eased? As grace never doth hurt efficiently, and yet may be ill used, and do hurt objectively, (as to them that are proud of it,) so sin never doth good efficiently, and of itself, and yet objectively may do good; for sin may be the object of grace, and so to use it is not sin. My unbelief, and darkness, and disaffection, and inordinate love of this life, do, of themselves, most hinder my desires of deliverance, and of a better life; but, objectively, what more fit to make me weary of such a grievous state? Were my unbelief and earthly mind predominant, they would chain my affections to this world; or if I were constrainedly weary of a miserable life, I should have no comfortable hopes of a better. But as it is the nature of my sin to draw down my heart from God and glory, it is the nature of my faith, and hope, and love, to carry it upward, and to desire the heavenly perfection: not to love death, but to love that which is beyond it. And have I been so many years in the school of Christ, learning both how to live and die, begging and studying for this grace, and exercising it against this sinful flesh, and shall I now, after all, find flesh more powerful to draw me downward, than faith, hope, and love, to carry my desires up to God?

Sect. 11. 'O God forbid! O thou that freely gavest me thy grace, maintain it to the last against its enemies, and make it finally victorious! It came from thee; it hath been preserved by thee; it is on thy side, and wholly for thee. O let it not now fail, and be conquered by blind and base carnality, or by the temptations of a hellish, conquered enemy; without it I had lived as a beast, and without it I should die more miserably than a beast. It is thine image which thou lovest; it is a divine nature, and heavenly beam. What will a soul be without it, but a dungeon of darkness, a devil for malignity, and dead to holiness and heaven? Without it, who shall plead thy cause against the devil, world, and flesh? Without thy glory earth is but earth: without thy natural efficacy, it would be nothing: without thy wise and potent ordination it would be but a chaos: and, without thy grace, it would be a hell. O rather deny me the light of the sun, than the light of thy countenance! Less miserable had I been without life or being, than without thy grace. Without thee, and my Saviour's help, I can do nothing; I did not live without thee; I could not pray or learn without thee; I never could conquer a temptation without thee; and can I die, or be prepared to die, without thee? Alas! I shall but say as

Philip of Christ, "I know not whither my soul is going, and how then shall I know the way?" My Lord having loved his own in the world, did love them to the end. Thou lovest fidelity and perseverance in thy servants; even those that in his sufferings forsook him and fled, yet are commended and rewarded by Christ, for continuing with him in his temptations. (Luke 22:28.) And wilt thou forsake a sinner in his extremity, who consenteth to thy covenant, and would not forsake thee? My God, I have often sinned against thee, but yet thou knowest I would fain be thine: I have not served thee with the resolution, fidelity, and delight, as such a master should have been served, but yet I would not forsake thy service, nor change my master, or my work. I can say, with thy servant Paul, that thou art the God whose I am, and whom I serve: and O that I could serve thee better! For to serve thee is but to receive thy grace, and to use it for my own and others' good, and so to glorify thee, and please thy will, which, being love itself, is best pleased when we receive and do most good. (Acts 27:23.) I have not loved thee as infinite goodness, and love itself, and fatherly bounty, should have been loved; but yet I would not forsake thy family. And nothing in this world is more my grief, than that I love thee no more. Forsake not, then, a sinner that would not forsake thee, that looketh every hour towards thee, that feeleth it as a piece of hell to be so dark and strange unto thee, that gropeth, and groaneth, and gaspeth after thee; feeling, to his greatest sorrow, (though thou art every where,) that while he is present in the body, he is absent from the Lord. My Lord, I have nothing to do in this world, but to seek and serve thee. I have nothing to do with a heart and its affections, but to breathe after thee: I have nothing to do with my tongue and pen, but to speak to thee, and for thee, and to publish thy glory, and thy will. What have I to do with all my reputation, and interest in my friends, but to increase thy church, and propagate thy holy truth and service? What have I to do with my remaining time, even these last and languishing hours, but to look up unto thee, and wait for thy grace, and thy salvation? O pardon all my carnal thoughts, and all my unthankful neglects of thy precious grace, and love, and all my wilful sin against thy truth and thee; and let the fuller communications of thy forfeited grace, now tell me by experience that thou dost forgive me! Even under the terrible law thou didst tell man thy very nature, by proclaiming thy name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." (Exodus 34:6-7.) And is not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ revealed in the gospel for our more abundant faith and consolation? My God, I know as I cannot love thee according to thy loveliness, so I cannot trust thee according to thy faithfulness: I can never be sufficiently confident of thy all-sufficient power, thy wisdom, and thy goodness. When I have said, as Psalms 77:7, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail to generations?

Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Conscience hath replied, that this is my infirmity; I never wanted comfort, because thou wantedst mercy; but because I wanted faith and fitness to receive it, and perceive it. But hast thou not mercy also to give me, even that fitness, and that faith? My God, all is of thee, and through thee, and all is to thee, and when I have the felicity, the glory of all for ever will be thine. None that trusteth in thee, (according to thy nature and promise,) shall be ashamed. If I can live and die in trusting in thee, surely I shall not be confounded.

Sect. 12. Why, then, should it seem a difficult question, how I may, willingly, leave this world, and my soul depart to Christ in peace? The same grace which regenerated me, must bring me to my

desired end, as the same principle of vegetation which causeth the end, must bring the fruit to sweet maturity, I. Believe and trust thy Father, thy Saviour, and thy Comforter. II. And hope for the joyful entertainments of his love, and for the blessed state which he hath promised. III. And long, by love, for nearer union and communion with him; and thus, O my soul, thou mayest depart in peace.

I. How sure is the promise of God! How suitable to his love, and to the nature of our souls, and to the operations of every grace? It is initially performed here, whilst our desires are turned towards him, and the heavenly seed and spark is here ingenerated in a soul that was dead and dark, and disaffected. Is it any strange thing for fire to ascend? yea, or the fiery principle of vegetation in a tree, to carry up the earthy matter to a great height? Is it strange that rivers should hasten to the sea? Whither should spirits go, but to the region or world of spirits? And whither should Christ's members, and holy spirits go but to himself, and the heavenly society? And is not that a more holy and glorious place and state than this below? Earth is between heaven and hell; a place of gross and passive matter, where spirits may, indeed, operate upon that which needeth them, and where they may be detained awhile in such operation, or as incorporated forms, if not incarcerated delinquents; but it is not their centre, end, or home. Even sight and reason might persuade me, that all the noble, invisible powers, that operate on this lower world, do principally belong unto a higher; and what can earth add to their essence, dignity, or perfection?

Sect. 13. But why, O my soul, art thou so vainly solicitous to have formal, clear, distinct conceptions of the celestial world, and the individuation and operations of separated souls, any more than of the angels? While thou art the formal principle of an animated body, thy conceptions must be suitable to their present state and use. When thou art possessed of a better state, thou shalt know it as a possessor ought to do; for such a knowledge as thou lookest after, is part of the possession, and to long to know and love, in clearness and perfection, is to long to possess. It is thy Saviour, and his glorified ones, that are comprehensors and possessors; and it is his knowledge which must now be most of thy satisfaction. To seek his prerogative to thyself, is vain, usurping arrogance. Wouldest thou be a God and Saviour to thyself? Oh, consider how much of the fall is in this selfish care and desire to be as God, in knowing that of good and evil which belongeth not to thee, but to God, to know. Thou knowest, past doubt, that there is a God of infinite perfection, who is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Labour more to know thy duty to this God, and absolutely trust him, as to the particularities of thy felicity and reward. Thou didst trust thy parents to provide thee food and raiment, when thou didst but dutifully obey them; though they could have forsaken thee, or killed thee every hour, thou didst never fear it. Thou hast trusted physicians to give thee even ungrateful medicines, without inquiring after every ingredient, or fearing lest they should wilfully give thee poison. I trust a barber with my throat: I trust a boatman or shipmaster with my life; yea, my horse, that might cast me; because I have no reason to distrust them, saving their insufficiency and uncertainty, as creatures. If a pilot undertake to bring thee to the Indies, thou canst trust his conduct, though thou know thyself neither the ship, nor how to govern it; neither the way nor the place to which thou art conveyed. And must not thy God and Saviour be trusted to bring thee safe to heaven, unless he will satisfy all thy inquiries of the individuation and operation of spirits? Leave unsearchable and useless questions to him that can easily resolve them, and to those to whom the knowledge of them doth belong. Thou dost but entangle thyself in sin and self-vexation, while thou wouldest take God's work upon thee, and

wouldest know that for thyself, which he must know for thee. Thy knowledge and care for it did not precede, nor prepare for, thy generation, nor for the motion of one pulse or breath, or for the concoction of one bit of all thy food, or the continuance of thy life one hour; supposing but thy care to use the means which God appointed thee, and to avoid things hurtful, and to beg his blessing. The command of being careful for nothing, and casting all thy care on God, who careth for us, obligeth us in all things that are God's part; and for our souls as well as for our bodies: yea, to trust him with the greatest of our concerns is our greatest duty; supposing we be careful about our own part, viz., to use the means, and obey his precepts. To dispose of a departing soul is God's part, and not ours: oh! how much evil is in this distrustful, self-providing care! If I did but know what I would know about my soul and myself; and if I might but choose what condition it should be in, and be the final disposer of it myself, O what satisfaction and joy would it afford me! And is not this to be partly a God to myself? Is he not fitter to know, and choose, and dispose of me, than I am? I could trust myself easily, even my wit and will, in such a choice, if I had but power; and cannot I trust God and my Redeemer, without all this care, and fear, and trouble, and all these particular inquiries? If you are convoying your child in a boat, or coach, by water, or by land, and he at every turn be crying out, 'O father, whither do we go?' or, 'what shall I do?' or, 'I shall be drowned, or fall.' Is it not rather his trust in you, than the particular satisfaction of his ignorant doubts, that must quiet and silence him? Be not, then, foolishly distrustful and inquisitive. Make not thyself thy own disquieter or tormentor, by an inordinate care of thy own security. Be not cast down, O departing soul, nor, by unbelief, disquieted within me. Trust in God, for thou shalt quickly, by experience, be taught to give him thanks and praise, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Sect. 14. O, what clear reason, what great experience, do command me to trust him, absolutely and implicitly to trust him, and to distrust myself!

He is essential, infinite, perfection, power, wisdom, and love. There is in him all that should invite and encourage rational trust, and nothing that should discourage it.

There is nothing in any creature to be trusted, but God in that creature, or God working in and by it. Distrust him, and there is nothing to be trusted. Not the earth to bear me, nor the air to breathe in, much less any mutable friend.

I am altogether his own, his own by right, and his own by devotion and consent. And shall I not trust him with his own.

He is the great benefactor of all the world, that giveth all good to every creature, not by constraint, or by commutation, but as freely as the sun giveth forth its light. And shall we not trust the sun to shine?

He is my Father and special benefactor, and hath taken me into his family as his child. And shall I not trust my heavenly Father?

He hath given me his Son as the great pledge of his love, and what, then, will he think too dear for me? Will he not with him give me all things? (Romans 8:32.)

His Son came purposely to reveal the Father's unspeakable love, and purposely to save us. And shall I not trust him that hath proclaimed his love and reconciliation by such a messenger from heaven?

He hath given me the Spirit of his Son, even the spirit of adoption, which is the surest character of his child, the witness, pledge, and earnest of heaven, the name and mark of God upon me, holiness to the Lord. And yet shall I not believe his love, and trust him?

He hath made me a member of his Son, and so far already united me to him. And will he not take care of the members of his Son? Will he lose those that are given him? Is not Christ to be trusted with his members?

I am his interest, and the interest of his son. Freely beloved; dearly bought! for whom so much is suffered and done, that he is pleased to call us his peculiar treasure. And may I not trust him with his dear-bought treasure?

He hath stated me in a relation to angels, who rejoiced at my repentance, and to the heavenly society, which shall not miss the smallest part. Angels shall not lose their joy, nor ministration.

He is in covenant with me; even the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He hath given me many great and precious promises, and shall I fear lest he will break his word or covenant?

My Saviour is the forerunner, entered into the holiest, and there appearing and interceding for me. And this after he had conquered death, and risen again to assure me of a future life, and ascended into heaven, to show us whither we must ascend; and that after these comfortable words, "Say to my brethren, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." (John 20:17.) And shall I not follow him through death, and trust such a Guide and Captain of my salvation?

He is there to prepare a place for me, and will take me to himself. And may I not confidently expect it?

He told a malefactor on the cross, that he should be that day with him in paradise, to tell believing sinners what they may expect.

The church, by the article of his descent into hell, hath signified their common belief that his separated soul had its subsistence and operation, and did not sleep or perish, to tell us the immortality of separated souls.

His apostles, and other servants, have on earth served him with all these expectations.

The spirits of the perfected just are now in possession of what I hope for. And I am a follower of them who, by faith and patience, have attained the promised felicity. And may I not trust him to save me, who hath already saved millions in this way, when I could trust a ferryman to pass me over a river, that had safely passed over thousands before me? or I could trust a physician who cureth all that he undertaketh of the same disease.

I must be at his disposal whether I will or not. I shall live while he will, and die when he will, and go whither he will. I may sin, and vex my soul with fears, and cares, and sorrows, but I shall never prevail against his will.

Therefore, there is no rest for souls but in the will of God. That will created us, and that will did govern us, and that will shall be fulfilled on us. It was our efficient and our regent cause, and it shall be our end. Where else is it that we should rest? in the will of men, or angels, or in our own wills? All creatures are but creatures, and our own wills have undone us; they have misgoverned

us, and they are our greatest enemies; our disease, our prison, and our death, till they are brought over to the will of God. Till then they are like a foot out of joint; like a child or subject in rebellion. There is no rectitude or health, no order, no peace or true felicity, but in the conformity of our wills to the will of God. And shall I die in distrustful striving against his will, and desiring to keep up my own before it?

What abundant experience have I had of God's fidelity and love? And after all this shall I not trust him? His undeserved mercy gave me being; it chose my parents; it gave them a tender love to me, and desire of my good; it taught them to instruct me early in his word, and to educate me in his fear; it chose me suitable company and habitation; it gave me betimes a teachable ingeny; it chose my schoolmasters; it brought to my hands many excellent and suitable books; it gave me some profitable, public teachers; it placed me in the best of lands on earth, and I think in the best of ages which that land had seen; it did early destroy all great expectations and desires of the world, teaching me to bear the yoke from my youth, and causing me rather to groan under my infirmities, than to fight with strong and potent lusts; it chastened me betimes, but did not destroy me. Great mercy hath trained me up all my days, since I was nineteen years of age, in the school of affliction, to keep my sluggish soul awake in the constant expectations of my change, and to kill my pride and overvaluing of this world, and to lead all my studies to the most necessary things, and as a spur to excite my soul to seriousness, and especially to save me from the supine neglect and loss of time. Oh! what unspeakable mercy hath a life of constant but gentle chastisement proved to me! It urged me, against all dull delays, to make my calling and election sure, and to make ready my accounts, as one that must quickly give them up to God. The face of death, and nearness of eternity, did much convince me what books to read, what studies to prefer and prosecute, what company and conversation to choose. It drove me early into the vineyard of the Lord, and taught me to preach as a dying man to dying men. It was divine love and mercy which made sacred truth so pleasant to me, that my life hath been (under all my infirmities) almost a constant recreation and delight, in its discoveries, contemplation, and practical use: how happy a teacher have I had! What excellent help, and sweet illumination! How far beyond my expectation hath divine mercy encouraged me in his sacred work! How congruously did he choose every place of my ministration and habitation to this day, without my own forecast or seeking! When, and where, since he first sent me forth, did I labour in vain? How many are gone to heaven, and how many are in the way, to whom he hath blessed the word, which, in weakness I did, by his grace and providence, deliver! Many good Christians are glad of now and then an hour's time to meditate on God's word, and recreate themselves in his holy worship; but God hath allowed and called me to make it the constant business of my life. My library hath afforded me both profitableand pleasant company and help, at all times, whenever I would use them. I have dwelt among the shining lights, which the learned, wise, and holy men of all ages have set up, and left to illuminate the world. How many comfortable hours have I had in the society of living saints, and in the love of faithful friends. How many joyful days have I had in the solemn assemblies, where God hath been worshipped in seriousness and alacrity, by concordant (though imperfect) saints. Where the spirit of Christ hath manifested his presence, by helping myself and my brethren in speaking, and the people in ready, delightful hearing, and all of us in loving and gladly receiving his doctrine, covenant, and laws. How unworthy was such a sinful worm as I (who never had any academical helps, nor much from the mouth of any teacher), that books should become so great a blessing to me; and that, quite beyond my own intentions, God should induce or constrain me to provide any such like helps for

others! How unworthy was I to be kept from the multiplied snares of sects and errors which reigned in this age, and to be used as a means for other men's preservation and reduction; and to be kept in a love of unity and peace; how unworthy was I that God should make known to me so much of his reconciling truth, while extremes did round about prevail, and were commended to the churches by the advantages of piety on one side, and of worldly prosperity and power on the other: and that God should use me above forty years in so comfortable a work as to plead and write for love, peace, and concord, and to vouchsafe me so much success therein as he hath done, notwithstanding the general prevalency of the contentious military tribe. Mercy I have had in peace, and liberty in times of violence; and mercy I have had in wars, living two years in safety in the city of defence, in the very midst of the land (Coventry), and seeing no enemy while the kingdom was in wars and flames; and only hearing of the common calamities round about: and when I went abroad and saw the effects of human folly and fury, and of God's displeasure, he mercifully kept me from hurting any one, and being hurt by any; how many a time hath he preserved me by day and night, in difficulties and dangers, from the malice of Satan, and from the wrath of man, and from accidents which threatened sudden death; while I beheld the ruins of towns and countries, and the fields covered with the careasses of the slain, I was preserved, and returned home in peace. And oh, how great was the mercy he showed me, in a teachable, tractable, peaceable, humble, unanimous people! So many in number, and so exemplary in quality; who to this day keep their integrity and concord, when violence hath separated me from them above thirty years: yea, the like mercy of acceptance and success beyond my expectation, he hath showed me everywhere; I have had opportunity of free ministration; even where there were many adversaries I have had an open door; in the midst of human wrath and rage he hath preserved my liberty beyond expectation, and continued my acceptance and success. When I might not speak by voice to any single congregation, he enabled me to speak by writing to many; and for the success of my plainest and popular writings, which cost me least, I can never be sufficiently thankful; some of which he sent to preach abroad, in other languages, in foreign lands. When my mouth, with eighteen hundred or two thousand more, had been many years stopped, he hath since opened them in some degree; and the sufferings intended us by men, have been partly put by, and partly much alleviated, by his providence; and the hardness of our terms hath not so much hindered the success of faithful labours as we feared, and as others hoped it would have done. I have had the comfort of seeing some peace and concord, and prosperity of truth and piety, kept up, under the utmost opposition of diabolical and human power, policy, and wrath: when I have been sent to the common jail for my service and obedience to him, he hath there kept me in peace, and soon delivered me. He hath made the mouths of my greatest enemies, who have studied my defamation and my ruin, to become my witnesses and compurgators, and to cross their own designs. How wonderful is it that I should so long dwell in so much peace, in the midst of those that seemed to want neither power nor skill, and much less will, to tread me down into contempt and misery! And, oh! how many a danger, fear, and pain hath he delivered this frail and languishing body from! How oft hath he succoured me, when flesh, and heart, and art have failed! He hath cured my consuming coughs, and, many a time, stayed my flowing blood: he hath eased my pained limbs, and supported a weary, macerated skeleton: he hath fetched me up from the jaws of death, and reversed the sentence which men have passed on me. How many thousand weary days have been sweetened with his pleasant work; and how many thousand painful, weary nights have had a comfortable morning! How many thousand strong and healthful persons have

been taken away by death, whilst I have been upheld under all this weakness! Many a time have I cried to the Lord in my trouble, and he hath delivered me out of my distress. I have had fifty years added to my days since I would have been full glad of Hezekiah's promise of fifteen. Since the day that I first preached his gospel, I expected not, of long time, to live above a year; and I have lived since then fifty years. When my own prayers were cold and unbelieving, how many hundreds have prayed for me? And what strange deliverances, encouraging fasting and prayer, have I oft had, upon their importunate requests? My friends have been faithful, and the few that proved unfaithful have profitably taught me to place no confidence in man, and not to be inordinately affected to any thing on earth; for I was forsaken by none of them, but those few that I excessively valued and overloved. My relations have been comfortable to me, contrary to my deserts, and much beyond my expectations. My servants have been faithful: my neighbours have been kind: my enemies have been impotent, harmless, or profitable: my superiors have honoured me by their respectful words; and while they have afflicted me, as supposing me a remora to their designs, they have not destroyed but protected me. To my inferiors, God hath made me, in my low capacity, somewhat helpful. I have been protected in ordinary health and safety, when the raging pestilence came near my habitation, and consumed a hundred thousand citizens: my dwelling hath been safe when I have seen the glory of the land in flames, and after beheld the dismal ruins. When violence separated me from my too much beloved library, and drove me into a poor and smoky house, I never had more help of God, nor did more difficult work than there. What pleasant retirements and quietness in the country have been the fruits of persecuting wrath? And I must not forget, when I had more public liberty, how he saved me and all my hearers, even by a wonder, from being buried in the ruins of the fabric where we were; and others, from the calamities, scandal, and lamentations, which would else have followed: and it is not a mercy to be extenuated, that when the tongues and pens of all sects among us, and of proud self-exalters, and of some worthy, pious, differing brethren, have been long and vehemently bent against me, when my infamy hath been endeavoured, by abundance of volumes, by the backbiting of angry dividers of all sorts, and by the calumniating accusations of some that were too high to be gainsayed, and would not endure me to answer them, and vindicate my innocency; yet, all these together were never able to fasten their accusations, and procure any common belief, nor to bring me under the designed contempt, much less to break my comforts, encouragements, or labours.

These, all these, and very many more than these, are my experiences of that wondrous mercy which hath measured my pilgrimage, and filled up my days. Never did God break his promise with me; never did he fail me, nor forsake me. Had I not provoked him by rash and wilful sinning, how little interruption of my peace and comforts had I ever been likely to have had! And shall I now distrust him at the last? Shall I not trust, and quietly trust, that infinite wisdom, love, and power, whom I have so long trusted and found so good?

Nature teacheth man to love best those animals that are tame and tractable, that trust us and love us, that will come to our hands, and love our company, that will be familiar with us, and follow us, be it horse or dog, beasts or birds: but those that are wild and live in woods, and fly from the face of man, are taken to be the game and prey of any one that can catch and kill them. And shall my foolish soul thus wildly fly from the face of God? Shall his children be like the fearful hare, or like a guilty Cain, or like an unbelieving Sadducee, that either believeth not, or hopeth not for, the forgiveness of sin, and the life everlasting? Doth not the spirit of adoption incline us to love our

Father's presence, and to be loath to be long from home? To distrust all creatures, even thyself, is not unreasonable; but to distrust God hath no just excuse. Fly from sin, from Satan, from temptations, from the world, from sinful flesh and idol self; but fly not from him that is goodness, love, and joy itself. Fear thine enemy, but trust thy Father. If thy heart be reconciled to him and his service, by the Spirit, he is certainly reconciled to thee through Christ: and if he be for thee, and justify and love thee, who shall be against thee, or condemn thee, or separate thee from his love? If thy unreconciled will do make thee doubt of his reconciliation, it is time to abhor and lay by thy enmity. Consent, and be sure that he consenteth. Be willing to be his, and in holiness to serve him, and to be united in joyful glory to him; and then be sure that he is willing to accept thee, and receive thee to that glory. O dark and sinful soul! how little dost thou know thy friend, thyself, or God, if thou canst more easily and quietly trust thy life, thy soul, and hopes to the will of thy friend, or of thyself, if thou hadst power, than to the will of God. Every dog would be at home, and with his master; much more every ingenuous child with his father: and though enemies distrust us, wife and children will not do so, while they believe us just. And hath God ever showed himself either unfaithful or unmerciful to me? To thee, O Lord, as to a faithful Creator, I commit my soul. (1 Peter 4:19.) I know that thou art the faithful God, who keepest covenant and mercy with them that love thee and keep thy commandments. (Deuteronomy 7:9.) Thou art faithful who hast called me to the communion of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:9.) Thy faithfulness hath saved me in and from temptation; (1 Corinthians 10:13;) it hath stablished me, and kept me from prevailing evil; (2 Thessalonians 3:3;) and it will keep my spirit, soul, and body to the coming of Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.) It is in faithfulness that thou hast afflicted me; (Psalms 119:75;) and shall not I trust thee, then, to save me? It is thy faithful word, that all thine elect shall obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory; and if we be dead with him, shall live with him, and if we suffer, we shall also reign with him. (2 Timothy 2:11-12.) To thee, O my Saviour, I commit my soul: it is thine own by redemption; it is thine own by covenant; it is marked and sealed by thy Spirit as thine own, and thou hast promised not to lose it. (John 6:39.) Thou wast made like us thy brethren, that thou mightest be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for our sins. By thy blood we have boldness to enter into the holiest, even by the new and living consecrated way. Cause me to draw near with a sincere heart, in full assurance of faith, by thee that art the High Priest over the house of God; for he is faithful that has promised life through thee. (Hebrews 10:20-23.) Thy name is faithful and true, (Revelation 19:11,) and faithful and true are all thy promises. (Revelation 22:6; Revelation 21:5.) Thou hast promised rest to weary souls that come to thee. (Matthew 11:28; 2 Thessalonians 1:7.) I am weary of suffering, and weary of sin; weary of my flesh, and weary of my darkness, and dulness, and distance, and of this wicked, blind, unrighteous, and confounded world: and whither should I look for rest but home to my heavenly Father and to thee? I am but a bruised reed, but thou wilt not break me; I am but a smoking flax, but thou wilt not quench what thy grace hath kindled; but thou, in whose name the nations trust, wilt bring forth judgment unto victory. (Matthew 12:20-21.) The Lord redeemeth the souls of his servants, and none of them that trust in thee shall be desolate. (Psalms 34:22.) Therefore will I wait on thy name, for it is good, and will trust in the mercy of God for ever. (Psalms 52:8-9.) The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him. (Nahum 1:7.) Sinful fear is a snare; but he that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be set on high. (Proverbs 29:25.) Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, and such as turn aside to lies. (Psalms 40:4.) Thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my

trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb, and my praise shall be continually of thee. Cast me not off now in the time of age. Forsake me not when my strength faileth; O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and grey, O God, forsake me not. (Psalms 71:5-6; Psalms 71:9; Psalms 71:17-18.) Leave not my soul destitute; for mine eyes are toward thee, and my trust is in thee. (Psalms 141:8.) I had fainted unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; even where they that live shall die no more. The sun may cease to shine on man, and the earth to bear us; but God will never cease to be love, nor to be faithful in his promises. Blessed be the Lord, who hath commanded me so safe and quieting a duty as to trust him, and cast all my cares on him, as on one that hath promised to care for me!

And blessed be God, who hath made it my duty to hope for his salvation. Hope is the ease, yea, the life of our hearts, that else would break, yea, die within us: despair is no small part of hell: God cherisheth hope as he is the lover of souls. Satan, our enemy, cherisheth despair, when his way of blind presumption faileth. As fear is a foretaste of evil, before it is felt: so hope doth anticipate, and foretaste salvation, before it is possessed. It is then worldly hypocrites' hope that perisheth, for all that hope for true or durable happiness on earth, in the pleasures of this perishing flesh, must needs be deceived. But happy is he who hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, which made heaven and earth, which keepeth truth for ever. (Psalms 146:5-6.) Wo to me, were my hope only in the time and matters of this fleshly life; (1 Corinthians 15:19;) but the righteous hath hope in his death; (Proverbs 14:32;) and hope maketh not ashamed. (Romans 5:5.) Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is. (Jeremiah 17:7.) Lay hold then, O my soul, upon the hope which is set before thee; (Hebrews 6:18;) it is thy firm and steadfast anchor, (

Hebrews 6:19) without it thou wilt be as a shipwrecked vessel. Thy foundation is sure; it is God himself; our faith and hope are both in God. (1 Peter 1:21.) It is Jesus our Lord who is risen from the dead, and reigneth in glory, Lord of all. (1 Timothy 1:1.) Yea, it is the Christ, who by faith doth dwell within us, who is our hope of glory. (Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:27.) In this hope, which is better than the law that Moses gave, it is that we draw nigh to God; (Hebrews 7:19;) it is the Holy Ghost that is both our evidence, and the efficient of our hope. (Galatians 5:5; Romans 8:16; Romans 8:23.) By him we hope for that which we see not, and therefore wait in patience for it; (

Romans 8:24-25) by hope we are saved. It is an encouraging grace which will make us stir, when as despair doth kill endeavours; it cureth sloth, and makes us diligent and constant to the end, and by this doth help us to full assurance. (Hebrews 6:11-12.) It is a desiring grace, and would fain obtain the glory hoped for. It is a quieting and comforting grace. (Romans 15:4.) The God of hope doth fill us with joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Romans 15:13) Shake off despondency, O my soul, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:2.) Believe in hope, though dying flesh would tell thee that it is against hope. (Romans 4:18.) God, that cannot lie, hath confirmed his covenant by his immutable oath, that we might have strong consolation who are fled for refuge to the hope which is set before us. (Hebrews 6:18.) What blessed preparations are made for our hope; and shall we now let the tempter shake it, or discourage it? The abundant mercy of God the Father hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection or Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. (1 Peter 1:3.) Grace teacheth us to deny ungodliness, and

worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, as looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour. (Titus 2:12-13.) We are renewed by the Holy Ghost, and justified by grace, that we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:6-7.) We are illuminated, that we may know the hope of Christ's calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. (Ephesians 1:18-19.) The hope that is laid up for us in heaven, is the chief doctrine of the gospel, which bringeth life and immortality into clearer light. (Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:10.) It is for this hope that we keep a conscience void of offence, and that God is served in the world; (Acts 24:15-16; Acts 26:7;) wherefore gird up the loins of thy mind; put on this helmet, the hope of salvation; (1 Thessalonians 5:8;) and let not death seem to thee as it doth to them that have no hope. (1 Thessalonians 4:13.) The love of our Father, and our Saviour, have given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, to comfort our hearts, and establish them in every good word and work. (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17.) Keep, therefore, the rejoicing of hope, firm to the end. (Hebrews 3:6.) Continue grounded and settled in the faith, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel. (Colossians 1:23; 1 Peter 1:13.) And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee. (Psalms 39:7.) Uphold me according to thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope. (Psalms 119:116.) Though mine iniquities testify against me, yet, O thou that art the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, be not as a stranger to my soul. (Jeremiah 14:7-8.) Thy name, is called upon by me, oh, forsake me not! (Jeremiah 14:9) Why have our eyes beheld thy wonders, and why have we had thy covenant, and thy mercies, but that we might set our hope in God. (Psalms 78:5; Psalms 78:7.) Remember the word to thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. (Psalms 119:49.) If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who should stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord; my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope; I will hope in the Lord, for with him there is mercy and plenteous redemption. (Psalms 130:3-5; Psalms 130:7.) For he taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. (Psalms 147:11.) Though flesh and heart fail, the Lord is the rock of my heart; he is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good to them that wait for him; to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that I should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for me that I have borne the yoke in my youth, and that I keep silence, and put my mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. (Psalms 73:26; Lamentations 3:24-27; Lamentations 3:29.)

God need not flatter such worms as we, nor promise us that which he never meaneth to perform. He hath laid the rudiments of our hope, in a nature capable of desiring, seeking, and thinking of another life: he hath called me by grace, to actual desires and endeavours; and some foretaste he hath vouchsafed. I look for no heaven, but the perfection of divine life, light, and love, in endless glory with Christ and his holy ones. And this he hath begun in me already; and shall I not boldly hope when I have the capacity, the promise, and the earnest and foretaste? Is it not God himself that hath caused me to hope? Was not nature, promise, and grace from him? And can a soul miscarry, and be deceived, that departeth hence in a hope of God's own causing, and encouraging? Lord, I have lived in hope, I have prayed in hope, I have laboured, suffered, and waited in hope; and, by thy grace, I will die in hope. And is not this according to thy word and will? And wilt thou cast away a soul that hopeth in thee, by thine own command and operation? Had wealth and honour, or continuance on earth, or the favour of man, been my reward and hope, my hope and I had died together. Were this our best, how vain were man! But the Lord liveth, and my

Redeemer is glorified, and intercedeth for me; and the same Spirit is in heaven, who is in my heart, (as the same sun is in the firmament which is in my house,) and the promise is sure to all Christ's seed. And millions are now in heaven, that once did live and die in hope; they were sinners once, as now I am; they had no other Saviour, no other Sanctifier, no other promise, than I now have; confessing that they were strangers here, they looked for a better country, and for a city that had foundations, even a heavenly, where now they are: and shall I not follow them in hope that have sped so well? Hope then, O my soul, unto the end. (1 Peter 1:13.) From henceforth, and for ever, hope in the Lord. (Psalms 131:3.) I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more; my mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and salvation. (Psalms 71:14-15.) The Lord is at my right hand; I shall not be moved. My heart, therefore, is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall dwell confidently, and rest in hope; for God hath showed me the path of life: in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand, are pleasures for evermore. (Psalms 16:8-11.)

What then remaineth, O my soul, but that, in trust and hope, thou love thy God, thy Saviour, thy Comforter, the glorious society, thy own perfection in glorious, endless, heavenly life, and light, and love, and the joyful praises of Jehovah, better than this burden of painful and corruptible flesh, and this howling wilderness, the habitation of serpents and untamed brutes, where unbelief and murmuring, lust and folly, injustice and uncharitableness, tyranny and divisions, pride and contention, have long provoked God, and wearied thee? Where the vintage and harvest is thorns and thistles, sin and sorrows, cares and crosses, manured by manifold temptations. How odious is that darkness and unbelief, that unholiness and disaffection, that deadness and stupidity, which maketh such a work as this so reasonable, necessary, and pleasant a work, to seem unsuitable or hard? Is it unsuitable or hard to the eye, to see the sun and light; or by it to see the beautified world? or for a man to love his life or health, his father, or his friend? What should be easier to a nature that hath rational love, than to love him that is essential love itself. He that loveth all, and giveth to all the loving faculty, should be loved by all; and he that hath specially loved me, should be specially loved by me.

Love is the perfection of all thy preparations. It desireth to please God, and therefore to be in the most pleasing state, and freed from all that is displeasing to him, which is not to be hoped for on earth. It desireth all suitable nearness, acquaintance, union, and communion. It is weary of distance, estrangedness, and alien society and affairs. It taketh advantage of every notice, intimation, or mention of God, to renew and exercise these desires. Every message and mercy from him is fuel for love, and, while we are short of perfection, stir up our desires after more. When love tasteth of the grapes, it would have the vine. When it tasteth of the fruits, it would dwell where they grow, and possess the land. Its thoughts of proximity and fruition are sweet; no other person or thing can satisfy it. The soul is where it loveth. If our friend dwell in our hearts by love, and if fleshly pleasure, riches, and honour, do dwell in the heart of the voluptuous, the covetous, and the proud, surely God and our Redeemer, the heavenly society, holiness, and glory, do dwell in the heart which loveth them with a fervent love. And if heaven dwell in my heart, shall I not desire to dwell in heaven? Light and light, fire and fire, are not more inclined to union than love and love; gracious love, and glorious love. Would divine, original, universal love communicate and pour out itself more plentifully upon my heart, how easy would it be to leave this flesh and world, and to hear the sentence of my departure to my God? Death and the grave would be but a triumph for victorious love. It would be easier to die in peace and joy, than to rest at night, or to come home

from my travel to my beloved friends, or to go, when I am hungry, to a feast. A little love hath made me study willingly, and preach willingly, and write willingly, yea, and suffer somewhat willingly; and would not more make me go more willingly to God? Shall the imagination of house, gardens, walks, libraries, prospects, meadows, orchards, hills, and rivers, allure the desires of deceived minds? And shall not the thoughts of the heavenly mansions, society, and delights, much more allure and draw up my desires? The reading of a known fiction of a Civitas Soils, an Utopia, an Atalantis, &c., hath pleased many; but if I did believingly hear of such a country in the world, where men did never die, nor were sick, or weak, or sad; where the prince was perfectly just and pious, wise and peaceable, devoted to God and the public good; and the teachers were all wise, judicious men, of universal certain knowledge, perfectly acquainted with the matter and method of natural and theological truths, and all their duty, and all of one mind and of one heart, and tongue and practice, loving each other, and the people as themselves, and leading the flocks heavenward, through all temptations, with triumphant hopes and joy; where all the people perfectly obeyed God, their commanders, and their teachers, and lived in perfect love, unity, and peace, and were daily employed in the joyful praises of God, and hopes of glory, and in doing all possible good to one another, contending with none through ignorance, uncharitableness, or pride, nor ever reproaching, injuring, or hurting one another, &c. I say, if I knew or heard of such a country, should I not love it before I ever see it, and earnestly desire to be there? Nay, do I not over-love this distracted world, where tyranny sheddeth streams of blood, and layeth desolate cities and countries, and exposeth the miserable inhabitants to lamentable distress and famine; where the same tyranny sets up the wicked, reproacheth and oppresseth the just and innocent, keepeth out the gospel, and keepeth up idolatry, infidelity, and wickedness, in the far greatest part of all the earth; where Satan chooseth pastors too often for the churches of Christ, even such as by ignorance, pride, sensuality, worldliness, and malignity, become thorns and thistles, yea, devouring wolves, to those whom they should feed and comfort; where no two persons are in all things of a mind; where evil is commended, and truth and goodness accused and oppressed, because men’s minds are unacquainted with them, or unsuitable to them. And those that are the greatest pretenders to truth do most eagerly contend against it, and oppose it; and almost all the world are scolding or scuffling in the dark; and where there appeareth but little hopes of a remedy. I say, can I love such a world as this? And shall I not think more delightfully of the inheritance of the saints in light, and the uniting love and joyful praises of the church triumphant, and the heavenly choir? Should I not love a lovely and a loving world much better than a world where there is, comparatively, so little loveliness or love? All that is of God is good and lovely, but it is not here that his glory shineth in felicitating splendour. I am taught to look upward when I pray, and to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven." God’s works are amiable, even in hell; and yet, though I would know them, I would not be there. And, alas! how much of the works of man are mixed here with the works of God! Here is God’s wisdom manifest; but here is man’s obstinate folly. Here is God’s government; but here is man’s tyranny and unruliness. Here is God’s love and mercies; but here are men’s malice, wrath, and cruelty; by which they are worse to one another than wolves and tigers, depopulating countries, and filling the world with bloodshed, famine, misery, and lamentations, proud tyrants being worse than raging plagues; which made David choose the pestilence before his enemies’ pursuit. Here is much of God’s beauteous order and harmony; but here is also much of man’s madness, deformity, and confusion. Here is much historical truth, and some civil and ecclesiastic justice; but, alas! with how much odious falsehood and injustice is it

mixed? Here is much precious theological verity; but how dark is much of it to such blind, and negligent, and corrupted minds, as every where abound. Here are wise, judicious teachers and companions to be found; but, alas! how few, in comparison of the most; and how hardly known by those that need them. Here are sound and orthodox ministers of Christ; but how few that most need them know which are they, and how to value them or use them. And how many thousands of seduced or sensual sinners are made believe that they are but deceivers, or, as they called Paul, pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition among the people. And in how many parts of the world are they as the prophets that Obadiah hid in caves, or as Micaiah, or Elias among the lying prophets, or the Baalites. Though such as of whom the world is not worthy. And is that world, then, more worthy of our love than heaven? There are worthy and religious families which honour God, and are honoured by him; but, alas! how few; and usually by the temptations of wealth, and worldly interest, how full even of the sins of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, if not also unmercifulness to the poor. And how are they tempted to plead for their sins and snares, and account it rustic ignorance which contradicteth them. And how few pious families are there of the greater sort, that do not quickly degenerate; and posterity, by false religion, error, or sensuality, grow most contrary to the minds of their pious progenitors. There are many that educate their children wisely in the fear of God, and have, accordingly, comfort in them; but how many are there, that having devoted them in baptism to God, do train them up in the service of the flesh, the world, and the devil, which they renounced, and never understood, or at least intended, for themselves or children, what they did profess. How many parents think, that when they offer their children to God in baptism, without a sober and due consideration of the nature and meaning of that great covenant with God, that God must accept, and certainly regenerate and save them. Yea, too many religious parents forget that they themselves are sponsors in that covenant, and undertake to use the means, on their part, to make their children fit for the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Spirit, as they grow up, and think that God should absolutely sanctify, keep, and save them at age, because they are theirs, and were baptised, though they keep them not from great and unnecessary temptations, nor teach them plainly and seriously the meaning of the covenant which was made for them with God, as to the nature, benefits, or conditions of it. How many send them to others to be taught in grammar, logic, philosophy, or arts, yea, and divinity, before their own parents ever taught them what they did with God in baptism, what they received, and what they promised and vowed to do. They send them to trades, or secular callings, or to travel in foreign lands, among a multitude of snares, among tempting company, and tempting baits, before ever at home they were instructed, armed, and settled against those temptations which they must needs encounter, and which, if they overcome them, they are undone. How ordinarily, when they have first neglected this great duty of their own for their fortification, do they plead a necessity of thrusting them out on these temptations, though utterly unarmed, from some punctilio of honour or conformity to the world, to avoid the contempt of worldly men, or to adorn their (yet naked) souls with some of the plumes or painted trifles, ceremonies, or compliments, which will never serve instead of heavenly wisdom, mortification, and the love of God and man. As if they were like to learn that fear of God in a crowd of diverting and tempting company, baits, and business, which they never learned under the teaching, nurture, and daily oversight, of their religious parents, in a safer station: or as if, for some little reason, they might send them as to sea without pilot or anchor, and think that God must save them from the waves: or as if it were better to enter them into Satan’s school, or army, and venture them upon the notorious danger of damnation, than to miss

of preferment and wealth, or of the fashions and favour of the times: and then when they hear that they have forsaken God, and true religion, and given up themselves to lust and sensuality, and, perhaps, as enemies to God and good men, destroy what their parents laboured to build up, these parents wonder at God's judgments, and with broken hearts lament their infelicity, when it were better to lament their own misdoing, and it had been best of all to have lamented it.

Thus families, churches, and kingdoms, run on to blindness, ungodliness, and confusion: self-undoing, and serving the malice of Satan, for fleshly lust, is the too common employment of mankind: all is wise, and good, and sweet, which is prescribed us by God, in true nature, or supernatural revelation: but folly, sin, and misery, mistaking themselves to be wit, and honesty, and prosperity, and raging against that which nominally they pretend to and profess, are the ordinary case and course of the most of men: and when we would plead them out of their deceit and misery, it is well if we are not tempted to imitate them, or be not partly infected with their disease, or at least reproached and oppressed as their enemies: such a Bedlam is most of the world become, where madness goeth for the only wisdom, and he is the bravest man that can sin and be damned with reputation and renown, and successfully drive or draw the greatest number with him unto hell: to which the world hath no small likeness, forsaking God, and being very much forsaken by him. This is the world which standeth in competition for my love, with the spiritual, blessed world: much of God's mercies and comforts I have here had: but their sweetness was their taste of divine love, and their tendency to heavenly perfection. What was the end and use of all the good that ever I saw, or that ever God did for my soul or body, but to teach me to love him, and long for more? How many weaning experiences; how many thousand bitter or contemning thoughts have I had of all the glory and pleasures of this world. How many thousand love tokens from God have called me to believe and taste his goodness. Wherever I go, and which way soever I look, I see vanity and vexation written upon all things in this world, so far as they stand in competition with God, and would be the end and portion of a fleshly mind: and I see holiness to the Lord written upon every thing, so far as it declareth God, and leadeth me to him, as my ultimate end. God hath not for nothing engaged me in a war against this world, and commanded me to take and use it as mine enemy: the emptiness, dangerousness, and bitterness of the world, and the all-sufficiency, trustiness, and goodness of God, have been the sum of all the experiences of my life? And shall a worldly, backward heart overcome the teachings of nature, Scripture, the Spirit of grace, and all experience? Far be it from me!

But, O my God! love is thy great and special gift: all good is from thee: but love is the godlike nature, life, and image: it is given us from the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the quickening, illuminating, and sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit: what can the earth return unto the sun, but its own reflected beams,—if those? As how far soever man is a medium in generation, nature, and that appetite which is the moving pondus in the child, is thy work; so, whatever is man's part in the mediate work of believing and repenting, (which yet is not done without thy Spirit and grace,) certainly it is the blessed Regenerator which must make us new creatures, by giving us this divine nature, holy love, which is the holy appetite and pondus of the soul. Come down, Lord, into this heart, for it cannot come up to thee. Can the plants for life, or the eye for light, go up unto the sun? Dwell in me by the Spirit of love, and I shall dwell by love in thee. Reason is weak, and thoughts are various, and man will be a slippery, uncertain wight, if love be not his fixing principle, and do not incline his soul to thee: surely through thy grace I easily feel that I love thy

word, I love thy image, I love thy work, and, oh, how heartily do I love to love thee, and long to know and love thee more! And if all things be of thee, and through thee, and to thee, surely this love to the beams of thy glory here on earth is eminently so! It is thee, Lord, that it meaneth: to thee it looketh: it is thee it serveth: for thee it mourns, and seeks, and groans: in thee it trusts: and the hope, and peace, and comfort which support me, are in thee. When I was a returning prodigal in rags, thou sawest me afar off, and didst meet me with thy embracing, feasting love: and shall I doubt whether he that hath better clothed me, and dwelt within me, will entertain me with a feast of greater love in the heavenly mansions, the world of love? The suitableness of things below to my fleshly nature, hath detained my affections too much on earth: and shall not the suitableness of things above to my spiritual nature much more draw up my love to heaven? There is the God whom I have sought and served: he is also here; but veiled, and but little known: but there he shineth to heavenly spirits in heavenly glory. There is the Saviour in whom I have believed: he hath also dwelt in flesh on earth; but clothed in such meanness, and humbled to such a life and death, as was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles matter of reproach: but he shineth and reigneth now in glory, above the malice and contempt of sinners. And I shall there live because he liveth; and in his light I shall have light. He loved me here with a redeeming, regenerating, and preserving love: but there he will love me with a perfecting, glorifying, joyful love. I had here some rays of heavenly light: but interpositions caused eclipses and nights, yea, some long and winter nights: but there I shall dwell in the city of the sun, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, where there is no night, eclipse, or darkness: there are the heavenly hosts, whose holy love, and joyful praises, I would fain be a partaker of? I have here had some of their loving assistance, but to me unseen, being above our fleshly way of converse; but there I shall be with them, of the like nature, in the same orb, and of the same triumphant church and choir! There are perfected souls gathered home to Christ: not, as here, striving, like Esau and Jacob in the womb; nor yet as John when he leaped in the womb, because of his mother's joy; nor as wrangling children, that are hardly kept in the same house in peace: not like the servants of Abraham and Lot, like Paul and Barnabas, like Epiphanius and Chrysostom, like Luther and Carolostadius, like Ridley and Hooper, or the many striving parties now among us; nor like the disciples striving who should be the greatest: not like Noah's family in a wicked world, or Lot in a wicked city, or Abraham in an idolatrous land; nor like Elijah left alone; nor like those that wandered in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, and tormented, hid in dens and caves of the earth: not like Job on the dunghill; nor like Lazarus at the rich man's door: not like the African bishops, whose tongues were cut out; nor like the preachers silenced by Popish imposers; (in Germany by the interim, or elsewhere;) nor like such as Tzegedine, Peucer, and many other worthy men, whose maturest age was spent in prisons: not as we poor bewildered sinners, feeling evil, and fearing more, confounded in folly and mad contention, some hating the only way of peace, and others groping for it in the dark, wandering and lost in the clearest light, where the illuminated can but pity the blind, but cannot make them willing to be delivered. What is heaven to me, but God? God, who is life, and light, and love, communicating himself to blessed spirits, perfecting them in the reception, possession, and exercise of life, and light, and love, for ever. These are not the accidents, but the essence of that God who is heaven and all to me: should I fear that death which passeth me to infinite, essential life? Should I fear a darksome passage into a world of perfect light? Should I fear to go to love itself? Think, O my soul, what the sun's quickening light and heat is to this lower, corporeal world? Much more is God, even infinite life, and light, and love, to the blessed world

above: doth it not draw out thy desires to think of going into a world of love? When love will be our region, our company, our life; more to us than the air is for our breath, than the light is for our sight, than our food is for our life, than our friends are for our solace; and more to us than we are to ourselves. O excellent grace of faith which doth foresee, and blessed word of faith that doth foreshow, this world of love! Shall I fear to enter where there is no wrath, no fear, no strangeness, nor suspicion, nor selfish separation, but love will make every holy spirit as dear and lovely to me as myself, and me to them as lovely as themselves, and God to us all more amiable than ourselves and all: where love will have no defects or distances, no damps or discouragements, no discontinuance or mixed disaffection; but as life will be without death, and light without darkness, (a perfect, everlasting day of glory,) so will love be without any hatred, unkindness, or allay. As many coals make one fire, and many candles conjoined make one light, so will many living spirits make one life, and many illuminated, glorious spirits, one light and glory, and many spirits, naturalized into love, will make one perfect love of God, and be loved as one by God for ever: for all the body of Christ is one; even here it is one in initial union of the Spirit, and relation to one God, and Head, and Life, (1 Corinthians 12:1-31 throughout; Ephesians 4:1-17,) and shall be presented as beloved and spotless to God, when the great marriage day of the Lamb shall come. (Ephesians 5:24-25, &c.; Revelation 21:1-27, Revelation 22:1-21)

Hadst thou not given me, O Lord, the life of nature, I should have had no conceptions of a glorious, everlasting life: but if thou give me not the life of grace, I shall have no sufficient delightful inclination and desire after it. Hadst thou not given me sight and reason, the light of nature, I should not have thought how desirable it is to live in the glorious light and vision; but if thou give me not the spiritual illumination of a seeing faith, I shall not yet long for the glorious light, and beatific vision. Hadst thou not given me a will and love, which is part of my very nature itself, I could not have tasted how desirable it is to live in a world of universal, perfect, endless love: but unless thou also shed abroad thy love upon my heart, by the Spirit of Jesus, the great medium of love, and turn my very nature or inclination into divine and holy love, I shall not long for the world of love. Appetite followeth nature: oh! give me not only the image and the art of godliness; the approaches towards it, nor only some forced or unconstant acts; but give me the divine nature, which is holy love, and then my soul will hasten towards thee, and cry, 'How long, O Lord, how long! O come, come quickly, make no delay.' Surely the fear of dying intimateth some contrary love that inclineth the soul another way; and some shameful unbelief, and great unapprehensiveness of the attractive glory of the world of love: otherwise no frozen person so longeth for the fire, none in a dungeon so desireth light, as we should long for the heavenly light and love.

God's infinite, essential self-love, in which he is eternally delighted in himself, is the most amiable object, and heaven itself to saints and angels: and next to that his love to all his works, to the world, and to the church in heaven, speaketh much more of his loveliness than his love to me. But yet due self-love in me, is his work, and part of his natural image; and when this by sin is grown up to excess, (through the withdrawing of a contracted, narrow soul, from the union and due love to my fellow-creatures, and to God,) I must also, I cannot but, inquire after God's love to me: and by this my desires must be moved; for I am not so capable of ascending above self-interest, and self-love, as in the state of glorious union I shall be. I am glad to perceive that others do love God; and I love those most that I find most love him: but it is not other men's love to God that will be

accepted by him instead of mine: nor is it God’s love to others (which yet rejoiceth me) that will satisfy me, without his love to me. But when all these are still before me, God’s essential self-love and delight, his love to his creatures, especially the glorified, and his love to me also, even to me, a vile, unworthy sinner; what then should stay my ascending love, or discourage my desires to be with God? And dost thou doubt, canst thou doubt, O my soul, whether thou art going to a God that loveth thee? If the Jews discerned the great love of Christ to Lazarus by his tears, canst thou not discern his love to thee in his blood? It is never the less, but the more, obliging and amiable that it was not shed for thee alone, but for many. May I not say as Paul, (Galatians 2:20,) "I live by the faith of the Son of God, that hath loved me, and given himself for me." Yea, it is not so much I that live, as Christ liveth in me: and will he forsake the habitation which his love hath chosen; and which he hath so dearly bought? Oh, read often that triumphing chapter Romans 8, and conclude, "What shall separate us from the love of God?" If life have not done it, death shall not do it. If leaning on his breast at meat was a token of Christ’s special love to John, is not his dwelling in me by my faith, and his living in me by his Spirit, a sure token of his love to me: and if a dark saying, "If he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" raised a report that the beloved disciple should not die, why should not plain promises assure me that I shall live with him that loveth me for ever? Be not so unthankful, O my soul, as to question, doubtingly, whether thy heavenly Father, and thy Lord, doth love thee? Canst thou forget the sealed testimonies of it? Did I not even now repeat so many as should shame my doubts? A multitude of thy friends have loved thee so entirely, that thou caust not doubt of it: and did any of them signify their love with the convincing evidence that God hath done? Have they done for thee what he hath done? Are they love itself? Is their love so full, so firm, and so unchangeable, as his? My thoughts of heaven are the sweeter, because abundance of my ancient, lovely, and loving holy friends are there: and I am the willinger, by death, to follow them. And should I not think of it more pleasedly because my God and Father, my Saviour, and my Comforter, is there? And not alone, but with all the society of love. Was not Lazarus in the bosom of God himself? Yet it is said that he was in Abraham’s bosom; as the promise runs, that we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. And what maketh the society of the saints so sweet as holy love? It is comfortable to read, that "To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and might," is the first and great commandment; and the second is like to it, "to love our neighbours as ourselves." For God’s commands proceed from that will which is his nature, or essence, and they tend to the same as their objective end. Therefore, he that hath made love the great command, doth tell us that love is the great conception of his own essence, the spring of that command; and that this commanded, imperfect love doth tend to perfect, heavenly love, even to our communion with essential, infinite love. It were strange, that the love and goodness which is equal to the power that made the world, and the wisdom that ordereth it, should be scant and backward to do good, and to be suspected more than the love of friends! The remembrance of the holiness, humility, love, and faithfulness, of my dearest friends of every rank, with whom I have conversed on earth, in every place where I have lived, is so sweet to me, that I am oft ready to recreate myself with the naming of such as are now with Christ. But in heaven they will love me better than they did on earth; and my love to them will be more pleasant. But all these sparks are little to the sun.

Every place that I have lived in was a place of divine love, which there set up its obliging monuments. Every year and hour of my life hath been a time of love; every friend, and every neighbour, yea, every enemy, have been the messengers and instruments of love; every state and

change of my life, notwithstanding my sin, hath opened to me treasures and mysteries of love. And after such a life of love, shall I doubt whether the same God do love me? Is he the God of the mountains, and not of the vallies? Did he love me in my youth and health, and doth he not love me in my age, and pain, and sickness? Did he love all the faithful better in their life than at their death? If our hope be not chiefly in this life, neither is our state of love, which is principally the heavenly, endless grace. My groans grieve my friends, but abate not their love. Did he love me for my strength, my weakness might be my fear; as they that love for beauty loathe them that are deformed, and they that love for riches despise the poor. But God loved me when I was his enemy, to make me a friend, and when I was bad, to make me better. Whatever he taketh pleasure in is his own gift. Who made me to differ? And what have I that I have not received? And God will finish the work, the building, the warfare, that is his own. Oh, the multitude of mercies to my soul and body, in peace and war, in youth and age, to myself and friends, the many great and gracious deliverances which have testified to me the love of God! Have I lived in the experience of it, and shall I die in the doubts of it? Had it been love only to my body, it would have died with me, and not have accompanied my departing soul. I am not much in doubt of the truth of my love to him; though I have not seen him, save as in a glass, as in a glass seen I love him. I love my brethren whom I have seen, and those most that are most in love with him. I love his word, and works, and ways, and fain I would be nearer to him, and love him more; and I loathe myself for loving him no better. And shall Peter say more confidently, "Thou knowest that I love thee," than "I know that thou lovest me?" Yes, he may; because, though God’s love is greater and steadfaster than ours, yet our knowledge of his great love is less than his knowledge of our little love; and as we are defective in our own love, so are we in our certainty of its sincerity. And without the knowledge of our love to God, we can never be sure of his special love to us. But yet I am not utterly a stranger to myself; I know for what I have lived and laboured in the world, and who it is that I have desired to please. The God whose I am, and whom I serve, hath loved me in my youth, and he will love me in my aged weakness. My flesh and my heart fail; my pains seem grievous to the flesh; but it is love that chooseth them, that useth them for my good, that moderateth them, and will shortly end them. Why then should I doubt of my Father’s love? Shall pain or dying make me doubt? Did God love none from the beginning of the world, but Enoch and Elias? And what am I better than my forefathers? What is in me that I should expect exemption from the common lot of mankind? Is not a competent time of great mercy on earth, in order to the unseen felicity, all that the best of men can hope for? O for a clearer, stronger faith, to show me the world that more excelleth this, than this excelleth the womb where I was conceived! Then should I not fear my third birthday, what pangs soever go before it; nor be unwilling of my change. The grave, indeed, is a bed that nature doth abhor, yet there the weary be at rest. But souls new born have a double nature that is immortal, and go to the place that is agreeable to their nature, even to the region of spirits, and the region of holy love. Even passive matter, that hath no other natural motion, hath a natural inclination to uniting, aggregative motion. And God maketh all natures suitable to their proper ends and use. How can it be that a spirit should not incline to be with spirits? and souls, that have the divine nature in holy love, desire to be with the God of love? Arts, and sciences, and tongues, become not a nature to us; else they would not cease at death. But holy love is our new nature, and therefore ceaseth not with this bodily life. And shall accidental love make me desire the company of a frail and mutable friend? And shall not this engrafted, inseparable love, make me long to be with Christ? Though the love of God to all his creatures will not prove that they are all

immortal, nor oblige them to expect another life, that never had capacity or faculties to expect it, yet his love to such as in nature and grace are made capable of it, doth warrant and oblige them to believe and hope for the full perfection of the work of love. Some comfort themselves in the love of St. Peter, as having the keys of heaven. And how many could I name that are now with Christ, who loved me so faithfully on earth, that were I sure they had the keys and power of heaven, and were not changed in their love, I could put my departing soul into their hands, and die with joy. And is it not better in the hand of my Redeemer, and the God of love, and Father of spirits? Is any love comparable to his; or any friend so boldly to be trusted? I should take it for ungrateful unkindness in my friend to doubt of my love and trustiness, if I had given him all that he hath, and maintained him constantly by my kindness; but oh, how odious a thing is sin! which, by destroying our love to God, doth make us unmeet to believe and sweetly perceive his love; and by making us doubt of the love of God, and lose the pleasant relish of it, doth more increase our difficulty of loving him. The title that the angel gave to Daniel, "A man greatly beloved of God," methinks, should be enough to make one joyfully love and trust God, both in life and death. Will Almighty love ever hurt me or forsake me? And have not all saints that title in their degrees? What else signifieth their mark and name, Holiness to the Lord? What is it but our separation to God, as his peculiar, beloved people? And how are they separated but by mutual love, and our forsaking all that alienateth, or is contrary? Let seorners deride us as self-flatterers, that believe they are God's darlings; and wo to the hypocrites that believe it on their false presumption! Without such belief or grounded hopes I see not how any man can die in true peace. He that is no otherwise beloved than hypocrites and unbelievers, must have his portion with them. And he that is no otherwise beloved than as the ungodly, unholy, and unregenerate, shall not stand in judgment, nor see God, nor enter into his kingdom. Most upright souls are to blame for groundless doubting of God's love; but not for acknowledging it, rejoicing in it, and, in their doubts, being most solicitous to make it sure. Love brought me into the world, and furnished me with a thousand mercies. Love hath provided for me, delivered me, and preserved me, till now; and will it not entertain my separated soul? Is God like false or insufficient friends, that forsake us in adversity?

I confess that I have wronged love by sin; by many and great unexcusable sins. But all, save Christ himself, were sinners, which love did purify, and receive to glory. God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace we are saved, and hath raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-6.) O that I could love much that have so much forgiven! The glorified praise him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God. (Revelation 1:5-6.) Our Father that hath loved us, giveth us consolation and good hope, through grace. (2 Thessalonians 2:16.) I know no sin which I repent not of with self-loathing; and I earnestly beg and labour that none of my sins may be to me unknown. I dare not justify even what is in any way uncertain; though I dare not call all that my sin which siding men, of different judgments, on each side, passionately call so. While both sides do it on contrary accounts, and not to go contrary ways is a crime. O that God would bless my accusations to my illumination, that I may not be unknown to myself! Though some think me much better than I am, and others much worse, it most concerneth me to know the truth myself; flattery would be more dangerous to me than false accusations: I may safelier be ignorant of other men's sins than of my own. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me, Lord, from secret sins, and let not ignorance or error keep me in impenitence; and keep thou me back from presumptuous sins. (Psalms 19:12-13.) I have an

advocate with the Father, and thy promise, that he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy. Those are, by some men, taken for my greatest sins, which my most serious thoughts did judge to be the greatest of my outward duties, and which I performed through the greatest difficulties, and which cost me dearest to the flesh, and the greatest self-denial and patience in my reluctant mind. Wherever I have erred, Lord, make it known to me, that my confession may prevent the sin of others; and where I have not erred, confirm and accept me in the right. And seeing an unworthy worm hath had so many testimonies of thy tender love, let me not be like to them, that when thou saidst, 'I loved you,' unthankfully asked, 'Wherein hast thou loved us?' (Malachi 1:2.) Heaven is not more spangled with stars, than thy word and works with the refulgent signatures of love. Thy well-beloved Son, the Son of thy love, undertaking the office, message, and work of the greatest love, was full of that Spirit which is love, which he sheds abroad in the hearts of thine elect, that the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Spirit, may be their hope and life. His works, his sufferings, his gifts, as well as his comfortable word, did say to his disciples, "As the Father loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love." (John 15:9.) And how, Lord, shall we continue in it, but by the thankful belief of thy love and loveliness, desiring still to love thee more, and in all things to know and please thy will; which thou knowest is my soul's desire.

Behold then, O my soul, with what love the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have loved thee, that thou shouldest be made and called a son of God, redeemed, regenerate, adopted into that covenant state of grace in which thou standest. "Rejoice, therefore, in hope of the glory of God, being justified by faith, having peace with God, and access by faith and hope that maketh not ashamed; that being reconciled, when an enemy, by the death of Christ, I shall be saved by his life. (Romans 5:1-2.) Having loved his own, to the end he loveth them, and without end. His gifts and calling are without repentance. When Satan, and thy flesh, would hide God's love, look to Christ, and read the golden words of love in the sacred gospel; and peruse thy many recorded experiences, and remember the convictions which secret and open mercies have many a time afforded thee. But especially draw nearer to the Lord of love, and be not seldom and slight in thy contemplations of his love and loveliness; dwell in the sunshine, and thou wilt know that it is light, and warm, and comfortable. Distance and strangeness cherish thy doubts; acquaint thyself with him, and be at peace.

Yet look up, and oft and earnestly look up, after thy ascended, glorified Head, who said, "Tell my brethren I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Think where and what he is, and what he is now doing for all his own; and how humbled, abased, suffering love is now triumphant, regnant, glorified love; and therefore no less than in all its tender expressions upon earth. As love is nowhere perfectly believed but in heaven, so I can nowhere so fully discern it, as by looking up by faith to my Father and Saviour, which is in heaven, and conversing more believingly with the heavenly society. Had I done this more and better, and as I have persuaded others to do it, I had lived in more convincing delights of God's love, which would have turned the fears of death into more joyful hopes, and more earnest desires to be with Christ, in the arms, in the world, in the life of love, as far better than to be here, in a dark, a doubting, fearing world. But O Father of infinite love! though my arguments be many and strong, my heart is bad, and my strength is weakness, and I am insufficient to plead the cause of thy love and loveliness to myself or others. Oh, plead thy own cause, and what heart can resist? Let it not be my word only, but

thine, that thou lovest me, even me, a sinner; speak it as Christ said to Lazarus, "Arise." If not, as thou tellest me that the sun is warm, yet as thou hast told me that my parents and my dearest friends did love me, and much more powerfully than so. Tell it me, as thou tellest me that thou hast given me life, by the consciousness and works of life; that while I can say, "Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee;" it may include, 'therefore I know that I am beloved of thee;' and therefore come to thee in the confidence of thy love, and long to be nearer in the clearer sight, the fuller sense, and joyfuller exercise of love for ever. Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! Amen.

2A.5. AN APPENDIX

AN APPENDIX A BREVIATE OF THE HELPS OF FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE A BREVIATE OF THE PROOF OF SUPERNATURAL REVELATION, AND THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. 1 Timothy 3:16 THESE are the creed, or six articles of the gospel which the apostles preached.

Sect. 1. God manifested in the flesh of Jesus, is the first and great article. Believe this, and believe all. No wonder that believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is so often made, in Scripture, the description of saving faith, the title to baptism, and pardon, and salvation, the evidence of the Spirit, &c. He that truly and practically believeth that God came in flesh to man, and that Christ is the Father's messenger from heaven, must needs believe that God hath a great value for the souls of men, and for his church, that he despiseth not even our flesh; that his word is true, and fully to be trusted; that he, who so wonderfully came to man, will certainly take up man to him. Who can doubt of the immortality of souls, or that Christ will receive the departing souls of the faithful to himself, who believeth that he took man's nature, and hath glorified it now in heaven, in union with the divine? Who can ever have low thoughts of God's love and mercy who believeth this? and who can prostitute his soul and flesh to wickedness, who firmly believeth that he took the soul and flesh of man to sanctify and glorify it?

Sect. 2. II. The Holy Spirit is the justification of the truth of Jesus Christ. He is Christ's advocate and witness to the world. He proveth the gospel by these five ways of evidence: 1. By all the prophecies, types, and promises of Christ in the Old Testament, before Christ's coming. 2. By the inherent impress of God's image on the person and doctrine of Christ; which, propria luce, showeth itself to be divine. 3. By the concomitant miracles of Christ: read the history of the gospel for this use, and observe each history. 4. By the subsequent gift of the Spirit to the apostles and other Christians, by languages, wonders, and multitudes of miracles, to convince the world. 5. By the undeniable and excellent work of sanctification on all true believers through all the world, in all generations to this day. These five are the Spirit's witness, which fully testifieth the certain truth, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Sect. 3. Quest. But how are we sure, who, ourselves, never saw the person, miracles, resurrection, ascension of Christ, that the history of them is true?

Answ. 1. We may be sure that the spectators were not deceived. 2. And that they did not deceive them to whom they reported it. 3. And that we are not deceived by any miscarriage in the historical tradition to us.

Sect. 4. I. It was not possible that men that were not mad, that had eyes and ears, could, for three years and a half, believe that they saw the lame, the blind, the deaf, and all diseases healed, the dead raised, thousands miraculously fed, &c., and this among crowds of people that still followed

Christ, if the things had not been true. One man's senses may be deceived at some one instance, by some deceitful accident: but that the eyes and ears of multitudes should be so oft deceived, many years, in the open light, is as much as to say, no man knoweth any thing that he seeth and heareth.

Sect. 5. II. That the disciples who received the apostles' and evangelists' report of Christ, were not deceived by the reporters, is most evident.

For, 1. They received it not by hearsay, at the second hand, but from the eye and ear witnesses themselves, who must needs know what they said.

They heard this report from men of the same time, and age, and country, where it was easy to examine the case, and confute it, had it been false.

The apostles appealed to crowds and thousands of witnesses, as to many of Christ's miracles, who would have made it odious, had it not been true.

They sharply reproved the rulers for persecuting Christ, which would provoke them to do their best to confute the apostles for their own justification.

Christ chose men of no great human learning and subtlety, but common, plain, unlearned men, that it might not be thought a deceit of art.

Yea, he did not make much more known to them before his death, than the bare matters of fact which they daily saw, and that he was the Christ, and Moral Doctrine; his death, resurrection, ascension, and kingdom of heaven, they knew little of before; but experience, and the sudden coming down of the Spirit, suddenly taught them all the rest.

They taught not one another, but were every one personally taught of God.

And yet they all agreed in the same doctrine when they were dispersed over the world, and never differed in any one article of faith.

They were men that had no worldly interest, wealth, or dominion, to seek.

Yea, they renounced and denied all worldly interest, and sealed their testimony by their sufferings and blood; and all in hope of a heavenly reward, which they knew that lying was no means to obtain.

Had they plotted to cheat the world for nothing, the sin is so heinous that some one of them would have repented and confessed it, at least, at death; which none of them did, but died joyfully, as for the truth.

Paul was converted by a voice and light from heaven, in the presence of those that travelled with him in his persecuting design.

But yet it is a fuller evidence that the doctrine which they delivered, as from God, beareth a divine impress, that, as the light, it is its own evidence.

And for the more infallible conviction, they that testified of Christ's miracles, did the like themselves to confirm their testimony. They spake with tongues which they never learned; they healed all

diseases; even the shadow of Peter, and the clothes that came from Paul, did heal men; they raised the dead; and they that in all countries converted the nations by their own miracles, attesting the miracles and resurrection of Christ, must needs compel the spectators to believe them.

Yet, more than all this, those that believed them were presently enabled to do the like in one kind and degree or other. The same extraordinary gift of the Spirit fell upon the common multitude of believers, by the laying on of the apostles' hands; so that Simon Magus would fain have bought that power with money. And when men witnessed Christ's miracles, and wrought the like themselves; and those that believed them had and did the like, either healing, tongues, prophecy, or some wonder, it was, sure, an infallible way of testifying.

When wrangling heretics quarrelled with the apostles, and would draw away disciples to themselves, by disparaging them, they still appealed to the miracles wrought by these disciples themselves, or in their sight; as Galatians 3:1-3; Galatians 3:5. And as Christ, when the Jews said he did all by Beelzebub, when he cast out devils, asked them, "By whom do your children cast them out?" Which, had it been false, would have turned all the people from them.

Their adversaries were so far from writing any confutation of their testimony, that they confessed the miracles, and had no shift, but either to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and say that they were done by the devil, or else, by persecution and violence, to oppress them. As if the devil were master of the world, and could remedilessly deceive it against God's will; or God himself would send or suffer a full course of miracles remedilessly to deceive the world, which is to make God like the devil: or, as if the devil were so good, as by miracles to promote so holy, and amiable, and just a doctrine, as that of Christianity, to make men wise, and, good, and just, and kill their sin. So that this blasphemy of the Holy Ghost makes Satan to be God, or God to be Satan.

All the cruelty, powers, learning, and policy of their adversaries was not able to stop the progress of this testimony, much less to prevail against it.

It is then most certain, that the first witnesses were not deceived by Christ, nor believers after deceived by them. The next question is, whether we be not deceived by a false historical tradition of these things? Had we seen them all ourselves, we must needs have believed; but at this distance we know not what misreports may intervene. What eyesight and hearing was to them, that tradition is to us. Now the question is, is it certainly the very same fact and doctrine which they received, and which we receive?

And here, let it be premised, that there is no other way of assurance, than that which God hath afforded us, that the reason of man could have desired.

If we would see God, and heaven, and hell, this is not a way suitable to the state of probationers that live in flesh on earth. Angels live by vision, and fruition of glory; and brutes, by sense, on sensible things; but reasonable travellers must live by reason, and by believing certain revelation.

If God will send his Son from heaven to ascertain us, and we will believe no more than we see ourselves, then Christ must dwell on earth, to the end of the world, and he must be in all places of the earth at once, that all may see; and he must die and rise again before all men in all ages; and how mad an expectation is this!

Or if all that deliver us the history must work miracles before our eyes, or else we will not believe them, it is still most absurd. Will you not believe that the laws of the land are genuine, or that ever there were such kings as made them, unless he that tells it you work miracles? Shall not children believe their parents, or scholars their tutors, unless they work miracles?

I must premise that there are three sorts of tradition, I. Such as depends on the common wit and honesty of mankind. And this is very much to be suspected, wickedness, folly, and lying being grown so common in the world.

Such as depends on the extraordinary skill and honesty of some proved men. And this deserveth much belief; but it is an uncertain human faith.

Such as depends on natural necessity, and cannot possibly be false. We have both these last to ascertain us of the gospel history.

This resteth on a distinction of the acts of man's will: some of them are mutably free; and these give no certainty: some of them are naturally and immutably necessary, and man can do no otherwise; and these give even natural, infallible certainty. Such are to love one's self, to love felicity, to hate torment and misery, &c., and to know that which is fully manifest to our sound senses, &c. When men of contrary interests and temper all confess the truth of known things, about which their interests stand cross, it is a physical evidence of truth. On this account, men's agreement about natural notices is infallible.

It seems strange that all the world, from Adam's time, are agreed which is the first, second, and third, &c., day of the week, and not a day lost till now. It could be no otherwise, because, being a thing of natural interest and notice, if any kingdom had lost a day by oversleeping, or had agreed to falsify it, all the rest of the world would have shamed them.

Thus all Grecians, Latins, Englishmen, &c., agree about the sense of words; for if some would pervert them, the rest would detect it.

Thus we are certain that the statutes of the land are not counterfeit. For men of cross interests hold their lands and lives by them: and if some did counterfeit them, the rest would, by interest, be bound to detect it.

Arg. 1. There can be no effect without an adequate cause; but in nature there is no cause that can make all men agree to assert a known falsehood, or deny a known truth, against all their known interest; therefore there can be no such effect.

Arg. 2. A necessary cause will necessarily effect; but where men's known interest obligeth them to agree of a known truth, this is a necessary cause of certain credibility; therefore it hath a necessary effect.

You know who were your parents, and when and where you were born, &c., by such tradition in a lower degree. This dependeth not on pretended authority, nor on mere honesty; but on natural necessity.

Having premised this, I come to prove, that we have such tradition of physical, infallible evidence, that the faith of the present church, in the essentials, is the same which the first churches received

infallibly from the apostles.

The world knoweth, that ever since Christ's ascension, all that believed in him were baptised, as all Abraham's covenanting seed were circumcised. And what is baptism, but a profession of belief in Jesus Christ, as dead, risen, and glorified; and a devoting ourselves in covenant to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? All that ever were Christians by solemn vow professed this same faith; and this is such a tradition of Christianity as human generations, down from Adam, are of the same humanity in the world.

They that were baptised were catechised first; in which the three articles of baptism were opened to them; of which Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension were part; and this hath been an undeniable tradition of the same faith.

The sum of the christian faith was, from the beginning, drawn up in certain articles called the creed, which expounded the three baptismal articles; and all churches on earth had the same in sense, and most in words; and all at age that were baptised, professed this creed; which is as full a tradition of the same belief in Christ's birth, death, and resurrection, ascension, and glory, as speaking is a tradition of the same human nature.

Before Christ's ascension, he instituted the office of the sacred ministry, which friends and foes confess hath continued ever since. And what is this ministry, but an office of publishing the gospel of Christ, his life, death, miracles, resurrection, grace, &c. What else have they done in all ages in the world? so that the office is an undeniable tradition.

Christ and his apostles instituted the weekly celebration of the remembrance of his resurrection on the Lord's days: friends and foes confess the history, that the first day of the week hath been kept for such memorial ever since, through all the Christian part of the world, which proveth the uninterrupted belief of Christ's resurrection, as a notorious, practical tradition.

Christ and his apostles, ever since his resurrection, instituted solemn assemblies of Christians to be held on those days, and at other times; once a week was the least through the Christian world: and what did they meet for, but to preach, hear, and profess the same christian faith?

It was the constant custom of Christians in their assemblies, and their houses, to sing hymns of praise to Jesus Christ, in remembrance of his resurrection, &c. Pliny tells Trajan that this was the practice by which Christians were known by their persecutors: which is a practical tradition.

Jesus Christ instituted, and all Christians to this day have constantly used, the sacrament of Christ's sacrifice, called the eucharist; to keep in remembrance his death till he come, and profess their belief that he is our life. And as the constant celebration of the passover, with all its ceremonies, was a most certain tradition of the Egyptians' plagues, and Israelites' deliverance, more than a bare written history would be, so hath the Lord's supper been, of the uninterrupted belief of the history of our redemption by Christ.

The church hath, from the beginning, had a constant discipline, by which it hath kept itself separate from heretics, who have denied any essential article of this faith, which is a sure tradition of the same belief.

None question but Christians have, from the beginning, been persecuted for this same faith, and in persecution made confession of it: persecutors and confessors, then, are both the witnesses of the continuance.

Whenever heretics or enemies have written against Christians, their apologies and defences show that it was this same faith which they owned.

Most of the adverse heretics owned the same matters of fact.

The Jews were long before in possession of the books of the Old Testament, which bear their testimony to Christ.

The books of the New Testament have, by certain tradition, been delivered down to this present day, which contain the matters of fact and doctrine, the essentials, integrals, and accidents of the faith.

No enemies have written any thing against the matter of fact, of any moment.

Yea, the Jews, and other bitterest enemies, confess much of the miracles of Christ.

Martyrs have cheerfully forsaken life and all in confessing it.

God, by his wonderful providence, hath maintained it.

The devil, and all the wicked of the world, are the greatest enemies to it.

The Holy Ghost hath still blessed it, to work the same holy and heavenly nature and life, in all sincere and serious believers.

Quest. This proveth infallibly the tradition of the same faith in the essentials: but how prove you that the same holy Scripture is delivered as uncorrupted?

Answ. All the Bible is not brought down so unchanged as are the essentials of our religion: when there were no Bibles but what scriveners wrote, no wonder if over-sight left few copies without some of their slips. There are hundreds of various readings in the New Testament, and of many no man can be certain which is true: but none of them are such as make any difference in the articles of our faith or practice, nor on which any point of doctrine or fact dependeth. And the words are necessary but for the matter which they do record. And 1. All ministers, and all churches, constantly used this same Scripture publicly and privately, as the word of God, so that it could not be easily altered.

They all knew that a curse is pronounced against every one that addeth or diminisheth; which must needs possess them with fear of corrupting it.

They took it to be the charter of their own salvation.

The work of the ministers was to expound it, and preserve it against corrupters.

These ministers and churches were over much of the world, and could not agree together to corrupt it; and if some did it, all the rest would soon detect it.

Heresies and quarrels were quickly to rise among them; so that cross interests and animosities would soon have fallen upon the corrupters.

Some heretics made some adding and corrupting attempts, which the church presently condemned, and turned it to their shame.

In all the disputations then managed, the same Scriptures were appealed to.

The translations into various languages show that the books were the same, without any momentous difference.

To this day, when sin and tyranny have torn the church into many factions, they all receive the same canonical Scriptures, except that some receive more apocryphal writings, which yet make no alteration at all of our gospel faith.

Quest. But doth not this laying so much on tradition favour popery?

Answ. No: The difference is here. 1. Papists are for tradition, as a supplement to the Scripture, as if this were but part of the word of God: and, 2. They plead for a peculiar power of being the keepers and judges of that supplemental tradition, which other churches know nothing of. But we, 1. Plead for the infallible, practical tradition of the essentials of Christianity by itself, and in the creed, &c., which is less than the Scripture. 2. And next for the certain tradition of the Scripture itself, uncorrupted in all that faith depends on: which Scripture is the complete record of God's will and law, containing more than essentials and integrals. So much of God, 1. Manifested in the flesh; 2. Justified in the Spirit.

He was seen of angels; that is, angels were the beholding, witnessing, and admiring servants of this great mystery, God manifested in the flesh.

Angels preached Christ at his incarnation.

Angels ministered to Christ in his temptations, agonies, &c.

Angels were preachers and witnesses of his resurrection.

Angels rolled away the stone, and terrified the soldiers.

Angels preached his return to them that gazed up at his ascension.

Angels opened the prison-doors, and set the imprisoned apostles free once, and Peter alone, afterwards.

Angels rejoice in heaven at the conversion of all that Christ brings home.

Angels disdain not to be the guardians of the least of Christ's disciples.

Angels are protecting officers over churches and kingdoms.

Angels have preached to apostles, and been the messengers of their revelations.

Angels have been the instruments of miracles, and of destroying the church's enemies.

Angels will ministerially convoy departed souls to Christ.

Angels will gloriously attend Christ at his return, and sever the wicked from the just.

Angels will be our companions in the heavenly choir for ever.

Therefore, 1. We should love angels. 2. And be thankful to God for them. 3. And think the more comfortably of heaven for their society.

And pray for the benefit of their ministry on earth, especially in all our dangers.

IV. The fourth article is "Preached to the Gentiles." The Jews having the covenant of peculiarity, were proud of their privilege, even while they unworthily abused it; and despised the rest of the world, and would not so much as eat with them, as if they had been God's only people. And, indeed, the rest of the world was so corrupted, that we find no one nation that, as such, renounced idolatry, and was devoted in covenant to the true God alone, as the Jews were. Now that God should be manifested in flesh, to reconcile the heathen world to himself, and extend greater privileges, indefinitely to all nations, than ever the Jews had in their state of peculiarity, this was a mystery of godliness, which the Jews did hardly yield belief to. And that which aggravateth this wonder is, 1. That the Gentile world was drowned in all idolatry and unnatural wickedness, such as Paul describeth. And that God should suddenly and freely send them the message of reconciliation, and be found of them that sought him not, is that wonder which obligeth us Gentiles, who once lived as without God in the world, to be thankful to him. (Romans 1:2; Ephesians 2:1-22, and Ephesians 3:18, &c.)

V. The fifth article is "Believed on in the world." The effect of the gospel on the souls of men in their effectual faith, is one of the evidences of the christian truth.

I told you before, that the fifth witness of the Spirit on the souls of all believers, I reserved to be here mentioned. Here, 1. It is a part of the wonder, that Christ should be believed on in the world, even with a common faith.

For, 1. To believe a mean man to be the Mediator between God and man, and the Saviour of the world; yea, one that was crucified as a malefactor; this must needs be a difficult thing.

The very Jewish nation was as contemptible to the Romans, being one of their poorest subdued provinces, as the Gentiles were to the Jews: and Christ was by birth a Jew.

The greatness of the Roman empire then, ruling over much of the world, was such, that by preaching, and not by war, to bring them to be subjects to a crucified Jew, was a marvellous work; and so to bring the conquered nations to become Christ's voluntary subjects.

The Roman and Greek learning was then at the height of its perfection: and the Christians were despised by them as unlearned barbarians: and that learning, arts, and empire should all submit to such a King and Saviour, was certainly a work of supernatural power. Christ did not levy armies to overcome the nations, nor did victory move them; but the victors and lords of the world, and these no fools, but the masters of the greatest human wisdom, were conquered by the gospel, preached by a sort of inferior men.

And this gospel which conquered them was still opposed by them, and the Christians persecuted as a sort of hated men, till it overcame the persecutors.

It is true that heathenism hath the greatest part of the world, and Mahometans have as much as Christians: but one sort got it by the sword, and the other by the doctrine and holy lives of a few unarmed, inferior men.

But I use this of the extent of faith, but as a probable, and not a cogent argument: but the main argument is from the sanctifying effect of faith.

I know it will be said, that many, or most, Christians are as bad as other men. But it is one thing to be of a professed religion, because it is the religion of the king and country, and therefore maketh for men's worldly advantage, and they hear little said against it: this is the case of most in the world, Christians, Mahometans, and heathens: and it is another to be a serious believer, who, upon trial and consideration, chooseth Christianity. And it is notorious that such serious Christians are all holy, sober, and just, and so greatly differing from the corrupted world, as fully proveth that God owneth that gospel which he maketh so effectual to so great a change.

Here consider, 1. What that change is. 2. How hard and great a work it is. 3. That it is certainly a work of God. 4. That the gospel is the means by which God doth it.

The nature of his holy work on all serious, sincere Christians, is, it sets all their hopes and hearts on the promised glory of the life to come, and turns the very nature of their wills into the predominant love of God and man, and of heaven and holiness. It mortifieth all fleshly lusts, and subjects sense to reason and faith, the body to the soul, and all to God. It sets a man's heart on the sincere study of doing all the good he can in the world, to friends, neighbours, and enemies, especially the most public good; to live soberly, righteously, and godly, is his delight. Sin is his chief hatred, and nothing more grievous to him than he that cannot reach to greater perfection in faith, hope, obedience, patience, and in heavenly love and joy. It causeth a man to contemn wealth, honour, and fleshly pleasure, and life, in comparison of God's love and life everlasting. This change of God's Spirit worketh on all true believers.

Those that are ungodly have but the name of Christians; they never well understood what Christianity is, nor ever received it by a true belief. But all that understandingly and seriously believe in Jesus Christ, are sanctified by his Spirit.

And this is a greater work than miracles, in excellency and difficulty.

It is the very health of the souls. It is salvation itself; it maketh man in his measure like to God, and is his image. It is a heavenly nature, and is the earnest and preparation for heaven. It delivereth man from the greatest evil on earth, and giveth him the firmest peace and joy, in his peace with God, the pardon of his sins, and the hope of everlasting glory.

It is easy to discern how great a work this is, by the deep roots of all the contrary vices in the corrupted nature of man. Experience assureth us that man, by vitiated nature, is proud and ignorant, and savoureth little but the things of the flesh, and worldly interest, and is a slave to his appetite and lust: his bodily prosperity is all that really hath his heart. Yea, if God restrain them not, all wicked men are bitter enemies to all that are truly wise and holy, even among heathens and infidels; if any be but better than the rest, the wicked are their deadly enemies. There is so visible an enmity between godliness and wickedness, the seed of Christ, and of the serpent in the world, as is a great confirmation of the Scripture which describeth it. And it is not the name of Christians

that altereth men's nature. We here, that have peace from all the world, are under such implacable hatred of wicked men, that call themselves Christians, that so many bears or wolves would be less hurtful to us.

And the universal spreading of this wickedness over all the earth, in all ages and nations, doth tell us how great a work it is to cure it.

And so doth the frustration of all other means, till the Spirit of God do it by setting home the gospel upon the heart. Children will grow up in wickedness, against all the counsel, love, and correction of their parents. No words, no reason, will prevail with them, more than with drunken men or beasts.

We find it a very hard thing to cure a man of some one rooted sin, much more of all.

The common misery of the world proclaimeth man's vice, and the difficulty of the cure. How else comes the world to live in self-seeking falsehood, fraud, malice, and in bloody wars, worse than wolves and serpents against each other.

Lastly, where God cureth this by true believing, it is done with the pangs of sharp repentance, and a great conflict, before God's Spirit overcometh.

It is evident, then, that this sanctification of souls is an eminent work of God himself. 1. In that it is yet done on so many of his chosen ones in all ages and places.

In that, as hard as it is, he usually turneth the hearts of sinners to himself, in a very little time. Sometimes by one sermon.

It is a work that none can do but God, who hath the power of souls.

It is a work so good, that it beareth God's own image. It is but the writing of his law and gospel on men's hearts. None is so much for it as God. Satan apparently fighteth against it with all the power he can raise in the world. Mark it, and you will find that most of the stir that there is in the world, by false teachers, and tyrants, and private malice, is but Satan's wars against faith, and holiness, and love. Certainly it is not he that promoteth them.

IV. And it is evident, in experience, that it is the gospel of Christ which God useth and blesseth, to do this great sanctifying work on souls. Among Christians none are converted by any other means. And God would not bless a word of falsehood and deceit to such great and excellent effects. All that are made holy and heavenly, and truly conscionable, among us, are made so by Christ's gospel. And all the wicked are enemies to the serious practice of it, or rebels that despise it. The effects daily prove that God himself owneth it as his word.

If you say, there are as good men among the heathens, and Mahometans, as holy, heavenly, and just: I answer, it is none of my business to depreciate other men, but I can say, 1. That I have lived above seventy-seven years, and I never knew one serious, holy person in England that was made such by the writings of heathens or Mahometans. 2. Many excellent things are in the writings of some heathens, Plato, Cicero, Hierocles, Plutarch, Antonine, Epictetus, and many others; but I miss in them the expressions of that holy and heavenly frame of mind and life, and that victory over the flesh and world, which Christianity containeth.

Christ is like the sun, whose beams give some light before it is seen itself at its rising, and after it is set. The light of Jews and heathens was as the dawning of the day before sun-rising. And the light among the Mahometans is like the light of the sun which leaveth it when it is set.

Doubtless, the same God who hath used Mahometans to be his dreadful scourge to wicked Christians, who abused the gospel by a false profession, hath also used them to do abundance of good against idolatry in the heathen world. Wherever they come, idolatry is destroyed. Yea, the corrupt Christians, Greeks, and especially papists, that worship images, angels, and bread, are rebuked, and condemned justly by Mahometans. But O that they who have conquered so far by the sword, were conquered by the sacred word of truth, and truly understood the mystery of redemption, and the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Obj. But they think us idolaters for saying that Christ is God, and believing the Trinity.

I. As to the Trinity: it is no contradiction that one fire or sun should have essentially a virtue or power to move, light, and heat; nor that one soul should have a power of vegetation, sense, and reason; nor as rational, to have a peculiar power or vitality, intellection, and free-will. Why then should the Trinity seem incredible?

We do not believe that the Godhead hath any change, or is made flesh, or the manhood made God, but that the Godhead is incomprehensibly united to the human nature by assumption, so as he is united to no other creature, by and for those peculiar operations on the humanity of Christ, which make him our Redeemer.

They that well think that God is all in all things, more than a soul to all the world, and as near to us as our souls to our bodies, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, will find that it is more difficult to apprehend, how God is further from any soul, than that he is so much one with Christ: save that different operations of God on his creatures are apparent to us. By all this we see that every sanctified Christian hath the certain witness in himself that Christ is true. He is truly a physician that healeth, and a Saviour that saveth all that seriously believe and obey him. The Spirit of God in a new, and holy, and heavenly nature of spiritual life, and light, and love, is the witness.

VI. The sixth article in my text is 'Received up into glory.' That Christ, after forty days' continuance on earth, was taken up into heaven, in the sight of his disciples, is a matter of fact of which we have all the forementioned infallible proof, which I must not here again repeat.

And, I. If Christ were not glorified now in heaven, he could not send down his Spirit with his word on earth, nor have enabled the first witnesses to speak with all tongues, and heal the sick, and raise the dead, and do all the miracles which they did. A dead man cannot send down the holy Spirit in likeness of fiery cloven tongues, nor enable thousands to do such works; nor could he do what is done on the souls of serious believers in all ages and nations to this day. He is sure alive that makes men live; and in heaven, that draws up hearts to heaven.

And this is our hope and joy: heaven and earth are in his power. The suffering and work which he performed for us on earth was short, but his heavenly intercession and reign is everlasting. Guilty souls can have no immediate access to God. All is by a Mediator: all our receivings from God are by him: and all our services are returned by him, and accepted for his sake. And as he is the Mediator between his Father and us, his Spirit intercedeth between him and us. By his Spirit he

giveth us holy desires, and every grace. And by his Spirit we exercise them in returns to him.

And our glorified Saviour hath Satan, and all our enemies, in his power: life and death are at his command: all judgment is committed to him. He that hath redeemed us is preparing us for heaven, and it is for us, and receiveth our departing souls to his own joy and glory. He hath promised us that we shall be with him where he is, and shall see his glory. He that is our Saviour, will be our Judge. He will come with thousands of his angels to the confusion of wicked unbelievers, and to be glorified in his saints. He will make a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness shall dwell. Angels and glorified saints shall, with Christ our head, make one city of God, or holy society and choir, in perfect love and joy, to praise the blessed God for ever.

I. The differences between this world, and that which I am going to I. This world is God's footstool. That is his throne.

Here are his works of inferior nature and of grace. There he shineth forth in perfect glory.

Here is gross, receptive matter moved by invisible powers. There are the noblest efficient communicative powers moving all.

IV. This is the inferior, subject, governed world. That is the superior, regent world.

V. This is a world of trial, where the soul is his that can win its consent. That is a world where the will is perfectly determined and fixed.

VI. Satan winning men's consent hath here a large dominion of fools.

There he is cast out, and hath no possession.

VII. Here he is a tempter and troubler of the best. There he hath neither power to tempt nor trouble.

VIII. This world is as the dark womb where we are regenerated. That is the world of glorious light into which we are born.

IX. Here we dwell on a world of sordid earth. There we shall dwell in a world of celestial light and glory.

X. Here we dwell in a troublesome, tempting, perishing body. There we are delivered from this burden and prison into glorious liberty.

XI. Here we are under a troublesome cure of our maladies. There we are perfectly healed, rejoicing in our Physician's praise.

XII. Here we are using the means in weariness and hope. There we obtain the end in full fruition.

XIII. Here sin maketh us loathsome to ourselves, and our own annoyance. There we shall love God in ourselves, and our perfect selves in God.

XIV. Here all our duties are defiled with sinful imperfection. There perfect souls will perfectly love and praise their God.

XV. Here Satan’s temptations are a continual danger and molestation. There perfect victory hath ended our temptations.

XVI. Here still there is a remnant of the curse and punishment of sin.

Pardon and deliverance are perfected there.

XVII. Repenting, shame, sorrow, and fear, are here part of my necessary work. There all the troublesome part is past, and utterly excluded.

XVIII. Here we see darkly, as in a glass, the invisible world of spirits.

There we shall see them as face to face.

XIX. Here faith, alas! too weak, must serve instead of sight. There presence and sight suspend the use of such believing.

Desire and hope are here our very life and work. But there it will be full felicity in fruition.

XXI. Our hopes are here oft mixed with grievous doubts and fears. But there full possession ends them all.

XXII. Our holy affections are here corrupted with carnal mixtures. But there all are purely holy and divine.

XXIII. The coldness of our divine love is here our sin and misery. The perfection of it will be there our perfect holiness and joy.

XXIV. Here, though the will itself be imperfect, we cannot be and do what we would. There will, and deed, and attainment, will all be fully perfect.

XXV. Here, by ignorance and self-love, I have desires which God denieth. There perfect desires shall be perfectly fulfilled.

XXVI. Here pinching wants of something or other, and troublesome cares, are daily burdens. Nothing is there wanting, and God hath ended all their cares.

XXVII. Sense here rebelleth against faith, and reason, and oft overcometh. Sense there shall be only holy, and no discord be in our faculties or acts.

XXVIII. Pleasures and contents here are short, narrow, and twisted with their contraries. There they are objectively pure and boundless, and subjectively total and absolute.

XXIX. Vanity and vexation are here the titles of transitory things.

Reality, perfection, and glory, are the titles of the things above.

This world is a point of God’s creation, a narrow place for a few passengers. Above are the vast, capacious regions, sufficient for all saints and angels.

XXXI. This world is as Newgate, and hell as Tyburn; some are hence saved, and some condemned. The other world is the glorious kingdom of Jehovah with the blessed.

XXXII. It was here that Christ was tempted, scorned, and crucified.

It is there where he reigneth in glory over all.

XXXIII. The spiritual life is here as a spark or seed. It is there a glorious flame of love, and joy, and the perfect fruit and flower.

XXXIV. We have here but the first-fruits, earnest, and pledge. There is the full and glorious harvest and perfection.

XXXV. We are here children in minority, little differing from servants. There we shall have full possession of the inheritance.

XXXVI. The prospect of pain, death, grave, and rottenness, blasteth all the pleasures here. There is no death, or any fear of the ending of felicity.

XXXVII. Here, even God's word is imperfectly understood, and errors swarm, even in the best. All mysteries of nature and grace are there unveiled in the world of light.

XXXVIII. Many of God's promises are here unfulfilled, and our prayers unanswered. There truth shineth in the full performance of them all.

XXXIX. Our grace is here so weak, and hearts so dark, that our sincerity is oft doubted of. There the flames of love and joy leave no place for such a doubt.

XL. By our inconstancy, here one day is joyful and another sad. But there our joys have no interruption.

XLI. We dwell here with sinful companions, like ourselves, in flesh.

There holy angels and souls, with Christ, are all our company.

XLII. Our best friends and helpers are here, in part, our hinderers by sin. There all concur in the harmony of active love.

XLIII. Our errors and corruptions make us also hurtful and troublesome to our friends. But there both Christ and they forgive us, and we shall trouble them no more.

XLIV. Selfishness and cross interests here jar, and mar our conversation. There perfect love will make the joy of every saint and angel mine.

XLV. A militant church imperfectly sanctified here liveth in scandal and sad divisions. The glorious church united in God in perfect love hath no contention.

XLVI. Sin and error here turn our very public worship into jars. The celestial harmony of joyful love and praise is, to mortals, inconceivable.

XLVII. Weak, blind, and wicked teachers here do keep the most in delusion and division. There glorious light hath banished all lies, deceit, and darkness.

XLVIII. The wills of blind tyrants is the law of most on earth. The wisdom and will of the most holy God is the law of the heavenly society.

XLIX. Lies here cloud the innocency of the just, and render truth and goodness odious. All false judgments are there reversed, and slander is silenced, and the righteous justified.

L. Government is here exercised by terror and violence. But there God ruleth by light, love, and absolute delight.

LI. Enemies reproach, and persecution here annoy and tempt us. All storms are there past, and the conquerors crowned in joyful rest.

LII. The glory of divine love and holiness is clouded here by the abounding of sin, and the greatness of Satan's kingdom upon earth. But the vast, glorious, heavenly kingdom, to which this earth is but a point and prison, will banish all such erring thoughts, and glorify God's love and goodness for ever.

LIII. This is the world which, as corrupted, is called an enemy to God and us, and which, as such, we renounce in baptism, and must be saved from. That is the world which we seek, pray, and wait for all our lives, and for which all the tempting vanities of this must be forsaken.

LIV. This body and world is like our riding clothes, our horse, our way, and inn, and travelling company; all but for our journey homeward. The other is our city of blessedness, and everlasting rest, to which all grace inclineth souls, and all present means and mercies tend.

LV. The very ignorance of nature and sensible things makes this life a very labyrinth, and our studies, sciences, and learned conversation, to be much like a dream, or puppet play, and a childish stir about mere words. But in heaven, an universal knowledge of God's wonderful works, will not he the least of the glory in which he will shine to saints.

LVI. Distance and darkness of souls here in flesh, who would fain know more of God and the heavenly world, and cannot, doth make our lives a burden by these unsatisfied desires. There glorious presence and intuition giveth full satisfaction.

LVII. Our sin and imperfection here render us uncapable of being the objects of God's full, complacential love, though we have his benevolence, which will bring us to it. But there we shall, in our several measures, perfectly please God, and be perfectly pleased in God for ever.

LVIII. All things here are short and transitory from their beginning, posting towards their end, which is near and sure, and still in our eye. So short is time, that beings here are next to nothing; the bubble of worldly prosperity, pomp, and fleshly pleasure, doth swell up, and break in so short a moment; as that it is, and is not, almost at once. But the heavenly substances, and their work, and joys, are crowned by duration, being assuredly everlasting.

Such, O my soul, is the blessed change which God will make. The reasons and helps of my belief and hope of this perfection

I. Natural reason assureth me, that God made all creatures fitted to their intended use; even brutes are more fit for their several offices than man is. He giveth no creature its faculties in vain; whatever a wise man maketh, he fits it to the use which he made it for; but man's faculties are enabled to think of a God, of our relation, and our duty to him, of our hopes from him, and our fears of him; of the state of our souls related to his judgment; of what will befall us after death, reward, or punishment, and how to prepare for it. This nature, and its faculties and powers, are not made in vain.

Reason assureth me, that all men are bound by nature to prefer the least probability of a life of everlasting joy before all the prosperity of this world; and to suffer the loss of all this short vanity, to escape the least possibility of endless misery; and nature hath such notices of rewards and punishments after death, that no man can say that he is sure there is no such thing. From whence it followeth, that all men are bound by the very law of nature, to be religious, and to seek first and most their salvation in the life to come. And if so, it is certain that there is such a thing to be obtained; else God had made the very nature of man to be deceived by itself, and to spend the chief part, yea, all his life, through labour and suffering, for that which is not; and so made his greatest duty to be his greatest deceit and misery; and the worst men should be least deceived. But all this is not to be imputed to our wise and good Creator.

The universal sense of moral good and evil in all mankind, is a great evidence of another life. The vilest atheist cannot abide to be accounted a knave, a liar, and a bad man; nor will equal a vicious servant with another. All would be thought good, who will not be good. And doth not God make a greater difference than man? and will he not show it?

IV. The world is actually ruled much by the hopes and fears of another life, and cannot well be ruled without it, according to the nature of man; but the Almighty, most wise, and most holy God needs not, and will not rule the world by mere deceit.

V. The gospel of Christ hath brought life and immortality into a clearer light than that of nature; and it must be by believing in Christ that we must have our full satisfaction. Oh, what hath God done in the wonders of redemption to make us sure! And against the doubts that are apt to rise from some hard particular text of Scripture, it must be considered, 1. That Christ and his apostles did put the ascertaining seal of the many uncontrolled miracles to the gospel doctrine, primarily; which doctrine, 1. Was delivered and sealed eight years before any of the New Testament was written, and almost seventy before the last. 2. And Christ did not speak in the language in which the gospel is written to us; so that being but a translation as to his own words the matter is the thing first sealed.

And that it was the two legislative mediatory Moses and Christ, who came with the great stream of uncontrolled miracles; it being necessary that men should have full proof that a law or doctrine is of God, before they believe it; but the priests and prophets after Moses, and the preachers and pastors of the christian church, who were not commissioned to bring men any new laws or gospel, but to proclaim and teach that which they received, needed no such new testimony of miracles.

The belief of every particular priest or prophet after Moses, or every pastor after Christ and his apostles, was not of the same degree of necessity to salvation as the belief of the law and gospel itself. Therefore, though all the holy Scripture be true, the law and the gospel must be much differenced from the rest.

IV. The history of the law and gospel have full, ascertaining, historical evidence; or else there is none such in the world. Therefore the doctrine must be true.

V. The prophecies fulfilled prove the gospel true.

VI. And the divine impress on the whole.

VII. And the sanctifying work of the Spirit wrought by it, in all nations and ages, on serious believers, is a constant, divine attestation.

VIII. And as my faith hath so sure a foundation, it confirmeth my faith and hope, that it hath been so long and great a work of God, by his Word and Spirit on my soul, to raise it to believe, and love, and desire, that holy state of perfection and fruition which I hope for. That which hath made me so much better than I else had been, and turned my heart and life (though imperfectly) to things above the pleasures of the flesh, must needs be of God; and God would never send his grace to work my heart to deceit and lies, and give me such graces as shall all be frustrate; his Spirit is the earnest and first-fruits of glory.

IX. And all the course of religious and moral duty which he hath commanded me, and in which he hath employed my life, were never imposed to deceive me; I am sure, by nature and Scripture, that it is my duty to love God and my neighbour, to desire protection, and to serve God, and do good with all my time and power, and to trust God for my reward, believing that all this shall not be in vain; nor that which is best be made my loss. O blessed be God for commands and holy duty; for they are equal to promises. Who can fear that he shall lose by seeking God?

X. As God hath sealed the truth of his word as aforesaid, so he hath, by an instituted office and ordinance, sealed and delivered to myself his covenant with the gift of Christ and life, in baptism, and the Lord's supper.

XI. He hath given me such a love to holy things and persons, that I greatly long to see his church in perfect light, and love, and concord; oh! how sweet would it be to see all men wise, and holy, and joyfully praising God. Every Christian longs for this; and, therefore, such a state will be.

XII. I have found here the great benefit of the love and ministry of angels, such as is described in Psalms 91:1-16. They have kept me night and day, which confirmeth my hope that I shall dwell with them; for I love them better than men, because they love and serve God better.

XIII. That low communion which I have here with God by Christ and the Spirit, in his answer to my prayers, supports, comforts, experience, tends to more.

XIV. The pleasure which I have by love, in thinking of the happiness of my many, many, many holy departed friends, and of the glory of Christ, and the heavenly Jerusalem, is sure some hopeful approach towards their state.

XV. When I see the fire mount upward, and think that spirits are of a more sublime and excellent nature than fire; and when I see that all that is done in this world, is done by spiritual unseen powers, which move this gross and drossy matter, it puts me past doubt, that my soul, being a spirit, hath a vast and glorious world of spirits to ascend to. God hath, by nature, put into all things an aggregative, uniting inclination: earth hath no other natural motion. The ascent of fire tells us its element is above; and spirits naturally incline to spirits, and holy spirits peculiarly are inclined to the holy.

XVI. I am sure, 1. By understanding that I understand, and by willing that I will, &c. 2. I am sure by these acts, that I have the power or faculties to do them: for none doth that which it cannot do. 3. And I know that it is a substance that hath these powers: for nothing can do nothing. My soul, then, being certainly an intellective, volitive, vital substance, 1. I have no reason to think, that God, who

annihilateth not the least sand, will annihilate so noble a substance.

Nor that he will destroy those powers which are its essential form, and turn it into some other thing.

Nor that such essential powers shall lie as dead and unactive, and so he continued in vain.

There remaining, therefore, nothing uncertain to natural reason, but the continuance of individuation to separate souls. 1. Apparitions and witches have put that out of doubt, notwithstanding many fables and delusions. 2. Christ hath put it more out of doubt. 3. While substance, faculties, and acts continue, it is the error of our selfish state in flesh, which maketh any fear too near an union, which shall end our individuation. The greatest union will be the greatest perfection, and no loss to souls.

XVII. God’s wonderful providences for the church and single saints on earth are such as tell us of that love and care, which will bring them afterwards to him.

XVIII. The nature of God taketh off the terror of my departure much; I am sure I shall die at the will, and into the hand, of infinite essential love and goodness; whose love should draw up my longing soul.

XIX. I am going to a God whose mercies have long told me, that he loveth me better than my dearest friend doth, and better than I love myself, and is a far better chooser of my lot.

As he hath absolute right to dispose of his own, so indeed the fulfilling of his will is the ultimate end of all things, and therefore most desirable in itself: and his will shall be fulfilled on me.

XXI. I go to a glorified Saviour, who came down to fetch me up, and hath conquered and sanctified death, and made it my birth-day for glory, and taketh me for his dear-bought own and interest, and is in glory ready to receive his own.

XXII. I go to that Saviour who, on the cross, commendeth his spirit into his Father’s hand, and taught me, with dying Stephen, to say, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit."

XXIII. I go no solitary, untrodden way, but follow all the faithful since the death, of Abel, to this day, (save Enoch and Elias,) who all went by death into that glorious world, where I shall find them.

XXIV. I have so long groaned under a languid body, and in a blind, distracted, and (by man) uncurable world, where Satan, by lies, malice, and murder, reigneth in—alas! how many; and specially am so weary of my own darkness, and sinful imperfection, that I have great reason to be willing of deliverance.

XXV. I have had so large a share of mercies in this world already, in time, and manifold comforts from God, that reason commandeth me to rest in God’s time for my removal.

XXVI. I shall leave some fruits, not useless, to serve the church when I am gone: and if good he done, I have my end.

XXVII. When I am gone, God will raise up and use others to do his appointed work on earth: and a church shall be continued to his praise: and the spirits in heaven will rejoice therein.

XXVIII. When I am gone, I shall not wish to be again on earth.

XXIX. Satan, by his temptations, and all his instruments, would never have done so much as he doth in the world to keep us from heaven, if there were not a heaven which conquerors obtain.

When darkness and uncertainty of the manner of the action and fruition of separated souls would daunt me, it is enough to know explicitly so much as is explicitly revealed, and implicitly to trust Christ with all the rest: our eyes are in our head; who knoweth for us? Knowledge of glory is part of fruition: and therefore we must expect here no more than is suited to a life of faith.

XXXI. All my part is to do my own duty, and then trust God; obeying his commanding will, and fully and joyfully resting in his disposing and rewarding will. There is no rest for souls but in the will of God, and there with full trust to repose our souls in life, and, at death, is the only way of a safe and comfortable departure.

XXXII. The glorious marriage-day of the Lamb cannot now be far off, when the number of the elect shall be complete, and Christ will come with his glorious angels, and will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all believers, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and that kingdom shall come, where that which God hath prepared for them that love him, eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to have a formal, full conception of it.

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

Fear not then, O my soul, to lay down this flesh: mercy hath. kept it up for my preparing work; but, oh, what a burdensome and chargeable companion hath it been! Is it better than the dwelling-place of perfect spirits? Oh, what are my groans, and all my cold and faint petitions, and my dull thanksgiving, to their harmonious, joyful praise? If a day in God’s courts be better than a thousand, what is a day, yea, what is everlastingness in the heavenly society and work. Oh, how hateful a thing is darkness and unbelief, when the remnants of them thus stop poor souls in their ascent, and make us half unwilling to go home! What! unwilling to be with my glorified Lord! Unwilling to be with saints and angels, who are all life, and light, and love! Unwilling to see the glory of Jehovah! O foolish, sinful soul! hath Christ done so much to purchase the heavenly glory for thee, and now art thou unwilling to go into the possession of it? Hast thou been seeking, and praying, and labouring, and suffering so many years, for that which now thou seemest scarce willing to obtain? Dost thou not judge thyself unworthy of eternal life, when thou no more desirest to enjoy it? All this is along of thy too much adherence unto self and sense: thou art still desiring sensitive satisfaction, and, not content to know thy part, wouldest know that for thyself which Christ knoweth for thee; as if thou couldest better trust thyself than him. Fear not, weak soul, it is our Father’s good pleasure to give thee the kingdom: trust infinite power, wisdom, and love: trust that faithful, gracious Saviour who hath so wonderfully merited to be trusted: trust that promise which never deceived any one, and which is confirmed by so many miracles, and by the oath, and by the Spirit, of God. Whenever thou departest from this house of flesh, the arms of mercy are open to embrace thee; yea, essential, transcendent love is ready to receive thee: the Spirit of love hath sealed thee to that blessed state: Christ will present thee justified and accepted. Most of my old, holy, familiar friends are gone before me, and all the rest that died since the world began. And the few imperfect ones left behind are hasting after them apace, and if I go before, will quickly overtake me: though they weep as if it were for a long separation, it is their great mistake: the gate of death stands all day open, and my sorrowful friends are quickly following me, as I am now

following those for whom I sorrowed. Oh, pity them who are left a while under the temptations, dangers, and fears, which have so long been thine own affliction! but be not afraid of the day of thy deliverance, and the bosom of everlasting love, and the society of the wise, and just, and holy, and of the end of all thy troubles, and the entrance into the joy of thy Lord, and the place and state of all thy hope. Oh, say, not notionally only, as from argumentative conviction, but confidently, and with glad desire and hope, to depart and be with Christ, is far better than to be here.

But, O my God, I have much more hope in speaking to thee than to myself. Long may I plead with this dark and dull, yet fearful soul, before I can plead it into joyful hopes and heavenly desires, unless thou shine on it with the light of thy countenance, and thou, whom my soul must trust and love, wilt give me faith and love themselves. I thank thee for convincing arguments: but had this been all the strength of my faith and hope, the tempter might have proved too subtle for me in dispute. I thank thee that some experience tells me, that a holy appetite to heavenly work, and a love to the heavenly company and state, doth more to make me willing to die, and think, with pleasure, of my change, than ever bare arguments would have done. Oh, send down the streams of thy love into my soul, and that will powerfully draw it up by longings for the near and full fruition! Oh, give me more of the divine and heavenly nature, and it will be natural and easy to me to desire to be with thee: send more of the heavenly joys into this soul, and it will long for heaven, the place of joy! I must not hope on earth for any such acquaintance with the world above as is proper to the enjoying state. But if the sun can send its illuminating, warming rays, to such a world as this, according to the various disposition of the recipients; doubtless thou hast thy effectual, though unsearchable, ways, of illuminating, sanctifying, and attractive influence on souls. And one such beam of thy pleased face, one taste of thy complacential love, will kindle my love, and draw up my desires, and make my pains and sickness tolerable; I shall then put off this clothing with the less reluctancy, and willingly leave my flesh to the dust, and sing my nunc dimittis, when I have thus seen and tasted thy salvation. O my God, let not thy strengthening, comforting grace now forsake me, lest it should overwhelm me with the fears of being finally forsaken. Dwell in me as the God of love and joy, that I may long to dwell in love and joy with thee for ever. As grace abounded where sin abounded, let thy strengthening and comforting mercy abound when weakness increaseth, and my necessities abound. My flesh and my heart faileth, but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever: this short life is almost at an end; but thy loving-kindness is better than life: I know not with what pains thou wilt further try me; but if I love thee, thou hast promised that all things shall work together for my good. The world that I am going to by death is not apparent to my sight; but my life is hid with Christ in God; and, because he liveth, we shall live; and we shall be with him where he is; and when he appeareth, we shall appear with him in glory; and shall enter into our Master’s joy, and be for ever with the Lord. Amen.

What sensible manifestation of his kingdom Christ gave in his transfiguration

Sect. 1. Our Lord, who brought life and immortality to light, well knew the difficulty of believing so great things unseen: and therefore it pleased him to give men some sensible helps by demonstration. In Matthew 16:1-28 and Matthew 17:1-2, &c.; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:28, he promised some of his disciples a sight of his kingdom as coming in power; or such a glimpse as Moses had of the back parts of God’s glory: this he performed first in his transfiguration, as afterward in his resurrection, ascension, and sending the Holy Ghost to enable them, with power, to preach, and work miracles, and convert the nations.

Sect. 2. By the kingdom of God, is meant God's government of his holy ones, by a heavenly communication of life, light, and love, initially, on earth by grace, and perfectly in heaven by glory. A special theocracy.

Sect. 3. For the understanding of this we must know, that when God had made man good, in his image, he conversed with him in a heavenly manner, either immediately, or by an angel, speaking to him, and telling him his will. But man being made a free, self-determining agent, he was left to choose whom he would follow: and hearkening unto Satan, and turning from God, he became a slave of Satan, and gave him advantage to be his deceiving ruler: not that man's rebellion nullified God's power, or disposing government, or took man from under obligation to obedience; but that, forsaking God, he was much, though not wholly, forsaken by his special, fatherly, approving government, and left to Satan and his own will: but the eternal Word interposing for man's reprival and redemption, undertook to break the serpent's head, and to conquer and cast out him that had deceived and captivated man: and, choosing out a special seed, he made them a peculiar people, and set up a heavenly, prophetical government over them, himself, by heavenly revelation, making their laws, and choosing their chief governors under him, from time to time, and would not leave it to blind and sinful man to make laws, or choose princes, for themselves, but would keep them in a special dependence upon heaven. But the carnal Israelites having provoked God by odious idolatry to deny them much of the benefit of government (save when they repented, and cried to him for help) they thought to amend this by choosing a king like other nations, and ending their dependence on heavenly revelation, and choice for government: and so theocracy was turned into a more human regiment, and God more cast off: though yet he would not quite forsake them. And the rest of the world was yet more left under the power of Satan, and their own corrupted mind and will; so that Satan hath both an internal kingdom in wicked souls, and a visible political government of the wicked kingdoms of the world, ruling them by men that are ruled by him. And as Christ came to cast him out of men's hearts by his sanctifying, conquering Spirit, so also to cast him out of the political Government of the kingdoms of the world, and to bring them under the laws, and officers, and Spirit of Christ, and rule them by heavenly power and love as his own kingdoms, that he may bring them to perfection in one celestial kingdom at last. And in this sense we pray, "Thy kingdom come."

Sect. 4. To make men believe that he is the heavenly King sent from God, to cast down Satan's kingdom, was the great business of the preaching of the gospel: this he would demonstrate, as by all his miracles which showed him to have the victory of devils, and to be the Lord of life, so also by visible apparition in glory. And it is said, (1 John 5:7-8,) that there are three witnesses in heaven, and three on earth, so here Christ would have three heavenly and three earthly witnesses of his transfiguration. From heaven he had the witness, 1. Of a voice, proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him." 2. Of Moses, the chief law-giver. 3. And of Elias, the chief prophet; to tell us; that the law and the prophets are his prognosticating witnesses: but "hear him" notifieth to us, that Christ and his gospel are to be heard above the law and the prophets, and to teach us more than they could teach us, the law was given by Moses (with its types and shadows) but grace and truth (the substance so typified) are by Jesus Christ.

Sect. 5. Light and glory are often of the same signification. Christ was transfigured into a lucid, glorious appearance of body: he tells us by this, that he would have us have some sort of idea of his kingdom, fetched from sense; many apparitions of angels have been in lights. Christ appeared

to Saul in a visible light. (Acts 9:1-43) So did he to John: (Revelation 1:1-20, &c.:) God and the Lamb are the light of the New Jerusalem. It is an inheritance of the saints in light.

Some seem to me to think too basely of sense, and too far to separate it from intellectual spirits, both as to power, act, and object: and all because they find it in lower creatures. They might accordingly deny substantiality to spirits, because brutes are substances: the higher have all the perfections of the lower, either formally or eminently. It is not a spirit's perfection to be insensible, or to have nothing to do with sensible things, but to be eminently sensible, and to be superior agents on lower sensibles. God is love: and love is complacency: and a high degree of complacency is delight or joy. So that God is essential, infinite joy, but without that drossy quality which is proper to souls in flesh, and all that imperfection which belongs to creatures. Can we tell what it is to enter into our Master's joy, or joyfully to love and praise him, without any sense: I rather think, that as vigorous youth makes men capable of more delight than decrepit, languid, painful age and sickness, so heaven shall, by perfecting our natures, make them capable of inconceivably more joy than any on earth is capable of. And as we shall have sense in exaltation as to power and act, so we shall have sensible objects. God himself delighteth in all his works, and so shall we. We must not, on pretence of taking the heavenly Jerusalem to be merely spiritual, deprive ourselves of all the sensible ideas of it which God's description offereth to us. Light is sensible; Christ glorified there is sensible; Moses and Elias were sensible to Peter, James, and John. Lazarus and Abraham were sensible to the man in hell. (Luke 16:1-31) Stephen saw heaven open, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God. And all eyes shall see him at his glorious return. Heavenly glory is not enjoyed only by mere thinking and knowing, nor as in a dream, but by the most eminent intellectual sensation, exalted and invigorated.

Sect. 6. Say not then, O my soul, that this kingdom of glory is so far above thee, that thou canst have no idea of it. Think not that it is therefore unmeet for thy desiring and joyful hopes, because thou canst not know what it is. Hast thou no conception of the difference between light and darkness? If thou hadst been but one year kept in absolute darkness, wouldest thou have no desiring thoughts of light? The blind think themselves half dead while they are alive. Indeed, the faculty and object must be suitable; light may be too great for our weak eyes, as heat may be torment in an unsuitable degree; but when our souls are perfected, they will be suitable recipients of a more glorious light than we can here endure. Moses is not there covered in a cleft of the rock, because he could see but as the back part of God's glory. We must see here but as in a glass, but there as face to face. Though these organical eyes, as spectacles, shall be laid by, we shall have media more perfect, suitable to our perfect state. And as I can think of heaven as a region of glorious light, so can I think of it as a place and state of life and love. I know somewhat of the difference of life and death, and that a living dog is better than a dead lion. And I have felt what it is to love my friends, and thence to desire their near communion as my delight; and can I then have no idea of that world, where life, light, and joyful love are the very element of souls, as water is to the fishes? And as I can have some idea of that state in general, so may I of the state of the perfected spirits of the just which are there. They are connatural to their proper element. They are essential, created life, light, and love. And they want not substance to be the basis of those formal powers, nor objects on which to exercise them. Think not, then, that heaven is so far inconceivable, as not by any idea to be thought of. If we have no conception of it, we can have no desires of it, and no delightful hope. What can we conceive of more certainly than of life, and light,

and love; of a region, and of persons essentiated of these? Do we not know what knowledge is, and see what light is, and feel what life and love are? But it is true that our conceptions hereof are lamentably imperfect; and so they must be till possession, fruition, and exercise, perfect them. Who knoweth what light or sight is, but by seeing; or what knowledge is, but by knowing; or what love and joy are, but by ove and rejoicing? And who knows what perfect sight, knowledge, love, and joy are, but by perfect seeing, knowing, loving, and rejoicing? No man by an intuitive or immediate perception. But some abstractive conceptions of it we may have by reasoning deduction from that poor degree which we here in the kingdom of grace possess. Can I perceive substantiality in the dark terrene appearances, which are but mutable lifeless matter agitated and used by invisible powers, and shall I think of those unseen, powerful substances, as if they were less substantial for being spiritual, or were not objects for a knowing thought? Are the stars which I see less substantial than a carcass in a darksome grave? The Lord that appeared in shining glory hath members in their measure like himself; and hath promised that we shall shine as stars in the kingdom of his Father. If some degree of this be here performed in them who are called the children of light, and the lights of the world, how much more will they shine in the world of light? They that call light a quality, or an act, must confess it hath a substance whose quality or act it is. Alas! what a deceived thing is a sensual unbeliever, who spendeth his life in the pursuit of fugitive shadows, and walketh in a vain show, and thinks of spiritual, glorious substances, as if they were the nothings or delusions of a dream.

Sect. 6. Christ, Moses, and Elias, here visibly appeared as three distinct, individual persons. This tells us that it is a false conceit that death ceaseth individuation, and turneth all souls into one (of which before); perfect, indivisible, infinite unity is proper to God; from this one is multiplicity. Reason forbids us, when we see the numberless individuals in this world, and see also the numerous stars above, to imagine that all the worlds above us have so much of divine perfection, as to be but one undivided substance, and to have no multiplicity of inhabitants. Yea, some of those Sadducees hold that the stars are worlds inhabited as the earth is. And why then should they think whithersoever souls go, that they cease their individuation, when they go among individuals? But Christ hath confuted them even to sense. Moses is Moses still, and Elias is Elias still; and all our friends that are gone to Christ are the same still that they were, and may be called by the same names. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the same in heaven; and Lazarus was Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. When we lay by flesh, and are unclothed, we put not off our personality. Every one shall receive his own reward according to what he hath done in the body, when every one must give account of his own works and talents.

Why then may not I, with distinct conceptions and joyful desires, look after the souls of my departed friends, that are now in the celestial kingdom? Though malignity hath scorned me for naming some few in my 'Saints' Rest,' being such as the despisers hated, yet I forbear not, on such accounts, to solace myself by naming more, but because they are more than it is fit to number. In all places where I have lived, how many excellent souls (though here they were not perfect) are gone to Christ. How sweet is the remembrance of the communion which I had with many of them in Shrewsbury, and other parts of Shropshire; of many at Dudley, and the adjoining parts; of multitudes at Kidderminster, Bewdley, and other parts of Worcestershire; of abundance at Coventry, and other parts of Warwickshire; and of many where I have sojourned in other parts of the land; and, above all, in London, and the adjoining parts. As Mr. Howe hath elegantly expressed

it, in his excellent character of my excellent and dear friend, Mr. Richard Fairclough: what a multitude of blessed saints will arise at the last day out of London. And this earth is, as it were, hallowed with the dust and relics of so many blessed souls. But it is heaven that is spangled with these spiritual stars; the place honoured with them, and they with it, and all by Christ. We are like infants, or lambs, or other young ones, that cry for their dams if they be but out of sight; though they are ever so near, if they see them not, they cry as if they were not, or had forsaken them. As Christ told his disciples, that it was needful for them that he departed from them, and yet their hearts for this were sorrowful, till the Holy Ghost came upon them, as better than Christ's fleshly presence, to prepare them joyfully to follow him; so we think of our friends as almost lost to us by separation, till the heavenly Spirit tell us where they are, and prepare us to desire to be with them.

Sect. 6. Elias hath a body now in heaven, and so hath Enoch; but can we think that only two or three that are there with Christ do so much differ from all the rest, as to have bodies when the rest have none? Is there such a dissimilitude of saints in heaven? What are two or three in such a society? Doubtless their bodies are not corruptible flesh and blood, but such spiritual bodies as all saints shall have at the resurrection. But are they in heaven such visible and shaped bodies as they appeared on the mount? The same difficulty poseth us about the risen body of Christ: he would not have Mary touch him, because he had not yet ascended to his Father; he could appear and vanish from their sight at his pleasure; and yet Thomas handled him, and felt that he had flesh and bones. That body of flesh ascended visibly up toward heaven; and yet it is not flesh and blood in heaven, but a spiritual body: for it is not worse than he will make his members. What shall we say to these things? We must say, that we are not capable of knowing them, but have reason to be thankful that we may know so much, more necessary for us. But yet it seemeth probable that the bodies of Christ, and Enoch, and Elias, were changeable according to the region in which they were to be. Christ could take up a body of flesh and blood, and immediately change that state of it into a pure and incorruptible, spiritual body, as it entered into the incorruptible, spiritual region. And so God did by Enoch and Elias. As Paul saith, that we shall not all die, (those that live till Christ's appearing) but we shall all be changed. And yet if Elias have business on the mount, he can put on the clothing of a grosser body to be seen of men, and can lay it by, or return to his more invisible, spiritual state, when he returneth to the place from whence he came. And no wonder, when angels (and the ancients say Christ, before his incarnation) assumed bodies suitable to their several businesses on earth; yea, such as could eat and drink with men; when they dwelt not in heaven so coarsely clothed.

Sect. 7. But how came Moses to have a body on the mount, who is said to have been buried, and therefore took none with him into heaven? We must still remember, that we inquire of things above our certain knowledge. But in humble conjecture we may say, that it is no more impossible for Moses to assume such a body as he appeared in on the mount, for that occasion, than for angels to appear in human shapes; and departed souls too, as many apparitions have told men. And if bad souls can do it, why not good ones, when God will have it? The tradition seemeth but a Jewish dream, that God kept the body of Moses uncorrupted in the grave; and that this was it that the devil is said to strive for against Michael, that the body might be corrupted. And say others, that at this transfiguration it rose again. There need no such conceits to our satisfaction. The soul of Moses could assume a body.

Sect. 8. But still the dissimilitude of Enoch and Elias from all the saints in heaven is an unresolved difficulty. If we knew that God would have it so, it might satisfy us. But there is a symmetry in the body of Christ. And it is like that the same region hath inhabitants of the same nature. What shall we think, then, that Enoch and Elias, at their entrance into those regions, laid by their bodies, and became such as Abraham, and other holy souls? Why are they taken up to be so laid by? The corruptibility, no doubt, they did lay by. God knoweth, but it is much unknown to us. Or shall we think as all those fathers cited by Faustus Regiensis, and as Dr. More, and some of late, that all spirits are souls, and animate some bodies; and so that all in heaven have some bodies. If so, what bodies are they; and how differ they from the resurrection state? As the soul here operateth in and by the igneous spirits in our bodies, it may be so lodged in these as to take some of them with it at death, as the life of a dying plant, yet dieth not in the seed. And a man may be said to go unclothed to bed, though he put not off his shift or nearest garment, and to be clothed again when he puts on the rest. And at the resurrection, as there will be a new heaven and earth, so spirits now in heaven may have much more delightful business on the new and righteous earth than now they have, and therefore may have use for an additional body, as much differing from what they have now in heaven, as the new earth and their employment there require; and as the seed doth differ from the plant. And spirits being communicative, will be more happy by more communication. As God delighteth to do good to all his works, so the souls now confined to heaven will delight to be employed in doing good to the new earth, and to animate the bodies suited to such work; though now they have use for no other than such spiritual, lucid receptacles as are fit for the regions where they dwell. And it will be no debasement or dejection for a spirit now in heaven to animate a body at the resurrection fit for the new earth; no more than it was to angels to speak to Adam, and to Moses, to Abraham, Jacob, Manoah, and others; or than it is to the sun to enlighten and enliven things on earth.

It is a foolish thing to think, as some do, that departed souls will be as dormant and unactive as in apoplectic or sleeping persons, for want of organized bodies to act in. Spirits are essentially active, intellective, and volitive; and will God continue such essential powers in vain? Moses and Elias wanted not bodies; and those in heaven can praise Jehovah and the Lamb with holy, concordant love and joy; whether in any sort of ethereal bodies, or without, we shall shortly know.

Sect. 8. It is said that Moses and Elias talked with Christ; this showeth that Christ hath familiar communion with the blessed. He that would come into flesh on earth, and live with man in an humbled state, and refused not familiar converse with poor men and women, and would cat and drink with publicans and sinners, will not refuse everlasting, near familiarity with the glorified. If the church be his dearly beloved spouse, and as it were one with him, as his body, surely he will be no stranger to the least and lowest member of it.

Sect. 9. But what was it that they talked about? Luke (Luke 9:31) saith, "They appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." This was not to make it known to Christ, who came into the world to die for sin; what then was it for? Did Christ tell them of it, as not knowing it before? That is not likely neither. Did he need their comfort, as angels in his trials ministered to him and strengthened him? The particular uses of this speech we know not; but in general we know it was somewhat preparatory to his great sufferings and death. And must Christ’s sufferings and death have such preparation, and must not mine have much premeditation? And do I not need the consolatory messages of God? Carnal men would rather

have chosen pleasanter discourse, than the talk of sufferings and death. But that which must be undergone, and requireth greatest strength, must be forethought of, and requireth the most preparing thoughts. It is worse than madness to be surprised with sufferings and death, before it is seriously forethought of. So sharp a trial, and so great a change, require the greatest preparation. He that can refuse to suffer and die, may refuse to talk or think of it. If Christ must have men from heaven to talk with him of his cross, what cause have we to study the cross; even all our lives to foresee it, and, by obedient consent, to submit unto it, and take it up to follow Christ, and even to determine, with Paul, to know nothing in the world but Christ and him crucified; that is, to take this for the only needful and excellent learning? But, alas! how senselessly is death and suffering talked of till it comes! We are to learn how to suffer when suffering is upon us; and to learn how to die when nature, or the physician, passes the sentence of death on us at hand. And it is God's mercy to some of us to make our sufferings long, that we may have a competent time of learning. As we learn to write by writing, and to discourse by discoursing, and every art and trade by practice; even so by suffering we learn to suffer, and the lesson is very hard. Malefactors suffer without learning, whether they will or not; but to suffer obediently, with child-like affections, is the lesson to be learned. Oh! little, too little, do many honest Christians think how much of their excellent obedience consisteth in child-like, holy suffering; therefore they little expect it, and provide for it; and then they are overwhelmed with the unexpected surprisal when it comes. Even in the sufferings which men bring on the faithful for righteousness' sake, how many shrink, and shift off their duty, or venture on forbidden things for safety, because they were not prepared for it. The loss of goods, or imprisonment and want, seem to many almost insufferable trials. But I can tell such, by some experience, that bodily pain and torment is a far greater trial, which none of them are secured from, and requireth greater strength of faith obediently to accept it at the hand of God: and others can tell them that the violence of temptations, and the terrors of God on a wounded conscience, and troubled soul, are yet far harder than all these: and these are the saddest, because they make the mind unfit at present to improve them, and to refer them to holy ends and uses. Christ, in all his agony, and even when he cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" had his intellectuals free and perfect, to know the nature, the reason, the uses, and end of all his sufferings: but so have not many poor, distressed, troubled, distracted souls. O how great a part of Christianity is it to understand and rightly bear the cross! Most of our care is how to escape it, or to be delivered from it, rather than obediently to bear it.

Sect. 10. Experience of a suffering, painful state is a great help to our understanding of the gospel. It taketh off from me the scandal of Christ's cross, and helpeth me to perceive the great use and reasons of it, when I am under sufferings. Oh! what need have I of such an example as Christ's. All the parts of his sufferings are as useful to teach me how to suffer, as the ten commandments to teach me what to do. That he was put to fly from proud, domineering pharisees, false teachers, and worldly rulers, and to converse most with the poor, in wildernesses, or various obscure places; that he was hated and persecuted for doing good, and accounted a sinner for neglecting men's ceremonies and traditions; that he was hardly believed, even by them that saw his miracles; and his own disciples were so slow in learning; and that in his suffering they all forsook him and fled, and one denied him with oaths and curses: all these are instructing instances. That Christ's natural, though sinless, aversation to death and suffering, and his fear, should be so powerful, and the sense of God's punishing justice so terrible, as to make his soul sorrowful, even to the death, and cast him into an agony, where he sweat water and blood, and to pray thrice that the bitter cup,

if possible, might pass from him, which he came into the world to drink: all these also are teaching parts of the sufferings of Christ, that rulers, and priests, and soldiers, and the rabble, should agree to scorn him, clothe him in derision, spit on him, buffet him, scourge him, make him their jest, that came to save them; that they should make a sinner of him that never sinned, but came to destroy it, and save men from it; yea, to make him no less than a deceiver, a blasphemer, and an usurping rebel against Cæsar, and write this last as his accusation on his cross, thinking to leave his innocency no vindication or defence. For the Lord and Saviour of the world to undergo all this, is very instructing to a suffering believer: that he should, as such a malefactor, be reviled on a cross, and numbered with transgressors, and his side be pierced, and he there cry out to his Father as forsaken by him; that thus dying he was buried, and his soul went to the place of separated souls, and yet into paradise. They are excellent lessons which may be learned from all this.

I am not to suffer for others, nor to make God's justice a satisfying sacrifice for sin, as Christ did; but I must suffer God's fatherly corrections, and the castigation of paternal, healing justice. I must be saved as by fire, and pass through this purgatory, that I may be refined: I must suffer from Christ and for Christ, for my sin, and also for righteousness' sake: and I must, with a filial justification of God's holiness and chastening justice, bear his indignation, because I have sinned against him. I am predestined to be conformed to Christ's image, in suffering and in sanctity; yea, I must "count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," (Romans 8:30, &c.,) for whom I must not refuse to suffer the loss of all things, and count them dung, that I may win him, and be found in him, and not only know the power of his resurrection, but also the "fellowship of his sufferings, and be made conformable to his death." (Php 3:8-10.) Paul rejoiced in such infirmities, and in his sufferings for the church, filling up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh. (Colossians 1:24.) Peter bids us "rejoice, inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:13.) "If we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him." (Romans 8:17.) It is a great gift to suffer for his sake. (Php 1:29.) It is for the kingdom of God that such suffer. (2 Thessalonians 1:5.) It is happiness and joy to suffer for righteousness' sake, for well doing. (1 Peter 2:10; and 1 Peter 3:14, 1 Peter 3:17; and 1 Peter 4:15-16, 1 Peter 4:19; Matthew 5:10-11.) It is the sufferings of Christ that abound in such, that their consolations may abound. (2 Corinthians 1:5.)

But, alas! I suffer much more for my own sin than for Christ and righteousness: but even this also by the cross of Christ is sanctified, and made a great remedy against my sin. As Christ suffered for our sins, and yet merited by his suffering; so if we accept the castigatory punishment, and exercise repentance and mortification in our suffering, and an obedient submission to the rod, God will take this as acceptable service, and bless it to our further good.

Sect. 11. But how is it that Christ is said "to learn obedience by the things that he suffered, and so to be made perfect." (Hebrews 5:8-9.) Was he unlearned and imperfect before? He had no culpable imperfection; but his satisfactory mediation was imperfect till it was all performed: it was not perfectly done; and when it was done, he thereby was constitutively made a perfect Mediator: as he said upon the cross, "It is finished;" and as this human nature received additional acts of knowledge, as he grew up, and conversed with more objects, and so is said to increase in wisdom (as Adam knew the creatures when he saw them); so he had a new acquaintance with obedient suffering, when he was under the experience of it; and is said to learn it, in that he now exercised

it. And should not my suffering be God’s school? Should I not learn obedience by it? Surely, as it smartly tells me of the evil of former disobedience, so it calls me to remember in whose hands I am, and with whom I have to do, and what is my duty in such a state: God can do no wrong to his own: he will do nothing finally hurtful to his children. In all our afflictions he is said to be afflicted, to signify that he afflicts not willingly, or without our provocation. Justice is good, and holiness is good; and it is good for us to repent, and be weaned from the flesh and world: and all good must be loved, and the means as such: sharp, heart-breaking sermons are unpleasing to nature; and yet to be loved for their use: and afflictions are God’s powerful sermons: the proud and hardened are forced to hear them, who scorn and prosecute preachers for speaking the same things: and shall believers under sufferings be untaught? Words are but words, but stripes go by forcible sense unto the heart: obedient submission to the greatest pains is a serious acknowledgement of God’s dominion, and of his wisdom and love, and the certain hopes of a better life. Impatience hath in it somewhat of atheism, or blasphemy: God is not duly acknowledged and honoured. Job’s wife would have had him thus purposely provoke God, to end his misery by death: as if she had said, ’Speak no more well of him, by whom thou sufferest so much, nor honour a God that will not help thee:’ but patience saith, "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." (Micah 7:7.)

Impatience showeth a misunderstanding of God’s dealing with the afflicted; but patience yielded, because it understandeth whence all comes, and what will be the fruit and end. A man that is let blood for his life, is not impatient with the chirurgeon; but a beast will strive, and a swine, or child, will cry. Our burdens are heavy enough of themselves: impatience maketh them heavier, and is oft more painful than the thing which we suffer: some have gone mad with crosses, which to another would have been light. Patience is our cordial and nepenthes, yea, the health of the soul, by which it is able to bear its infirmities. "In our patience we possess our souls." (Luke 21:19.) Whatever else we lose, we lose not ourselves. He that keepeth his faith, and hope, and love by patience, keepeth his soul: but the impatient lose themselves, as if their other losses were not enough. A poor man singeth that gets his living only by his day labour; when a lord or knight would be tormented with sorrow, if he were reduced to his degree. Striving under our yoke and burden maketh it gall the more: and we cannot so hopefully or comfortably pray for deliverance from the pain which we make ourselves, as from that which God layeth on us; though also there, we must pray for the grace that must save us from our own impatience.

Patience preventeth many sins which impatience causeth; hard thoughts of God, if not hard and unseemly words: "Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly:" impatience tempteth men to think that piety and prayer are in vain, and to condemn the generation of the just, and to leave off duty, and say, ’Why should I wait on God any longer?’ Yea, and to venture on false and sinful means, in hopes of deliverance and ease. Were it to men, we have much to allay our impatience: but impatience against God hath no just excuse. Infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, can do nothing that deserveth blame: we have God’s promise that all things shall work together for our good: and is he not to be trusted? Or is the means of our good to be accused?

Impatience is unseemly for them that believe that heavenly rest and glory are at hand; where all their pains and sorrows will end. Were a man on the rack, and were sure to have all that he desired after it, he would the more easily endure it. Why else did the martyrs so patiently suffer? It is incongruous to complain of any thing that brings a man to heaven.

Christ himself was innocent, and yet accused not God for his sufferings. But we suffer justly for our faults; and it is so much less than they deserve, that the sins which we suffer most for are said to be forgiven us, in that the everlasting punishment is forgiven: should we so often sinfully please the flesh, and yet must it not smart? Shall we so often grieve the Spirit of God, and not be grieved? Shall we lose our time, neglect our duty, forget our home, fall in love with the world, and yield to temptations, and defile our souls with filth and vanity, and must not correction tell us of our sinful folly? "If we suffer for our faults, and bear it patiently, it is not thankworthy." (1 Peter 2:20.) Our merciful Father doth use to shame us for our impatience, by the blessed end of our afflictions. The end that God made with Job showed the reasonableness of his patience: when our afflictions are over, do not all believers see cause of thankfulness for them, and say, 'It is good for me that I was afflicted? 'The pain is past, and the benefit remaineth. And if all that is past was mercy to us, why should we much fear that which is to come. Heaven will end all, and shame impatience for ever. Our patience is much of our perseverance: what a deal of labour do those impatient men lose, that learn, and pray, and are somewhat religious, and have not patience at the last assault to bear the trial, but fail when they seemed to be near the crown!

Hold out, then, poor desponding soul! lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and run with patience the race which is set before thee, looking to Jesus, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross. God will not deceive thy hopes. Sin hath brought pain and death on man; but Christ hath sanctified it, and is the Lord of Life. Yet a little while, and the heavenly possession shall turn thy sorrows into everlasting joy, and thy moans and groans into thanks and praise, and there shall be no more sickness, pain, or death. O foolish, unbelieving hearts! that cry out of suffering, and fear deliverance; that would fain be free from all affliction, and yet fly from the only state of freedom; that are impatient under their calamity, and yet afraid of passing to the only rest!

Sect. 12. But it is neither pain alone, nor death alone, that will sufficiently try our strength, and exercise our faith and patience. It must be great pain (and often long) in order to a certain, expected death. These two conjunct were the case of Christ. The torment of his agony, scourging, crucifying, piercing, and desertion, and the certainty of death that followed. Great pains, with hopes of recovery and ease, may be borne, even by a worldly man; because there is still the worldly hope of better: and so there is no denial of all, while life itself is not denied. We must receive the sentence of death in ourselves, if we will find that we trust in God alone, and trust him as one that raiseth the dead, that is, for another and better life. As long as a man hath any hope of life and ease, a man's faith is not tried to the uttermost, by actual forsaking all. And yet an easy death alone doth not fully try a man: for they that know that all must die, may submit to this, who cannot bear long pains before it. But great and long pains, and the sentence of death together, are the trial. And if God will so try me, why should I repine? Flesh will groan, but the mind may obediently submit. It is but flesh; that flesh that hath tempted and imprisoned my soul. I have too much loved it, and am too loth to leave it: and is it not mercy from God to make me weary of it? God is engaged against idols, that is, all that is loved and pleased before him; and if any thing, that is likest to be this flesh. Its corruptibility tells us, that both its pleasure and its pain will be but short. Long pain is usually tolerable: and intolerable pain will conquer nature, and not be long. The grace of Christ is sufficient for us, and his strength is manifested in our weakness, when he will not take the thorn out of our flesh, though, as Christ and Paul did, we pray thrice, or oftener. And to be

impatient with death is to repine that we are born mortal men; and to fly from heaven and all true hopes, and all the felicity purchased by Christ: and is this renouncing the world, and trusting Christ for life everlasting? And why fear we that which endeth all our pains and fears? A true believer never suffereth so much, but his mercies are far more and greater than his sufferings. His soul is united to Christ: his hopes of heaven have a sure foundation: he is sealed up to glory: rest and joy are near at hand; and former mercies should not be forgotten; and should not such men patiently endure? O what a shameful contradiction is it, to choose heaven as our only portion, to believe in Christ for it, and to seek it as the business of all our lives, and yet to be loth to die, that we may obtain it, and to fly with fear from that which we so seek and hope for! What a contradiction is it to call God our God and Father, the God of Love, and to call Christ our gracious, glorified Redeemer, and to fly from his presence with distrustful fear! Almighty love may correct us, may kill us, but it cannot finally hurt true believers. So much of Moses' and Elias' discourse of the sufferings and death of Christ.

Sect. 13. Sure it is not true that the souls of the fathers, before Christ's coming, did not enter into heaven, but lay in some inferior limbus. For Moses and Elias came from heaven; their shining glory showed that, and their discourse with Christ, and the voice and glory that went with them. And it is not to be thought that they were separated from the rest of the souls of the faithful, and, with Enoch, were in heaven by themselves alone, and the rest elsewhere. Though it is said that God's house hath many mansions, and there are various degrees of glory, yet the blessed are all fellow-citizens of one society, and children in one family of God. And they that came from east and west, shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God; and Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom, and the believing thief with Christ in paradise.

Sect. 14. It seems that Moses and Elias appeared thus, to foreshow the resurrection of Christ, and of the faithful, and to make it easier to the three disciples to believe it. Why should they doubt whether Christ should rise, when they saw that Moses was risen before him? And why should they doubt of the resurrection of the faithful, and the glory following, when they saw these glorified saints? Some think that this apparition was for the strengthening of Christ himself, whose human nature had use for such ministry also of angels, but it is more certain that it was for the strengthening of the disciples' faith, and of ours by their testimony. As it is said, "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes." (John 12:30.)

Sect. 15. It is much worth our noting, in what a communion this specimen of the kingdom of heaven was represented in the holy mount. Here was a voice of God, and a glimpse of his glory: here was our Redeemer in a glimpse of his glory: here was a Moses and Elias in a glimpse of their glory: and here were three beloved disciples yet in the flesh, and in weakness of faith, which needed such confirmation. God, our Father, and our Saviour, the saints of heaven, and those on earth, are all of one society or kingdom. There is a near relation, and a near communion among them all. When the eternal Word disdained not so wonderful condescension as to come to us in the form of a servant, even of a poor, despised, crucified man, it is less wonder that Moses and Elias should come down as his witnesses and servants. (Hebrews 12:23, &c.) The heavenly Jerusalem, and city of the living God, of which we are enrolled burgesses or heirs, hath many parts. There is the assembly of the first-born, and innumerable angels, and the Spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and God, the Judge of all. Oh, what holy, glorious, joyful company shall we have above! Christ and his angels will not despise the least

of saints.

Sect. 16. But what was the introduction to this apparition and transfiguration? It was Christ's praying, "He went up into a mountain to pray, and, as he prayed, he was transfigured." (Luke 9:28-29.) Surely this is written to invite and encourage us to pray. We are in greater need than Christ. It is folly in unbelievers to think prayers vain, because God is unchangeable. We are not unchangeable: and the exercise of faith, dependence on God, and true desires, being the condition required in a due receiver, maketh those blessings become ours, which else we had been incapable of. God, who commandeth fervent prayer, hath promised to answer it. Though we must not think to be the rulers of the world, nor have whatever our flesh or folly doth desire, because we ask it earnestly, yet true prayer is the appointed way for obtaining what we need, and is best for us, and we are fitted to receive. And as Christ had this wonderful return to his prayers, his servants have experience that their choicest mercies for soul and body have come this way.

Sect. 17. Though the three disciples were admitted to this glorious society, how different was their case from that of Christ, and Moses, and Elias! In the beginning of the heavenly concourse, they were asleep with heaviness, even while this glorious company stood near them. Alas! such is our infirmity in flesh, and such a clog are these earthly bodies to us, that when God is present, and heaven is before us, and we have the greatest cause to watch and pray, a heavy, weary, sluggish body, even fettereth an active spirit, and we sleep, or turn away in wandering thoughts, when we should seriously converse with Christ and heaven. Alas! what unworthy servants hath our Lord! Are such as these meet for his work, his love, his acceptance, or his kingdom? But oh, how merciful a Saviour have we, who taketh not his poor servants at the worst, but when they have served him thus in his agony, he gently rebuketh them; "Could you not watch with me one hour:" and that with an excuse, "The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Sect. 18. It is a matter of great moment to understand in what cases this excuse will hold, and our weakness will not make the willingness of the Spirit unacceptable to God. If a drunkard, fornicator, or other sensualist should say, 'My spirit is willing to leave my sin, but my flesh is weak, and a temptation doth prevail,' Video meliora proboq; &c. This excuse would not prove God's forgiveness. If a man live in known sin, which he could forbear were he truly willing, and say, "To will is present with me, but to do I am unable; it is not I, but sin, that dwelleth in me;" this would be but a frivolous excuse, and yet to the sleepy disciples it was a good excuse, and I think to Paul, Romans 7:1-25. Where, then, is the difference? There are some acts of man which the will hath not power to rule, and some that it can rule. The will hath not power always to keep a sleepy man awake: this sleep might be of the flesh without any will at all: and this excuseth from all guilt. There are some acts of man which the will cannot rule, but by a great degree of power and endeavour: as perhaps, with much ado, by preventing and resisting diligence, the disciples might have kept awake: in this case, their sleep is a fault, but a pardoned fault of weakness. Some persons are liable to inordinate fear and grief, which so surpriseth them by the constitution of their bodies, that the greatest unwillingness would not hinder them. And some could do more to resist these passions than they do, but very hardly with the greatest diligence. These are accordingly excusable in degree. Paul would have perfectly obeyed God's law, and never have sinned. But there is no perfection in this life: mere imperfection of true grace, which is predominant in the will, doth not damn men. But there are acts which are so subject to the will, that a sincere will, though imperfect, can command them. He that doth these, (or doth the contrary,) it is not because he

sincerely would, and cannot, but because he hath but ineffectual wishes, and is not sincerely willing, if he know them to be what they are; especially if they be materially great sins which he yieldeth to, which true grace more strongly resisteth than it doth an idle word, or thought, or action. In short, all omissions or commissions, in which the will is positively or privatively guilty, are sinful in some degree; but only these do damn the sinner, which are inconsistent with the predominant love of God, and heaven, and holiness, in the soul.

Sect. 19. When the disciples awaked, they saw these glorious ones in converse. Did they hear what they said, or did Christ after tell them? The latter is most probable. Doubtless, as Moses tells us how God made the world, which none could tell him but by God's telling them first, so the apostles have written many things of Christ which they neither saw nor heard, but from Christ, that told it them by word, or inspiration. How else knew they what Satan said and did to him in his temptations in the wilderness, and on the pinnacle of the temple? How knew they what his prayer was in his agony? And so in this instance also. But Christ's own testimony was enough to put them out of doubt, to them that daily saw his confirming miracles.

Sect. 20. How great a difference was there between mount Sinai and this mount? When God delivered the law to Moses, that mount was terrible in flame, and smoke, and thunder, so that the people trembled and fled: but now here is nothing but life, and light, and love from heaven. A merciful Redeemer, whose face shone as the sun, with heavenly company, appearing nearly to the disciples, pitying and bearing with their heaviness and infirmity, strengthening their faith and hope, and proving to them a resurrection, and a heavenly kingdom, by a visible apparition of some of its possessors. This was not a frighful, but a confirming, delectable sight: the law in terror was by Moses, but grace and truth, peace and pleasure, are by Christ. This was an inviting and delighting, and not an affrighting, apparition. Was it not a shameful infirmity, and a sin, that Peter should deny Christ after such a sight as this, and the rest of the disciples forsake him and fly? What! after they had seen the kingdom of God come in power, and Christ's face shine as the sun in its brightness, could they forget all this? Or could they doubt whether he or his persecutors were the stronger, and liker to prevail at last? O, how frail, how uncertain, how bad a thing, is depraved man! But though Christ found them asleep, and though he foreknew that they would forsake him, he forsook not them, nor used them as they deserved, but comforted them with a glimpse of heaven: for he died for his enemies.

Sect. 21. But this was but once in all the time of his abode among them. It was an extraordinary feast, and not their daily bread: they had Christ still with them, but not transfigured in glory, nor Moses and Elias in their sight. We are too apt to think, that if God give us a joyful, extraordinary glimpse of heaven, we must have it always, or that he forsaketh us, and casts us off when he denieth it us. O that we were as desirous of holiness and duty as we are of the joy which is the reward! But our Father, and not we, must be the chooser both of our food and feast. Moses did not dwell on mount Nebo, that he might still see the land of promise: it was enough to have one sight of it before his death. As flesh and blood cannot enter into heaven, so it is little of heaven that entereth into it.

Sect. 22. When the disciples awake, they see his glory, and the two men that stood with them. It must not be a sleeping but an awakened Christian that will have a sight of heavenly glory. As we must love God with all the heart, and soul, and might, all must be awakened in seeking him, and in

attending him, before we can have a joyful foretaste of his love. Carnal security, supine neglect, and dull contempt, are dispositions which render us incapable of such delights. Heavenly joy supposes a heavenly disposition and desires. Angels sleep not, nor are clogged with bodies of clay: earth hath no wings: it must be holy vivacity that must carry up a soul to God, notwithstanding the fetters of flesh. It is with each other's souls in the body that we converse together on earth. And it is not sluggish, but lively faith, and fervent desire, that must converse in heaven with Moses and Elias, and our living Head.

Sect. 23. But how did Peter know Moses and Elias, whom he had never seen before? Perhaps glorified saints do bear each one his notifying signature, and need not names and sound of words to make them known: perhaps Christ told the disciples who they were that talked with him: perhaps he made them know it by inspiration, as the prophets have their knowledge. Any of these ways God could notify them: it is not needful that we know which of them it was; but that they were known, is certain. We shall be no strangers to any saints in heaven, and therefore not to our old acquaintance. Whether we shall have any greater love to them, or delight in them, for old acquaintance' sake, or because they were instruments of our good on earth, I know not, but I know that our love to them, with whom we had holy comfort on earth, may well render heaven more familiar to us now, and more suitable to our desires. O! how great a number of my godly friends are there! They are so many that I cannot make a catalogue of their names, but the memory of abundance of them doth delight me. And when we meet there, we shall be far better known to each other than we were to the most intimate on earth.

Oh, let Christians now so converse together, as remembering that they must meet in heaven, where all that was secret will be brought to light, if we now put on any vizor, and seem better than we are; if we hide any sin, or base corruption; if we, by fraud or falsehood deceive our friends, all this will be opened when we meet in heaven. It is a daily grief and shame to my soul, to think of the sins that I have committed against some that are now in heaven, which I either excused, extenuated, or hid, and to think how much evil they will know of me there, which on earth they knew not by me. But God, who pardoneth them, will cause his servants there to forgive each other; but the detected sin, for all that, will be an odious, shameful thing. Lying and hypocrisy are there no cloak, but an aggravation, of the shame. If we cannot confess, and take shame to ourselves, by repentance, upon earth, how shall we appear in the open light, and see the faces of those whom we have wronged. What diminution it will make of our joy, I know not, but it must needs be a dishonour to have been false to God or man, and especially when we meet where sin is perfectly hated, to think how we either sinned together, or that we tempted and ensnared one another in any sin; how it will affect us then I do not fully know, but it is now to me a far greater grief to think of any in heaven whom I have tempted or wronged, than it was while they lived with me on earth. And I think there is somewhat of this nature common to good and bad: even the consciences of wicked men do haunt them for notable injuries to others, especially concealed ones, and especially for persecuting the servants of God, when they are dead, more than while they lived. Insomuch that (though I doubt not of real apparitions) I am ready to think, that some that say they are haunted by the sight and the voice of such as seem to them to be deceased persons, are rather haunted by their own consciences, which strongly represent those persons to their imaginations But on the other side, it is a great delight to me to think of the good which I received from many that are now in heaven. Of the profitable sermons which I have heard from some, and

the profitable conversation which I have had with others: how oft we sweetly consulted together of the things which concern everlasting life: how many days in public and private we spent in preparation, and in some prospect of the blessedness which now they enjoy. And it is not a small mercy to me, that I can think of the multitudes now in heaven, of whose conversion and salvation God hath made my weak endeavours a prosperous means. O what a mercy is it to think on, that while I am yet compassed with temptations, and languishing in weakness, and groaning in pain, and, worst of all, burdened with a dark and sinful soul, so many are past all this with Christ, by means of any help which he sent them by my labours. It hath oft humbled me greatly to read in the lives of such men as John Janeway and Joseph Allen, how much of their proficiency they ascribed to my writings, and how far they overwent me, and left me quite behind them in holy delights and praises of God! But how much more am I below a multitude now in heaven, who called me father here on earth! And if here I must rejoice with them that rejoice, as well as mourn with them that mourn, why should I not much more rejoice with all the blessed society above; and more familiarly with my old acquaintance, pupils, and dear friends? My love should be most to the best; and therefore, more to them than to any other of my friends; and therefore, my union with them being closer, and their felicity far greater, I should think with more joy of them than of any left behind. They are safe in the harbour, past all our dangerous storms and waves; and though they know, or will know, more of my sins than they did on earth, and hate them more, yet they that feel the comfort of the pardon of their own, will imitate God in pardoning me, and rejoice in God’s forgiveness of me. Though their vile bodies lie like common dust, how much better do they now know the love of God, the mysteries of grace, the heavenly glory, the state of spirits in the city of God, than I do who was wont to preach it to them. God, that sent down Moses and Elias to show that saints in heaven and on earth have communion, will bring me and my friends now in heaven together again, into a far sweeter communion than ever we had here.

Sect. 24. It is no great wonder that Peter should be transported with this glorious sight; and greatly delighted with this heavenly communion, and say, "Master it is good for us to be here." Would not a sight, a glimpse, of heaven, have transported any holy soul; yea, even those that now lie in tears and fears, and are overwhelmed with doubts and troubles? When they are groping after God, and groaning on their knees, because they feel more of his frowns than of his love, if then they had such a sight as this, what a change would it make upon them? Perhaps you will say, that the doubt of their own sincerity might still deprive them of their joy. No; this sight would banish doubts and troubles. It is a communication of love, and such as will fully convince the communicants.

Without such a miraculous glimpse of glory, God sometime giveth some of his servants such a mental illustration, and inward glimpse and taste of heaven, as greatly overcometh all the fears of pain and death; such many old and later martyrs have had. It was a strange word of the godly Bishop of St David’s, Mr. Farrar, to his neighbours, ’If I stir in the fire, believe not my doctrine:’ and accordingly he stirred not. If he had not had some prophetical inspiration, this could not have been justified from being a presumptuous tempting of God. And Mr. Baynam’s case was a mere wonder, who, in the flames, called to the papists to see a miracle, professing to them, that in the fire he felt no more pain than if he had been laid on a bed of down, or roses.

I am just now reading in Melch. Adam’s Lives of the German Philosophers, the Life of Olympia Fulvia Morata, which ended with some such experience. In many ages there hath been some one rare woman, who hath excelled men in the languages, philosophy, and other human learning.

Such an one was this Olympia Fulvia Morata, of Ferrara. She married Andr. Gundler, a physician: she removed with him into Germany; and was by the way convinced of the guard of angels, by her young brother falling out of a high window, on cragged stones, without any more hurt than if it had been on the soft ground. In Germany, she thus wrote to Anna Estensis, a Guisian princess: 'As soon as, by the singular goodness of God, I was departed from the Italian idolatry, and came with my husband into Germany, it is incredible how God changed my soul, (or mind,) which, being formerly most averse (or abhorring) to the divine Scriptures, am now delighted in them alone, and place in them all my study, labour, care, and mind; and, as much as possible, contemn all the riches, honours, and pleasures, which formerly I was wont to admire.' But the cross presently following, in God's usual method, her husband and she were, by soldiers, stripped naked, save the shift next the body, and narrowly escaping with life, were put so to wander from place to place, none daring to entertain them, even when she was sick of a fever; till at last they found liberal entertainment, in which she shortly fell into a mortal disease, of which she died. And in her last sickness, and after much torment of body, near death, she pleasantly smiled. Her husband asked her the cause; who said, 'I saw a certain place which was full of a most clear and beauteous light;' intimating that she should quickly be there, and saying, 'I am wholly full of joy.' And spake no more till, her eyesight failing her, she said, 'I scarce know any of you any more; but all things else about seem to be full of most beauteous flowers;' which were her last words; having a long time professed, that nothing seemed more desirable to her, than to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, in all her sickness magnifying his mercies to her.

Many have thus joyfully laid down the flesh to go to Christ; what wonder, then, if Peter was loth to lose the pleasure of what he saw.

Two things are necessary to great and solid joy; first, that the object be truly and greatly amiable, and delectable; and, secondly, that the apprehensions of it be clear and strong. As to the first, we have so great and glorious things to delight us as would feast our souls with constant joy, were not the second, alas! much wanting. What man could choose but be even in Peter's rapture continually, if he had but ascertained heavenly glory, apprehended by him, in as satisfactory a manner as these sensible things are? If I lay in prison, yea, or in torment of cholic, stone, or any such disease, and had but withal such apprehensions, or sight, of assured glory, surely the pain would not be able to suppress my joy. What a mixture, what a discord, would there be in my expressions; torment would constrain my flesh to groan, and the sight of heaven would make me triumph. I cannot but think how this great discord would show the difference between the spirit and the flesh. What a strange thing it would be to hear the same man, at the same time, crying out in pain with groans, and magnifying the love of God with transporting joy! But we are not yet fit for such joyful apprehensions; our weak eyes must not see the sun, but through the allaying medium of a humid air, at a vast distance, and by the chrystalline humour, and organical parts of the eye. Fain we would get nearer, and have sight, or clearer apprehensions, of the spiritual society, and glorious world. We study, we pray, we look up, we groan under our distance, darkness, and unsatisfying conceptions; but yet it must not be. We must be ripened before the shell will break, or the dark womb will deliver us up to the glorious light; but Christ vouchsafed that to his three apostles which we are unworthy of, and yet unfit for. O happy sight! O happy men! It is incongruous to say, 'What would I not give for such a sight?' lest it should savour of Simon Magus' folly; and I have nothing to give; but it is not incongruous to say, 'What would I not do; and what

would I not suffer for such a sight?' Yea, Christ puts such kind of questions to us; O that I had better answered them in the hour of duty, and in the hour of temptation! When he asked, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptised with the baptism, that I am baptised with?" I have been ready, with James and John, to say, I can; but when the trial comes, (as they after in his suffering forsook him and fled,) how insufficient is my own strength to perform my promise? When he did impose on me the denying of myself, forsaking all, taking up the cross and following him, I yielded and covenanted by vow to do it; but it was by the help of the Holy Spirit, which he promised to give me. I stand, Lord, to my covenant; help me to perform it; and give me, though not his present sight, yet some of Peter's mental apprehensions, and a glimpse, a taste, of that which transported him with delight. Let who will (or who thou wilt) take the riches and grandeur of the world. O give me some delightful taste of that which I am made for, redeemed for, and which thy Spirit hath long taught me to seek and hope for, as my all!

Sect. 25. Peter was not weary with the sight of this heavenly apparition. Why should I be weary of the believing contemplation of greater things? Though sight affect us more sensibly than mere believing and thinking, yet these have their happy office, which may be effectual. And Christ, who thus appeared in glory to Peter, hath said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And Peter himself saith of them that see not Christ, that "They rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," in believing. O how unexcusable am I for every weary prayer or meditation of such a glory; and for yielding to Satan and a backward heart, which have oft made me shorten these sweet employments, when I had time, and leave, and need, to lengthen them. What! weary of communion with Christ! weary of speaking to my heavenly Father, for endless blessedness, upon such joyful terms of hope as he hath given me! weary of the thoughts of the city of God, the heavenly society, and work! weary of exciting divine love, and exercising it in divine praise, which are the works of angels, and all the heavenly host! Oh, how justly might God be, as it were, weary of me, and of my weary services; yea, of the best that I can offer him, which hath in it so much to give him cause!

Sect. 26. Peter did not fly from this glorious prospect; but would fain have had more of it, and have dwelt upon the holy mount. And when God will call me to a more glorious vision and fruition in heaven, shall I draw back, and be unwilling to go? Was that mount a better place than heaven? Is not Christ now to be there seen in greater glory? Is the Jerusalem above, the glorious company of saints and angels, no better and more desirable a sight, than Moses and Elias were on the mount? Alas! when we have read, and heard, and thought, and talked so much of heaven, and done and suffered so much for it, that yet we should draw back with fear and unwillingness to go to it! O what lamentable weakness of faith, and power of flesh, doth this discover! When I read Peter's words "It is good to be here," I am grieved that I, who dwell in a world so near like hell, among the implacable haters of holiness and holy peace, and in a painful, tired body, and who have thought, said, and written so much of heaven, do yet say, with no stronger desire and joy, "It is good to be there." When I see all natural appetites desire earnestly their proper food, and even the brutes desire their beloved company, shall my holy appetite be so dull and indifferent? Lord, quicken it by the fuller communications of thy Spirit, and save me from this hated, dangerous disease.

Sect. 27. But Peter spake he knew not what, when he talked of building tabernacles on earth, for the fruition of that which is proper to heaven. Alas! this is our common malady and folly: we would have Christ in the splendour of his glory; but we would have him here: we would see Moses and

Elias, if they will come down to us: we would have that in the flesh, which flesh and blood cannot possess. O if we knew in what land, what city, what country, what private house, we might live in the least glimpse of the heavenly glory, how joyfully should we run to such an habitation! Merchants make towards the most gainful place for trade: poor men inquire after the most fertile and delectable countries for plantation: gentlemen delight themselves with a sweet and pleasantly-seated mansion; but if saints on earth could find a place where they could see what Stephen, or Paul, or the apostles saw, and have a little of heaven without dying and putting off this body, what a desirable dwelling would that seem to them? And yet, alas, how cold are our desires of the time and place where we shall have much more! We have Christ on earth, in the manner and measure that we are capable: we have here some communion with heaven, as verily (though not so sensibly) as our eye hath with the sun. God will not deny believers their title, their earnest, and some first-fruits; but when we would have our all, or our best on earth, or that on earth which is proper to heaven, we know not what we desire or say. Are we, vile, dirty sinners in flesh, now fit for heavenly sights or joys? Or is this world a place for building tabernacles, where we may see the Lord, and take up our rest? What! in a world of temptations, of wickedness, of sufferings, where we are daily wrestling for our lives, and fighting, not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, even spiritual wickedness (or wicked spirits) in high places (above the greatest men that are their servants). (Ephesians 6:12.) But that which is of the earth is earthly. Our earthly part would have an earthly felicity; but when we know that it is corruptible, and a dying thing, and that we have here no continuing city, both faith and reason bid us seek for one to come. The unfaithful steward had so much wit as to make sure of another habitation, when he knew that he must be no longer steward.

God hath so constantly confuted and befooled me, by his marvellous providence, whenever I have said, 'Soul take thy ease,' and have thought of building tabernacles on earth, as hath convinced me, that such folly is not the least part of the danger of a soul, from which his mercy did so watchfully save me. If a little health and ease, or a pleasant habitation, or beloved company and friends, have but flattered me into earthly delight and hopes, and made me say, "It is good to be here;" I never was long without some pains, and dangerous sickness, or some loss or cross in friends, or some removal by personal or public changes, to tell me, that I knew not what I said, and that rest and happiness are not here. As the laborious ants and bees are long gathering a heap of treasure, and furnishing a hive with winter provisions, and a contemptuous foot soon spurneth about the one, and the chief owner of the hive destroyeth the other; so (while I neglected wealth and honour) when I have but treasured up the choicest books, and taken pleasure in my works and friends, God saw that such pleasure needed an allay, and hath taken away books and friends together, or driven me oft from them and my habitation, to tell me, sensibly, that I have higher to look, and further to go; and that Moses and Elias appeared not to turn earth into heaven, and make me think that now I am well, but to invite my soul to their celestial habitation. When Christ hath comforted me by hearing prayers, by great deliverances, by wonderful success of my defective labours, by comfortable friends, by public mercies, it was not, by making my condition pleasant, to keep down my desires from heaven, but to draw them thither by such foretastes. Contentment with our condition, as without more of the world, is a great duty; but to be content with the world, or any thing on earth, without more holiness and communion with God, and without a part in the heavenly perfection, is a heinous and pernicious sin.

But, alas! it is a far worse mistake than Peter's, which deceiveth the greatest part of men. They say, indeed, as he, "It is good to be here," (till melancholy or misery make them intolerable to themselves,) but it is not because they have seen a glimpse of heaven on earth, or tasted the sweetness of the holy society and work, but because their bodies are in health, their purses full, their appetites pleased, and their inferiors do their wills, and honour them. This is all the heaven that they love; and, to leave all this is the death which they abhor and fear. And they will not hear God, and the experience of all mankind befooling them, till near the night that their souls shall be required, and then, whose will all their treasure be?

Sect. 28. But yet it was a greater part of Peter's dotage, to think of tabernacles for Christ, Moses, and Elias, and of detaining of heavenly inhabitants upon earth. If you would offer the lowest saint in heaven an earthly kingdom in exchange for his condition, with what disdain would he despise the offer? Christ's kingdom was not of this world, nor would Moses and Elias change their lot with Alexander or Cæsar. Poor trifles allure us, and seem somewhat to us (as toys to children) while we are dreaming in the flesh; but if once we he delivered, and see what the celestial glory is, what a change will it make upon our judgments? We fear now in the dark to go unto that world of light, and are loth to put off the rags of flesh, and to depart from a known, though a dirty, falling habitation: but if we get to heaven, we shall be loth to return to earth again, and be so coarsely clothed: when once we are there, a world would not hire us to come back into this corruptible body, till God will make it spiritual and incorruptible. Our friends, whose deaths we passionately lamented, would be loth now to change their company for such as we are, or their abode for such a wicked world as this, or their work for the best of ours on earth: no wonder that departed souls appear not to their friends on earth: most apparitions are of devils, or miserable souls, to whom it is no loss or condescension. Were I once in heaven, could I possibly be willing to be turned again into a Bedlam world, and laid under the feet of blinded pride, and raging madness, and live among Sodomites (called Christians) whose God is their belly, and who glory in their filthiness and shame, and mind nothing, with love, but earthly things; and are bitter enemies, not only to the cross, but to the government of Christ? Would I be again among dogs and swine; yea, devils in flesh, who hate and persecute the regenerate seed, and all that will not receive their mark, and be as mad and bad as they? Would I again be groaning here in pain, or tired with a weary body, and more with a feeble, sinful soul, weak in faith, cold in love, of doubtful hope, and imperfect duty? Would I be here again in the prospect of a grave, with fear of dying; as strange as now to the heavenly felicity? Lazarus will not come from Abraham's bosom, for the rich man's wealth and belly-pleasure, no, not to warn his sensual brethren. Had Peter seen heaven as he saw the glory on the mount, he would never have made so blind a motion for Christ, Moses, and Elias, to continue there, who have so much better a habitation.

Sect. 29. But this glorious apparition was but short: as the glory of God's back parts to Moses, which did but pass by. Presently a cloud cometh, and separateth the company, and ends the pleasant sight. When Christians receive some extraordinary sense of the love of God, some sweet foretastes of promised happiness, they must not look that this should be ordinary, or always so. When some fervent prayer is extraordinarily answered, and a sacrament sweetened with unusual drops of heavenly sweetness, or a holy discourse or meditation hath raised us higher than ever before, we must not expect that this should be our constant diet, and God should thus feast us all the year. The times of fasting also have their turn. Moses did not dwell on Mount Horeb, nor Mount

Nebo or Pisgah, from whence he saw the Land of Promise. God's children do not always laugh and sing; while they have their sinning times, they will have their suffering and crying times. How suddenly doth the lark come down to the earth, who before was soaring out of sight, and singing pleasantly in the higher air, as if it had been aspiring towards the sun. A luscious diet is not best for such as we, that have so many corruptions to be cured by cleansing means: cordials must not be all our physic; unwarrantable expectations of greater or more continued joys than we are meet for is injurious both to God and to ourselves. Desires of more we may and must have: but those desires must look up to heaven, where, indeed, they may be satisfied.

The joy of these spectators was turned into fear (saith the text) when they entered into the cloud. No wonder: the change was sudden and great; from a sight of the kingdom of God in power unto a dark cloud. Just now they seemed almost in heaven, and presently they knew not where they were: from glorious light to a kind of prison of obscurity.

Such changes here we are liable to. The same soul that lately tasted of transporting joy, may lie in terror, hardly resisting temptations to despair. The same person that was confident of the love of God, may be quickly, not only doubting of it, but sinfully denying it: the same that had assuring evidence of sincerity, may shortly conclude that all was but hypocrisy. The same that was triumphing in the sense of love, may cry out, O miserable man that I am! And the same that magnified the grace of Christ, may say, the day of grace is past; especially if either the tempter get the advantage of a melancholy body, or of casting the soul into renewed guilt of some wounding sin, or into impatient discontents, with the things that befall it in the world.

There is a stability in the essentials of holiness: it is life eternal that is here begun: but, alas! the degrees of grace, the exercise of it, the evenness and integrity of our obedience, and accordingly our comforts, are lamentably liable to change: even as all worldly things are mutable to the ungodly, though their hardened hearts are too little changeable. Expecting nothing but joy from God, or expecting more than we are meet for, maketh our dejections the greater, and more grievous. None are cast lower with terror, trouble, and almost despair, than some that have been most transported with joy: when some other Christians of an even conversation have an evenness and constancy of holy peace, though no such joys.

Sect. 31. The cloud separated the company; Moses and Elias are seen no more; no, nor the glory of Christ: but yet Christ is not separated from them: his ordinary presence still abideth with them. Christ doth not leave the soul when extraordinary joys do leave it: it loseth not his saving grace, nor the presence of his Spirit, as oft as it loseth heavenly delight. Desire showeth love to him, and to his holiness: and he never forsaketh those that love him: as long as the soul breatheth after Christ, and after more communion with God, and, conscious of its imperfection, would fain be perfect, and resolveth to continue waiting for increase of faith and holiness in the use of the means which Christ hath appointed, it is not forsaken. Christ, by his Spirit, dwelleth and worketh in that soul. It may enter into a cloud, and Christ may be unseen, and seem quite lost, but the cloud will vanish, and he will appear; and he will first find us, that we may seek and find him. If he appear to us but as in his humiliation, and as crucified, and thereby humble us, and crucify us to the world and the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof, and cause us but to seek first his kingdom and righteousness, he will raise us higher, and show us his glory, when grace, and conquest, and perseverance have prepared us: we are in a cloudy world and body; and our sins are yet a thicker

cloud between God’s glorious face and us: but as God is God, and heaven is heaven, so Christ is Christ, and grace is grace, when we see it not, but fear that we are undone, and entering into outer darkness: and at sun-rising, all our darkness, and all our doubts and fears will vanish.

Sect. 32. "There came a voice out of the cloud, this is my beloved Son; hear him." (Luke 9:15.) Had I heard such a testimony from heaven, would it not have set my faith above all doubts and unbelief? For the voice that thus owned Christ and his word, might embolden me fully to trust all his promises, as it bindeth me to obey his precepts.

God’s love is effective and communicative; and as his life and light cause life and light, so his love causeth love; and Christ, that is called his beloved Son, is likest him in love; none loveth us so much as God our Father, and his beloved Son, who is also as God, essential love. And shall I think with cold or little love of such a God, and such a Saviour? It is as unreasonable to fly from God or Christ, as fearing that he wanteth love to a capable soul, as to fly from the sun, as wanting heat or light. Oh, what an unruly, froward thing is the corrupted soul of man! When we think of God’s judgment, and how we are in his hands, as to all our hopes, for soul and body, we fear, and are uncomfortable, lest he have not so much love and mercy as should cause us confidently to trust him: we could trust some friends with life and soul were we in their power; but infinite love itself, and a loving Saviour, we can hardly trust, so far as to quiet us in pain or death. And yet when Christ, to cure this distrust, hath manifested his love by the greatest miracles that ever God showed to mortal men, even by Christ’s incarnation, his life, his works, his death, resurrection, intercession, and the advancement of human nature in him above angels, the greatness of this incomprehensible love occasioneth the difficulty of our believing it; as if it were too great and wonderful to be credible: thus dark and guilty sinners hardly believe our Father’s love, whether it be expressed by ordinary, or by the most wonderful effects.

Sect. 33. As Christ is called the Son of God, so also are all his members: we have so far the same title, that we might partake of the same comforts: he is God’s only Son by eternal generation, and the hypostatical union upon his miraculous conception: but through him we are sons by regeneration and adoption. And shall not the love of such a Father he trusted, and the presence and pleasing of such a Father be desired? If Manoah’s wife could say, "If he would have killed us, he would not have accepted a sacrifice of us;" I may say, if he would have damned me, or forsaken my departing soul, he would not have adopted me, nor made and called me his Son. Christ was made his incarnate son, that we might he made his adopted sons: and we are made his adopted sons, for the sake, and by the grace, of Christ, his natural Son.

Sect. 34. The command, "hear him," is relative, as to Moses and Elias: 1. Hear him whom the law and the prophets typified and foretold, and were his servants, and preparatory instructors, to lead us to him. 2. Hear him before Moses and the prophets, where his coming and covenant abrogateth the law of Moses, and as a greater light, he obscureth the less: he hath revealed more than they revealed; and, the same more clearly: life and immortality is more fully brought to light by him: his gospel is as the heart of the Holy Bible: we use the Old Testament books, especially as the witnesses of Christ.

Sect. 35. And whom shall we hear so willingly, so obediently, as Christ? Abraham sent not Dives’s brethren to the king, or to the high-priest, to know what religion he should choose, or what he should do to escape hell torments; but it was Moses and the prophets that they must hear. But

God, from heaven, hath sent us yet a better teacher, and commanded us to hear him: Moses was faithful in God's house as a servant, but Christ as a Son: his authority is above kings and high priests; and they have no power now but from him; and therefore none against him or his laws: all commands are null to conscience which contradict him: the examples in Daniel 3:1-30, Daniel 4:1-37, and of the Apostles, tell us, whether God or man should be first obeyed: therefore it is that the Bible is more necessary to be searched and learned than the statute-book, or canons: were man to be heard before Christ, or against him, or as necessarily as he, why have we not law-preachers every Lord's-day to expound the statutes and canons to all the people? And why are they not catechised out of the book of canons, or law, as well as out of the Bible. And sure if we must hear Christ and his gospel before priests or princes, or before our dearest friends, much more before our fleshly lusts and appetites, and before a profane and foolish scorner, and before the temptation of the devil. O had we heard Christ warning us, when we hearkened to the tempter, and to the flesh, how safely had we lived, and how comfortably might we have died!

Sect. 36. But this word, "hear him," is as comfortable as obligatory. Hear him, sinner, when he calls to thee to repent and turn to God: hear him when he calleth thee to himself, to take him for thy Lord and Saviour, to believe and trust him for pardon and salvation: hear him when he calleth, "Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy laden: ho, every one that thirsteth come: whoever will, let him drink of the water of life freely." Hear him when he commandeth, and hear him when he promiseth; and hear him before the worldly wise, when he teacheth us the way to God: hear him, for he knows what he saith: hear him, for he is true, and faithful, and infallible: hear him, for he is the Son of God, the greatest messenger that ever God sent: hear him, for he purposely came down in flesh, that he might familiarly teach us: hear him, for none else in the world hath made known the things of God like him, and none can do it: hear him, for he meaneth us no hurt: he is our dearest friend, and love itself, and saith nothing but for our salvation, and promiseth nothing but what he will perform. Yea, hear him, for every soul that will not hear him shall be cut off.

Hear him, therefore, if he contradict thy fleshly appetite: hear him, if great or small, if any or all shall be against it: hear him, if he set thee on the hardest work, or call thee to the greatest suffering: hear him, if he bid thee take up the cross, and forsake all and follow him, in hope of a reward in heaven: hear him, if he call thee to lay down thy life; for none can be a loser by him.

Hear him now in the day of grace, and he will hear thee in the day of thy extremity, in the day of danger, sickness, death, and judgment, when the world forsaketh thee, and no one's hearing else can help thee.

Sect. 37. But, 'I was not one that saw this vision: had I seen it myself it would have satisfied me, and confuted all my doubts.' Answ. But it is the will of God that the ministry and testimony of men shall be a means of our believing: it is faith, and not sight, that must be the ordinary way of our salvation; else Christ must have showed himself, and his miracles, resurrection, and ascension, to every one in the world that must believe in him: and then he must have been visible at once in every kingdom, parish, and place on earth, and continued so to the end of the world; and must have died, risen, and ascended many millions of times, and in every place. They that will put such laws on their law-giver before they will believe in him, must be saved without him, and against him, if they can. This is more unreasonable than to tell God that you will not believe that there is a heaven or hell unless you see them. But God will have us live, and be saved by believing, and not

by sight. And he will use man for the instruction and salvation of man, and not send angels with every message.

Sect. 38. But why did Christ show this vision but to three of his disciples? Answ. He is not bound to tell us why: but we may know that a sight of heavenly glory is not to be ordinarily expected on earth. Why did God show the back parts of his glory to none but Moses, no, not to his brother Aaron? Why did he speak to him only in the bush, and on the mount? Why did he translate none to heaven without dying but Enoch and Elias? Why did he save but Noah, and seven with him, in the ark? These are not things ordinary, nor to be common to many.

Sect 39. But by this it appeareth, that even among his twelve apostles Christ made a difference, and preferred some before the rest; though he set no one over the rest in any governing authority, yet some of them were qualified above the rest, and esteemed, and used by him accordingly. Peter is called the first, and, it seems, was qualified above the rest, by his more frequent speaking and familiarity with Christ, and his speeches and miracles after the resurrection; though yet the faction that said, "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Paul," was rebuked as carnal; so far was Christ from directing the churches to end all difference by obeying Peter as their supreme ruler. James and John are called the sons of thunder: they had some more eminent qualification than the rest; so that James was the first martyred apostle, and John the disciple whom Jesus specially loved. Ministers of the same office and order may much differ in gifts and grace, in labour and success, and in God's acceptance and reward, and in the church's just esteem and love. All pastors were not such as Cyprian, Basil, Gregory, Nazianzen, Chrysostom, or Augustin. And the rest must not envy at the preference of Peter, James, and John. Andrew seems to be Peter's elder brother, and knew Christ before him; as Aaron was elder brother to Moses, and yet must give God leave to choose to give pre-eminence to whom he will.

Sect. 40. But why did not these three apostles tell any of this vision till after Christ's resurrection? Answ. Christ did forbid it them. And it is according to the method of his revelation. He would make himself known to the world by degrees; and more by his works than by mere words; and these works were to be finished, and all set together, to be his convincing witness to the world. And the chief of these were his resurrection, ascension, and sending down the Holy Ghost: the apostles could not say till then, 'Jesus is risen, ascended, and hath given us the seal of the Spirit; therefore he is the Son of God.' Christ first preached repentance like John Baptist; and next he told them that the kingdom of God (by the Messiah) was come, and was among them; and then he taught them to believe his word to be sent from God, and to be true; and he taught them the doctrines of holiness, love, and righteousness towards men: and he wrought those miracles which might convince them that what he said, or should say, deserved their belief; but yet before his resurrection, his apostles themselves understood not many of the articles of our creed; they knew not that Christ was to die for sin, and so to redeem the world by his sacrifice, nor that he was to rise, ascend, and reign, and intercede in glory; and yet they were then in a state of grace and life, such as believers were in before Christ's incarnation. And sure no more is required of the nations that cannot hear the gospel. But the resurrection was the beginning of the proper gospel state, and kingdom, to which all before was but preparatory; and then, by the Spirit, Christianity was formed to its settled consistence, and is a known, unalterable thing. And it is a great confirmation to our faith, that Christ's kingdom was not settled by any advantage of his personal presence, preaching, and persuasion, so much as by the Holy Ghost in his apostles and disciples, when he was gone

from them into heaven.

Sect. 41. But how are we sure that these three men tell us nothing but the truth? Answ. This is oft answered elsewhere. The Spirit which they spake and worked by was Christ's witness and theirs. They healed the sick, raised the dead, spake various languages which they never learned; and preached and recorded that holy doctrine committed to them by Christ, which itself contained the evidence of its divinity, and of their truth; and Christ then and to this day hath owned it, by the sanctifying efficacy of the same Spirit, upon millions of souls.

How holy a doctrine hath Peter himself delivered, as confirmed by his apparition! "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty; for he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; and this voice which came from heaven, we heard when we were with him in the holy mount." (2 Peter 1:16-18.) The words "in whom I am well pleased," are only here and in Matthew; Mark and Luke omitting them, tell us, that the evangelists undertook not to recite all that was said and done, but each one so much as seemed necessary for him to say.

Sect. 42. And now what remaineth, O my soul, but that thou take in the due impression of this apparition of the glory of Jesus and his saints; and that thou joyfully obey this heavenly voice, and hear the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father is well pleased?

I. As we that are born in another age and land must know what Christ said, by the transmission and certain testimony of them that heard him, infallible tradition, by act, word, and record, being our way of notice, as immediate sensation was theirs, so even the glorious apparition itself may, by the mediation of their infallible record, be partly transmitted to our imagination. An incorporate soul is so used to a mixed way of knowing by imagined ideas received by sense, that it would fain have such a sort of knowledge of separated souls, and other spirits, and of their glorious state and place, and work, and is hardly fully satisfied without it: seeing Christ hath partly condescended to this our culpable weakness, lose not the help of his condescension. Let this clear description of the heavenly sight make it to thee partly as if thou hadst been one of the three spectators; till thou canst say, 'Methinks I almost see the face of Christ shine as the sun, and his raiment whiter than the snow; and Moses and Elias (no doubt, in some degree of glory) standing with him;' methinks I almost hear them discoursing of Christ's death, and man's redemption: and by this sight I partly conceive of the unseen heavenly company and state; methinks I see the cloud receive them, when Peter had been transported with the sight; and I almost feel his pleasant raptures, and am ready to say, as if I had been with him, "It is good for us to be here;" methinks I almost hear the heavenly voice, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." And shall I yet doubt of the celestial society and glory? Had I once seen that, what a sense would it have left upon my heart, of the difference between earth and heaven, man and God, flesh and spirit, sin and duty! How thankfully should I have thought of the work of redemption and sanctification? And why may I not accordingly put myself as into the case of them who saw all Christ's miracles, and saw him risen, and ascend towards heaven? or, at least, of all those ordinary Christians who saw all the wonders done by the reporters of these things? I can easily receive a pleasing idea of some foreign, happy country, which a traveller describeth to me, though I never saw it; and my reason can partly gather what great things are, if I see but lesser of the same kind, or somewhat like them. A candle showeth

somewhat by which we may conceive of the greatest flame. Even grace and gracious actions do somewhat notify to us the state of glory; but the sight on the mount did more sensibly notify it.

Think not, then, that heavenly contemplation is an impossible thing, or a mere dream, as if it had no conceivable subject-matter to work upon: the visible things of earth are the shadows, the cobwebs, the bubbles, the shows, mummeries, and masks: and it is loving them, and rejoicing and trusting in them, that is the dream and dotage. Our heavenly thoughts, and hopes, and business, are more in comparison of these than the sun is to a glow-worm, or the world to a mole-hill, or governing an empire to the motions of a fly. And can I make somewhat, yea, too much, of these almost nothings; and yet shall I make almost nothing of the active, glorious, unseen world; and doubt and grope in my meditations of it, as if I had no substance to apprehend? If invisibility to mortals were a cause of doubting, or of unaffecting, unsatisfying thoughts, God himself, who is all to men and angels, would be as no God to us, and heaven as no heaven, and Christ as no Christ, and our souls, which are ourselves, would seem as nothing to themselves; and all men would be as no men to us, and we should converse only with carcasses and clothes.

Lord shine into this soul with such an heavenly, potent, quickening light, as may give me more lively and powerful conceptions of that which is all my hope and life! Leave me not to the exercise of art alone, in barren notions; but make it as natural to me to love thee, and breathe after thee: thou teachest the young ones both of men and brutes to seek to the dam for food and shelter: and though grace be not a brutish principle, but works by reason, it hath its nature and inclining force; and tendeth towards its original, as its end. Let not thy soul be destitute of that holy sense and appetite, which the divine and heavenly nature doth contain. Let me not lay more stress and trust upon my own sight and sense, than on the sight and fidelity of my God, and my Redeemer. I am not so foolish as to live, as if this earth were no bigger than the little of it which I see: let me not be so much more foolish as to think of the vast and glorious regions, and the blessed inhabitants thereof, and the receptacles of justified souls, as if they wanted either substantiality or certainty, to exercise a heavenly conversation here, and to feast believing souls with joy, and draw forth well-grounded and earnest desire to "depart and be with Christ."

Sect. 43. II. Hear then, and hear with trust and joy, the tidings and promises of him whom the voice from heaven commanded man to hear. He is the glorified Lord of heaven and earth: all is in his power. He hath told us nothing but what he knew, and promised nothing but what he is able and willing to give. Two sorts of things he hath required us to trust him for: things notified by express, particular promises, and things only generally promised and known to us.

We may know particularly that he will receive our departing souls, and justify them in judgment, and raise the dead, and all the rest particularly promised. And we know, in general, that we have a heavenly city and inheritance, and shall see God, and he with Christ in everlasting happiness, loving and praising God with joy in the perfected, glorious church of Christ. All this, therefore, we must explicitly believe. But it is little that we know distinctly of the consistence and operations of spirits and separated souls, as to a formal or modal conception; a great deal about the place, state, and mode, their acting, and fruition, is dark to us; but none of it is dark to Christ: here, therefore, an implicit trust should not only bind and stop our selfish and over-bold inquiries, but also quiet and comfort the soul, as well as if ourselves knew all.

O my soul, abhor and mortify thy selfish trust, and unbelieving thirst to have that knowledge of good and evil thyself, which is the prerogative of thy Lord and Saviour. This was the sin that first defiled human nature, and brought calamity on the world. God hath set thee enough to learn; know that, and thou knowest enough. If more were possible, it would be a perplexity and a snare, and he that increaseth such knowledge would increase sorrow: but when it is both unprofitable and impossible, what a sin and folly is it to waste our time, and tire and deceive our minds, in long and troublesome searches after it; and then disquietly to murmur at God, and the holy Scripture, and die with sad, distrustful fears, because we attain it not: when all this while we should have understood, that this part of knowledge belongs to Christ, and the heavenly society, and not to sinful mortals here; and that we have without it as much as may cause us to live and die in holiness, safety, peace, and joy, if we can but trust him who knoweth for us. Christ perfectly knoweth what spirits are, and how they act, and whether they have any corporeal organ, or vehicle, or none; and what is the difference between Enoch and Elias, and those that left their bodies here, and what a resurrection will add to souls, and how it will be wrought, and when; and what is meant by the thousand years' previous reign; and who they be that shall dwell in the new earth, and how it will be renewed. All the dark passages of Scripture and providence he can perfectly resolve: he knoweth why God leaveth the far greatest part of the world in Satan's slavery, darkness, and wickedness, and chooseth so few to real holiness: and why he maketh not men such as he commandeth them to be: and why he leaveth serious Christians to so much weakness, error, scandal, and division. These, and all other difficulties, are fully known to Christ. And it is not the child, but the father, that must know what food and clothing he should have, and the physician that must know what are the ingredients of his medicines, and why.

Lord, open my eyes, then, to see what thou hast revealed; and help me willingly to shut them to the rest; and to believe and trust in thee for both: not to stagger at thy sealed promises, nor selfishly to desire particular knowledge, which belongs not to me, as if I could trust myself, and my own knowledge, and not thine. Lord teach me to follow thee, even in the dark, as quietly and confidently as in the light (having the general light of thy promise of felicity). I knew not the mystery of thy conception, incarnation, or the way of the workings of thy Spirit on souls. No wonder if much of the resurrection and unseen world be above my reach; much more that thy infinite majesty is incomprehensible to me: how little do the brutes that see me know of my thoughts or me! I have no adequate knowledge of any one thing in the world, but somewhat of it is unknown. O blessed be that love and grace that has given me a glorified Head in heaven, to know all for me which I know not: hear and trust him, living and departing, O my soul! who hath told thee that we shall be with him where he is, and shall behold his glory; and that a crown of salvation is laid up for us, and we shall reign with him, when we have conquered and suffered with him, and hath bid us live in joyful hope of our exceeding, eternal, heavenly reward, and at our death to commend our spirits into his hand: receive us, Lord, according to thy promises. Amen.

3.00. Mere Christian

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Preface

Introduction 01 "Good Mr. Baxter"

02 Disciple

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Preface

Writing of Richard Baxter, Sir Stephen James observed, "Men of his size are not to be drawn in miniature." While this may be so, it is the hope of the writer that this "miniature" treatment of the life of Richard Baxter will serve as a call to modern church leaders to be diligent in their work. I hope it also serves as an introduction to one of the giants of the faith and an incentive for all believers to cultivate a passionate love of God and a lifestyle of self denial and service. This electronic version is free and may be downloaded. I would be very grateful if, after you have read Richard Baxter: Mere Christian, you would kindly send along any comments, criticisms, suggestions or report dead links by visiting the Contact page.

I would like to thank Becky and Pat Brennan for their kindred spirits, their encouragement, and their generosity in making this work available on the Biblical Eldership Homepage. Thanks also to Alexander Strauch, for asking me to write this book in the first place. His book, Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership, filled my heart with a fervent desire to shepherd God’s people. His mature wisdom has been a welcome resource over the years. Tim Nunnink, Michele Nunnink and Mark Richey were kind enough to read and critique my first draft, "speaking the truth in love." They, along with my brothers and sisters at the Nevada City Christian Fellowship, have been a constant source of encouragement, love, instruction, and most of all, inspiration.

While I consider Baxter a friend and counselor through my study of his life, a number of men have served as living examples of what it means to "shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28) I wish to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to those pastors who I have come to know personally and who have been my shepherds. As a young believer at Faith Bible Church, Guy Rimestad impressed upon me a love and enthusiasm for the Word of God, which still inspires me to serious study. During the three years our family spent in Maine, Burt Lowry at the Ellsworth Assembly of God demonstrated how to be a thoughtful counselor, a loving family man and the epitome of a servant leader. Joe Browne is a model of faith, integrity and fidelity to Scripture. My brother Paul Webster is an evangelist; There is nothing that excites Paul more than seeing someone come to know Jesus as he does. George Springer, of the Baptist Church in the village of Sedgwick ME, was a good neighbor, a light in that small community, a devoted and humble shepherd. Don McFarland is an elder in the truest sense; humble, devoted to the Word of God, loving and gentle, with an impeccable reputation in the community. Tim Hutchins, Bill Fewell, Jim Robertson, "bi-vocational pastors," were faithful friends and counselors, "exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness..." As an elder at the Nevada City Christian Fellowship, I have been blessed to serve over the years with a number of exceptionally gifted, loving, meek, and humble men. Words cannot express how they have influenced me for the good, as I have observed them in some of the most difficult situations. My only prayer is that I will prove worthy of their confidence in the coming years. My children Sam, Camille, and Emma were very patient, sharing their dad with a 17th century eccentric. To this day, it is not uncommon for one or all to mimic me with the exclamation, "Ahhhh..... Baxter!" and a giggle. Finally, I wish to thank the wife of my youth, Denise, who has encouraged me all along the way in my quest to know Richard Baxter. Concerning Denise, I need only echo the words of Baxter, "...I am not ashamed to have been much ruled by her prudent love in many things. And you will the less wonder when I have told you what she and I were."

Introduction

You see on your screen yet another book on Christian leadership that demands a reading; "a must for the serious pastor or church leader!" But, warns the Preacher, "the writing of books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body." (1) So, you must wonder, "What sets this book apart from the dozens of other indispensable resources on the subject? How do I know that this is not the final book; the one which makes me weary?" The answer lies not in a vigorous writing style, nor pleasant typeface and graphics, skillful editing, or even because it can be read in a single sitting. No, the answer is found in the life of Richard Baxter, arguably the most energetic and successful pastor since New Testament times.

Just as Spurgeon is known as the "Prince of Preachers," so Baxter can be considered the "Prince of Pastors." The well-known Christian author and authority on the Puritans, J.I. Packer, called him "incomparable" (2) in his zeal and abilities as a shepherd of souls, as well as "...the most outstanding pastor, evangelist and writer on practical and devotional themes that Puritanism produced."(3)

Throughout the Acts and the epistles, we are given sketches of the first century pastors, Jesus' undershepherds, as well as instructions concerning their conduct and character. Paul, in his letter

to Timothy, writes that an overseer must be able to teach; he must be free from the love of money and a one woman man. He instructs Titus, on the island of Crete, to appoint elders who are hospitable, self-controlled, and "able to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." (4) The qualities outlined in Scripture must be present in any man who shepherds God's people, but in Baxter we see them manifested with extraordinary energy and power. His flock is cared for enthusiastically, effectively, and successfully. Therefore, his life forms an ideal portrait of the pastor who does not serve out of a sense of obligation or a feeling of accomplishment; And, certainly not to simply make a living. Baxter shepherded God's people for His glory and their salvation. To Baxter, conducting the souls of men to heaven made the pastoral work the most important labor a man can engage in. Consequently, he possessed an earnestness which will amaze you. Not content with a simple "sinner's prayer," Baxter worked tirelessly, intimately, "with fear and trembling" to guide his "good neighbors" to the heavenly Jerusalem. Hopefully, through this sketch of Baxter's life, you will sense the seriousness of the work you are engaged in as a leader in Christ's church. Rather than wearying you with another book, I pray that you will be renewed, invigorated, and stirred up to "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness... (5)

Baxter's uncompromising love for the gospel and his earnestness for men's salvation took him many places. It also incited his enemies to bar him from some and to imprison him in others. For this reason, a brief chronology will be helpful to follow Baxter's life. He was born at Rowton in Shropshire on November 12, 1615, educated in the free school at Wroxeter from 1629 -32, and then went on to be tutored at Ludlow Castle. In 1638 he was ordained a deacon and served as the headmaster at Richard Foley's School in Dudley in 1639. From 1639-40 Baxter was the curate or assistant to the priest, at Bridgnorth. Then, he went to Kidderminster where he would spend the next twenty years, first as curate and then as vicar, with an interruption of two years as a chaplain in the Army from 1645-47. In 1661 Baxter's work for Christian unity took him to London, but the forces of intolerance emerged victorious and he was never allowed to return to his beloved Kidderminster. He spent his final thirty years in or around London, first at Moorfields 1662-63, then Acton 1663-69, Totteridge 1669-73, and Bloomsbury 1673-85. He was imprisoned for treason at Southwark from 1685-86. Upon his release, Baxter lived near his friend and editor, Matthew Sylvester, in Charterhouse Yard, Finsbury from 1686 until his death on December 8, 1691.

Sir Stephen James, writing of Baxter, said, "Men of his size are not to be drawn in miniature." Yet, sometimes a "miniature" will capture the interest of those who might not ordinarily tackle a 300 page biography. It is the prayer of this author that a detailed miniature of Richard Baxter will inspire Christian men everywhere to become earnest and effective leaders among God's people, and perhaps to get to know Baxter better through the excellent biographies available, as well as his own works.

1 Ecclesiastes 12:12 2 J.I. Packer, Introduction to , The Reformed Pastor 11 3 J.I. Packer A Quest For Godliness (Wheaton, IL: 1990) 302 4 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9

5 1 Peter 5:2

3.01. "Good Mr. Baxter"

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter "Good Mr. Baxter"

"A little love has made me willingly study, preach, write, and even suffer..."

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

Acts 20:28

Paul’s final words to the Ephesian elders should fill all who would endeavor to shepherd a body of believers with a sobering sense of both profound privilege and awesome responsibility.

God demands the best for His people, but when we consider the pastoral care in many churches today, are we not bound to confess that much of what passes for oversight is simply the fruit of runaway egos or the lackluster efforts of pastors who have grown inattentive and lazy? Christian leaders need to commit themselves anew to humble, earnest oversight of God’s flock, because every member has been bought with a price. That price was the precious blood of Christ. Our present situation is not unique. Many of the churches in seventeenth-century England were languishing under the oversight of men who had lost sight of the value of God’s priceless flock. They had become inattentive and lazy. One pastor, Richard Baxter, came under the conviction that it was time for the clergy in England to awaken to their task and be "reformed" or renewed in their ministry; The time had come to diligently "shepherd the church of God" with purpose and passion.

Baxter understood rightly that before he would see a reformation in others, he must begin with himself. A fire erupted in Baxter, igniting every part of his being and the effect he was to have in the churches of his day, as well as later generations has never been matched. Reflecting on the life of Baxter, John Wilkins, bishop of Chester concluded, "if he had lived in the primitive time he had been one of the fathers of the church." (1)

Baxter first came to public attention as the curate [assistant to the local vicar or priest] in the church at Kidderminster, a notoriously irreligious town which consisted of about 800 families. Baxter states, "when I came thither first, there was about one Family in a Street that worshipped God and called on his Name, and when I came away there were some Streets where there was not past one Family in the side of a Street that did not so..." (2) The effects of his ministry in that community were dramatic and enduring. When George Whitefield, the eighteenth century Methodist evangelist, passed through the town one hundred years later, he noted the lingering "sweet savour of good Mr. Baxter’s doctrine, works and discipline." (3)

While at Kidderminster, Baxter’s evangelistic fervor spilled over in his most popular literary work, A Call to the Unconverted, while his enduring devotional book, The Saints Everlasting Rest, beckoned tens of thousands to meditate daily upon God’s promised rest. Both books were runaway bestsellers and the first of over 130 written and published in his 76 years! They remain in

print to this day, convicting, convincing, and converting thousands. As a preacher, writes his biographer, Frederick J. Powicke, he "could sway any audience as the wind can sway a field of corn." (4) His passionate, practical style made him very popular in Puritan England. He served as a chaplain during England's Civil War (1642-1647), preached before Oliver Cromwell (b. 1599- d. 1658), the Puritan leader and Lord Protector of England, and was appointed a royal chaplain to Charles II (b. 1630 - d. 1685).

Baxter, the scholar, was virtually self-taught, receiving little formal education. He became versed in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek and had an encyclopedic knowledge and recall of the writings of the church fathers. His manuscripts reveal that he rarely edited or corrected his writings, but published them from the first draft! The margins are crowded with hundreds of references to a wide variety of classical and religious scholars, spanning two thousand years. Ever the caring shepherd, he diligently pursued his studies until his death, considering them essential for the proper feeding of those under his care.

Baxter could not conceive of a life divided into categories labeled "sacred" or "secular," so everything he did was managed skillfully, earnestly, and under the scrutiny of his Master, to whom he would one day render a full account. Like the prophet Micah, he was consumed with God's passion for social justice. He inherited five small tenements, but never took rent from them. Instead, he turned the money over to his "poor kindred." His final treatise finished only months before his death, The Poor Husbandman's Advocate to Rich Racking Landlords - written in compassion especially of their Souls and of the Land,, was a stirring appeal for justice, addressed to the wealthy landowners of his day. He expressed opposition to slavery 100 years before Wilberforce brought the issue before the House of Commons and nearly 200 years before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, writing: To go as pirates and catch up poor negroes or people of another land...and to make them slaves, and sell them, is one of the worst kinds of thievery in the world...and they that buy them and use them as beasts, for their mere commodity...are fitter to be called incarnate devils than christians... (5)

Baxter's achievements are extraordinary. But, when we consider the obstacles which he faced daily, they are nothing short of miraculous and they stand as a testimony to God's faithfulness to those who will give themselves unreservedly to His service. He was plagued by a virtual catalogue of physical maladies all of his adult life. Every single day Baxter experienced pain or discomfort and he hovered at the point of death numerous times. To list his symptoms and diseases would literally fill pages! But, pain couldn't quench the fire in Baxter; it just slowed him down for a time:

...I fell into a Disease in my Eyes almost incredible; I had near every Day for one Year, and every second Day for another Year, a fresh Macula, commonly called a Pearl, in one Eye, besides very many in the other...till...I had almost lost my Eye...Thus I continued two years, curing the Spot one Day, and finding it still returned the next Morning...I went on with my Studies, though not without Pain and much Disturbance. (6) His work at Kidderminster was interrupted by religious controversy, persecution, and civil unrest, as opposing armies skirmished in the surrounding countryside. Toward the end of his life he was arrested, fined, and imprisoned again and again for preaching the gospel without state approval. At the age of 70, he was tried on the trumped-up charge of treason and sentenced to eighteen months in prison. Yet, after a lifetime of trials, Baxter would write, "All these I mention as obliged to record the Mercies of my great preserver to his

Praise and Glory." (7) As a shepherd among God’s people, Richard Baxter made Acts 20:28 the motivation for everything he did and he passionately urged others to do so, as well. Paul’s words, he said, are "A short sermon, but not soon learned!" (8)

It was his conviction that the overseers of Christ’s blood-bought church must not become complacent, but continually be reformed, allowing others to disciple and teach them:

Though we teach our people, as officers set over them in the Lord, yet may we teach one another, as brethren in office, as well as in faith...We have the same sins to mortify, and the same graces to be quickened and strengthened, as our people have... (9) The church of Christ is priceless, reasoned Baxter, so Paul’s "short sermon," must be repeated often to remind pastors, both intellectually and practically, what it means to "be on guard" for themselves and the flock. At the close of the twentieth century, do we need to be "aroused from the negligence in our work," as the pastors of Baxter’s day were? When we reflect upon our motivation for ministry, do we ever stop to ponder the purchase price of the people we shepherd? Jesus paid that inestimable price at the cross; We could never do enough to repay Him. But, as His undershepherds, we must certainly do more. Let us humble ourselves and receive instruction from the life of Richard Baxter, as he illustrates, in word and deed, Paul’s "short sermon."

1 Cited in Richard Baxter , Encyclopedia Britannica (New York: 1910 ed.) 2 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae (London: 1696), Part 1, 84 & 85 3 Packer, The Reformed Pastor 12 4 Frederick J. Powicke the Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter (London, 1924) 281 5 Richard Baxter A Christian Directory (Ligonier, PA. Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1990) 462 6 Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae, Part 1, 82 7 Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae, Part 1, 82 8 Baxter, The Reformed Pastor 51 9 Baxter, The Reformed Pastor 51

3.02. Disciple

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Disciple

"If you are ministers of Christ indeed, you will long for the perfecting of his body, and the gathering in of his elect; and you will Travail as in birth till Christ be formed in the souls of your people."

Richard Baxter's godly life and his incredible achievements flowed almost endlessly from two Spiritual qualities; A love for the gospel, the message of God's love to man, and an incredible earnestness in serving his Savior. His love for the gospel was rooted in a real and lively relationship with the God who had saved him from the power of sin and the flames of hell. For Baxter, the natural response of a disciple of Christ is selfless service, leading others to the One who is able to save them, as well.

While Baxter, the theologian, writer, and churchman, has been the study of historians for three hundred years, it is Baxter the disciple of Jesus which has fascinated Christians of every nation and every station in life. Baxter spent much time contemplating his spiritual state throughout his life, always examining himself to see whether he was "in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). In his autobiography he recounts his conversion, beginning with his first pangs of guilt and the realization that he was a sinner. He records the initial stirrings of the Spirit, his calling upon Jesus as his mediator and he details how God gave him assurance of salvation, resolving his distressing doubts and questions. It is this real-life, authentic faith in God which his contemporaries found so familiar and compelling in Baxter, the pastor. His story begins in 1615 at Rowton in Shropshire, England during the reign of James I (b. 1566 - d. 1625). The gambling habits of his father had saddled the family with debt. But, by the time Richard was born, his condition had improved to a "Competent Estate of a Freeholder, free from the Temptations of Poverty and Riches." (1) This turn of events was brought about by the conversion of Baxter's father:

...it pleased God to instruct and change my Father, by the bare reading of the Scriptures in private, without either Preaching, or Godly Company, or any other Books but the Bible: And God made him the Instrument of my first Convictions, and Approbation of a Holy Life... (2) The Baxter family lived in a county where there was "but little Preaching at all" and most of the clergy, by Baxter's account, were ignorant, immoral, drunkards. (3) Those ministers in the surrounding area who took the Bible seriously, teaching their flocks from the Word of God and urging them to a life of holiness, were denounced as "Puritans." Young Richard, having no first-hand knowledge of these pastors, was inclined to believe the worst about them, until he heard his own father ridiculed:

...only for reading Scripture when the rest were Dancing on the Lord's Day, and for praying (by a Form out of the end of the Common-Prayer Book) in his House, and for reproving Drunkards and Swearers, and for talking sometimes a few words of Scripture and the Life to come, he was reviled commonly by the Name of Puritan, Precision, and Hypocrite... (4)

Richard’s father introduced him to the Bible at a young age and he developed a great love of Scripture, "though all that time [he] neither understood nor relished much the Doctrinal Part, and Mystery of Redemption." Although young Richard’s love of the Scriptures did not spring from a complete understanding, he recognized later the source of his affection for the Bible:

...there is in a spiritual heart a co-naturality to the Word of God, because this is the seed which did regenerate him. The Word is that seal which made all the holy impressions that are in the hearts of true believers, and stamped the image of God upon them... (5) As a boy, he greatly feared sinning and its consequences, but had not experienced God’s grace and the power of His Spirit. In his own account, he confesses to being "addicted" to a detailed catalog of sins, including irreverence towards his parents, pride in his intellect, the reading of romances, lying, and plundering his neighbor’s pear and apple orchards. For years, it seems he was troubled by his powerlessness over sin. Then, at the age of fifteen:

...it pleased God of his wonderful Mercy to open my eyes with a clearer insight into the Concerns and Case of my own soul, and to touch my heart with a livelier feeling of things Spiritual...and shew me the folly of Sinning, and the misery of the Wicked, and the unexpressible weight of things Eternal, and the necessity of resolving on a Holy Life...(6)

Baxter’s awakening began with the reading of Bunny’s Resolution, a tattered old book, which he borrowed from the elderly reader in his parish. Since there was little preaching on Sundays, Richard continued privately to study the Bible and pray out of the prayer book. He also spent time in books which gave him " a livelier apprehension of the Mystery of Redemption" and sense of gratitude toward Jesus Christ. "And thus" writes Baxter "(without any means but Books) was God pleased to resolve me for himself." (7) For some time, however, Baxter experienced doubts concerning his salvation. He was troubled by his hard heartedness and the fact that, although he was a Christian, he would occasionally commit sins "deliberately and knowingly."

Most disturbing was the fact that he could not "distinctly trace the Workings of the Spirit" or the time of his conversion, as a number of contemporary writers had described. But, the study of God’s Word and years in the company of "some Reverend and peaceable Divines [ministers]" caused him to understand "that the Soul is in too dark and passionate a plight at first, to be able to keep an exact account of the order of its Own operations." (8) Although some may know the day and hour of their salvation, "God breaketh not all Men’s hearts alike." (9)

Baxter’s youthful doubts never troubled him again, but in his mid 20’s he faced the most serious challenge to his faith; One which is all too common in the lives of Christian leaders. He writes:

I was now assaulted with more pernicious Temptations; especially to question the certain Truth of the Sacred Scriptures; and also the Life to come... Though formerly I was wont when any such Temptation came, to cast it aside, as fitter to be abhorred than considered of, yet now this would not give me satisfaction; but I was fain to dig to the very Foundations, and seriously to examine the Reasons of Christianity, and to give a hearing to all that could be said against it, that so my Faith might be indeed my own. And at last I found that...Nothing is so firmly believed, as that which hath been sometime doubted of. (10)

These periods of uncertainty passed, but Baxter gained valuable wisdom and insight which would be a source of blessing to others. As Paul exclaimed:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) So, Baxter would draw upon the solace he received from the Lord to encourage others. He records:

It much increased my peace when God's Providence called me to the comforting of many others that had the same Complaints: While I answered their Doubts, I answered my own; and the Charity which I was constrained to exercise for them redounded to my self, and insensibly abated my Fears, and procured me an increase of quietness of Mind. (11)

Baxter's proven faith, practically applied to every situation in his difficult life, yielded the earnestness for which he was famous. He can rightly be considered the embodiment of the Puritan ideal of submitting everything to God's will. For English Puritans, eternity was always close at hand. Whether pestilence and disease, or the shifting winds of ecclesiastical and political change, the Puritan had to be ready to face God in a moment's notice. J.I Packer paints this picture of a life of uncertainty and frightening realism: The Puritans experienced systematic persecution for their faith; what we today think of the comforts of home were unknown to them; their medicine and surgery were rudimentary; they had no aspirins, tranquillisers, sleeping tablets, or anti-depressant pills, just as they had no social security or insurance; in a world in which more than half the adult population died young and more than half the children born died in infancy, disease, distress, discomfort, pain and death were their constant companions. (12) This produced in the Puritan a spirit of urgency and diligence which, in turn, gave them a deep appreciation for even the most mundane aspects of everyday life. This Puritan worldview, in which the wasting of time was a serious sin, is notably absent in much church leadership today. While we do not seem to live in the imminent peril which they did nor appreciate the value of time, we would be wise to consider the observation of James:

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. (James 4:14) God was pleased to make Baxter aware of his own mortality and future estate while he was yet in his teens: For being in expectation of Death, by a violent Cough, with Spitting of Blood, &c. of two years continuance, supposed to be of a Consumption [tuberculosis], I was yet more awakened to be serious, and solicitous about my Soul's everlasting State...and since then I have found that this method of God's very wise, and no other was so like to have tended to my good. (13)

Baxter was plagued by sickness to the degree that he was "seldom an hour free from pain" from the age of twenty-one to his death at seventy-six (14). Headaches and toothaches were a daily occurrence. Nosebleeds of up to a pint a day were also common to Baxter. But, rather than hindering him, this condition filled him with an urgent desire to accomplish as much good as possible in the time remaining. In fact, Baxter praised God that, while he was seldom free from pain, he "...was never one hour Melancholy..." His only complaint was his inability to work because of his loss of "...time in the Morning, for want of being able to rise early..." (15)

It seemed that Baxter never expected to live through the next winter. But, rather than being consumed by fear or self-pity, he could only think of "...such ignorant, presumptuous, careless Sinners as the World aboundeth with." (16)He committed himself to sharing Christ's love with anyone who would listen to him. He feared his lack of formal academic honors would hinder him,

but "...resolved that if one or two souls only might be won to God, it would easily recompense all the dishonour which for want of Titles I might undergo from Men!" (17)

Baxter's illness was not the only motive for his diligence in ministry. He was firmly convinced that the Holy Spirit was the one who had made him an overseer.(18) And, he knew he was involved in spiritual warfare, contending for each soul under his charge:

O brethren, what a world of wickedness have we to contend against in one soul: and what a number of these worlds! And when you think you have done something, you leave the seed among the fowls of the air; wicked men are at their elbows to rise up and contradict all you have said. You speak but once to a sinner, for ten or twenty times that the emissaries of Satan speak to them.(19) Baxter's earnestness is clearly seen in this exhortation to his fellow pastors:

Let us, therefore, rouse ourselves to the work of the Lord, and speak to our people as for their lives, and save them as by violence, 'pulling them out of the fire.' Satan will not be charmed out of his possession: we must lay siege to the souls of sinners, which are his garrison, and find out where his chief strength lieth, and lay the battery of God's ordnance against it, and ply it close, till a breach is made..." (20) The thoughts conveyed in these words of Baxter's seem foreign and unfamiliar to our modern minds. He seems so...well, so serious! But, why? Is it because Richard Baxter was some sort of fanatic or extremist? Are these simply the outdated notions of a Puritan?

No. Baxter was motivated by the same Spirit Who caused Peter, the apostle, to exhort his fellow elders to "...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness..."(21) Perhaps, the sad truth is we are out of touch with the Spirit Who inspired Peter and energized Baxter.

J.I. Packer is one who has found much in the biographies and writings of the Puritans worthy of imitation. He sums up the effect that Baxter, in particular, has had upon him in these words:

Few of us, I think, live daily on the edge of eternity in the conscious way that the Puritans did, and we lose out as a result....Reckoning with death brought appreciation of each day's continued life, and the knowledge that God would eventually decide, without consulting them, when their work on earth was done brought energy for the work itself while they were still being given time to get on with it. As I move through my own seventh decade, in better health than can possibly last, I am more glad than I can say for what Puritans like Bunyan and Baxter have taught me about dying; I needed it, and the preachers I hear these days never get to it, and modern Christian writers seem quite clueless about it - save for C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams... (22)

It is true that many of us may, by the grace of God, live to a ripe old age, free from persecution or serious illness. But, rather than sink into complacency or squander the precious time God has given us, let us follow Paul's command to the Romans, to lead with diligence. It is, after all, our "spiritual service of worship." (23) Catch the urgency of Richard Baxter:

O brethren, what a blow we may give to the kingdom of darkness, by the faithful and skilful managing of this work! If, then, the saving of souls, of your neighbours' souls, of many souls, from everlasting misery, be worth your labour, up and be doing!(24) 1 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae, Part 1, 1 2 Ibid., Part 1, 2 3 Ibid., Part 1, 1 & 2 4 Ibid., Part 1, 3 5 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 121

6 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae,Part 1, 3 7 Ibid., Part 1, 4 8 Ibid., Part 1, 6 9 Ibid., Part 1, 7 10 Ibid., Part 1, 21 & 22 11 Ibid., Part 1, 9 12 J.I. Packer A Quest for Godliness (Wheaton, IL, 1990) 13 13 Ibid., Part 1, 5 14 Ibid., Part 1, 80 15 Ibid., Part III, 60 16 Ibid., Part 1, 12 17 Ibid., Part 1, 12

18 Acts 20:28 19 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae, Part 1, 125 20 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 149

21 1 Peter 5:2 22 J.I. Packer A Quest for Godliness (Wheaton, IL, 1990) 14 23 Romans 12:1-2; Romans 12:8 24 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 176

3.03. Student

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Student "The devil is a greater scholar than you, and a nimbler disputant... "

Arthur Stanley, onetime professor of Church history at Oxford and dean of Westminster, called Baxter "the chief of English Protestant Schoolmen," (1) while Hugh Martin described Baxter, the scholar, in these words:

He was a rapid and omnivorous reader, with a wide knowledge especially of the classics, Church history and theology. The range of his references in his footnotes is extraordinary, and the quantity and range of his own writing is almost past belief. (2)

Certainly, one would think, Baxter's academic accomplishment must find it's root in a quality education and the cultivation of good study habits early in life. But, such was not the case. In fact, it would be hard to imagine a more dismal scholastic experience than what one writer called Baxter's "desultory and defective education." (3) His first instructors in the local church schools included a day laborer, a tailor, a local stage actor, a law clerk who was known for his public drunkeness, and a curate who fled after it had been discovered that his ordination papers were forged! These were the men who, according to Baxter, "taught school and tipled on the week-days, and whipt the boys when they were drunk." (4) And, what kind of student was young Richard? Baxter recalls:

...the case as I remember when I was a boy our School was in, when we had barred out our Master:...when we had got out our master and shut fast the doors, we grew bold, and talkt to him at our pleasure; then no one was Master, and everyone was Master; we spend our time in playing and quarreling... (5)

Prospects brightened when, at the age of fourteen he began attending John Owen's free school and Baxter proved to be an outstanding student. He planned to go on to Oxford, but Owen advised him against it. Instead Owen suggested that he go to nearby Ludlow Castle, under the tutelage of a Mr. Wickstead, who promised a superior education for an ambitious young pupil. Baxter's parents, not eager to have their only child so far from home, welcomed this advice and agreed. They felt that a young man of Baxter's charm and intellect could rise to a position of honor and wealth, so they insisted he pursue the life of a courtier. Richard honored their wish, but it was a decision he would forever regret. At Ludlow, Baxter found that Mr. Wickstead didn't have the ability or desire to tutor him, but was only interested in gaining favor with the lawyers, judges, and other court officials there. Tutoring one of Owen's top students was merely part of the charade. However, there was a fine library at the castle and Baxter spent most of his time in personal study and contemplation of spiritual matters.

It was also at Ludlow Castle, among "many idle Gentlemen," that Baxter learned of the enticements of the aristocratic life. He found that he had a disturbing attraction to dice and card

playing, as well as considerable skill at gambling. In his first match against "the best Gamester in the House," every roll of the dice turned up in his favor and his incredible luck gained him the admiration of the rabble there. This, reasoned Baxter, was no coincidence:

I took the hint, and believed that the Devil had the ruling of the Dice, and did it to entice me on to be a Gamester. And so I gave him his ten shillings again, and resolved I would never more play at Tables whilst I lived. (6)

After a year and a half, Baxter returned home and began studying with a local minister. But, "a violent Cough, with the Spitting of Blood, &c. of two years continuance..." eventually made it impossible to continue. Although his quest for academic success was thwarted again, the nearness of death had a sobering effect on Baxter and brought an eternal perspective to his studies:

It caused me first to seek God's Kingdom and his righteousness, and most to mind the One thing needful...by which I was engaged to choose out and prosecute all other Studies...Therefore Divinity was not only carried on with the rest of my Studies with an equal hand, but always had the first and chiefest place!...And by that means I prosecuted all my Studies with unweariedness and delight...and also less of my time was lost by lazy intermissions... (7)

Baxter concluded "...this method of God's was very wise, and no other was so like to have tended to my good." His new found conviction to "study and preach things necessary," coupled with his natural love of learning, were enough to overcome any deficiencies in his education and make him one of the foremost Christian thinkers of his time. His attitude toward worldly success underwent a transformation, as well. Initially Baxter feared his lack of formal academic honors would hinder him, but he "...resolved that if one or two souls only might be won to God, it would easily recompense all the dishonour which for want of Titles I might undergo from Men!" (8) And, constant illness and the spectre of death continually at his door taught Baxter to make good use of every minute in the day, a skill which would play an important part in the pastoral care of the large flock at Kidderminster.

Just how successful was Baxter in the wise use of his time? Let the reader consider his daily schedule during his period at Kidderminster and judge for himself. Baxter's constant pain would not allow him to rise before seven in the morning and then it would take him nearly an hour to get dressed. Headaches and fatigue brought any serious study to a halt soon after his evening meal. Baxter exercised two hours a day, usually a brisk walk or a ride through the countryside on his horse before meals. On Sundays, he would be careful to exercise in private, so as not to "tempt others to sin." And, he spent one hour a day, without fail, meditating upon the Scriptures. Preaching, teaching, counseling, and writing consumed huge amounts of time, yet Baxter always found time to study.

Baxter's natural thirst for knowledge and learning was probably enough to keep him from ever neglecting his studies, but he was well aware of his own tendency to read the wrong sort of books and squander his time in "superfluous recreations," "loitering," or "vain discourse."

Today, it is more common for church shepherds to allow their studies to be crowded out by administrative burdens and duties which may actually be the responsibility of others in the body. But, the Scripture is emphatic in charging pastors with "holding fast the faithful word which is in

accordance with the teaching, that [they] may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." (9) This requires ongoing, thorough study of the Scriptures, as well as familiarity with the current "wind of doctrine" blowing through the church.

He warned lazy and careless shepherds, "It is not now and then an idle snatch or taste of studies that will serve to make an able and sound divine [man of God]." Baxter chided those pastors who believed it was the Spirit's way to magically impart understanding and to: cause us to thrive in a course of idleness, and to bring us to knowledge by dreams when we are asleep, or to take us up into heaven, and show us his counsels, while we think of no such matter, but are idling away our time on earth! O that men should dare, by their laziness, to 'quench the Spirit,' and then pretend the Spirit for the doing of it! (10)

"Study hard, for the well is deep, and our brains shallow..," (11) Baxter urged his fellow pastors. He was preaching to himself, as well.

Books, carefully chosen, played the primary role in Baxter's self education. His life-long appreciation for good books stemmed from his own conversion: And the use God made of Books, above Ministers, to the benefit of my Soul, made me somewhat excessively in love with good Books; so that I thought I had never [enough], but [scraped] up as great a Treasure of them as I could. This reflection from his own Dying Thoughts gives us a revealing sketch of a man who loved books. When I die I must depart not only from several delights, but from the more manly pleasures of my studies, knowledge and converse with many wise and godly men, and from all my pleasure in reading, hearing, public and private exercises of religion, etc. I must leave my library and turn over those pleasant books no more. (12)

Baxter's rooms at Kidderminster were small and plain, but the walls held shelves full of books. Stacks covered the furniture and floor. On one occasion, his "treasure" almost killed him. What follows is Baxter's humorous account of a near fatal calamity in his library: as I sat in my study, the weight of my greatest Folio Books brake down three or four of the highest Shelves, when I sat close under them, and they fell down on every side me, and not one of them hit me, save one upon the Arm; whereas the Place, the weight, and greatness of the Books was such, and my Head just under them, that it was a Wonder they had not beaten out my Brains, one of the Shelves right over my Head having the six Volumes of Dr. Walton's Oriental Bible, and all Austin's Works, and the Bibliotheca Patrum, and Marlorate, & c. (13)

Perhaps Baxter's fondness for books went too far. After the Great Fire of 1662, he walked among the ruins and rubble of London, surveying the devastated city. To Baxter, the loss of buildings and belongings was shocking, but not so great as the loss in books! Besides the destruction of the bookseller's stock, Baxter lamented, "The Library, also, of Sion-College was burnt, and most of the Libraries of Ministers...I saw the half-burnt leaves of books near my dwelling in Acton, six miles from London, but others found them near Windsor, almost twenty miles distant." (14)

No, in spite of his great appetite for reading and learning, only one book was indispensable to Baxter. The Bible took first place and determined the value of all others:

Let all writers have their due esteem, but compare none of them with the Word of God. We will not refuse their service, but we must abhor them as rivals or competitors. It is the sign of a distempered heart that loseth the relish of Scripture excellency. (15)

Paul’s instructions to Timothy, along with Baxter’s own trials and experience, gave direction to his ongoing education. The Bible alone gives "the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The man of God who immerses himself in the Scriptures will be "adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:15 b & 2 Timothy 3:17 b) This illustration of a tree, expressed in Baxter’s pungent style, puts the pursuit of knowledge in proper perspective: As the Stock of the Tree affordeth Timber to build Houses and Cities, when the small though higher multifarious Branches are to make a Crows Nest, or a Blaze: so the Knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, of Heaven and Holyness, doth build up the Soul to endless Blessedness, and affordeth it solid Peace and Comfort; when a multitude of School Niceties serve but for vain Janglings and hurtful Diversions and Contentions: and yet I would not dissuade my Reader from the perusal of Aquinas, Scotus, Ockam, Arminiensis, Durandus, or any such writer: for much Good may be gotten from them: But I would persuade him to study and live upon the essential doctrines of Christianity and Godliness, incomparably above them all. (16) At a time when the shelves of Christian bookstores are glutted with trendy self-help and how-to books, perhaps we need to ask ourselves if we are careful to read only those books which "affordeth timber" to build ourselves up, as well as the body of Christ. Or, would they be more suitable for "a crows nest, or a blaze?"

It is doubtful if you, the reader, will be considered the "chief Protestant Schoolman" of this century. Few of us will ever approach the academic reputation or obtain the wealth of knowledge which Baxter possessed. But, is that our goal? No. If we will make God "the end, the object, and the life" of our studies, as Baxter did, He will determine the success of our labor and those given to our care will enjoy the fruits of our work. How desperately the Body of Christ today needs those pastors who will draw fresh water from the inexhaustible well of the Word of God, to refresh and wash His lambs; Men who esteem a minute as gold, making the most of their time, for their own sake, as well as those in His body. Baxter is direct on this point: "...life is short, and we are dull, and eternal things are necessary, and the souls that depend on our teaching are precious." (17) 1 "Baxter, Richard" Encyclopedia Britannica (New York, NY: 1910) 551 2Martin Puritanism 122 3 Cited in Encyclopedia Americana (New york, NY: 1959), "Baxter, Richard," Volume 3, 358 4 Geoffrey F. Nuttall Richard Baxter (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1965) 2 & 3

5 Ibid. 1 6 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae 12 7 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae 5 & 6 8 Ibid., Part 1, 12

9 Titus 1:9 10 Baxter Reformed Pastor 71

11 Ibid. 112 12 Baxter cited in Martin Puritanism 189 13 Powicke Richard Baxter 28 14 Baxter Reformed Pastor 120 15 2 Timothy 3:15 b & 2 Timothy 3:17 b 16 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae 127 17 Baxter Reformed Pastor 113

3.04. Teacher

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Teacher

"...we shall have the best opportunity to impress the truth upon their hearts, when we can speak to each individuals particular necessity, and say to the sinner, thou art the man; and plainly mention his particular case; and set home the truth with familiar importunity. "

Baxter enjoyed immense popularity during his own lifetime for his preaching and writing. But, he is remembered best for his work of discipling at Kidderminster and the phenomenal transformation which took place there.

He came to Kidderminster, a parish of about 4000 people, as the assistant to an incompetent vicar, among "an ignorant, rude and revelling People," with only a handful of believers. In his first year, he was ridiculed as a Puritan and mocked in effigy at the annual town fair. Twenty years later, he left a vibrant, lively body of Christians. These are his own words: My publick Preaching met with an attentive diligent auditory!.. The Congregation was usually full, so that we were fain to build five Galleries after my coming thither...Our private Meetings also were full. On the Lord's Days there was no disorder to be seen in the Streets, but you might hear an hundred Families singing Psalms and repeating Sermons, as you passed through the Streets. (1) The believers there continued to bear fruit after Baxter moved away to London: And the Zeal and Knowledge of this poor People provoked many in other parts of the Land. And though I have been now absent from them about six Years and they have been assaulted with Pulpit-Calumnies, and Slanders, with Threatenings and Imprisonments, enticing Words, and seducing Reasonings and they yet stand fast and keep their Integrity... (2)

Baxter recognized that the revival at Kidderminster was all God's doing, but he also observed that God uses human means to achieve His ends. Baxter's means of making disciples was one on one, teaching and applying the basic truths of Christianity. "Make disciples of all nations..." That is the goal of all Christian teaching. Baxter said it well: The ministerial work must be carried on purely for God and the salvation of souls, not for any private ends of our own...Hard studies, much knowledge, and excellent preaching, if the ends be not right is but more glorious hypocritical sinning. (3)

What was the content and the aim of Baxter's teaching and preaching? He preached once each Sunday (twice before the War) and once on Thursday, focusing on: the great Fundamental Principles of Christianity contained in their Baptismal Covenant, even a right knowledge of, and subjection and love to, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and Love to all Men, and Concord with the Church and one another... (4)

He would occasionally introduce a subject "above their own discovery," in order to keep them humble and teachable, staying clear of controversy and "Novelties of Doctrine." Always, Baxter's

goal was to "increase their Knowledge; and also to make Religion pleasant to them, by a daily addition to their former Light, and to draw them on with desire and Delight." (5) As far as intellect and godliness, Baxter stood head and shoulders above the poor people of Kidderminster. Also, in seventeenth-century England, the contrast between clergy and laity was sharp, with ministers being regarded as a privileged class. Baxter's distinguished life and the class distinctions of the times might cause us to conclude that he stayed aloof from the more common sort. But, Baxter was a servant leader, possessing those qualities required of an overseer outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-16. Hospitality and intimacy were essential elements in Baxter's style of teaching; a style which was developed early in life and bore abundant fruit at Kidderminster. On Thursday evenings, his home was open to neighbors. This was an informal meeting where they would sing a psalm and someone would repeat the sermon from the previous Sunday. Baxter answered doctrinal questions, gently responded to any objections, and applied Biblical principles to real-life situations. Then he would ask one or two to pray, helping those who were timid or afraid. It was in these home meetings, face to face, discussing daily trials and situations, that Baxter was able to demonstrate to God's people that His Word really is "living and active."(6) It was there that prayers were offered and answered, and lives were changed eternally. The foregoing sounds somewhat like our modern Bible study group. We take such meetings for granted, but in Baxter's day this was quite an innovation. The Reformation had only recently taken hold in England. The average person rarely prayed, except from the prayer book, and a good sermon was the best instruction anyone could hope to have. But, Baxter learned from Jesus, that disciples are made through close and personal instruction, dialogue, and example.

What proved to be the most effective and fruitful method of instruction was Baxter's system of privately catechizing, or systematically teaching every member of the flock. Monday and Tuesday afternoons were set aside by Baxter and his assistant to spend an hour with each family. Baxter would meet with the people in town and his good friend, Mr. Richard Sergeant, would visit those in the surrounding countryside. By following this schedule, they were certain to meet with every member of the large congregation at least once a year and sometimes more often.

During these meetings, Baxter would have family members recite a simple catechism and then explain the sense of the doctrines. If some members of the family were shy, he would talk to them privately. He took great pains to gently draw them out. Baxter was careful not to embarrass those who were simple-minded, but still help them to grow in their faith as much as possible. Finally, he would address their individual strengths and weaknesses, urging them to "holy and blameless conduct." So many good things happened during these hours of private instruction! Many were reminded of their profession of faith and renewed in their desire to worship and serve God. The young people learned how to pray as they watched Baxter tenderly teaching their own parents to pray without form prayers -- some for the first time! It gave them opportunity to question Baxter about the Bible and he was able to adapt his public teaching to the actual needs of individuals, as well as the whole congregation. The positive effects of this work were enormous. First, Baxter found that this arduous and time consuming program was, in reality, a much more efficient and fruitful manner of teaching than any other. His experience showed that: our private Meetings were a marvellous help to the propagating of Godliness... for thereby Truths that slipt away were recalled, and the seriousness of the Peoples minds renewed; and good desires cherished; and hereby their knowledge was much increased (7) ...some ignorant persons, who have been so long

unprofitable hearers, have got more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half an hour's close discourse, than they did from ten years' public preaching. (8) By meeting privately with Baxter, they came to see that he loved and cared for them. The same was true of Baxter. The narrow "Puritan " slowly transformed into the devoted shepherd, as Baxter's concern for the flock and their affection for him both increased.

Time passed and the majority of the church at Kidderminster followed Baxter's example of making disciples. He practiced the ideals expressed in the fourth chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, "equipping the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" and the gospel spread through the homes and shops of Kidderminster. Baxter blessed God for: the Zeal and the diligence of the Godly People of the Place; who thirsted after the Salvation of their Neighbours, and were in private my Assistants, and being dispersed through the Town, were ready in almost all Companies to repress seducing Words, and to justify godliness, and convince, reprove, exhort Men according to their needs; as also to teach them how to pray; and to help them sanctifie the Lord's Day... (9)

Yes, the revival at Kidderminster was all God's doing, through the gifts and service of His entire body there. This was no one man show and it is commendable that Baxter not only believed this, but taught it, lived it, and praised God for it. The crowning success of Baxter's personal instruction in the basics of the Christian faith was unity. In the seventeenth chapter of John, Jesus prayed for those who would believe on Him through the word of the apostles. He asked , "that they may all be as one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." (John 17:21) Jesus' prayer was answered at Kidderminster: And our Unity and Concord was a great Advantage to us, and our freedom from those Sects and Heresies which many other Places were infected with. We had no private Church, though we had private Meetings; we had not Pastor against Pastor, nor Church against Church, nor Sect against Sect, nor Christian against Christian...But we were all of one Mind, and Mouth, and Way...When People saw diversity of Sects and Churches in any Place, it greatly hindred [sic] their conversion; and they were at a loss, and knew not what Party to be of, or what Way to go...But they had no such offence or Objection there; they could not ask, which church or Party shall I be of; for we were all but as one...(10)

1 Ibid., 84

2 Ibid., 86 3 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 111

4 Ibid., 93

5 Ibid., 93

6 Hebrews 4:12 7 Richard Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 88 8 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 196 9 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 87

10 John 17:21 11 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 87

3.05. Preacher

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Preacher

"Of all the preaching in the world, (that speaks not stark lies) I hate that preaching which tends to make the hearers laugh, or move their minds with tickling levity, and effect them as stage-plays used to do, instead of affecting them with a holy reverence of the name of God" Paul, awaiting imminent martyrdom, amid reports of "evil men and impostors" troubling the churches, solemnly instructed Timothy, to "preach the word" no matter the circumstance. While this passage provides the grist for many a sermon, few pastors pretend to apply it in their own preaching with the urgency enjoined by Paul. In Baxter, however, no other Scriptural ideal was so strenuously and successfully attained. The course of his entire life was literally determined by opportunities to proclaim the gospel, refute false teaching, and persuade Christians to live godly, fruitful lives. From his late teens, he decided to lay aside his youthful desire for "Reputation of Learning..."(1) and concentrate on the study and application of the Scriptures. His thirst for understanding was primarily for his own spiritual growth, but he eventually sensed God’s calling him to preach, which he pursued with his typical zeal. His parents, however, did not share his enthusiasm and he was sent to Ludlow Castle. In his eighteenth year, Mr. Wickstead had nearly persuaded him to ignore his calling and seek a position at the Court. He spent a month in London under the patronage of Sir Henry Herbert, but became disillusioned by the wordliness and debauchery at court:

I had quickly enough of the Court; when I saw a Stage Play instead of a Sermon on the Lord’s-day in the Afternoon, and saw what Course was there in fashion, and heard little Preaching, but was as to one part against the Puritans, I was glad to be gone.(2)

About this time, Baxter was called home quickly by the illness of his mother. She soon died and Richard resolved from that point to preach the gospel whenever and wherever possible. He would never again be turned aside. On December 23, 1638 Baxter was ordained a deacon in the Church of England and chosen schoolmaster of Richard Foley’s school at Dudley. He found the position most suitable because, in addition to his teaching, he "might also Preach up and down in Places that were most ignorant..." The people of Dudley were once known for their drunkenness and indifference to religion, but Baxter was grateful to spend a year among such "a poor tractable [teachable] people...ready to hear God’s Word with submission and reformation..."(3) When Baxter preached, the entire countryside would fill the once vacant chapel and crowd around the windows and doors to hear the young country preacher. So accustomed did the church at Dudley become to good preaching that, for years after Baxter’s departure, the people of the town would still crowd the modest chapel to hear the Sunday sermon and weekly lectures.

Baxter’s next opportunity to preach came at the town of Bridgnorth. He spent a year there teaching a very large congregation, but he was disappointed by the results. His sermons received great praise, but apparently little application by his hearers. Perhaps it was his experience at Bridgnorth

which would later remind him of the words of Jerome: "Teach in thy church, not to get the applause of the people, but to set in motion the groan; the tears of the hearers are thy praises."(4)

While Baxter was at Bridgnorth, the English Parliament passed a resolution to reform the clergy. Those ministers found guilty of "Insufficiency, false Doctrine, illegal innovations, or Scandal..." were to be removed. The town of Kidderminster presented a petition for the removal of their vicar and his assistants. The minister frequented taverns, was ignorant of "the very Substantial Articles of Christianity..." and only preached a few times each year. His poor preaching even "exposed him to laughter..."(5) It was determined that the vicar would continue, but a lecturer would be appointed and supported with a small portion of the minister's living expenses.

Baxter was offered the position at Kidderminster and he eagerly accepted. The town appealed to him for the usual reasons: My mind was much to the place as soon as it was described to me; because it was a full Congregation...an ignorant, rude and revelling People for the greater part, who had need of preaching...but above all, because they never had any lively, serious preaching among them...(6)

Baxter quickly found that his serious, Biblical preaching was certainly "out of season" at Kidderminster, where mobs ridiculed and threatened him with violence. But, he would not be intimidated. Once, after preaching on the doctrine of man's sinful nature, the townspeople "railed" at him as he walked down the street, accusing him of teaching "that God hated, or loathed infants..." because he taught, as is plain from Psalms 51:1-19, that all people are born sinners. Baxter, "the man of God," countered this abuse by opening up the Scriptures to his people, "with great patience and instruction:" The next Lord's Day I cleared and confirmed it, and shewed them that if this were not true, their Infants had no need of Christ, of Baptism, or of the Renewing by the Holy Ghost. And I askt them whether they durst say that their Children were saved without a Saviour...and afterward they were ashamed and mute as fishes.(7) The most serious threat to Baxter appeared with the Civil War in 1642. The town of Kidderminster and the surrounding county were divided between loyalty to the King or the Parliament and this put Baxter in danger for his life. Baxter found safety at the Governor's House in nearby Coventry, where he was invited to preach regularly to the garrison.

Many renowned ministers took commissions to serve as chaplains in the New Model Army (Parliamentary), but Baxter wanted no part of it. He would reflect years later, "So miserable were those bloody Days, in which he was most honourable, that could kill the most of his Enemies."(8) However, when news reached him concerning the poor spiritual condition of the soldiers, the divisions caused by false teachers, and a growing attitude of rebellion toward all authority, Baxter resolved to serve as chaplain with Cromwell's forces. He willingly gave up his comfort and safety at Coventry, going into the field and seeking to retrieve those who had gone astray, having "their ears tickled."

Baxter took seriously Paul's admonition to Timothy in refuting the teachings of those who are "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."(9) Immediately he began to "reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction." Baxter spent the greater part of his time among the soldiers "in Preaching, Conference, and Disputing against their Confounding Errours..."(10) More than once he was called upon to debate false teachers before large crowds. On one occasion he "alone disputed against them from Morning until almost Night..."(11) The

adversity of military life and long hours of work eventually overcame Baxter's poor health. He was forced to leave the army at about the time the war came to an end. Baxter returned to spend nearly fifteen years among the people of Kidderminster. He experienced the joy of watching nearly the entire town converted by the preaching of the Bible and the inner working of the Spirit of God.

Baxter's preaching usually bore much good and lasting fruit. His early success was the result of his ability to "convince and get within men..," regardless of their social or economic position. What was his secret? He was, as Paul directed, "ready in season and out of season" to preach.

First, Baxter believed that a sermon must be lived before it can be preached:

Certainly, brethren, we have very great cause to take heed what we do, as well as what we say: if we will be the servants of Christ indeed, we must not be tongue servants only, but must serve him with our deeds...A practical doctrine must be practically preached. We must study as hard how to live well, as how to preach well. We must think and think again, how to compose our lives, as may most tend to men's salvation, as well as our sermons.(12)

Baxter likened a sermon to a meal, which would only cause others indigestion and discomfort if it was not properly prepared over time. A sermon or teaching must be meditated upon and believed before it is passed on to others with any conviction:

...preach to yourselves the sermons which you study, before you preach them to others...When your minds are in a holy, heavenly frame, your people are likely to partake of the fruits of it...They will likely feel when you have been much with God: that which is most on your hearts, is like to be most in their ears.(13)

Baxter's method of preparation involved hard work on his part, yet he knew all would come to naught without complete reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit. He spent hours in the Scriptures composing each message. But, even the most painstaking and lengthy study would amount to nothing, believed Baxter, without much "secret prayer and meditation." "Thence you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices..,"(14) he counseled others. In the pulpit, Baxter preached with earnestness and urgency! He recalled his early Christian years and the kind of preaching which prevailed upon his own sluggish heart. It was "the plain and pressing downright Preacher, that onely seemed to me to be in good sadness [seriousness], and to make somewhat of it, and to speak with life, and light, and weight."(15) Baxter was convinced that his audience included "drowsy sinners," who were sick unto spiritual death. The Word of God holds the cure and it was his responsibility to awaken the dying and administer the gospel in such a way that it would bring about a full recovery! Employing his guiding principle; "first light-then heat," he sought to shine the "light" of sound doctrine in their minds, then warm their hearts with passionate exhortation to obedience.(16)

He lamented that far too many pastors gather "only a few naked truths..." and let them "die in their hands for want of close and lively application..."(17) He advocated speaking with great "affection and fervancy," but, adds Baxter,"...I move you not to a constant loudness in your delivery...yet see that you have a constant seriousness..."(18)

Baxter was an imposing figure in the pulpit at Kidderminster, standing tall and straight in his black gown, with an hourglass at his side.(19) He read his sermons, over an hour long, from a

manuscript. Baxter eschewed emotionalism and disapproved of jesting from the pulpit, yet he preached with great passion and there were traces of quiet wit in his sermons. A fellow Puritan described his intensity this way:

He had a moving pathos , and useful Acrimony in his words; neither did his Expressions want their Emphatical Accent, as the Matter did require. And when he spake of weighty Soul - Concerns, you might find his very Spirit Drench'd therein.(20)

It was said that Baxter "talked in the pulpit with great freedom of another world, like one who had been there and was coming back as a sort of express from thence to make a report concerning it."(21)

He had the unique ability to speak effectively to both the simple and the intelligent. Yet, he would purposely speak over their heads on occasion as an incentive to learn and to remind them that he was the teacher.

It is important to note that, though Baxter's fame as a preacher made him a legend in his own time, he remained ever humble. The effects of his preaching upon his hearers, not fame or reputation, remained the measure of his success. Baxter himself was his harshest critic:

I seldom come out of the Pulpit, but my Conscience smiteth me that I have been no more serious and fervent...It asketh me, '... Shouldst thou not weep over such people, and should not tears interrupt thy words?'(22)

Finally, he was known for "plain dealing" or being very straight forward, loving his audience enough to tell them what they needed to hear. While modern preachers may suffer unpopularity or ridicule for preaching the reality of a heaven and hell, Baxter risked his very life to warn others that they were on a disastrous course for the abyss. After the restoration of King Charles II in 1660, Baxter was appointed a royal chaplain. Many questioned Baxter's judgment when he once addressed a pointed sermon to King Charles and his court on the dangers of worldliness in royalty, but none doubted his courage. It is easy to imagine Charles and his fashionable courtiers, leaning forward in their comfortable seats, fixing their attention on the stern preacher as his voice slowly elevated: Could I but show to all this Congregation while I am preaching the invisible world of which we preach, and did you hear with Heaven and Hell in your eyesight...I durst then ask the worst that hearest me,"Dare you now be drunk, or gluttonous or worldly? Dare you go home and make a jest at piety and neglect your souls as you have done?"...Princes and Nobles live not alwaies...No man will fear you after death; much less will Christ be afraid to judge you... Live as if you saw the glorious things which you say you believe... Write upon your Palaces and Goods that sentence: "Seeing all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness looking for and hasting to the coming of the Day of God."(23)

Evidently, Charles respected Baxter for his fearlessness in warning him of the snares of wealth and power, for he ordered the sermon published and distributed.

Baxter's freedom to preach ended in 1662 with the Act of Uniformity. Among other conditions, the Act stated that ministers must be ordained by the Church of England and assent to complete agreement with the Book of Common Prayer. Baxter was episcopally ordained and had no major objections to the prayer book, but he did not see ordination by the Church of England or the prayer

book as essential to Christian ministry. His refusal to conform resulted in his being banned from speaking to gatherings of any size. When the opportunity to publicly preach and teach ended, Baxter turned to writing. What appeared to be the final defeat of Puritanism and Baxter's influence as a public figure, was instead the beginning of his most effective and productive years as a writer. Baxter, ready to preach "in season and out of season," moved from the pulpit to the printing press to teach, reprove, rebuke and exhort.

Twenty-five years later, in 1687, the Declaration of Indulgence was passed allowing "non-conformists" to hold public meetings. Richard Baxter spent his last four years peacefully at Charterhouse Yard, where he assisted his good friend Matthew Sylvester. Although in his seventies, Baxter preached on Sunday mornings and at the Thursday lecture, usually to a full house. Sylvester was thrilled to work alongside a man of Baxter's reputation and learning, who humbly "stiled" himself Sylvester's assistant!

Sylvester remembered one occasion when Baxter forgot his notes on Hebrews 4:15. He went ahead, speaking for "an hour or so, just the same, or more effectively." And when he came down from the Pulpit, he asked me, "If I was not tired." I said, "With what?" He said, "With his Extemporate Discourse." I told him, "That had he not declar'd it, I believe none could have discover'd it:" His reply to me was, "That he thought it very needful for a Minister to have a Body of Divinity in his head."(24)

Finally, Baxter became too weak to preach in public, but he continued to conduct family worship until the very end. And even then, he would welcome all who came. In season, out of season; whenever or wherever, he was ready to preach the Word. In a few words, the life of Richard Baxter the preacher can be summed up in Paul's exhortation to Timothy to "...be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."(25) 1 Richard Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae, Part 1, 5

2 Ibid., 11

3 Ibid., 14

4 Ibid., 120 5 Ibid., 19 & 20

6 Ibid., 20

7 Ibid., 24

8 Ibid., 46

9 2 Timothy 3:7

10 Ibid., 56 11 Baxter Relquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 56 12 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 64 13 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 61

14 Ibid., 62 15 Geoffrey F. Nuttall Richard Baxter (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1965) 48 16 J.I. Packer A Quest for Godliness (Wheaton, IL, 1990) 69

17 Ibid., 147

18 Ibid., 148 19 Frederick J. Powicke A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter (London, 1924) 50 20 Richard Baxter Relquiae Baxterianae, Appendix, Elisha’s Cry 14 21 Edmund Calamy cited in, Martin Puritanism 189 22 Geoffrey F. Nuttall Richard Baxter (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1965) 49 23 Martin Puritanism 147 24 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part III, "After Elijah’s Cry" 17 25 2 Timothy 4:5

3.06. Shepherd

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Shepherd "Stretch your purse to the utmost, and do all the good you can."

Jesus said that if anyone would be a leader in God’s kingdom, he must become a servant.(1) Jesus became a living, flesh and blood example of humble servanthood, when He took on human flesh, came into the world He created, and served the very creatures who rejected Him. He gently instructed the poor and ignorant, yet when confronted with the religious pride of the Pharisees, He exercised firm correction. His was a life of self-denial, seeking only to please the Father.

Baxter exhibited this same kind of servant leadership when he came to Kidderminster to pour out his life for a poor, carousing, and sometimes obstinate community. He proved to be a living example of the Word he so passionately spoke from the pulpit and taught from house to house.

Although an immensely gifted, influential, and successful writer and preacher, Baxter considered no work more important than faithfully pastoring God’s flock; all other endeavors were an outgrowth of that ideal. From a very early age Baxter was faced with the choice of enjoying the applause and riches of the world or following the crucified lifestyle of a lowly shepherd of God’s flock. He chose the cross.

Baxter’s humble character became evident from his first dealings with the church at Kidderminster and George Dance, the displaced vicar of the parish. Dance had enjoyed a generous salary of £200 a year, along with a comfortable parsonage. In 1641, Baxter accepted the town’s offer to become curate [reader], under the condition that the elderly priest would not be put out of his home. Baxter would receive only £60 a year and occupy a few plain, upper story rooms in town. Dance continued to receive his pay, even though he was no longer the vicar, and only read the common prayer, conducted funerals, and administered communion and baptism. Baxter carried out all other pastoral labors.

Baxter’s indifference toward wages and his kind treatment of Mr. Dance is commendable, but it didn’t end there. His fame as a preacher grew and when he left the army in the spring of 1647, he received invitations to serve other congregations worth £300 to £500 a year. His friends at Kidderminster sent a tender letter with 265 signatures, imploring him to return. Baxter passed over the more lucrative, prestigious positions and returned to Kidderminster, where he received only eighty or ninety pounds a year. His motive reveals the heart of a true shepherd:

I had many score of my neighbours with me in the Wars - some going with me into Garrisons, and some went with me in a Troop into the field, and many and many a time ventured their lives, some taken prisoners, some dead, some slain, some wounded, many safe and returned home; and it was they that stuck to me and I to them, resolving then in the Wars that if our God restored us I would not forsake them, if now they forsook not Him and me.(2) In October of 1647, unknown to Baxter, the trustees of the town went to his superiors and had him appointed vicar. They feared

that, since the Baxter was merely the curate and the position of vicar was still vacant, another might be appointed and Baxter required to leave. When Baxter discovered their scheme three years later, he insisted that Mr. Dance continue to receive the support due himself and live in the Vicarage House, while he remained in rented rooms. So far was Baxter from serving out of greed or exploiting Christ's sheep, that he provided for some of the poor in the parish out of his own modest income. His generosity demonstrated his love and "reconciled them to the Doctrine "(3) which he taught.

Baxter gave money to any who would ask. When the poor weavers of the town visited him for their counseling and personal instruction, he would repay them from his own pocket for the time spent away from their looms. Baxter was careful to do good to all that had need: And in giving that little I had, I did not enquire whether they were good or bad, if they asked Relief: For the bad had souls and Bodies that needed Charity most. And I found that Three pence or a Groat to every poor Body that askt me, was no great matter in a year, but a few pounds in that way of giving would go far.(4) Even his international success as a writer became a means of serving those under his care:

Another furtherance of my work was the Writings which I wrote, and gave among them. Some small Books I gave each Family one of, (which came to about 800); and of the bigger I gave fewer: And every Family that was poor, and had not a Bible, I gave a Bible to.(5) When Baxter says that he gave 800 books to the people in the parish, he means 800 of each new book published! It was Baxter's policy to receive part of his royalties in books (one of every fifteen published) and much of the money received from his writings went to the poor and the support of students. He "took the aptest of their Children from the School, and set divers of them to the Universities; where for 8 l. a year, or 10 l. at most, by the help of [his] Friends there [he] maintained them."(6) The thoroughly Puritan conviction that all of life is an act of service to God flowered in Baxter. He understood that teaching and preaching are only part of a pastor's duties. The good shepherd will lay down his life for the sheep. Therefore, even Baxter's varied and extended illnesses provided him with another instrument for service. In 1672 he wrote, "....it is by dear experience that I have learnt how little Physicians know, having passed through the tryal of above thirty of them on my own body long ago...; and most that I got was but the ruine of my own body."(8) So, early in life, Baxter set himself on the diagnosis and cure of his own ailments and it seems he gathered a fair amount of medical knowledge. For a time, he became the physician of the bodies, as well as the souls, of the flock at Kidderminster:

Besides all this, I was forced five or six years by the Peoples Necessity to practise Physick; A common Pleurisie happening one year, and no physician being near, I was forced to advise them, to save their Lives: and I could not afterwards avoid the Importunity of the Town and Country round about: And because I never once took a Penny of any one, I was crowded with Patients, so that almost Twenty would be at my Door at once: and though God by more Success than I expected, so long encouraged me, yet I could endure it no longer: partly because it hindred my other Studies, and partly because the very fear of miscarrying and doing any one harm, did make it an intollerable burden to me: So that after some Years Practice, I procured a godly diligent Physician to come and live in the town, and bound my self by Promise to practice no more (unless in Consultation with him in case of any seeming necessity)...(8) His generous use of time, talents, and money proved to be a powerful evangelistic ministry: And God made use of my practice of Physick among them, as a very great advantage to my Ministry; for they that cared not for their

souls did love their Lives, and care for their Bodies: And by this they were made almost as observant, as a Tenant is of his Landlord: Sometimes I could see before me in the Church a very considerable part of the Congregation, whose Lives God had made me a means to save, or to recover their health: And doing it for nothing so obliged them, that they would readily hear me.(9)

Often times, adversity will ultimately test the depth of a man's convictions. The greatest test of Baxter's lowly servant character came to Kidderminster with the restoration to power of King Charles in 1660, an event which Baxter played a major role in accomplishing. Along with the King came the return of many of the corrupt leaders in the national church and Mr. Dance to the position of Vicar at Kidderminster. Those favoring ceremonialism and a hierarchical, centralized form of church government regained power, so much of the progress made under the Puritan government was reversed and the systematic persecution of non-conformists like Baxter began.

Baxter, the faithful and truly loving pastor, was removed and Mr. Dance returned Baxter's former kindness by refusing to keep him on as lecturer. In one day, the people of Kidderminster produced a petition supporting Baxter with 1600 signatures and could have gotten twice as many, but to no avail. Baxter sought any solution possible to stay at Kidderminster, finally offering to serve as c urate without pay. "Better none than you,"(10) was Bishop Morley's spiteful reply. Baxter's earnestness in making disciples and his message of genuine Christian unity, including Baptists, Presbyterians, and others, threatened the powerful Anglican bishops. He was forbidden to preach anywhere in Worcester County and Mr. Dance would not even allow a farewell sermon or final communion with his brothers and sisters.

Baxter did, however, preach a farewell sermon in the secluded home of James Boucher. Gathering in the kitchen, he instructed his flock to be subject to those over them and not to forsake public worship. He left his assistant, Richard Serjeant, as well as Mr. Baldwin, the former schoolmaster, to visit each family regularly, house to house.

Since Mr. Dance was such a poor preacher, Bishop Morley filled the pulpit over the years with men who regularly slandered Baxter. But, Baxter's powerful example of humility bore fruit in God's people there. Their love and admiration for him never ceased and it appears that Kidderminster remained true to Baxter's final Biblical instruction, for in his last letter to them in 1681, he wrote, "I am glad to hear that you lovingly join together in the public congregation."(11) The congregation there continued to bear fruit into the next century, in spite of efforts to undermine Baxter's influence. George Whitefield's report of finding the "sweet savour of good Mr. Baxter's doctrine, works and discipline"(12) parallels that of a local history written in 1777. The historian credits the success of the local carpet trade to "the industry, frugality and simplicity of the manners of the inhabitants," resulting from "the labours and example" of Baxter.

Baxter, though great in stature and abilities, had willingly taken the lower place. Rather than setting himself up as a ruler over the people of Kidderminster, he had been a leader among them, even caring for them as a physician in their homes. He knew his flock well and they knew him from close personal dealings. Because of his generosity and kindness, his doctrine found its way into the very heart of God's people there, manifesting itself in love, forgiveness, and good deeds.

What is the condition of those sheep which the Chief Shepherd has committed to your charge? What effect has your leadership had upon them, if any? Do they bear the stamp of lowliness and

humility or pride and independence? If you were removed from among them, would they continue, in unity, to bear the fruit of the Spirit? The honest answers to these questions are the real measure of your effectiveness as a pastor and servant leader.

1 Matthew 20:25-28

2 Baxter (Baxter MSS., vol. iv, ff. 124-5b) cited in Frederick J. Powicke A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter 1615-1691 (London, 1924) 85 & 86 3 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part1, 89

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Geoffrey Nuttall Richard Baxter 42 8 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 84

9 Ibid., 89 10 Martin Puritanism and Richard Baxter 56 11 Powicke A Life of Baxter 213 12 Packer, The Reformed Pastor 12

3.07. Peacemaker

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Peacemaker "...he that will blow the Coals must not wonder if some Sparks do fly in his face..."

Jesus prayed for our unity, so the world would know God's love and recognize Christ's coming to save sinners. It is remarkable how far our loving actions and cooperation within the Body of Christ can go in revealing the love of God to mankind. It is equally depressing to see how our infighting and divisions within God's household have marred His image and distorted His message of love and reconciliation to our dying world.

Confronted with the existence of hundreds of sects and denominations, with ministers competing for larger and larger congregations, it is tempting to think of times past as a Golden Age. But, the sad truth is that pride and division have attended the bride of Christ since the Day of Pentecost. The England which Baxter knew represents a idealic time to some, and indeed it was in some respects. But, seventeenth-century England also gave birth to fratricidal quarrels and divisions which remain unhealed to this day. In the midst of the wrangling and infighting stood Baxter, working tirelessly to bring reconciliation and cooperation to the factious whole. He wrote entire books on the subject of Christian unity, met with men, small and great, and proposed plan after plan to heal the major divisions within England's national church. He sacrificed so very much for Christ's body; time, money, friendship, and even his health. It is ironic then, that in these endeavors we often find Baxter at his very worst.

J.I. Packer reaches the sum in a few words: "Baxter was a big man, big enough to have big faults and make big errors."(1) It seems that Baxter, as one of a generation which produced many "big" men, was ineffective among his peers.

Among his faults was speaking his mind, when silence would have accomplished more. His habit of "plain dealing" offended many more than Oliver Cromwell and Charles II, as if they were not enough. Baxter often alienated the very men who were sympathetic to his ideals and could have exercised great influence for peace and harmony. Baxter's sharp and undeserved criticism of John Owen, occupying thirty pages in his first published work, was perhaps his biggest blunder and one which would haunt him over and over in his quest for unity.

Dr. Owen was a fellow Puritan, committed to the reformation of the church and a supporter of the Parliamentarian cause. His character and reputation as man of God are born out in the fact that, after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, he was not hindered in preaching and pastoring a congregation in London. Owen was a man of considerable influence and was sometimes in a position to work alongside Baxter in achieving concord. With his backing, Baxter's ideas may have gotten a hearing. But, it seems that Owen and others were never able to get beyond their initial negative impression of Baxter's arrogance and rashness. Baxter excused himself years later:

I medled too forwardly with Dr. Owen... For I was young, and a stranger to men's tempers, and thought others could have born a Confutation as easily as I could do my self; and I thought that I was bound to do my best publickly, to save the World from the hurt of published Errours, and not to meddle with the Person that maintained them. But indeed I was then too raw to be a Writer... It cost me more than any other that I have written... (2) This is an accurate self appraisal of Baxter's shortcomings and a sound warning for any young pastor, but it was a character flaw which was rarely overcome by Baxter his entire life.

One of Baxter's many sayings, "Overdoing is the ordinary way of Undoing,"(3) was another bit of wisdom which he never really mastered. In controversies, he "made war to end war" and always sought to bring opposing parties to common ground. But, his pedantic and triumphalist style made failure a certainty. Baxter's overtures of peace more often than not, had the effect of "an olive branch discharged from a catapault."(4)

Perhaps the best example of Baxter's "overdoing" was his role in the "Happy Union" between the Congregationalists and Presbyterians. This was an event which he had worked for nearly all his life, yet when a reconciliation of the two sects finally came about, Baxter played a major role in its demise. Hoping to counter what he perceived as antinomian tendencies, as he had with Dr. Owen years earlier, Baxter insisted on publishing his Scripture Gospel Defended in 1690. His friends advised him against it, but Baxter just couldn't let the slightest error pass without comment. The book offended men on both sides, opened up old divisions, and ignited a controversy which was still raging when Baxter died in 1691. The "Happy Union" completely dissolved in the bitter quarrel which followed.

But, what of Baxter's victories? As a young pastor, Baxter did not act immediately upon his desire for love and cooperation among those outside of Kidderminster: "I stood still some years, as a looker on, and contented myself to wish and pray for Peace..."(5) Being in his early thirties, with the charge of a large parish, he was quite busy and unsure of himself. He hoped that some who were more prominent and mature would lead the way. But, most of all, he really underestimated God's power to work through seemingly insignificant people:

I was so conscious of my meaness and in considerableness in the Church, that I verily thought, but very few will regard what I said. But when I once attempted it, God convinced me of this Errour, and shewed me how little Instruments signifie, when he will work: and that his Ministers and People were more humble to hear the meanest of their Brethren, than I before believed.(6)

He first took his practical ideas for unity to the ministers of London, but found that, all but a few, were not sympathetic in the least. It was a different story in his home county of Worcestershire.

Baxter shared his thoughts with those present at a weekly meeting of pastors in the Spring of 1652 and received overwhelming approval. The most pressing problem which they addressed was the separation of believers from the local congregations, because of the lack of discipline and admission of notorious sinners to worship and communion. They asked him to draw up articles of discipline, which the differing parties (Presbyterian, Baptist, Anglican, etc.) could agree upon: after several Meetings we subscribed them, and so associated for our mutual help and concord in our Work. The ministers that thus associated were for Number, Parts and Piety, the most considerable part of all that County, and some out of some neighboring Counties that were near us...Those that

did not come near us, nor concur with us, were all the weaker sort of Ministers, whose Sufficiency or conversation was questioned by others, and knew they were of little esteem among them, and were neither able or willing to exercise any Discipline on their Flocks.(7) The Worcestershire Association met once monthly, more often if necessary, at one of five of the larger market towns. The pastors dined together and held a "disputation" of a topic or question, which had been previously determined. If there were matters of discipline which proved too difficult for younger ministers or concerns involving more than one parish, they would be discussed and settled. The meetings were so productive and informative that pastors from other counties often attended just to observe. When the association met at Kidderminster, members stayed to hear Baxter's weekly lecture at St. Mary's chapel in the afternoon and then met at his small home until his neighbors arrived for their evening prayer meeting. Baxter looked back upon those times with fondness:

I must confess this was the comfortablest time of all my Life, through the great delight I had in the Company of that Society of honest, sincere, laborious, humble Ministers of Christ...its pleasant to me to remember the Converse I had with them; so aimable are sincere and upright Men, whose singleness of heart doth imitate the State of the primitive Believers...(8) The Spirit of God was moving and one or two associations sprung up in other counties, independent and unaware of events at Worcestershire. Others heard of Baxter's success and similar groups were formed throughout England, Wales and even in Ireland. This reformation among ministers increased and the prospects for unity spread until Cromwell's death in 1658. Then, a series of events followed which dissolved these associations and the country was shattered into more divisions than ever.

Baxter's hopes were shattered as well. In 1664 he lamented the state of Christ's body in England, after the dividers came to power: The poor Church of Christ, the sober, sound religious Part, are like Christ that was crucified between two Malefactors; the prophane and formal Persecutors on one hand, and the Fanatick dividing Sectary on the other hand, have in all Ages been grinding the spiritual Seed, as the Corn is ground between the Milstones: And though their sins have ruined themselves and us, and silenced so many hundred Ministers, and scattered the Flocks and made us the Hatred and the Scorn of the ungodly World, and a by Word and Desolation in the Earth; yet there are few of them that lament their Sin , but Justify themselves and their Misdoings, and the penitent Malefactor is yet unknown to us.(9) As we see from the foregoing example of Baxter's "plain dealing," he had no patience for those who, out of pride, continued to upset the body of Christ. But, had he not played a part in all of this, as well? Was Baxter not himself a self-righteous hypocrite, seeking to remove the speck from his brother's eye while blinded by the log in his own?(10) He answers himself:

I must mention it by way of penitent Confession, that I am too much inclined to such words in Controversial Writings which are too keen, and apt to provoke the Person whom I wrote against...And I have a strong natural inclination to speak of every Subject just as it is, and to call a Spade a Spade...I repent of it, and wish all over-sharp passages were expunged from my Writings, and desire forgiveness of God and Man...I mention all these Distempers, that my Faults may be a warning to others to take heed, as they call on my self for Repentance and Watchfulness. O Lord, for the Merits and Sacrifice and Intercession of Christ, be merciful to me a sinner, and forgive my known and unknown Sins.(11)

Paul warned the believers in Corinth that the sin of Israel and God’s judgment were recorded in Scripture for their instruction, so they would not "try the Lord" in the same way, but turn from their sin.(12) Richard Baxter, in his autobiography, has done the same for you and I. He was truly a big man with big faults and we must guard ourselves against those same shortcomings. On the other hand, his example of humility and sorrow for sin is one worthy of our imitation. Like Baxter, we must weigh our words and actions and ask ourselves if we are a unifying force in Christ’s body or a wedge of division? The Lord’s will for us on this point is not hard to determine. Jesus said plainly that we are to be one, in unity, so the world will know the love of the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ.

1 Baxter Reformed Pastor 9 2 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 107 3 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae 27 4 Newman cited in Martin Puritanism 158-9 5 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 146

6 Ibid

7 Ibid., 148

8 Ibid., 150

9 Ibid., 103 10 Matthew 7:1-5 11 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 137 & 138 12 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

3.08. Reformed Pastor

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Reformed Pastor "A holy calling will not save an unholy man. "

Baxter’s greatest success in his quest to bring unity among Christians found powerful expression at Kidderminster and among the pastors who made up the Worcestershire Association.

True and lasting reformation in the Church of England must begin in the hearts of the pastors, asserted Baxter. Yet, much of the clergy, particularly in the countryside, retained the character of a corrupt form of Roman Catholicism. Many ministers had grown comfortable in their livings, performing their religious duties by rote and spending much of their time in gluttony and drunkeness. The local churches mirrored the character of their vicars.

It was under these conditions that the Worcestershire Association officially began on December 4, 1655, when the pastors in the county met "to join in humiliation and in earnest prayer to God." They asked the Lord’s forgiveness for their negligence in caring for His people and they sought His blessing upon the difficult work of reformation they were about to undertake.

Baxter prepared a sermon for the occasion, but acute pain and illness kept him from attending. His fellow ministers urged him to publish the sermon, which grew into a sizable book titled Gildas Silvianus: the Reformed Pastor. The title set the tone of the book, a strong reprimand to indolent pastors and an urgent appeal to earnestly shepherd God’s flock. Gildas and Silvianus were two early Christian writers who, like Baxter, were known for their "plain dealing" with sinners. The first edition is subtitled the Reformed Pastor, with the word "reformed" standing out in large, bold typeface. When Baxter speaks of being a reformed pastor, he means one renewed in his zeal for the work of shepherding God’s people. J.I Packer succinctly expresses Baxter’s central theme: The Reformed Pastor is the supreme transcript of Baxter’s heart as a Puritan evangelist, and it is dynamite. Evangelism as an expression of Christian love through ministerial labour is what it is about, and its spiritual honesty, integrity, energy, and straightforwardness are almost unnerving.(1)

Typically, Baxter covers a great deal of ground in this book, but his focus is the pastor’s obligation to "take heed" of his own spiritual condition, before he attends to the oversight of others. Baxter, the evangelist, will not settle for anything less than Christ enthroned in the hearts and minds of His pastors. In the first chapter, Baxter goes straight to the heart and immediately tackles a devastating affliction in the Body of Christ:

It is the common danger and calamity of the Church, to have unregenerate and inexperienced pastors, and to have so many men become preachers before they are Christians...and so worship an unknown God, and to preach an unknown Christ, to pray through an unknown Spirit...(2)

It is almost beyond belief to think that anyone would become a leader of God’s people, without knowing God himself. Yet, this has been a chronic problem in every age and seventeenth-century England was no exception.

It was obvious to Baxter; before any man embarks upon the work of leading others to Christ, he must first be a partaker himself, of God’s mercy and grace:

See that the work of saving grace be thoroughly wrought in your own souls. Take heed to yourselves, lest you be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual working of that gospel which you preach; and lest, while you proclaim to the world the necessity of a Saviour, your own hearts should neglect him, and you should miss of an interest in him and his saving benefits.(3)

Surely, nothing was more pathetic to Baxter than the man who points others to heaven, while he himself is destined for judgment:

O what sadder case can there be in the world, than for a man, who made it his very trade and calling to proclaim salvation, and to help others to heaven, yet after all to be himself shut out!(4)

Next, Baxter turns his attention to the endless assault of temptation in a pastor’s life. Because leaders are in the forefront of the struggle, they make inviting targets. Satan "hath long tried that way...of smiting the shepherds, that he may scatter the flock: and so great hath been his success this way, that he will continue to follow it as far as he is able."(5) Only a man who is sober and alert can hope to avoid falling into scandalous sin, spreading doubt and confusion among the young and tender members of the flock:

You shall see neither hook nor line, much less the subtle angler himself, while he is offering you his bait. And his bait shall be so fitted to your temper and disposition, that he will be sure to find advantages within you, and make your own principles and inclinations betray you; and whenever he ruineth you, he will make you the instruments of ruin to others.(6)

Christian leadership certainly invites many temptations, but high visibility is also one of God’s gracious means of purifying men for service. Baxter reminds his readers to bless the Lord for this added protection: you should thankfully consider how great a mercy this is, that you have so many eyes to watch over you, and so many ready to tell you of your faults; and this greater helps than others, at least for restraining you from sin. Though they may do it with a malicious mind, yet you have the advantage of it.(7)

Here we must stop and consider our attitude toward those who seem ever willing to point to our failings and shortcomings. Are we quick to label them as "rebellious" and perceive them as obstacles in our path to success or do we listen patiently to see if perhaps the Lord is warning us of an unseen danger? These brothers and sisters are a source of God’s blessing to us!

If Satan’s outward enticements fail to compromise the man of God, the sin of pride lies dormant, quickened by the slightest inducement. When it is awakened, it creeps into every area of a man’s life and taints everything he touches:

Oh what a constant companion, what a tyrannical commander, what a sly and subtle insinuating enemy, is this sin of pride! It goes with men to the draper, to the mercer, the tailor; it chooseth them their cloth, their trimming, and their fashion.(8)

Baxter saw such haughtiness and the lack of humility in ministers as a formidable impediment to growth and peace within the Body of Christ in his day. The seduction of acclaim and power was

just as strong then as now, driving popular ministers to seek larger and larger congregations. Baxter attributed such arrogance to a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of Biblical, servant leadership:

I seldom see ministers strive so furiously, who shall go first to a poor man's cottage to teach him and his family the way to heaven; or who shall first endeavour the conversion of a sinner, or first become the servant of all. Strange, that notwithstanding all the plain expressions of Christ, men will not understand the nature of their office! If they did, would they strive who would be the pastor of a whole county and more, when there are so many thousand poor sinners in it that cry for their relief.(9) Baxter lamented the effects of this "superstar" mentality upon the local church:

O, happy had it been for the Church...that pastors had been multiplied as churches increased, and the number of overseers had been proportioned to the number of souls, that they might not have let the work be undone, while they assume empty titles and undertook impossibilities!(10)

Truly, when pastors take on the impossibility of single-handedly shepherding hundreds of people, the Scriptural duties of the overseers outlined in Acts 20:1-38 will eventually be crowded out. While the leader of a large congregation may receive wide acclaim and perhaps even wealth, the people under his care will wither from spiritual malnutrition. "Oh, therefore, be jealous of yourselves; and amidst all your studies, be sure to study humility,"(11) Baxter pleads with his fellow ministers.

Finally, Baxter censured those leaders who no longer followed the admonition of Peter, shepherding God's flock "voluntarily," out of "eagerness." Serving their brothers and sisters had become merely an obligation or, in some cases, an easy way of making a living. The ministerial work must be carried on purely for God and the salvation of souls...They who engage in this as a common work, to make a trade of it for their worldly livelihood, will find that they have chosen a bad trade, though a good employment. Self-denial is of absolute necessity in every Christian, but it is doubly necessary in a minister, as without it he cannot do God an hour's faithful service.(12) In one sentence, Baxter effectively presents the essence of the pastor's vocation, revealing all of its dignity and severity:

We are seeking to uphold the world, to save it from the curse of God, to perfect the creation, to attain the ends of Christ's death, to save ourselves and others from damnation, to overcome the devil, and demolish his kingdom, to set up the kingdom of Christ, and to attain and help others to the kingdom of glory.

He underscores the gravity of this work by posing the question, "And are these works to be done with a careless mind, or a lazy hand?"(13) The answer is, of course, "no." In The Reformed Pastor, Baxter again confronts us with an earnestness which is foreign to our modern Christian experience. Perhaps, this is the "spiritual honesty" which J.I. Packer describes as "unnerving." Indeed it is disturbing, because Baxter calls upon us to look beyond our popularity, the size of our congregation, the myriad of programs or any of the other contemporary yardsticks commonly used to determine the success of a Christian leader. Baxter demands instead that we consider the condition of our hearts and our willingness to engage in selfless, arduous work for our Master.

Baxter's own bent toward introspection presses us, his readers, into a self-audit of difficult questions. Do I really serve God or myself? Do I seek to meet the needs of others or am I actually pursuing self-fulfillment or a life of ease? Is my teaching and preaching merely a showcase for my

intellect and abilities or am I compelled to proclaim the message as Paul, who exclaimed "woe is me if I do not preach the gospel."(14) Finally, am I a reformed pastor, being renewed daily by the Holy Spirit? If not, perhaps reading Baxter's Reformed Pastor would be a good place to start. The Reformed Pastor is truly dynamite and considered essential reading by no less than John Wesley (b. 1703-d. 1791), the founder of Methodism. Philip Doddridge (b. 1702-d. 1751), the devout pastor, author, and hymnist thought the book "should be read by every young minister, before he takes a people under his stated care; and, I think, the practical part of it reviewed every three or four years..."(15)

Charles Spurgeon records one Sunday evening when, disappointed by his own lack of fervor, he entreated his wife, "My dear, I fear I have not been as faithful in my preaching today as I should have been. I have not been as much in earnest after poor souls as God would have me be! Go to the study and fetch down Baxter's Reformed Pastor, and read some of it to me. Perhaps that will quicken my sluggish heart."(16) 1 Packer A Quest for Godliness 305 2 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 56

3 Ibid., 53

4 Ibid., 72

5 Ibid., 74

6 Ibid., 75

7 Ibid., 76

8 Ibid., 137

9 Ibid., 127

10 Ibid., 89

11 Ibid., 146

12 Ibid., 111

13 Ibid., 112 14 1 Corinthians 9:16 b 15 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 5

16 Charles Spurgeon cited in Timothy Beougher and J.I. Packer 'Go fetch Baxter' Christianity Today , January 13, 1992, 26

3.09. Reformer

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Reformer

"For if the holy and unholy are all permitted to be sheep of the same fold, without any means being used to separate them, we defame the Redeemer, as if he were guilty of it, and as if this were the nature of his precepts." When a pastor is truly "reformed" and when he has submitted to the discipline of the Lord, then he can begin the work of reforming and restoring discipline to the Body of Christ. The important first step taken by the Worcestershire Association was the institution of an agreeable policy of discipline which would be practiced throughout the county.

Church discipline was rare prior to Baxter's time. However, the early Christians were careful to "rebuke before all" the impenitent, "till selfishness and formality caused them to be remiss.," Baxter reminded his fellow pastors. "All Christians value God's ordinances, and think them not vain things; and, therefore, are unwilling to live without them."(1)

Baxter was not infected with the pragmatism and unbelief so prevalent today. To him, turning a brother from sin was more urgent than maintaining popularity and numbers. Answering the common objection that the rebellious won't repent, he asked, "Will you give them up as hopeless?"(2)

While Baxter relied upon the Spirit to convict hard-hearted sinners, he would not stand by while they were lulled into a false security: The neglect of discipline hath a strong tendency to delude immortal souls, by making those think they are Christians that are not, while they are permitted to live with the character of such, and are not separated from the rest by God's ordinance: and it may make the scandalous think their sin a tolerable thing, which is so tolerated by the pastors of the church.(3)

Baxter wrote much on the subject, but he was no mere theorist. At Kidderminster the Christians were careful to solemnly warn habitual sinners. Baxter would speak privately to those whose sin was not public. If they would not repent, he would admonish them before the monthly meeting of the elders and deacons. The final step before excommunication was to call the offender to repentance before the entire congregation and ask them to join in prayer. "This I do once or twice or thrice as prudence shall direct...If yet he hear not the church, I do, from certain texts recited, require them to avoid him..."(4)

Only a handful were actually excommunicated and usually for drunkenness. In his reflection upon those cases of discipline, Baxter sadly recorded: But those that were cast out of our Communion were enraged, and made much more Enemies of Godliness than before... When private Intreaties and vehement Exhortations... and all that we could say or do... would not make most of them so much as say, We are sorry for our sin; nor any of them leave their common Drunkenness; how should Excommunication do them any good?(5)

Baxter’s doubts were answered with the conviction that discipline is "an Ordinance of Christ, and greatly conducing to the Honour of the Church..." Baxter’s open rebuke of the habitual sinners was "For the sake of the rest more than for them..."(6) the Exercise of Church-Discipline was no small furtherance of the Peoples Good: For I found plainly that without it I could not have kept the Religious sort from Separations and Divisions. There is something generally in their Dispositions, which inclineth them to dissociate from ungodly Sinners... and if they had not seen me do something reasonable for a Regular Separation of the notorious obstinate Sinners from the rest, they would irregularly have withdrawn themselves...(7)

One case which surely caused Baxter much grief was that of his personal friend, John Pearsall. Charged with slander and divisiveness, he refused to make public confession of his offenses. Baxter implored him to repent, in a four page letter written on "Saturday night at eleven o’clock with an aching head and heart and weeping eyes..." Pearsall eventually made the confession, but over time he did not change his ways. He had a deep problem which caused confusion and division in the local body and Baxter sensed the real danger that Pearsall might even be eternally lost. Baxter’s final appeal is permeated with the Good Shepherd’s love for a lamb gone astray:

Ah, John Pearsall, sin is not worthy all this friendship. It must be up by the roots or you are a lost man. Have you so little sense of what hath bin so long preached to you from Proverbs 5:11-12? Must those be your own complaints? And is there no remedy against deep - rooted selfishness and unreasonable wilfullness? Think not that these lines are written to you without tears. To conclude, by God’s assistance I resolve to morrow, if you refuse a free and downright Humiliation and Confession, to desire ye congregation to pray for you, and ye next day, if you do it not, to warne them to reject and avoid you. The letter is signed "Your faithful and truly loving Pastor."(8) It appears that Pearsall did not heed this tender appeal and Baxter instructed the believers to avoid him. It must have been painful for Baxter to walk silently by Pearsall on the streets of Kidderminster and grieve for his absence at St. Mary’s chapel on the Lord’s Day.

Imagine, however, Baxter’s joy in London after three years absence from Kidderminster, when he received an affectionate and moving letter from many friends and neighbors, including the signature of John Pearsall, received back into fellowship. As difficult and sorrowful a task as it is, discipline "is as essential a part of the pastor’s office as preaching."(9) And it, along with all other pastoral duties, is to be done voluntarily and with eagerness. Baxter made no attempt to soften his intolerance for unwilling pastors, who imagine that their job is simply to "preach the Word," while shrugging off unpleasant, yet necessary duties:

I confess, if I had my will, that man should be ejected as a negligent pastor, that will not rule his people by discipline, as well as he is ejected as negligent preacher that will not preach...(10)

We modern Christians have grown so cold in our love of the brethren that we tolerate all but the grossest sin and allow many in the family of God to suffer needlessly because of our unwillingness to discipline them. Worse yet, because of our timidity and downright lack of active, Biblical love for one another, some may continue in a course leading to eternal punishment. Perhaps if we were more diligent in seeking the repentance and restoration of habitual sinners, as Baxter did, fewer believers would feel constrained to separate themselves and we would not see the Body of Christ divided into so many factions.

1 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 166

2 Ibid., 105

3 Ibid., 168 4 Nuttall Richard Baxter 60 5 Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 92

6 Ibid., 92

7 Ibid., 91 8 Powicke A Life of Baxter 110 & 111 9 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 171

10 Ibid.

3.10. Husband

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Husband

"For she oft said, that before she married me she expected more sourness and unsuitableness than she found; yet I am sure that she found less zeal and holiness and strictness in all words, and looks and duties, and less help for her soul than she expected." It may be natural to suppose that a man so serious, so scholarly, and so immersed in the shepherding of others would be poorly suited for married life. Yet, Richard Baxter, "the husband of one wife," is a fine example of the one-woman man, described by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1-16. Frederick J. Powicke pinpoints in Baxter the kind of single-hearted devotion to a wife which Paul considers essential in a married pastor:

Baxter's love for his wife was a worshipful love. He thought of her as being superior to himself, whom it was as much his privelege to follow in many things as his business to lead; and his one regret was that he proved less worthy of her love than he ought to have been.(1) In many ways Margaret Baxter really was superior to Richard. His marriage reveals still another facet in Baxter's exceptional abilities as a shepherd and one which modern pastors may want to pay particular attention to; his spirit of humility and submission to others. With men, the relationship with their wives will often reveal the depth or shallowness of their humility and so, their suitability to the task of humble, servant leadership within the Body of Christ.

Baxter, the confirmed bachelor, was well known among his contemporaries for his strong views discouraging the marriage of ministers. While he never crossed the Scriptures by declaring the marriage of pastors unlawful, he did caution those with a desire to oversee a flock: The work of the sacred ministry is enough to take up the whole man, if he had the strength and parts of many men...In the primitive Church every congregation had many ministers; but covetousness of clergy and people will now allow scarce two to very great parishes... Believe it, he that will have a wife must spend much of his time in her conference, prayer, and other family duties... And if he have children, O how much care, time and labour they will require.(2)

So, it came as no surprise that his relationship and marriage in September of 1662 to Magaret Charlton, who was but half his age, caused a stir among his powerful enemies in the church and the court. They were quick to point to Baxter's apparent hypocrisy and even intimated that he had married for her considerable wealth. But Baxter maintained and the facts reveal that he never profited from the union, nor did he marry until he "was silent and ejected, and had no flock or pastoral cure."(3) This also gives us insight into the remarkable character of Margaret Charlton. She joined herself to Baxter in his darkest hour, when he had fallen into disfavor with the ruling parties, barred from ministry in the state church and facing certain persecution.

Initially, there was no mutual attraction between the two. Baxter, the Puritan, was too busy and the aristocratic Margaret too worldly. When she first came to Kidderminster she was put off by the piety and poverty of the believers there. But, soon the Spirit began stirring within her and "these

convictions did neither die, nor yet pass to despair, but to serious conversion..."(4) Her spiritual transformation was swift, so that eavesdropping servants commented later upon the length and seriousness of her secret prayers soon after she came to Christ.

Baxter would discover later that Magaret's love for him was awakening at Kidderminster, shortly after her conversion. But, any hopes she may have had of him returning her affections were certainly deemed futile in light of his views on marriage and his preoccupation with the work at Kidderminster. But, all that changed with his move to London in 1660 and ejection in 1662.

Margaret and her mother followed Baxter to London and it appears that, in the midst of his setbacks, he was pleased to have friends from Kidderminster so close at hand. The three attended worship together at the parish church each week and Baxter was always a welcome guest in the Charlton home. In January of 1661, Mrs. Charlton died leaving Margaret alone. This event coupled with Baxter's banishment from Kidderminster opened the way for their marriage and marked the beginning of "a Puritan love-story": When we were married, her sadness and melancholy vanished...And we lived in inviolated love and mutual complacency sensible of the benefit of mutual help. These near nineteen years I know not that we ever had any breach in the point of love, or point of interest...(5) Powicke illustrates the quality of their marriage with this sketch:

They were fond of singing Psalms to sacred music. And (says Baxter) 'it was not the least comfort that I had in the converse of my late dear wife that our first in the morning and last in bed at night was a Psalm of Praise till the hearing of others interrupted it.' A husband and wife who began and ended each day with a 'Psalm of Praise' sung so heartily as to evoke a protest from the neighbours need no further testimony to their mutual content!(6)

Years alone had made Baxter oblivious to the affairs of a running a household, so he was happy to have one so efficient manage his affairs. Margaret's ability to keep house became a source of wonder to him: Her household affairs she ordered with so great skill and decency, as that others much praised that which I was no fit judge of. I had been bred among plain, mean [humble] people, and I thought that so much washing of stairs and rooms, to keep them as clean as their trenchers [bowls] and dishes and so much ado about cleanliness and trifles, was a sinful curiosity, and expense of servants' time, who might have been reading some good book. But she that was otherwise bred had somewhat other thoughts.(7) The Baxter household, like all but the poorest of the period, had servants. Margaret was a kind and caring mistress to them, overlooking their faults and mistakes. She insisted that Baxter catechize them once a week and teach them from the Bible at their morning and evening prayers. Sometimes Baxter would be caught up in his studies and so forget his duties. Margaret gently reminded him with an "expression" of "trouble" on her face,(8) a habit Baxter came to appreciate. He was aware of his faults and appreciated her loving correction.

Unlike others, servants in the Baxter home were treated as family:

She had an earnest desire of the conversion and salvation of her servants, and was greatly troubled that so many of them (although tolerable in their work) went away ignorant, or strange to true godliness, as they came; and such as were truly converted with us she loved as children.(9)

Baxter, the scholar and recluse, was unpolished in the social graces. That fact, coupled with his constant pain, sometimes caused him to become testy or rude while at home. So, Margaret gently scolded him when he was careless or rash in his speech. Writes Baxter," if my very looks seemed

not pleasant, she would have me amend them (which my weak and pained state of body undisposed me to do)...(10)" Rather than consider her a nuisance, he welcomed her "greater exactness" and the peaceful atmosphere which it produced in their home.

Margaret was even a help to him in his writing, being somewhat of an intellectual herself. Letters to William Baxter, Richard's nephew and a recognized classical scholar, reveal that she was conversant in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew grammar.(11) But, her real strength was in her wisdom and her practical application of Scripture to life's problems. Baxter was not ashamed to declare her superiority:

...her apprehension of such things was so much quicker, and more discerning than mine... She would at the first hearing understand the matter better than I could do by many and long thoughts... Yes, I will say that... except in cases that required learning and skill in theological difficulties, she was better at resolving a case of conscience than most divines that ever I knew in all my life... Insomuch that of late years, I confess, that I was used to put all, save secret cases, to her and hear what she could say... and she would lay all the circumstances together, compare them, and give me a more exact resolution than I could do.(12)

Baxter's praise carries much weight in light of the fact that he produced A Christian Directory, the 948 page volume which Dr. Timothy Keller deemed "...the greatest manual on Biblical counseling ever produced..." This directory contains question after question concerning the Christian's duty in literally hundreds of specific situations. Written over a period of two years in their home at Acton, one wonders how many of these cases and topics were put to Margaret for consideration before being put to ink by Baxter.(13)

Margaret was a clever and resourceful ,"Proverbs 31:1-31 woman." After being cast aside for a decade, Baxter had resigned himself to the fact that he would never again preach to gatherings larger than their small home could contain. Although Richard had been banished from public ministry, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter were permitted to worship at the local parish church every Sunday. Afterwards, Mrs. Baxter would invite some of their poor neighbors in to be taught by Baxter, attracting small crowds who otherwise would never set foot in the parish chapel. This was dangerous business and exposed the Baxters to considerable trouble, but how else would these people hear the good news, she reasoned? The Baxters continued to touch many lives one by one, but Margaret was not content to see her husband shut away in the country while thousands in the slums of London were deprived of any gospel preaching. In 1673 she contrived a scheme which Baxter remembers: At London, when she saw me too dull and backward to seek any employment till I was called...she first fisht out of me in what place I most desired more preaching. I told her in St. Martin's Parish, where are said to be forty thousand more than can come into the Church...where neighbors many live like Americans, and have heard no Sermon of many years.(14)

Immediately she rented a large upstairs room where Baxter could preach Sunday mornings and another minister was hired to preach in the evening. During the first meeting the crowd was so great that the floor beam gave out a loud crack which "set them all on running, and crying out the windows for ladders." Mrs. Baxter pushed her way downstairs through the crowd and immediately found a carpenter, who went under the floor and propped up the beam. The next day they pulled up the flooring and found the beam held by a sliver and "took it for a wonder that the house fell not

suddenly."(15) The building could not contain the crowds attracted by Baxter's preaching. Not to be defeated, she settled her accounts and set out to have a new chapel built from the ground up on a vacant lot. Baxter preached the first Sunday after its completion, but had to travel to the country on business the following week. Mrs. Baxter hired Mr. Seddon to preach the next Lord's Day. Baxter's enemies, thinking he would be there on Sunday, got a warrant for his arrest and sent three justices. They arrested Mr. Seddon in his place "and all the burden lay on her to maintain him, to visit and comfort him, to pay the lawyer and discharge all fees..."(16) He spent nearly three months in jail and Mrs. Baxter supported his family from her own funds.

Baxter could not safely preach there again, so Margaret hired a good, licensed pastor to preach in the new chapel and then set out to find another where Baxter might minister unmolested. Over and over, Margaret contracted a chapel, Baxter was prevented from preaching, and she would raise support for a licensed pastor to come shepherd the poor who flooded in. She also set up a school in St. Jame's parish, to teach poor children to read and receive Christian instruction. Ironically, the efforts of Baxter's enemies who proclaimed Christ "out of selfish ambition"(17) and Mrs. Baxter's zeal, worked together to spread the gospel throughout the slums of London.

Margaret's zeal for good works was not without consequence. She was naturally timorous, "like the treble strings of a lute, strained up to the highest, sweet, but in continual danger."(18) Like her husband, she was frail and often sickly. Sometime in 1678 she began experiencing pain in one of her breasts. She feared cancer, so began restricting her diet and employed other folk remedies to fight it off. She became gravely ill for twelve days and died on June 14, 1681. Her selfless life "cost her not only her labour and estate, but somewhat of her trouble of body and mind; for her knife was too keen and cut the sheath."(19) Margaret had found true Life by losing her own life for the sake of her Master. Baxter was not bitter with the loss of Margaret, but instead acknowledged the Lord's goodness to him: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: and He hath taken away but that upon my desert, which He had given me undeservedly near nineteen years. Blessed be the name of the Lord. I am waiting to be next. The door is open. Death will quickly draw the veil, and make us see how near we were to God and one another, and did not sufficiently know it. Farewel(l) vain world, and welcom(e) true everlasting Life.(20) His heart broken, the man so acquainted with grief and suffering, who lived everyday in expectation of his own death, saw to it that even in hers, Margaret's example would continue to influence others for the kingdom of God. Within the year he had penned a short account of her life to show us that "...God's service lieth more in deeds than in words."(21)

Baxter married but once. He was truly a "one-woman man," regarding his wife as his companion, his equal in the Lord. Rather than resent her for her charm and abilities, he humbly, almost eagerly, welcomed her instruction and positive influence in their home. When his faith and evangelistic fire diminished, she fanned the flame; When he had no wisdom to impart, he sought hers; And, when his disposition was sometimes sour, he was tempered by her gentle reminders.

It is no secret that the Bride of Christ is troubled by far too many ambitious, controlling, headstrong men. While they carefully preach about each member's indispensability to Christ's body, they practically deny the Biblical doctrine with their independent, autocratic leadership style. How the church today needs men like Baxter; humble, teachable men who understand that Christian ministry is the vocation of every believer, not just leaders. And, what better example of Christian

humility than pastors who will patiently and thankfully bear the loving rebukes of their wives, as well as their local fellowship of believers. Let us learn Biblical submission, as Baxter did, by being "much ruled" by the love of brothers and sisters.

1 Frederick J. Powicke, The Reverend Richard Baxter Under the Cross (1662-1691), (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1927) 108

2 Ibid., 155-6

3 Ibid., 156

4 Ibid., 73

5 Ibid., 110

6 Frederick J. Powicke, A Puritan Idyll or The Reverend Richard Baxter's Love Story, (Manchester: Longman's Green and Co., 1918) 18 7 Richard Baxter Breviate, 137 8 Frederick J. Powicke A Puritan Idyll 17 9 Richard Baxter, Breviate, 136

10 Ibid., 129 11 Frederick J. Powicke A Puritan Idyll 29 12 Richard Baxter, Breviate, 127 13 Richard Baxter A Christian Directory (Ligonier, PA. Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1990)

14 Ibid., 116 15 Ibid., 116-17

16 Ibid., 119

17 Php 1:17 18 Richard Baxter, Breviate, 146

19 Ibid. , 113

20 Ibid., 160

21 Ibid., 154

3.11. Evangelist

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Evangelist

"Will it not awaken us to compassion, to look on a languishing man, and to think that within a few days his soul will be in heaven or in hell? Surely it will try the faith and seriousness of ministers, to be much about dying men! They will thus have opportunity to discern whether they themselves are in good earnest about the matters of the life to come." "Baxter was dominated by an ideal purpose and subordinated everything else to it,"(1) wrote his most extensive biographer, Frederick Powicke. That purpose was warning sinners of impending wrath and preaching the good news, that man's penalty was borne by Jesus Christ on the cross. Baxter's expectations of imminent death had given him "a thirsty desire of Mens Conversion and Salvation..,"(2) which was never quenched throughout his life.

Baxter's life radiated the gospel, to the point of being contagious. What was so attractive about Baxter's gospel? How was he able to communicate it to so many thousands of people who were converted as a result of his preaching, teaching, and writing over hundreds of years? At the center of his very being was the belief, based on the sure Word of God, of a literal heaven and hell:

I confess, with thanks to God, that having these forty years found that all our holiness and comfort depends upon our certain persuasion of the life of retribution following, and that our certainty of this depends upon our certain belief of the Holy Scriptures...(3)

Yes, Baxter's gospel of grace and forgiveness included stern warnings and vivid pictures of hell and damnation. He followed the example of the greatest evangelist of all; Jesus of Nazareth:

Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire: in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.(4)

Baxter never shrank from declaring the awful fate of the wicked and he delighted in the grace and mercy of God in pardoning sinners. The simple gospel is powerful and effective, believed Baxter, and he would not compromise it or entertain his hearers by dressing it up in trendy expressions:

I like to hear a man dwell much on the same essentials of Christianity. For we have but one God, and one Christ, and one faith to preach; and I will not preach another Gospel to please men with variety, as if our Saviour and our Gospel were grown stale.(5)

He eschewed emotionalism in his preaching, but his love and feeling for the gospel came through so powerfully that he could "...sway any audience as the wind can sway a field of corn."(6) His vivid descriptions of the horrors of hell, as well as the beautiful scenes of heaven crafted in his

words, were potent in spreading the gospel to his generation and those that followed.

Baxter’s resolve to share the gospel with any who would listen met with great success, even in his youth. His years at Kidderminster saw whole families converted until almost the entire town was saved. He knew his flock well and "took special notice of every one that was humbled, reformed or converted..." He continued this practice for a time, until finally "...it pleased God that the Converts were so many, that [he] could not afford time for such particular Observations about every one of them..."(7)

Then came the years of silence when Baxter was barred from preaching altogether. Baxter became increasingly restless. He even contemplated preaching to the Indians of New England, but knew he wouldn’t survive the hardships of the voyage and life in the wilderness. What was he to do? The Lord, in His wisdom, turned Baxter to writing. Rather than preaching to hundreds at a time, Baxter’s God-given gift of evangelism spread the healing message to thousands through his books. He would continue to plead and convince "obstinate sinners" for hundreds of years. His writings, says J.I. Packer, are "brilliant , passionate, eloquent, honest, open-hearted, sharpsighted, and wholly devoted to the glory of God and the good of others..." They display a "flair for unselfconscious, self -revealing intimacy on paper."(8) William Bates noted in Baxter’s writing, "...a vigorous pulse...that keeps the reader awake and attentive."(9)

Baxter’s "thirst for souls" caused him to tell his readers plainly what their fate is. In his Call to the Unconverted, Baxter implores the unrepentant:

He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear the gracious and yet dreadful call of God! His eye is all this while upon you. Your sins are registered, and you shall surely hear of them all again. God keepeth the book now; and he will write it all upon your consciences with his terrors; and then you will also keep it yourselves. O sinners, that you knew but what you are doing, and who you are all this while offending! The sun itself is darkness before the glory of that Majesty which you daily abuse and carelessly provoke... How eager are the devils to be doing with thee that have tempted thee, and do but wait for the word from God to take and use thee as their own, and then in a moment thou wilt be in hell!

He was no less impassioned in comforting those who have turned from their sin:

Christian, believe this, and think on it: thou shalt be externally embraced in the arms of that love which was from everlasting, and will extend to everlasting - of that love which brought the Son of God’s love from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory - that love which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, pierced - which did fast, pray, teach, heal, weep, sweat, bleed, die; that love will eternally embrace thee... Know this , believer, to thy everlasting comfort, if those arms have once embraced thee, neither sin nor hell can get thee thence forever.(10)

And, to those pastors who have been lulled into evangelistic slumber, then and now, he stirs with a fervent call to action:

Look upon your neighbors around you, and think how many of them need your help in no less a case than the apparent danger of damnation... Oh how can you walk, and talk, and be merry with such people, when you know their case? Methinks, when you look them in the face, and think how

they must suffer everlasting misery, you should break forth into tears... and then fall on with the most importunate exhortations... Oh, then, for the Lord's sake, and for the sake of poor souls, have pity on them, and bestir yourselves, and spare no pains that may conduce to their salvation.(11) His books had a far reaching effect as they were translated into other languages and published around the world. Baxter's correspondence with John Eliot (b. 1604 - d. 1690), the apostle to the American Indians, resulted in the translation of A Call to the Unconverted into the Algonquin language. It was the second book to be published in that language, following Mr. Eliot's work on the Bible. Baxter recorded

...I published this little book; which God hath blessed with unexpected Success beyond all the rest that I have written (except The Saints rest)... I have had Information of almost whole Households converted by this small Book, which I set so light by... God (since I was silenced) hath sent it... to many beyond the Seas...(12)

Reports of conviction, conversion, and comfort from Baxter's works are abundant. "...my second birth, if yet born again, I owe to you, you are my father, your Saints Rest, I mean, which I read three times over in the year 51," wrote Thomas Gouldstone, Rector of Finchley.(13) The request of one young boy before his death at the age of twelve is recorded: "I pray, let me have Mr. Baxter's book, that I may read a little more of eternity before I go into it."(14) The later years of the renowned pastor and Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, were spent in reading and prayer; "the Bible and Mr. Baxter's Saint's Everlasting Rest used to lie daily before him on the table in his parlor..."(15) As his health declined and his energy flagged, Baxter's evangelistic zeal turned to prayer for the lost and an expansion of his vision: My Soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of the miserable World, and more drawn out in desire of their Conversion than heretofore: I was wont to look but little further than England in my Prayers, as not considering the state of the rest of the World... But now as I better understand the Case of the World, and the method of the Lord's Prayer, so there is nothing in the World that lyeth so heavy upon my heart, as the thought of the miserable Nations of the Earth... I cannot be affected so much with the Calamities of my own Relations, or the Land of my Nativity, as with the Case of the Heathen, Mahometan and other Infidels! No part of my Prayers are so deeply serious, as that for the Conversion of the Infidel and Ungodly World, that God's Name may be sanctified, and his Kingdom come, and his Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven... There be no employment so desirable in my eyes, as to labour for the winning of such miserable Souls: which maketh me greatly honour Mr John Eliot, the Apostle of the Indians in New England, and whoever else have laboured in such work. When King Charles II was restored to power in 1662, he moved to dissolve the New England Company and their interests in America. The corporation, founded under Cromwell's rule, was conceived, at least in part, to "...maintain the Preachers that went among them and pay Schoolmasters to teach their children, and...for the furthering of the Works among the Indians."(16) Baxter was a strong supporter and he played the primary role in convincing the king that the company and the evangelistic work in America must continue. In appreciation, Mr. Eliot presented Charles with a copy of the Agonquin New Testament, followed by the entire Bible when it was completed.

Baxter's love of the gospel has been a source of blessing for thousands around the world, spanning three centuries. Preaching his funeral sermon, William Bates memorialized Baxter the evangelist and, perhaps unwittingly, prophesied of the fruit of Baxter's gospel :

He was animated with the Holy Spirit, and breathed celestial fire, to inspire heat and life into dead sinners, and to melt the obdurate in their frozen tombs... His books... have been effectual for more numerous conversions of sinners to God than any printed in our time; and while the church remains on earth will be of continual efficacy to recover lost souls.(17)

Baxter's life was guided by a determination to deliver the good news. What is the "ideal purpose" which animates us? What are our motives and what do we hope to accomplish? When we look at our efforts to tell others the good news, do we see any purpose or direction at all? If not, Baxter has a word or two for us:

I have observed that God seldom blesseth any man's work so much as his, whose heart is set upon the success of it....let all who preach for Christ and men's salvation, be unsatisfied till they have the thing they preach for.(18) And when we consider the gospel we preach, we must ask ourselves, "does our gospel message bring conviction, then comfort?" Or, are we only pleasant and entertaining in our preaching and teaching, hoping not to offend the sensibilities of the intelligent and self-righteous in the audience? Do we take God at His Word, believing that those who will not repent and be saved, face eternity in Hell? Finally, are we "thirsty for souls," as Baxter was? Do we have a longing to see those under our care borne safely to heaven? If not, then we must mend our ways.

1 Powicke A Life of Baxter 278 2 Richard Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 12 3 Baxter Breviate 150 4 Matthew 13:40-43 5 Baxter cited in Powicke A Life of Baxter 284

6 Ibid., 281 7 Richard Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 21 8 J.I. Packer A Quest For Godliness 302 9 Richard Baxter The Saints' Everlasting Rest (Evangelical Press: Ann Arbor, 1978) 7

10 Ibid., 35 11 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 198-199 12 Richard Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 114-115 13 Geoffrey Nuttall Richard Baxter 118-119A 14 Richard Baxter The Saints' Everlasting Rest (Evangelical Press: Ann Arbor, 1978) 12

15 Ibid., 11 16 Richard Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 2, 290

17 Richard Baxter The Saints' Everlasting Rest (Evangelical Press: Ann Arbor, 1978) 7v 18 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 121

3.12. Cross Bearer

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter

Cross Bearer

"Law or Physick or Souldiery would have afforded a man Honors and Riches; but what get I in the Ministry? I will tell you but the truth: constant study, Preaching, and all other labours, have utterly overthrown my health, and I know not one hard student and painful Preacher of many, but is languishing or sickly; yet though I am day and night full of pain, study I must, preach I must, I must visit the sick, instruct the ignorant, resolve the doubting, comfort the dejected and disquieted soul, admonish the scandalous and relapsed." When the Philistine Goliath stood threatening the armies of Israel, a young shepherd named David, stepped forward to fight the giant. King Saul sought to discourage David, but the experienced herdsman replied: Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear...(1) The shepherd David, who went on to rule over Israel as their king, provides us with a striking illustration of the danger and trouble involved in caring for a flock of sheep. Although modern Christian leaders may not actually encounter lions and bears in caring for God's people, we have been warned that we will certainly face ravenous wolves from within and persecution from without. It is the common lot of shepherds to be ridiculed, misunderstood, and slandered. Pastors and their families often live a frugal, hand to mouth existence, foregoing the simplest pleasures and possessions, which many take for granted. In some countries, which are particularly hostile to the gospel, it is not uncommon for pastors to be singled out for harassment, imprisonment or even death. Perhaps you have not experienced serious hardship in your ministry and have a difficult time believing that you ever will. Baxter gives you a stern warning, in this appeal to his fellow ministers to serve Christ to the fullest:

It is indeed a troublesome and painful work, and such as calls for some self-denial, because it will bring upon us the displeasure of the wicked. But dare we prefer our carnal ease and quietness, or the love and peace of wicked men, before our service to Christ our Master?(2)

We have seen the physical pain which Baxter endured his entire life, but he suffered the most hurt from those calling themselves Christian; those he considered brothers. His troubles began early in his ministry, when he brought the message of the gospel to Kidderminster and flashed the light of Scripture on sin.

Baxter's mere presence in the town, formerly known for its revelry, was enough to provoke "the Rabble of the more vicious sort" to mock and defame him. On one occasion a drunkard spread a report that he had seen Baxter "under a tree with a Woman," a compromising position for the new curate. The town was in an uproar and Baxter confronted the man, who confessed that he had started the rumor merely "as a Jest."(3) He had seen Baxter on horseback in a rain storm, waiting

it out under a large oak tree growing in a thick hedge. The woman was on the other side, out of Baxter's sight, seeking shelter under the same tree. The most innocent situations may provide fodder for a malicious heart and God's shepherds provide the enemy with an inviting target!

Soon, more serious problems arose, which might have cost Baxter his life. The stage was set for a civil war, with those favoring the Parliament and the Puritan cause on one side and those loyal to Charles I and ceremonialism on the other. Baxter and the town of Kidderminster were caught in the middle. He favored the monarchy. But, he saw that the court was corrupt, while the Parliament was upheld by "the more religious sort." So, Baxter fell out with the Parliament. He was immediately caricatured a "Roundhead," the label given to the Puritans who supported Parliament, ridiculing them for their short hair and plain dress. In 1642, an order came down from the Parliament to destroy all of the statues and images of the persons of the Trinity, Mary, and the saints, which remained from the days of Roman Catholicism. Baxter thought the order lawful, but didn't bother himself with the matter. However, the caretaker of the church immediately began the work of removing images. One day he set up a ladder to take down the image of Jesus from a cross in the churchyard, but couldn't reach it. While he went looking for a longer ladder, someone "took the Allarm" and a mob with sticks and clubs assembled to defend the crucifix. When the caretaker failed to return, the rabble went "raving about the Streets," looking for Baxter. Fortunately, he was a mile out of town on his daily walk. Two of Baxter's friends heard of the riot and ran into town to protect him. The mob beat them both instead and went home satisfied. When Baxter returned from his walk, he heard "the People Cursing at [him] in their Doors" as he walked through town and learned how nearly he had escaped the attack. The next Lord's Day he boldly reproved them from the pulpit and volunteered to leave town, because he feared they would beat him and so, bring on God's condemnation! They were surprised at Baxter's concern for them and quickly repented. Baxter's flesh and blood illustration of the same love and patience Christ demonstrated toward his tormentors, had a more powerful effect on Kidderminster than a hundred sermons.

Open violence soon erupted in the county so that "if a Stranger past in many places that had short Hair and a Civil Habit, the Rabble presently cried, 'Down with the Round-heads'; and some they knockt down in the open streets."(4) Tensions increased until one day, as Baxter was walking through town, "a violent Country gentleman... stopt and said, There goeth a Traitor...,"(5) pointing to Baxter. He quickly found his horse and rode out of town, barely escaping with his life.

After passions had cooled somewhat he returned, living in a state of constant unrest. For months, royalist mobs formed, rioted and "after the Lord's Day when they had heard the Sermon they would a while be calmed, till they came to the Alehouse again..." Baxter patiently bore with them until the Lord Himself intervened to deliver Kidderminster:

"And when the Wars began, almost all these Drunkards went into the King's Army, and were quickly killed, so that scarce a Man of them came home again and survived the War."(6)

Although Baxter had sided with Parliament, he was suspicious of Oliver Cromwell and regarded him as a usurper. Early on, Cromwell offered him a chaplaincy, which Baxter declined. His opinions, which were doubtless aired publicly, reached Cromwell's ear and he was never regarded warmly during the Lord Protector's lifetime. Ironically then, it was the time following the war under Cromwell's rule, that Baxter enjoyed his greatest freedom.

He returned from the war and entered into the most successful and comfortable period of his life, gently leading, teaching, and caring for the people of Kidderminster. When Cromwell died and his successor failed to hold England together, Baxter was of the party who sought to bring Charles II back from exile. He anticipated an increase of peace and unity within the national church and expected to enjoy some consideration for his loyalty to the king. His hopes, however, were dashed to pieces with the return of Charles and the Act of Uniformity. This Act barred from public ministry all non-Conformists; Those pastors, who would not swear to the oaths of allegiance put forth by the ruling party in the Church of England. Baxter was offered the prestigious position of Bishop of Hereford, which he declined. He felt that to accept the position would signal his approval of the church's hierarchical power structure and empty ceremonial traditions. It was one thing to tolerate differences in others, but quite another to participate in practices which violated his conscience. Baxter was completely silenced in August of 1662 and barred from any pastoral opportunities.

Baxter could not restrain his disappointment. In a letter to friends at Kidderminster, he wrote, "For these six years time in which I thought my greater experience, had made me more capable, of serving my Master better than before, his Wisdom and Justice, have caused me to spend in grievous silence," causing "Groans and Tears which I can never on Earth forget."(7) As the Lord taught Paul the apostle, He would show Baxter "...how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). In the midst of this disaster, the Lord comforted Baxter in his marriage to Margaret Charlton. After they were married in London, they withdrew from public life for a time, but continued to attend public worship at the parish church and prayer in the homes of friends. Baxter's enemies remained suspicious and watched his every move. Once, when he and other ministers planned to pray with a dying woman, officers were sent to arrest him for violating the Act of Uniformity. Baxter didn't attend the meeting, but "They came upon them into the Room where the Gentlewoman lay ready to die, and drew the Curtains, and took some of their Names, but missing of their Prey, returned disappointed.(8)" The next blow to fall was the Conventicle Act, which limited religious meetings to four people above the immediate family in a home and the Five Mile Act, requiring "nonconformists" to live at least five miles from any incorporated town. Mr. and Mrs. Baxter moved to the country, where he entered his most productive period as a writer. Baxter would preach privately to a few friends and neighbors, but even the slightest glimmer of the gospel incited the ungodly to anger:

March 26. being the Lord's Day 1665. as I was preaching in a Private House, where we received the Lord's Supper, a Bullet came in at the Window among us, past by me and narrowly mist the Head of a Sister-in-law of mine that was there, and hurt none of us...(9) This period at Acton was not, however, without comfort for Baxter. It was here that he met Sir Matthew Hale, who would soon become the Lord Chief Justice of England. They struck up an immediate friendship and spent hours discussing a variety of subjects. It was in Matthew Hale that Baxter discovered the value of patient listening, from "a Man of no quick utterance..." The two became the symbol of loving friendship at Acton so that the sculptured heads of Hale and Baxter adorn the doorway of the parish church to this day.(10)

Baxter's relative peace came to an abrupt end on June 12, 1669, when he was jailed for violating the Five Mile Act and imprisoned at Clerkenwell. Baxter found the heat stifling, the noise of the other prisoners distracting, and the loss of sleep a hindrance to his studies. But, Margaret made his stay tolerable, as he remembers: When I was carried thence to the common gaol [jail]... I never

perceived her trouble at it: she cheerfully went with me into prison; she brought her best bed thither, and did much to remove the removable inconveniences of the prison. I think she scarce had a pleasanter time in her life than while she was with me there.

Baxter would not allow himself to become shaken or embittered by the experience; "Truth did not change, because I was in a Gaol,"(11) he wrote. He was released within two weeks, due in part to the fact that Matthew Hale went before the Judges, weeping and attesting to Baxter's good character. In this episode we see illustrated the depth of character in those who are true disciples of Christ. Baxter, the lowly messenger, willing to faithfully bear the cross, as well as the message; Margaret, the young, aristocratic woman, making herself poor and cheerfully enduring persecution for the Gospel's sake; and Matthew Hale, the righteous friend and judge, proclaiming God's justice in the face of unrighteous rulers and unjust laws.

Upon release, the Baxters returned home long enough to rent out their house and gather up a few belongings before moving to Totteridge. It was there "in a troublesome, poor, smoaky, suffocating Room in the midst of daily pains of the Sciatia, and many worse" that Baxter finished a number of writing projects, without the aid of his library. Mrs. Baxter fared no better, suffering "a great straightness of the lungs" from the heavy coal smoke, which filled the room.(12) The Lord again comforted the Baxters, providing a new home large enough to accommodate them, as well as Baxter's stepmother and their friends the Corbets, an ejected minister and his wife. But, in 1672, Charles issued his Declaration of Indulgence which allowed the preaching of licensed non-Conformists. The Corbets and the Baxters parted, both returning to London to apply for licenses.

Until this time, Baxter had not sought a license because one of the requirements was adherence to a particular denomination or party within the Church of England, a profession his conscience would not allow. Christ is not divided and he would not take on the label of one party in order to preach. Now, however, it was possible to register simply as a "non - Conformist." Baxter stated his "Case" in a simple letter: My religion is merely Christian... The rule of my faith and doctrine is ye law of God in Nature and Scripture. The Church which I am a member of is the Universality of Christians, in conjunction with all particular Churches of Christians in England or elsewhere in the world, whose Communion according to my capacity I desire... I humbley crave his Majestie's License to preach the Gospel...

Baxter's case, which inspired the title for C.S. Lewis' apologetic work Mere Christianity, won an indulgence issued to "Richard Baxter, a non-Conforming Minister to teach in any licensed or allowed place."(13)

However, Baxter soon found that being licensed did not mean that he was free to preach the gospel. His enemies continued to hound him and prevented him from preaching or publishing. They levied fines on him for each "seditious" sermon and confiscated his property. Fearing that his beloved library, his "silent wise companions," would eventually be taken and destroyed, Margaret secretly distributed the books to London ministers and sent the rest to Cambridge University in America. Margaret persisted in procuring chapels, Baxter would preach, and his foes would beat on drums outside the windows or meet him at the door with constables and carefully worded warrants.

Baxter’s sorrows increased with the death of his beloved friend, Matthew Hale. Then, his stepmother died at the age of ninety-six, followed by John Corbet. In June of 1681, Margaret finally died and Baxter began to wither. Still, he was not allowed to rest.

Within four months, all of his remaining property was seized and he was taken to jail for preaching five sermons. His sentence was commuted because of ill health, but his property, including the very bed he lay on, was taken and sold to pay his fines.(14) In November of 1684 new accusations of sedition were made and officers sent to arrest Baxter. He locked himself in his room: But they set six Officers at my Study-door, who watcht all night, and kept me from my bed and food, so that the next day I yielded to them; who carried me (scarce able to stand) to their Sessions...

He was bound over for good behavior and returned home. But, on February 28, 1685 he was brought before Judge Jeffreys on the outrageous charge of treason, for certain passages in his recently published Paraphrase on the New Testament.

Baxter was not allowed to testify in his own defense and others who spoke on his behalf were shouted down. During the course of the matter, Jeffreys and the court vilified Baxter, styling him a rogue, a rascal, and a knave who sought to "ruin the King and the Nation" through his rebellious writings. But, Archbishop John Tillotson, an eyewitness at Westminster Hall, regarded the scene as Baxter’s hour of glory, triumphing over the enticements of worldly honor and an example worthy of our imitation:

Nothing more honourable than when the Rev Baxter stood at bay, berogued, abused, despised; and never more great than then...This is the noblest part of his life, and not that he might have been bishop. The Apostle (2 Corinthians xi.), when he would glory, mentions his labours and strifes and bonds and imprisonments; his troubles, weariness, dangers, reproaches; not his riches and coaches and honours and advantages. God lead us into this spirit and free us from the worldly one which we are apt to run into.(15)

Baxter was found guilty and he wrote "I went quietly to a costly Prison, where I continued in pain and languor near two years."(16) He was released on November 24, 1686 and allowed to live in London, renting a house in Charterhouse yard. His editor and close friend, Matthew Sylvester, paints the picture of a worn, though unbeaten Baxter in this, the twilight of his life:

He was pleasingly conversible, save in his Studying-hours, wherein he could not bear with trivial disturbances. He was sparingly facetious; but never light or frothy. His heart was warm, plain fixed; his Life was Blameless, Exemplary, Uniform... His Personal Abstinence, Severities and Labours, were exceeding great; He kept his Body at an under; and always fear’d pampering his flesh too much. He diligently, and with great pleasure minded his Master’s Work within doors and without, whilst he was able. His Charity was very great; greatly proportionable to his Abilities; his purse was ever open to the Poor...(17) To look upon Baxter in his final years, "His Person was Tall and Slender, and stooped much: his Countenance Compos’d and Grave, somewhat inclining to Smile. He had a piercing Eye, a very Articulate Speech, and his Deportment rather Plain than Complemental..."(18) Sylvester also noted:

"...though he was seldom without pain, or sickness (but mostly pain;) yet never did he murmur, but us’d to say, ’It is but flesh.’ And when I have askt him how he did? His usual Answer was, Either ’Almost well:’ Or, ’Better than I deserve to be, but not so well as I hope to be.’(19) His physical

condition grew slowly worse. Two days before his death on December 8, 1691, he told two friends, William Bates and Increase Mather, "I have pain, there is no arguing against sense, but I have peace, I have peace."(20) After a night of excruciating pain, at four in the morning, Baxter turned his eyes to Matthew Sylvester and said, "O I thank Him, I thank Him. The Lord teach you to die."(21) Then Baxter, the weary sojourner, was ushered into the saint's everlasting rest.

Baxter thanked God for his life of brokeness, trouble, and persecution because it made him recognize the effects of sin and death upon mankind. The wretched condition of the human race was ever in his sight and senses, and was present to an unusual degree in his own physical infirmities. The life of this man, the suffering of which modern readers may find appalling, caused Baxter to see more clearly than most, the need of a Savior. Instead of bitterness and self-pity, it produced in Baxter an earnestness in reproving sin and evil, a fervor in leading others to life and peace in Jesus Christ, and a complete reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

But, did his estimation of the pastoral ministry suffer from his years of difficult service and rough treatment? Let Baxter answer as he did one of his critics:

I bless the Lord daily, that ever he called me to this blessed work! It is but my flesh that repineth at it. God hath paid me for all these sufferings a thousand fold... O how the Lord doth sweetly revive my own Faith and Love and Desire and Joy and Resolution and all Graces, whilst He sets me on those thoughts in my studies, and those Persuasions in my Preaching which tend to revive the Graces of my Hearers!... Truly God's work is most precious wages! Yea, even my sufferings are the inlets of my Joy!(22) 1 1 Samuel 17:34-35 2 Baxter The Reformed Pastor 167 3 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae , Part 1, 24

4 Ibid., 40

5 Ibid., 40

6 Ibid., 42 7 Geoffrey F. Nuttall Richard Baxter (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1965) 93

8 Ibid., 96 9 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae , Part 2, 441 10 Geoffrey F. Nuttall Richard Baxter 99

11 Ibid., 101 12 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae , Part 3, 70 13 Frederick J. Powicke, The Reverend Richard Baxter Under the Cross (1662-1691), (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1927) 72 14 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae , Part 3, 191

15 Letter from Archbishop Tillotson to Matthew Sylvester cited in Frederick J. Powicke, The Reverend Richard Baxter Under the Cross (1662-1691), (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1927) 145 & 46 16 Geoffrey F. Nuttall Richard Baxter 100 17 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae , Appendix: Elisha's Cry 14-15

18 Ibid., 16

19 Ibid., 15 20 Geoffrey F. Nuttall Richard Baxter 112 21 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae , Appendix: Elisha's Cry 16 22 Baxter cited in Powicke A Life of Baxter 288

3.13. Citizen of Heaven

Mere Christian by Richard Baxter Citizen of Heaven

"A holy love, like that in heaven, must be studiously fetched from heaven, and be kindled by the foresight of what is there, and what we shall be there for ever. Faith must ascend and look within the vail. Thou, my soul, must not live a stranger to thy home and hopes, to thy God and Savior. The fire that must warm thee is in heaven, and thou must come near it, and open thyself to its influence, if thou wilt feel its powerful efficacy"

"...but now I had rather read, hear or meditate, on God and Heaven, than on any other Subject: for I perceive that it is the Object that altereth and elevateth the Mind...that it must animate all our other Duties; and fortifie us against every Temptation and Sin..."

These words, penned near the end of Richard Baxter's life provide us with the key to the incredible depth of his devotional life and, in turn, his success as a pastor. Like another noted psalmist and shepherd who lived in Jerusalem thousands of years ago, Baxter delighted in meditating upon God, His Word, and majestic throne room. He really did know God.

Baxter counted himself blessed to realize at an early age what Paul meant when he instructed the believers at Colossae to "...keep seeking the things above, where Christ is..."(1) As a young army chaplain, the rigour of weeks of travel on horseback and sleeping out of doors, along with hours of preaching and personal pastoral care, stretched Baxter's frail body to the breaking point. He experienced a complete breakdown in 1647. In "a cold and snowy season" Baxter began to bleed from the nose until he had lost nearly two quarts of blood. His physician's questionable countermeasures further weakened his body to the point that he was physically unrecognizable to his friends. He was left languishing for five months in the homes of friends with no book but the Bible, spending hours in heavenly meditation to prepare for his certain death. Not one to waste time, he began writing down his meditations for the benefit of others after his death. Weeks passed and Baxter slowly recovered. His notes became a series of sermons and eventually evolved into The Saints' Everlasting Rest , his first published work and an enormous bestseller. From that time forward, Baxter vowed to spend at least one hour of every remaining day in meditation upon the scenes and activities in heaven described in the Scriptures. All other duties might be crowded out of his busy day, but he jealously guarded his hour enjoying the benefits of his membership in the family of God and citizenship in His heavenly dominion. Afterwards, he felt resuscitated, reoriented, and invigorated for the accomplishment of his myriad tasks. This heavenly meditation was not optional; Baxter needed to know God intimately:

Frequency in heavenly contemplation is particularly important to prevent a shyness between God and thy soul. Frequent society breeds familiarity, and familiarity increases love and delight, and makes us bold in our address. The chief end of this duty is, to have acquaintance and fellowship with God...(2) The Bible was the object of his meditation, for he knew that it is "our Belief of the Truth of the Word of God, and the Life to come, which is the Spring that sets all Grace on Work..."

Conversely, he noted, "I observed easily in my self that if at any time Satan did more than at other times weaken my Belief of Scripture, and the Life to come, my Zeal in every religious Duty abated with it and I grew more indifferent..."(3)

Baxter's "love and delight" in God was the firm foundation which prevented him from becoming bitter from pain and persecution, stuffy from years of learning, and haughty or proud from his great achievements. His devotional life seemed to radiate until those around him were affected in the same way. Time spent with his Father made Baxter a man of prayer and praise and his "heavenly mindedness" was a powerful influence upon God's people as well. If one is to be an effective, dynamic Christian leader, then this principle, illustrated in Richard Baxter, must be embodied in us. Our private, hidden relationship with our Heavenly Father will deeply impact the lives of those in our charge; positively or negatively.. The once depraved town of Kidderminster slowly came to admire and imitate the very man they once ridiculed in effigy at their riotous fairs. Particularly conspicuous was their faithfulness in prayer, both public and private. In a day when most prayers were recited from the Book of Common Prayer, Baxter preferred to pray "without a form" because "it is easier to me to pray or preach six hours in freedome, about things which I understand, than to pray or preach the tenth part of an hour in the fetters of a form of words which I must not vary."(4) His example inspired others to pray from their hearts, too.

It is impossible to overlook Baxter's excitement in detailing a number of answers to the prayers of his neighbors, "a few humble Weavers and other Tradesmen only, and no Minister with them..."

Many a time have I been brought very low, and received the Sentence of Death in my self, when my poor, honest, praying Neighbours have met, and upon their fasting and earnest Prayers I have been recovered.(5)

Baxter's catalogue began with his recollection of an event which seemed to begin an outpouring of miraculous, merciful answers to prayer. A tumor appeared on one of his tonsils, which began growing larger and "hard like a Bone." After treating it for a few months with both remedies and entreaties, Baxter was suddenly stricken in his conscience that he had never publicly thanked God for His faithfulness in delivering him so many times from past illnesses. After preaching on God's promises of hearing and answering our prayers, the tumor suddenly vanished.(6)

Besides the answered prayers in his own life, he writes of "A grave and honest Widow, Mrs. Giles," whose son was given to severe epileptic seizures. All of the physician's efforts were in vain, so the people of Kidderminster came together for a day of fasting and prayer. The young man was "suddenly cured, and never had a Fit since to this Day..."

And, then there was Richard Cook who "fell quite Mad" for over ten years. Some men of Kidderminster decided to fast and pray for Mr. Cook in his home, but Baxter sought to discourage them. He had no hope that Mr. Cook would be cured and feared the men would lose faith and abandon prayer altogether. However, "...some of these Men would not be dissuaded, but would Fast and Pray at his House with great importunity; and Many months they continued it (once a Fortnight, or thereabouts)..." Eventually, Mr. Cook recovered, to Baxter's surprise and wonder! He never again doubted his Father's promise to hear and answer the requests of his humble children.

Baxter appears to have related well to the adolescents in the parish and his influence upon "the younger sort" was truly remarkable. Each Saturday evening, a number of the young people of

Kidderminster met privately in homes. They discussed the sermon from the previous Lord's Day, prepared themselves for the next, and joined together in intercessory prayer for three hours. These meetings and the movement of the Holy Spirit which followed, prepared the spiritual soil for a revival in Kidderminster which produced delicious fruit for generations to come. The spiritual depth and commitment of these young Christians at Kidderminster should cause us to wonder if we are not selling our own children short, by seeking to attract them too often with "teen" activities? Is it possible that young Christians in our modern world may actually have the same deep desire to know God intimately, to come together in prayer, and to understand His Word as those at Kidderminster did 300 years ago? Perhaps our "pop-Christian" traditions are simply a prop for our lack of belief, that the Holy Spirit can lead our children to live a godly life.

Baxter's "love and delight" in God was also apparent in public worship on Sunday mornings. This is one of the few areas in which Baxter broke ranks with his Puritan brethren, when most sought to make public worship a plain and solemn affair, removing organs from chapels and limiting singing to the Psalms, without accompaniment.Central to the Puritan service was the "regular prophesying" or preaching, by a man of God. Frederick Powicke points out that the Puritans were right in insisting upon this regular teaching from God's Word "...which the Church and State so shortsightedly tried to suppress. It was their vital point of difference from the ceremonialists..." But, "The result in many cases was a degradation of the idea of worship from which the Churches, that boast a Puritan descent, have not yet recovered."(7) Baxter, however, held a much loftier view of the place of praises sung to music in public worship. He was no "dry as dust" preacher: For myself I confess that Harmony and Melody are the pleasure and elevation of my Soul, and have made a Psalm of Praise in the holy Assembly the chief delightful Exercise of my Religion and my Life.(8)

Methinks, when we are singing the praises of God in the great assemblies with joyful and fervent spirits, I have the liveliest foretaste of heaven upon earth...(9)

Baxter was the quintessential Puritan pastor, earnest for souls and a serious preacher. However, on the Lord's Day he was anything but gloomy and he made the lively worship of the Savior the focus of all activity. The order of service at St. Mary's chapel in Kidderminster shows that Baxter followed the general form adopted by most churches in England with one notable exception; More time was devoted to prayer and the singing of praises. In fact, addressing other ministers, Baxter suggested that they teach more often during the week, so that their Sunday sermon may be shortened and the greater part of the service spent in singing "Psalms and solemn Praises to our Redeemer."(10) In answer to those who limited singing to the Psalms, Baxter pointed out that there was nothing unscriptural "if Hymns and Psalms of Praise were new invented, as fit for the state of the gospel, Church, and Worship...as David's Psalms were fitted to the former state and infancy of the Church."(11) God has given Christians a new song, reasoned Baxter, so it was only fitting that new hymns be written, praising God for his acts of deliverance in more recent memory.

It is common for the church in each age to question those aspects of the Sunday assembly which may appear tedious and unimportant. Those of us who lament that our own worship is lifeless and irrelevant, would be wise to examine our attitude in light of Baxter's directions for worship, composed over 300 years ago. The coming together of the church is to be approached with an spirit of celebration: The Lords day is a day of Joy and Thanksgiving, and the Praises of God are the highest and holyest employment upon Earth. And if ever you should do any thing with all your

might, and with a joyful and triumphing frame of soul, it is this. The thankful and praiseful Commemoration of the work of mans Redemption, is the special work of the day: and the celebrating of the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ...was part of these laudatory exercises and used every Lords day by the Primitive Church...(12)

Yes, Baxter longed for eternity in heaven, to be employed in praising and worshipping God. What Christian does not? But, Baxter had a divine impatience and he would not be put off until death to experience God's presence. He recognized that an eternity of praise and worship begins the moment a sinner comes to Christ and is set free. By contrast, Baxter's heavenly life makes even the most pious among modern Christians appear as spiritual dwarfs. Yet, the importance of daily praise and meditation was not immediately recognized even by Baxter himself. While still in his thirties, Baxter had written many times of the necessity of praising God daily and he pleaded "...let praises have a larger room in thy duties..."(13) However, nearly twenty years later, he was compelled to confess:

Then I was little sensible of the greatness and excellency of Love and Praise; though I coldly spake the same words in its commendations... But my Conscience now looketh at Love and delight in God, and praising him, as the top of all my Religious Duties, for which it is that I value and use the rest.(14)

How often have we resolved to spend more "quiet time" with our Lord or exhorted others with Paul's words to the Colossians to meditate upon heavenly things, when we ourselves are strangers to any such practice. In Christ, we really are citizens of heaven, yet most of the time we seem to remain earthbound and distant from God. Perhaps the pace of our frantic world blurs our vision, so that we count meditation as inactivity. We suppose our time would be better spent in some good enterprise.

People are no different now than in Baxter's day, when he made this observation of Christians and their neglect of genuine, Biblical meditation:

It is confessed to be a duty by all, but practically denied by most. Many that make conscience of other duties, easily neglect this. They are troubled if they omit a sermon, a fast, or a prayer, in public or private, yet were never troubled that they have omitted meditation perhaps all their life... though it be that duty by which all other duties are improved...(15)

If we hope to improve our skills at shepherding God's flock, we must first spend time in intimate communion with the Chief Shepherd. How can we expect to minister God's loving care to others if we remain strangers to Him?

This, then, is the key to Baxter's earnestness and success and it can be ours, as well; He took to heart Paul's "short sermon" to the Ephesian elders and lived it out moment by moment, day by day. Before caring for others, he first learned to "keep watch" over himself. Yes, Richard Baxter loved to preach of the grace and mercy of God. He was careful to painstakingly teach the way of salvation and a holy life in Christ. He delighted in his time spent studying God's word. He counted shepherding God's flock as the most exalted work a man could do on earth. But, above all else, he loved God. It was his deep and abiding love of Jesus Christ, the one who paid the price to redeem him, which made the fallen world tolerable and the difficult work pleasant. Baxter was an energetic, effective shepherd in spite of constant trouble and countless sorrows because he "set his mind on

things above" and brought heaven down to earth for others to see and hear and touch. His heavenly life spanned over half a century, yet he influenced thousands for eternity.

1 Colossians 3:1 2 Richard Baxter The Saints' Everlasting Rest 343-4 3 Richard Baxter Reliquiae Baxterianae Part 1, 23 4 Geoffrey F. Nuttall Richard Baxter (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1965) 50 5 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae (London: 1656), Part 1, 80

6 Ibid., 81 7 Frederick J. Powicke A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter (1615-1691) (Houghton Mifflin Company: New York, 1924) 48 8 Richard Baxter cited in Geoffrey F. Nuttall Richard Baxter 51

9 Richard Baxter Dying Thoughts: The Christian's Hope for the Life Hereafter (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1976) 97 10 Richard Baxter cited in Frederick J. Powicke A Life of the Reverend Richard Baxter (1615-1691) 96 11 Richard Baxter cited in Geoffrey F. Nuttall Richard Baxter 52

12 Ibid., 51 13 Richard Baxter The Saints' Everlasting Rest 332 14 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae , Part 1, 129 15 Richard Baxter The Saints' Everlasting Rest (Evangelical Press: Ann Arbor, 1978) 338

Chapter 38

4.00. THE REFORMED PASTOR

THE REFORMED PASTOR By Richard Baxter, 1656

Dedication The Oversight of OURSELVES The Oversight of the FLOCK The NATURE of This Oversight The MANNER of This Oversight The MOTIVES of This Oversight

Application The Use of Humiliation

4.00d. Dedication

DEDICATION To my reverend and dearly beloved brethren, the faithful ministers of Christ, in Britain and Ireland, Grace and Peace in Jesus Christ be increased. The subject of this treatise so nearly concerns yourselves, and the churches committed to your care, that it emboldens me to this address, notwithstanding the imperfections in the manner of handling it, and the consciousness of my great unworthiness to be your monitor.

Before I come to my principal errand, I shall give you an account of the reasons of the following work, and of the freedom of speech I have used, which to some may be displeasing. When the Lord had awakened his ministers in the county of Worcestershire, and some neighboring parts, to a sense of their duty in the work of catechizing, and private instruction of all in their parishes who would not obstinately refuse their help, and when they had subscribed an agreement, containing their resolutions for the future performance of it, they judged it unfit to enter upon the work, without a solemn humbling of their souls before the Lord, for their long neglect of so great and necessary a duty; and, therefore, they agreed to meet together at Worcester, December 4, 1655, and there to join in humiliation and in earnest prayer to God, for the pardon of our neglects, and for his special assistance in the work which we had undertaken, and for the success of it with the people whom we had engaged to instruct. At this time, among others, I was desired by them to preach. In compliance with their wishes, I prepared the following discourse; which, though it proved longer than could be delivered in one or two sermons, yet I intended to have entered upon it at that time, and to have delivered that which was most pertinent to the occasion, and to have reserved the test to another season. But, before the meeting, by the increase of my ordinary pain and weakness, I was disabled from going there; to recompense which unwilling omission, I easily yielded to the request of several of the brethren, forthwith to publish the things which I had prepared, that they might read that which they could not hear.

If it be objected, that I should not have spoken so plainly and sharply against the sins of the ministry, or that I should not have published it to the view of the world; or, at least, that I should have done it in another tongue, and not in the ears of the vulgar (especially at a time like then, when Quakers and Papists are endeavoring to bring the ministry into contempt, and the people are too prone to hearken to their suggestions), I confess I thought the objection very considerable; but that it prevailed not to alter my resolution, is to be ascribed, among others, to the following reasons:

1. It was a proposed solemn humiliation that we agreed on, and that this was prepared and intended for. And how should we be humbled without a plain confession of our sin?

2. It was principally our own sins that the confession concerned; and who can be offended with us for confessing our own sins, and taking the blame and shame to ourselves, which our consciences told us we ought to do?

3. Having necessarily prepared it in the English tongue, I had no spare time to translate it into Latin.

4. When the sin is open in the sight of the world, it is vain to attempt to hide it; all such attempts will but aggravate and increase our shame.

5. A free confession is a condition of a full remission; and when the sin is public, the confession should also be public. If the ministers of England had sinned only in Latin, I would have made shift to admonish them in Latin, or else have said nothing to them. But if they will sin in English, they must hear of it in English. Unpardoned sin will never let us rest or prosper, though we be at ever so much care and cost to cover it: our sin will surely find us (Numbers 32:23) out, though we find not it out. The work of confession is purposely to make known our sin, and freely to take the shame to ourselves; and if "he (Proverbs 28:13) that confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy," no wonder if "he who covers them shall not prosper." If we be so tender to ourselves, and so hesitant to confess, God will be the less tender of us, and he will indite our confessions for us. He will either force our consciences to confession, or his judgments shall proclaim our iniquities to the world.

6. Too many who have undertaken the work of the ministry so obstinately proceed in self–seeking, negligence, pride, and other sins, that it is become our necessary duty to admonish them. If we saw that such would reform without reproof, we would gladly forbear the publishing of their faults. But when reproofs themselves prove so ineffectual, that they are more offended at the reproof than at the sin, and had rather that we should cease reproving than that they should cease sinning, I think it is time to sharpen the remedy. For what else should we do? To give up our brethren as incurable would be cruelty, as long as there are further means to be used. We must not hate them, but plainly rebuke them, and not allow sin in them. To bear with the vices of the ministry is to promote the ruin of the Church; for what speedier way is there for the depraving and undoing of the people, than the depravity of their guides? And how can we more effectually further a reformation, than by endeavoring to reform the leaders of the Church? For my part, I have done as I would have done to me; and it is for the safety of the Church, and in tender love to the brethren, whom I venture to reprehend—not to make them contemptible and odious, but to heal the evils that would make them so—so that no enemy may so reproach us. But, especially, because our faithful endeavors are of so great necessity to the welfare of the Church, and the saving of men’s souls, that it will not consist with a love to either, to be negligent ourselves, or silently to connive at negligence in others. If thousands of you were in a leaking ship, and those that should pump out the water, and stop the leaks, should be sporting or asleep, or even but favoring themselves in their labors, to the danger of you all, would you not awaken them to their work and call on them to labor as for your lives? And if you used some sharpness and importunity with the slothful, would you think that man was in his wits who would take it ill of you, and accuse you of pride, self–conceitedness, or unmannerliness, to presume to talk so saucily to your fellow–workmen, or that should tell you that you wrong them by diminishing their reputation? Would you not say, "The work must be done, or we are all dead men. Is the ship ready to sink, and do you talk of reputation? or had you rather hazard yourself and us, than hear of your slothfulness?" This is our case, brethren. The work of God must be done! Souls must not perish, while you mind your worldly business or worldly pleasure, and take your ease, or quarrel with your brethren! Nor must we be silent while men are hastened by you to perdition, and the Church brought into greater danger and confusion, for fear of seeming too uncivil and unmannerly with

you, or displeasing your impatient souls! Would you be but as impatient with your sins as with our reproofs, you should hear no more from us, but we should be all agreed! But, neither God nor good men will let you alone in such sins. Yet if you had betaken yourselves to another calling, and would sin to yourselves only, and would perish alone, we should not have so much necessity of molesting you, as now we have: but if you will enter into the office of the ministry, which is for the necessary preservation of us all, so that by letting you alone in your sin, we must give up the Church to loss and hazard, blame us not if we talk to you more freely than you would have us to do. If your own body were sick, and you will despise the remedy, or if your own house were on fire, and you will be singing or quarreling in the streets, I could possibly bear it, and let you alone, (which yet, in charity, I should not easily do), but, if you will undertake to be the physician of a hospital, or to a whole town that is infected with the plague, or will undertake to quench all the fires that shall be kindled in the town, there is no bearing with your inattentiveness, however much it may displease you. Take it how you will, you must be told of it; and if that will not serve, you must be told of it yet more plainly; and, if that will not serve, if you be rejected as well as reprehended, you may thank yourselves. I speak all this to none but the guilty.

And, thus, I have given you those reasons which forced me to publish, in plain English, so much of the sins of the ministry as in the following treatise I have done. And I suppose the more penitent and humble any are, and the more desirous of the true reformation of the Church, the more easily and fully will they approve such free confessions and reprehensions. But I find it will be impossible to avoid offending those who are at once guilty and impenitent; for there is no way of avoiding this, but by our silence, or their patience: and silent we cannot be, because of God's commands; and patient they will not be, because of their guilt and impenitence. But plain dealers will always be approved in the end; and the time is at hand when you will confess that they were your best friends. But my principal business is yet behind. I must now take the boldness, brethren, to become your monitor, concerning some of the necessary duties, of which I have spoken in the ensuing discourse. If any of you should charge me with arrogance or immodesty for this attempt, as if hereby I accused you of negligence, or judged myself sufficient to admonish you, I crave your candid interpretation of my boldness, assuring you that I obey not the counsel of my flesh herein, but displease myself as much as some of you; and would rather have the ease and peace of silence, if it would stand with my duty, and the churches' good. But it is the mere necessity of the souls of men, and my desire of their salvation, and of the prosperity of the Church, which forces me to this arrogance and immodesty, if so it must be called. For who that has a tongue can be silent, when it is for the honor of God, the welfare of his Church, and the everlasting happiness of so many souls? The first and main point, which I have to propound to you, is this, Whether it be not the unquestionable duty of the generality of ministers of these three nations, to set themselves presently to the work of catechizing, and instructing individually, all that are committed to their care, who will be persuaded to submit thereunto? I need not here stand to prove it, having sufficiently done this in the following discourse. Can you think that holy wisdom will deny it? Will zeal for God; will delight in his service, or love to the souls of men, deny it?

1. That people must be taught the principles of religion, and matters of greatest necessity to salvation, is past doubt among us.

2. That they must be taught it in the most edifying, advantageous way, I hope we are agreed.

3. That personal conference, and examination, and instruction, has many excellent advantages for their good, is no less beyond dispute.

4. That personal instruction is recommended to us by Scripture, and by the practice of the servants of Christ, and approved by the godly of all ages, is, so far as I can find, without contradiction.

5. It is past doubt, that we should perform this great duty to all the people, or as many as we can; for our love and care of their souls must extend to all. If there are five hundred or a thousand ignorant people in your parish or congregation, it is a poor discharge of your duty, now and then to speak to some few of them, and to let the rest alone in their ignorance, if you are able to afford them help.

6. It is no less certain, that so great a work as this is should take up a considerable part of our time. Lastly, it is equally certain that all duties should be done in order, as far as may be, and therefore should have their appointed times. And if we are agreed to practice, according to these commonly acknowledged truths, we need not differ upon any doubtful circumstances.

I do now, in the behalf of Christ, and for the sake of his Church, and the immortal souls of men, beseech all the faithful ministers of Christ, that they will presently and effectually fall upon this work. Combine for the unanimous performance of it, that it may more easily procure the submission of your people. I must confess, I find, by some experience, that this is the work that, through the grace of God, which works by means, must reform indeed; that must expel our common prevailing ignorance; that must bow the stubborn hearts of sinners; that must answer their vain objections, and take off their prejudices; that must reconcile their hearts to faithful ministers, and help on the success of our public preaching; and make true godliness a commoner dining than it has hitherto been

I find that we never took the best course for demolishing the kingdom of darkness, until now. I wonder at myself, how I was so long kept off from so clear and excellent a duty. But the case was with me, as I suppose it is with others. I was long convinced of it, but my apprehensions of the difficulties were too great, and my apprehensions of the duty too small, and so I was long hindered from the performance of it. I imagined the people would scorn it, and none but a few, who had least need, would submit to it, and I thought my strength would never go through with it, having so great burdens on me before; and thus I long delayed it, which I beseech the Lord of mercy to forgive. Whereas, upon trial, I find the difficulties almost nothing (save only through my extraordinary bodily weakness) to that which I imagined; and I find the benefits and comforts of the work to be such, that I would not wish I had forborne it, for all the riches in the world.

We spend Monday and Tuesday, from morning almost to night, in the work, taking about fifteen or sixteen families in a week, that we may go through the parish, in which there are upwards of eight hundred families, in a year; and I cannot say yet that one family has refused to come to me, and only a few persons excused themselves, and shifted it off. And I find more outward signs of success with most that do come, than from all my public preaching to them. If you say, It is not so in most places, I answer, I wish that the blame of this may not lie much with ourselves. If, however, some refuse your help, that will not excuse you for not affording it to them that would accept of it. If you ask me what course I take for order and expedition, I may here mention, that, at the delivery of the Catechisms, I take a catalogue of all the persons of understanding in the parish, and the clerk

goes a week before, to every family, to tell them what day to come, and at what hour (one family at eight o'clock, the next at nine, and the next at ten, &c.). And I am forced by the number to deal with a whole family at once; but ordinarily I admit not any of another family to be present.

Brethren, do I now invite you to this work, without the authority of God, without the consent of all antiquity, without the consent of the Reformed Divines, or without the conviction of your own consciences? See what the Westminster Assembly speak occasionally in the Directory, about the visitation of the sick: "It is the duty of the minister not only to teach the people committed to his charge in public, but privately, and particularly to admonish, exhort, reprove, and comfort them upon all seasonable occasions, so far as his time, strength, and personal safety will permit. He is to admonish them in time of health to prepare for death. And for that purpose, they are often to confer with their minister about the estate of their souls," &c. Read this over again, and consider it. Hearken to God, if you would have peace with God. Hearken to conscience, if you would have peace of conscience.

I am resolved to deal plainly with you, though I should displease you. It is an unlikely thing that there should be a heart sincerely devoted to God in that man, who, after advertisements and exhortations, will not resolve on so clear and great a duty. I cannot conceive that he who has one spark of saving grace, and so has that love to God, and delight to do his will, which is in all the sanctified, could possibly be drawn to oppose or refuse such a work as this; except under the power of such a temptation as Peter was, when he denied Christ, or when he dissuaded him from suffering, and heard a half excommunication, "Get you behind (Matthew 16:23) me, Satan; you are an offence unto me: for you savor not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." You have put your hand to the plow; you are doubly devoted to him, as Christians, and as pastors; and dare you, after this, draw back, and refuse his work? You see the work of reformation at a stand; and you are engaged by many obligations to promote it: and dare you now neglect the means by which it must be done? Will you show your faces in a Christian congregation, as ministers of the gospel, and there pray for a reformation, and for the conversion and salvation of your hearers, and for the prosperity of the Church; and when you have done so, refuse to use the means by which all this must be effected?

I know carnal wit will never want words and show of reason, to deny that truth and duty which it abhors. It is easier now to quibble against duty than to perform it: but wait until the end, before you pass your final judgment. Can you make yourselves believe that you will have a comfortable review of these neglects, or make a comfortable account of them to God? I dare predict, from the knowledge of the nature of grace, that all the godly ministers in England will make conscience of this duty, and address themselves to it, except those who, by some extraordinary accident, are disabled, or who are under such temptations as mentioned before. I do not hopelessly persuade you to it, but take it for granted that it will be done. And if any lazy, or jealous, or malicious hypocrites, do quibble against it, or hold off, the rest will not do so; but they will take the opportunity, and not resist the warnings of the Lord.

God will unease the hypocrites before long, and make them know, to their sorrow, what it was to trifle with him. Woe to them, when they must account for the blood of souls! The reasons which satisfied them here against duty, will not then satisfy them against duty; but will be manifested to have been the effects of their folly, and to have proceeded radically from their corrupted wills, and

carnal interest. Nor will their consciences consider those reasons at a dying hour, which now they seem to own. Then they shall feel to their sorrow, that there is not that comfort to be had for a departing soul, in the review of such neglected duty, as there is to them that have wholly devoted themselves to the service of the Lord. I am sure my arguments for this duty will appear strongest at the last, when they shall be viewed at the hour of death, at the day of judgment, and, especially, in the light of eternity. And now, brethren, I earnestly beseech you, in the name of God, and for the sake of your people's souls, that you will not slightly slumber over this work, but do it vigorously, and with all your might; and make it your great and serious business. Much judgment is required for the managing of it. Study, therefore, beforehand, how to do it, as you study for your sermons. I remember how earnest I was with some of the last parliament, that they would settle catechists in our assemblies; but truly I am not sorry that it did not take effect, unless for a few of the larger congregations. For I perceive, that all the life of the work, under God, lies in the prudent effectual management of it, in searching men's hearts, and setting home the truth to their consciences; and the ablest minister is weak enough for this, and few of inferior parts would be found competent to it. For I fear nothing more, than that many ministers, who preach well, will be found but imperfectly qualified for this work, especially to manage it with old, ignorant, dead–hearted sinners. And, indeed, if the ministers be not reverenced by the people, they will rather slight them, and contest with them, than humbly learn and submit to them: how much more would they do so by inferior men?

Seeing, then, the work is cast upon us, and it is we that must do it, or else it must be undone, let us be up and doing with all our might. When you are speaking to your people, do it with the greatest prudence and seriousness, and be as earnest with them as for life or death; and follow it as closely as you do your public exhortations in the pulpit. I profess again, it is to me the most comfortable work, except public preaching (for there I speak to more, though yet with less advantage to each individual), that ever I yet did set my hand to. And I doubt not but you will find it so too, if you only perform it faithfully. My second request to the ministers in these kingdoms is that they would at last, without any more delay, unanimously set themselves to the practice of those parts of Church discipline which are unquestionably necessary, and part of their work. It is a sad case, that good men should settle themselves so long in the constant neglect of so great a duty. The common cry is, "Our people are not ready for it; they will not bear it." But is not the fact rather that you will not bear the trouble and hatred which it will occasion? If indeed, you proclaim our churches incapable of the order and government of Christ, what do you do, but give up the cause to them that withdraw from us, and encourage men to look out for better societies, where that discipline may be had? For though preaching and sacraments may be omitted in some cases, until a fitter season, as may discipline also, yet it is a hard case to settle in a constant neglect, for so many years together, as we have done, unless there were an absolute impossibility of the work. And if it were so, because of our incapable materials, it would plainly call us to alter our constitution, that the matter may be capable.

I have spoken plainly afterwards of this, which I hope you will conscientiously consider of I now only beseech you, if you would give a comfortable account to the chief Shepherd, and would not be found unfaithful in the house of God, that you do not willfully or negligently delay it, as if it were a needless dining; nor shrink from it, because of the trouble to the flesh that attends it; for as that is a sad sign of hypocrisy, so the costliest duties are usually the most comfortable; and you may be

sure that Christ will bear the cost. My last request is, that all the faithful ministers of Christ would, without any more delay, unite and associate for the furtherance of each other in the work of the Lord, and the maintaining of unity and concord in his churches. And that they would not neglect their brotherly meetings to those ends, nor yet spend them unprofitably, but improve them to their edification, and the effectual carrying on the work. Read that excellent letter of Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of Canterbury to Queen Elizabeth, for ministerial meetings and exercises. You will find it in Fuller's History of the Church of England.

Brethren, I crave your pardon for the infirmities of this address; and earnestly longing for the success of your labors, I shall daily beg of God, that he would persuade you to carry out those duties which I have here recommended to you, and would preserve and prosper you therein, against all the serpentine subtlety and rage that are now engaged to oppose and hinder you. Your unworthy fellow-servant,

Richard Baxter, 15 April 1656

Chapter 40

4.01. The Oversight of OURSELVES

THE OVERSIGHT OF OURSELVES

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28).

Though some think that Paul’s exhortation to these elders does prove him their ruler, we who are this day to speak to you from the Lord, hope that we may freely do the like, without any jealousies of such a conclusion. Though we teach our people, as officers set over them in the Lord, yet may we teach one another as brethren in office, as well as in faith. If the people of our charge must "teach and admonish and exhort each other daily," no doubt teachers may do it to one another without any super–eminency of power or degree. We have the same sins to mortify, and the same graces to be quickened and strengthened, as our people have: we have greater works to do than they have, and greater difficulties to overcome, and therefore we have need to be warned and awakened, if not to be instructed, as well as they. So that I confess I think such meetings together should be more frequent, if we had nothing else to do but this. And we should deal as plainly and closely with one another as the most serious among us do with our flocks, lest if they only have sharp admonitions and reproofs, they only should be sound and lively in the faith. That this was Paul’s judgment, I need no other proof, than this rousing, heart–melting exhortation to the Ephesian elders. A short sermon, but not soon learned! Had the bishops and teachers of the Church but thoroughly learned this short exhortation, though to the neglect of many a volume which has taken up their time, and helped them to greater applause in the world, how happy had it been for the Church, and for themselves! In further discoursing on this text, I propose to pursue the following method:

First, To consider what it is to take heed to ourselves.

Secondly, To show why we must take heed to ourselves.

1. The Nature of This Oversight

Let us consider what it means to take heed to ourselves.

1. See that the work of saving grace be thoroughly wrought in your own souls. Take heed to yourselves, lest you be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual working of that gospel which you preach. Beware lest, while you proclaim to the world the necessity of a Savior, your own hearts should neglect him, and you should miss an interest in him and his saving benefits. Take heed to yourselves, lest you perish, while you call upon others to take heed of perishing; and lest you famish yourselves while you prepare food for them. Though there is a promise of shining as the stars, to those "who turn many to righteousness," that is only on supposition that they are first turned to it themselves. Their own sincerity in the faith is the condition of their glory, simply considered, though their great ministerial

labors may be a condition of the promise of their greater glory.

Many have warned others that they come not to that place of torment, while yet they hastened to it themselves: many a preacher is now in hell, who has a hundred times called upon his hearers to use the utmost care and diligence to escape it. Can any reasonable man imagine that God should save men for offering salvation to others, while they refuse it themselves; and for telling others those truths which they themselves neglect and abuse? Many a tailor goes in rags, that makes costly clothes for others; and many a cook scarcely licks his fingers, when he has dressed for others the most costly dishes. Believe it, brethren, God never saved any man for being a preacher, nor because he was an able preacher; but because he was a justified, sanctified man, and consequently faithful in his Master's work. Take heed, therefore, to yourselves first, that you be that which you persuade your hearers to be, and believe that which you persuade them to believe, and heartily entertain that Savior whom you offer to them. (Mark 12:31) He who bade you love your neighbors as yourselves, did imply that you should love yourselves, and not hate and destroy yourselves and them.

It is a fearful thing to be an unsanctified professor, but much more to be an unsanctified preacher. Does it not make you tremble when you open the Bible, lest you should there read the sentence of your own condemnation? When you pen your sermons, little do you think that you are drawing up indictments against (Ephesians 3:19) your own souls! When you are arguing against sin, that you are aggravating your own! When you proclaim to your hearers the unsearchable riches of Christ and his grace, that you are publishing your own iniquity in rejecting them, and your unhappiness in being destitute of them! What can you do in persuading men to Christ, in drawing them from the world, in urging them to a life of faith and holiness, but (Ephesians 5:6) conscience, if it were awake, would tell you, that you speak all this to your own confusion? If you speak of hell, you speak of your own inheritance: if you describe the joys of heaven, you describe your own misery, seeing you have no right to "the inheritance of the saints in light." What can you say, for the most part, but it will be against your own souls? O miserable life! that a man should study and preach against himself, and spend his days in a course of self–condemning! A graceless, inexperienced preacher is one of the most unhappy creatures upon earth: and yet he is ordinarily very insensible of his unhappiness; for he has so many counters that seem like the gold of saving grace, and so many splendid stones that resemble Christian jewels, that he is seldom troubled with the thoughts of his poverty; but (Revelation 3:15) thinks he is "rich, and increased in goods, and stands in need of nothing, when he is poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." He is acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, he is exercised in holy duties, he lives not in open disgraceful sin, he serves at God's altar, he reproves other men's faults, and preaches up holiness both of heart and life; and how can this man choose but be holy? Oh what aggravated misery is this, to perish in the midst of plenty! To famish with the bread of life in our hands, while we offer it to others, and urge it on them! That those ordinances of God should be the occasion of our delusion, which are instituted to be the means of our conviction and salvation! and that while we hold the looking–glass of the gospel to others, to show them the face and aspect of their souls, we should either look on the back part of it ourselves, where we can see nothing, or turn it aside, that it may misrepresent us to ourselves!

If such a wretched man would take my counsel, he would make a stand, and call his heart and life to an account, and fall a preaching a while to himself, before he preach any more to others. He would consider, whether food in the mouth, that goes not into the stomach, will nourish; whether

he that "names the (2 Timothy 2:19) name of Christ should not depart from iniquity;" whether God will hear his prayers, if "he regard (Psalms 66:18) iniquity in his heart;" whether it will serve the turn at the day of reckoning to say, "Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in your name," when he shall hear these awful words, "Depart from me, I know(Mark 7:21-23) you not;" and what comfort it will be to Judas, when he has gone to his own place, to remember that he preached with the other apostles, or that he sat with Christ, and was called by him, "Friend." When such thoughts as these have entered into their souls, and kindly worked a while upon their consciences, I would advise them to go to their congregation, and preach over Origen's sermon on Psalms 50:16-17 : "But unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare my statutes, or that you should take my covenant into your mouth? seeing you hate instruction, and cast my words behind you." And when they have read this text, to sit down, and expound and apply it by their tears; and then to make a full and free confession of their sin, and lament their case before the whole assembly, and desire their earnest prayers to God for pardoning and renewing grace; that hereafter they may preach a Savior whom they know, and may feel what they speak, and may commend the riches of the gospel from their own experience.

Alas! it is the common danger and calamity of the Church, to have unregenerate and inexperienced pastors, and to have so many men become preachers before they are Christians; who are sanctified by dedication to the altar as the priests of God, before they are sanctified by hearty dedication as the disciples of Christ; and so to worship an unknown God, and to preach an unknown Christ, to pray through an unknown Spirit, to recommend a state of holiness and communion with God, and a glory and a happiness which are all unknown, and like to be unknown to them forever. He is like to be but a heartless preacher, that has not the Christ and grace that he preaches, in his heart.

O that all our students in our universities would well consider this! What a poor business is it to themselves, to spend their time in acquiring some little knowledge of the works of God, and of some of those names which the divided tongues of the nations have imposed on them, and not to know God himself, nor exalt him in their hearts, nor to be acquainted with that one renewing work that should make them happy!(Psalms 39:6) They do but "walk in a vain show," and spend their lives like dreaming men, while they busy their wits and tongues about abundance of names and notions, and are strangers to God and the life of saints. If ever God awaken them by his saving grace, they will have cogitations and employments so much more serious than their unsanctified studies and disputations, that they will confess they did but dream before. A world of business they make themselves about nothing, while they are willful strangers to the primitive, independent, necessary Being, who is all in all.

Nothing can be rightly known, if God be not known; nor is any study well managed, nor to any great purpose, if God is not studied. We know little of the creature, until we know it as it stands related to the Creator: single letters, and syllables uncomposed, are no better than nonsense. He who overlooks him who is the "Alpha and Omega, the (Revelation 1:8) beginning and the ending," and sees not him in all who is the All of all, does see nothing at all. All creatures, as such, are broken syllables; they signify nothing as separated from God. Were they separated actually, they would cease to be, and the separation would be an annihilation; and when we separate them in our fancies, we make nothing of them to ourselves. It is one thing to know the creatures as Aristotle, and another thing to know them as a Christian. None but a Christian can read one line of

his Physics so as to understand it rightly. It is a high and excellent study, and of greater use than many apprehend; but it is the smallest part of it that Aristotle can teach us. When man was made perfect, and placed in a perfect world, where all things were in perfect order, the whole creation was then man's book, in which he was to read the nature and will of his great Creator. Every creature had the name of God so legibly engraved on it, that man might run and read it. He could not open his eyes, but he might see some image of God; but nowhere so fully and lively as in himself. It was, therefore, his work to study the whole volume of nature, but first and most to study himself. And if man had held on in this course, he would have continued and increased in the knowledge of God and himself; but when he would know and love the creature and himself in a way of separation from God, he lost the knowledge both of the creature and of the Creator, so far as it could beautify and was worth the name of knowledge. Instead of it, he has got the unhappy knowledge which he affected, even the empty notions and fantastic knowledge of the creature and himself, as thus separated. And thus, he who lived to the Creator, and upon him, does now live to and upon the other creatures, and on himself; and thus, "Every man at (Psalms 39:5) his best estate" (the learned as well as the illiterate) "is altogether vanity. Surely every man walks in a vain show; surely they are disturbed in vain." (Romans 11:18-20)(Php 2:6)

It must also be well observed, that as God laid not aside the relation of a Creator by becoming our Redeemer, nor the right of his propriety and government of us in that relation, but the work of redemption stands, in some respect, in subordination to that of creation, and the law of the Redeemer to the law of the Creator; so also the duties which we owed to God as Creator have not ceased, but the duties that we owe to the Redeemer, as such, are subordinate thereto. It is the work of Christ to bring us back to God, and to restore us to the perfection of holiness and obedience; and as he is the way to the Father, so faith in him is the way to our former employment and enjoyment of God.

I hope you perceive what I aim at in all this, namely, that to see God in his creatures, and to love him, and converse with him, was the employment of man in his upright state; that this is so far from ceasing to be our duty, that it is the work of Christ to bring us, by faith, back to it; and therefore the most holy men are the most excellent students of God's works, and none but the holy can rightly study them or know them. (Psalms 111:2)"His works are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein;" but not for themselves, but for him that made them. Your study of physics and other sciences is not worth a rush, if it be not God that you seek after in them. To see and admire, to reverence and adore, to love and delight in God, as exhibited in his works—this is the true and only philosophy. The contrary is mere foolery, and is so called again and again by God himself. This is the sanctification of your studies, when they are devoted to God, and when he is the end, the object, and the life of them all.

And, therefore, I shall presume to tell you, by the way, that it is a grand error, and of dangerous consequence in Christian academies, (pardon the censure from one so unfit to pass it, seeing the necessity of the case commands it), that they study the creature before the Redeemer, and set themselves to physics, and metaphysics, and mathematics, before they set themselves to theology; whereas, no man that has not the vitals of theology, is capable of going beyond a fool in philosophy. Theology must lay the foundation, and lead the way of all our studies. If God must be searched after, in our search of the creature, (and we must affect no separated knowledge of them) then tutors must read God to their pupils in all; and divinity must be the beginning, the

middle, the end, the life, the all, of their studies. Our physics and metaphysics must be reduced (Acts 17:28) to theology; and nature must be read as (Colossians 1:16) one of God’s books, which is purposely written for the revelation of himself. The Holy Scripture is the easier book: when you have first learned from it God, and his will, as to the most necessary things, address yourselves to the study of his works, and read every creature as a Christian and a divine. If you see not yourselves, and all things, as living, and moving, and having being in God, you see nothing, whatever you do you think see. If you perceive not, in your study of the creatures, that God is all, and in all, and that "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things," you may think, perhaps, that you "know something; but you know nothing as you ought to know." Do not think so basely of your physics, and of the works of God, as that they are only preparatory studies for boys. It is a most high and noble part of holiness, to search after, behold, admire, and love the great Creator in all his works. How much have the saints of God been employed in this high and holy exercise! The book of Job, and the Psalms, may show us that our physics are not so little kin to theology as some suppose.

I do, therefore, in zeal for the good of the Church, and their own success in their most necessary labors, propound it for the consideration of all pious tutors, whether they should not as timely, and as diligently, read to their pupils, or cause them to read, the chief parts of practical divinity (and there is no other), as any of the sciences; and whether they should not go together from the very first? It is well that they hear sermons; but that is not enough. If tutors would make it their principal business to acquaint their pupils with the doctrine of salvation, and labor to set it home upon their hearts, that all might be received according to its weight, and read to their hearts as well as to their heads, and so carry on the rest of their instructions, that it may appear they make them but subservient unto this, and that their pupils may feel what they aim at in them all; and so that they would teach all their philosophy in habitu theologico—this might be a happy means to make a happy Church and a happy country. But, when languages and philosophy have almost all their time and diligence, and, instead of reading philosophy like divines, they read divinity like philosophers, as if it were a thing of no more moment than a lesson of music, or arithmetic, and not the doctrine of everlasting life—this it is that blasts so many in the bud, and pesters the Church with unsanctified teachers! Hence it is, that we have so many worldlings to preach of the invisible felicity, and so many carnal men to declare the mysteries of the Spirit; and (would that I would not have to say so) so many infidels to preach Christ, or so many atheists to preach the living God: and when they are taught philosophy before or without religion, what wonder if their philosophy be all or most of their religion!

Again, therefore, I address myself to all who have the charge of the education of youth, especially in matters of preparation for the ministry. You, that are schoolmasters and tutors, begin and end with the things of God. Speak daily to the hearts of your scholars those things that must be wrought into their hearts, or else they are undone. Let some piercing words fall frequently from your mouths, of God, and the state of their souls, and the life to come. Do not say, they are too young to understand and entertain them. You little know what impressions they may make. Not only the soul of the boy, but many souls may have cause to bless God, for your zeal and diligence, yes, for one such seasonable word. You have a great advantage above others to do them good; you have them before they are grown to maturity, and they will hear you when they will not hear another.

If they are destined to the ministry, you are preparing them for the special service of God, and must they not first have the knowledge of him whom they have to serve? Oh think with yourselves, what a sad thing it will be to their own souls, and what a wrong to the Church of God, if they come out from you with common and carnal hearts, to so great and holy and spiritual a work! Of a hundred students in one of our colleges, how many may there be that are serious, experienced, godly young men! If you should send half of them on a work which they are unfit for, what cruel work will they make in the Church or country! Whereas, if you be the means of their conversion and sanctification, how many souls may bless you, and what greater good can you do the Church? When once their hearts are savingly affected with the doctrine which they study and preach, they will study it more heartily, and preach it more heartily: their own experience will direct them to the fittest subjects, and will furnish them with matter, and quicken them to set it home to the conscience of their hearers. See, therefore, that you make not work for the groans and lamentation of the Church, nor for the great tormentor of the murderers of souls.

2. Content not yourselves with being in a state of grace, but be also careful that your graces are kept in vigorous and lively exercise, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons which you study, before you preach them to others. If you did this for your own sakes, it would not be lost labor; but I am speaking to you upon the public account, that you would do it for the sake of the Church, When your minds are in a holy, heavenly frame, your people are likely to partake of the fruits of it. Your prayers, and praises, and doctrine will be sweet and heavenly to them. They will likely feel when you have been much with God: that which is most on your hearts, is like to be most in their ears.

I confess I must speak it by lamentable experience, that I publish to my flock the distempers of my own soul. When I let my heart grow cold, my preaching is cold; and when it is confused, my preaching is confused; and so I can often observe also in the best of my hearers, that when I have grown cold in preaching, they have grown cold too; and the next prayers which I have heard from them have been too like my preaching. We are the nurses of Christ’s little ones. If we forbear taking food ourselves, we shall famish them; it will soon be visible in their leanness, and dull discharge of their several duties. If we let our love decline, we are not like to raise up theirs. If we abate our holy care and fear, it will appear in our preaching: if the matter show it not, the manner will. If we feed on unwholesome food, either errors or fruitless controversies, our hearers are like to fare the worse for it. Whereas, if we abound in faith, and love, and zeal, how would it overflow to the refreshing of our congregations, and how would it appear in the increase of the same graces in them!

O brethren, watch therefore over your own hearts: keep out lusts and passions, and worldly inclinations; keep up the life of faith, and love, and zeal: be much at home, and be much with God. If it be not your daily business to study your own hearts, and to subdue corruption, and to walk with God—if you make not this a work to which you constancy attend, all will go wrong, and you will starve your hearers; or, if you have an affected fervency, you cannot expect a blessing to attend it from on high. Above all, be much in secret prayer and meditation. Thence you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices: remember, you cannot decline and neglect your duty, to your own hurt alone; many will be losers by it as well as you. For your people’s sakes, therefore, look to your hearts. If a pang of spiritual pride should overtake you, and you should fall into any dangerous error, and vent your own inventions to draw away disciples after you, what a

wound may this prove to the Church, of which you have the oversight; and you may become a plague to them instead of a blessing, and they may wish they had never seen your faces. Oh, therefore, take heed to your own judgments and affections. Vanity and error will slyly insinuate, and seldom come without fair presences: great distempers and apostasies have usually small beginnings. (2 Corinthians 11:14) The prince of darkness does frequently impersonate an angel of light, to draw the children of light again into darkness. How easily also will distempers creep in upon our affections and our first love, and fear and care abate! Watch, therefore, for the sake of yourselves and others.

But, besides this general course of watchfulness, methinks a minister should take some special pains with his heart, before he is to go to the congregation: if it be then cold, how is he likely to warm the hearts of his hearers? Therefore, go then specially to God for life: read some rousing, awakening book, or meditate on the weight of the subject of which you are to speak, and on the great necessity of your people's souls, that you may go in the zeal of the Lord into his house. Maintain, in this manner, the life of grace in yourselves, that it may appear in all your sermons from the pulpit, that every one who comes cold to the assembly, may have some warmth imparted to him before he depart.

3. Take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine, and lest you lay such stumbling–blocks before the blind, as may be the occasion of their ruin; lest you unsay with your lives, what you say with your tongues; and be the greatest hindrances of the success of your own labors. It much hinders our work, when other men are all the week long contradicting to poor people in private, that which we have been speaking to them from the Word of God in public, because we cannot be at hand to expose their folly; but it will much more hinder your work, if you contradict yourselves, and if your actions give your tongue the lie, and if you build up an hour or two with your mouths, and all the week after pull down with your hands! This is the way to make men think that the Word of God is but an idle tale, and to make preaching seem no better than prating. He who means as he speaks, will surely do as he speaks. One proud, surly, lordly word, one needless contention, one covetous action, may cut the throat of many a sermon, and blast the fruit of all that you have been doing.

Tell me, brethren, in the fear of God, do you regard the success of your labors, or do you not? Do you long to see it upon the souls of your hearers? If you do not, what do you preach for; what do you study for; and what do you call yourselves the ministers of Christ for? But if you do, then surely you cannot find in your heart to mar your work for a thing of nothing. What! do you regard the success of your labors, and yet will not part with a little to the poor, nor put up with an injury, or a foul word, nor stoop to the lowest, nor forbear your passionate or lordly carriage, no, not for the winning of souls, and attaining the end of all your labors! He values success little, indeed, who will sell it at so cheap a rate, or will not do so small a matter to attain it.

It is a palpable error of some ministers, who make such a disproportion between their preaching and their living; who study hard to preach exactly, and study little or not at all to live exactly. All the week long is little enough, to study how to speak two hours; and yet one hour seems too much to study how to live all the week. They are loath to misplace a word in their sermons, or to be guilty of any notable infirmity (and I blame them not, for the matter is holy and weighty), but they make nothing of misplacing affections, words, and actions, in the course of their lives. Oh how curiously

have I heard some men preach; and how carelessly have I seen them live! They have been so accurate as to the preparation of their sermons, that seldom preaching seemed to them a virtue, that their language might be the more polite, and all the rhetorical writers they could meet with were pressed to serve them for the adorning of their style (and gauds were often their chief ornaments). They were so nice in hearing others, that no man pleased them that spoke as he thought, or that drowned not affections, or dulled not, or distempered not the heart by the predominant strains of a fantastic wit. And yet, when it came to matter of practice, and they were once out of church, how incurious were the men, and how little did they regard what they said or did, so it were not so palpably gross as to dishonor them! Those who preach precisely, would not live precisely! What a difference was there between their pulpit speeches and their familiar discourse? Those who were most impatient of barbarisms, solecisms, and paralogisms in a sermon, could easily tolerate them in their life and conversation.

Certainly, brethren, we have very great cause to take heed what we do, as well as what we say: if we will be the servants of Christ indeed, we must not be tongue servants only, but must serve him with our deeds, and be "doers of the work, that we may be blessed in our deed." (James 1:22, James 1:25) As our people must be "doers of the word, and not hearers only;" so we must be doers and not speakers only, lest we "deceive our own selves." A practical doctrine must be practically preached. We must study as hard how to live well, as how to preach well. We must think and think again, how to compose our lives, as may most tend to men’s salvation, as well as our sermons. When you are studying what to say to your people, if you have any concern for their souls, you will often be thinking with yourself, "How shall I get within them? and what shall I say, that is most likely to convince them, and convert them, and promote their salvation?" (cf. Ezra 7:10) And should you not as diligently think with yourself, "How shall I live, and what shall I do, and how shall I dispose of all that I have, as may most tend to the saving of men’s souls?" Brethren, if the saving of souls be your end, you will certainly intend it out of the pulpit as well as in it! If it be your end, you will live for it, and contribute all your endeavors to attain it. You will ask concerning the money in your purse, as well as concerning the word of your mouth, "In what way shall I lay it out for the greatest good, especially to men’s souls?" Oh that this were your daily study, how to use your wealth, your friends, and all you have for God, as well as your tongues! Then should we see that fruit of your labors, which is never else like to be seen. If you intend the end of the ministry in the pulpit only, it would seem you take yourselves for ministers no longer than you are there. And, if so, I do you think are unworthy to be esteemed ministers at all.

Let me then entreat you, brethren, to do well, as well as say well. Be "zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14) Spare not for any cost, if it may promote your Master’s work.

(1) Maintain your innocence, and walk without offense. Let your lives condemn sin, and persuade men to duty. Would you have your people more careful of their souls, than you are of yours? If you would have them redeem their time,(Ephesians 5:15) do not squander yours. If you would not have them vain in their conference, see that you speak yourselves the things which may edify, and tend to "minister grace to the hearers." (Ephesians 4:29) Order your own families well, if you would have them do so by theirs. Be not proud and lordly, if you would have them to be lowly. There are no virtues wherein your example will do more, at least to abate men’s prejudice, than humility and meekness and self–denial.(Romans 12:21) Forgive injuries; and "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (1 Peter 2:22) Do as our Lord, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not

again." If sinners be stubborn and stout and contemptuous, flesh and blood will persuade you to take up their weapons, and to master them by their carnal means: but that is not the way (further than necessary self–preservation or public good may require), but overcome them with kindness and patience and gentleness. The former may show that you have more worldly power than they (wherein yet they are ordinarily too hard for the faithful); but it is the latter only that will tell them that you excel them in spiritual excellency. If you believe that Christ is more worthy of imitation than Caesar or Alexander, and that it is more glory to be a Christian than to be a conqueror, yes to be a man than a beast—which often exceed us in strength—contend with charity, and not with violence; set meekness and love and patience against force, and not force against force. Remember, you are obliged to be the servants of all. "Condescend to men of low estate." Be not strange to the poor of your flock; they are apt to take your strangeness for contempt. Familiarity, improved to holy ends, may do abundance of good. Speak not stoutly or disrespectfully to any one; but be courteous to the lowest, as to your equal in Christ. A kind and winning carriage is a simple way of doing men good. (Jude 1:3; Romans 12:16)

(2) Let me entreat you to abound in works of charity and benevolence. Go to the poor, and see what they want, and show your compassion at once to their soul and body. Buy them a catechism, and other small books that are likely to do them good, and make them promise to read them with care and attention. Stretch your purse to the utmost, and do all the good you can. Do not think of being rich; seek not great things for yourselves or your posterity. What if you do impoverish yourselves to do a greater good; will this be loss or gain? If you believe that God is the safest purse–bearer, and that to expend in his service is the greatest usury, show them that you do believe it.

I know that flesh and blood will fight before it will lose its prey, and will never want somewhat to say against this duty that is against its interest; but mark what I say (and the Lord set it home upon your hearts), that man who has anything in the world so dear to him, that he cannot spare it for Christ, if he call for it, is no true Christian. And because a carnal heart will not believe that Christ calls for it when he cannot spare it, and, therefore, makes that his self–deceiving shift, I say further, that the man who will not be persuaded that duty is duty, because he cannot spare that for Christ which is therein to be expended, is no true Christian; for a false heart corrupts the understanding, and that again increases the delusions of the heart. Do not take it, therefore, as an undoing, to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness and to lay up treasure in heaven, though you leave yourselves but little on earth You lose no great advantage for heaven, by becoming poor: "In pursuing one’s way, the lighter one travels the better." (Matthew 6:19)

I know, where the heart is carnal and covetous, words will not wring men’s money out of their hands; they can say all this, and more to others; but saying is one thing, and believing is another. But with those that are true believers, methinks such considerations should prevail. O what abundance of good might ministers do, if they would but live in contempt of the world, and the riches and glory thereof, and expend all they have in their Master’s service, and pinch their flesh, that they may have with which to do good! This would unlock more hearts to the reception of their doctrine, than all their oratory; and, without this, singularity in religion will seem but hypocrisy; and it is likely that it is so. "He who practices disinterestedness prays to the Lord; he who snatches a man from peril offers a rich sacrifice; these are our sacrifices; these are holy to God. Thus he who is more devout among us is he who is more self–effacing," says Minucius Felix. * Though we need

not do as the papists, who betake themselves to monasteries, and cast away property, yet we must have nothing but what we have for God.

4. Take heed to yourselves, lest you live in those sins which you preach against in others, and lest you be guilty of that which daily you condemn. (Romans 2:1) Will you make it your work to magnify God, and, when you have done, dishonor him as much as others? Will you proclaim Christ's governing power, and yet condemn it, and rebel yourselves? Will you preach his laws, and willfully break them? If sin be evil, why do you live in it? if it be not, why do you dissuade men from it? If it be dangerous, how dare you venture on it? if it be not, why do you tell men so? If God's threatenings be true, why do you not fear them? if they be false, why do you needlessly trouble men with them, and put them into such frights without a cause? Do you "know the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death;" and yet will you do them? "You that teach another, teach you not yourself? You that say a man should not commit adultery, or be drunk, or covetous, are you such yourself? You that make your boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonor you God?" (Romans 1:32; Romans 2:17; Romans 2:21-24)What! shall the same tongue speak evil that speak against evil? Shall those lips censure, and slander, and backbite your neighbor, that cry down these and the like things in others?

Take heed to yourselves, lest you cry down sin, and yet do not overcome it; lest, while you seek to bring it down in others, you bow to it, and become its slaves yourselves: "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage." "To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." O brethren! it is easier to chide at sin, than to overcome it. (2 Peter 2:19; Romans 6:19)

5.Lastly, take heed to yourselves, that you not lack the qualifications necessary for your work. He must not be himself a babe in knowledge, that will teach men all those mysterious things which must be known for salvation. O what qualifications are necessary for a man who has such a charge upon him as we have! How many difficulties in divinity to be solved! and these, too, about the fundamental principles of religion! How many obscure texts of Scripture to be expounded! How many duties to be performed, wherein ourselves and others may miscarry, if in the matter, and manner, and end, we be not well informed! How many sins to be avoided, which, without understanding and foresight, cannot be done! What a number of sly and subtle temptations must we open to our people's eyes, that they may escape them! How many weighty and yet intricate cases of conscience have we almost daily to resolve! And can so much work, and such work as this, be done by raw, unqualified men? O what strong holds have we to batter, and how many of them! What subtle and obstinate resistance must we expect from every heart we deal with!

Prejudice has so blocked up our way, that we can scarcely procure a patient hearing. We cannot make a breach in their groundless hopes and carnal peace, but they have twenty shifts and seeming reasons to make it up again; and twenty enemies, that are seeming friends, are ready to help them. We dispute not with them upon equal terms. We have children to reason with, that cannot understand us. We have distracted men (in spirituals) to argue with, that will bawl us down with raging nonsense. We have willful, unreasonable people to deal with, who, when they are silenced, are never the more convinced, and who, when they can give you no reason, will give you their resolution; like the man that Salvian* had to deal with, who, being resolved to devour a poor

man’s substance, and being entreated by him to forbear, replied, "He could not grant his request, for he had made a vow to take it;" so that the preacher, by reason of this most religious evil deed, was gladly to depart. We dispute the case against men’s wills and passions, as much as against their understandings; and these have neither reason nor ears. Their best arguments are, "I will not believe you, nor all the preachers in the world, in such things. I will not change my mind, or life; I will not leave my sins; I will never be so precise, come of it what will." We have not one, but multitudes of raging passions, and contradicting enemies, to dispute against at once, whenever we go about the conversion of a sinner; as if a man were to dispute in a fair or a tumult, or in the midst of a crowd of violent scolds. What equal dealing, and what success, could here be expected? Yet such is our work; and it is a work that must be done.

O brethren! what men should we be in skill, resolution, and unwearied diligence, who have all this do? Did Paul cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And shall we be proud, or careless, or lazy, as if we were sufficient? As Peter says to every Christian, in consideration of our great approaching change, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" so may I say to every minister, "Seeing all these things lie upon our hands, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy endeavors and resolutions for our work!" This is not a burden for the shoulders of a child. What skill does every part of our work require! and of how much moment is every part! (2 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Peter 3:1) To preach a sermon, I think, is not the hardest part; and yet what skill is necessary to make the truth plain; to convince the hearers, to let irresistible light in to their consciences, and to keep it there, and drive all home; to screw the truth into their minds, and work Christ into their affections; to meet every objection, and clearly to resolve it; to drive sinners to a stand, and make them see that there is no hope, but that they must unavoidably either be converted or condemned—and to do all this, as regards language and manner, as beseems our work, and yet as is most suitable to the capacities of our hearers. This, and a great deal more that should be done in every sermon, must surely require a great deal of holy skill. So great a God, whose message we deliver, should be honored by our delivery of it. It is a lamentable case, that in a message from the God of heaven, of everlasting moment to the souls of men, we should behave ourselves so weakly, so unhandsomely, so imprudently, or so slightly, that the whole business should miscarry in our hands, and God should be dishonored, and his work disgraced, and sinners rather hardened than converted; and all this through our weakness or neglect! How often have carnal hearers gone home jeering at the palpable and dishonorable failings of the preacher! How many sleep under us, because our hearts and tongues are sleepy, and we bring not with us so much skill and zeal as to awake them!

Moreover, what skill is necessary to defend the truth against those that deny it, and to deal with disputing cavilers, according to their several modes and case! And if we fail through weakness, how will they exult over us! Yet that is the smallest matter: but who knows how many weak ones may thereby be perverted, to their own undoing, and to the trouble of the Church? What skill is necessary to deal in private with one poor ignorant soul for his conversion!

O brethren! do you not shrink and tremble under the sense of all this work? Will a common measure of holy skill and ability, of prudence and other qualifications, serve for such a task as this? I know necessity may cause the Church to tolerate the weak; but woe to us, if we tolerate and indulge our own weakness! Do not reason and conscience tell you, that if you dare venture on so high a work as this, you should spare no pains to be qualified for the performance of it? It is not

now and then an idle snatch or taste of studies that will serve to make an able and sound theologian.

I know that laziness has learned to allege the vanity of all our studies, and how entirely the Spirit must qualify us for, and assist us in our work; as if God commanded us the use of means, and then warranted us to neglect them; as if it were his way to cause us to thrive in a course of idleness, and to bring us to knowledge by dreams when we are asleep, or to take us up into heaven, and show us his counsels, while we think of no such matter, but are idling away our time on earth! O that men should dare, by their laziness, to "quench the Spirit," and then pretend the Spirit for the doing of it! "O outrageous, shameful and unnatural deed!" God has required us, that we be "not slothful in business," but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Such we must provoke our hearers to be, and such we must be ourselves. O. therefore, brethren, lose no time! Study, and pray, and confer, and practice; for in these four ways your abilities must be increased. Take heed to yourselves, lest you are weak through your own negligence, and lest you mar the work of God by your weakness. (1 Thessalonians 5:19; Romans 12:11) 2. The Motives to This Oversight

Having showed you what it is to take heed to ourselves, I shall next lay before you some motives to awaken you to this duty.

1. Take heed to yourselves, for you have a heaven to win or lose, and souls that must be happy or miserable forever; and therefore it concerns you to begin at home, and to take heed to yourselves as well as to others. Preaching well may succeed to the salvation of others, without the holiness of your own hearts and lives; it is, at least, possible, though less usual; but it is impossible it should save yourselves. "Many will say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name?" to whom he will answer, "I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:21-23) O sirs, how many men have preached Christ, and yet have perished for want of a saving interest in him! How many, who are now in hell, have told their people of the torments of hell, and warned them to escape from it! How many have preached of the wrath of God against sinners, who are now enduring it! O what sadder case can there be in the world, than for a man, who made it his very trade and calling to proclaim salvation, and to help others to heaven, yet after all to be himself shut out! Alas! that we should have so many books in our libraries which tell us the way to heaven; that we should spend so many years in reading these books, and studying the doctrine of eternal life, and after all this to miss it! that we should study so many sermons of salvation, and yet fall short of it! that we should preach so many sermons of damnation, and yet fall into it? And all because we preached so many sermons of Christ, while we neglected him; of the Spirit, while we resisted him; of faith, while we did not ourselves believe; of repentance and conversion, while we continued in an impenitent and unconverted state; and of a heavenly life, while we remained carnal and earthly ourselves. If we will be divines only in tongue and title, and have not the Divine image upon our souls, nor give up ourselves to the Divine honor and will, no wonder if we be separated from the Divine presence, and denied the fruition of God forever.

Believe it, sirs, God is no respecter of persons: (Romans 2:11) he saves not men for their coats or callings; a holy calling will not save an unholy man. If you stand at the door of the kingdom of grace, to light others in, and will not go in yourselves, you shall knock in vain at the gates of glory, that would not enter at the door of grace. You shall then find that your lamps should have had the oil of grace, as well as of ministerial gifts—of holiness, as well as of doctrine—if you would have

had a part in the glory which you preached. Do I need to tell you, that preachers of the gospel must be judged by the gospel; and stand at the same bar, and be sentenced on the same terms, and dealt with as severely, as any other men? Can you think to be saved, then, by your clergy; and to come off by a "He passed for a clergyman," when there is wanting the "He believed and lived as a Christian." Alas, it will not be! You know it will not be. Take heed therefore to yourselves, for your own sakes; seeing you have souls to save or lose, as well as others.

2. Take heed to yourselves, for you have a depraved nature, and sinful inclinations, as well as others. If innocent Adam had need of heed, and lost himself and us for want of it, how much more need have such as we! Sin dwells in us, when we have preached ever so much against it; and one degree prepares the heart for another, and one sin inclines the mind to more. If one thief be in the house, he will let in the rest; because they have the same disposition and design. A spark is the beginning of a flame; and a small disease may cause a greater. (1 Corinthians 5:6) A man who knows himself to be purblind, should take heed to his feet. Alas! in our hearts, as well as in our hearers, there is an averseness to God, a strangeness to him, unreasonable and almost unruly passions! In us there are, at the best, the remnants of pride, unbelief, self–seeking, hypocrisy, and all the most hateful, deadly sins. And does it not then concern us to take heed to ourselves? Is so much of the fire of hell yet unextinguished, that was at first kindled in us? Are there so many traitors in our very hearts, and is it not necessary for us to take heed? You will scarcely let your little children go themselves while they are weak, without calling upon them to take heed of falling. And, alas! how weak are those of us that seem strongest! How apt to stumble at a very straw! How small a matter will cast us down, by enticing us to folly; or kindling our passions and inordinate desires, by perverting our judgments, weakening our resolutions, cooling our zeal, and abating our diligence! Ministers are not only sons of Adam, but sinners against the grace of Christ, as well as others; and so have increased their radical sin. These treacherous hearts of yours will, one time or other, deceive you, if you take not heed. Those sins that seem now to lie dead will revive: your pride, and worldliness, and many a noisome vice, will spring up, that you thought had been weeded out by the roots. It is most necessary, therefore, that men of so much infirmity should take heed to themselves, and be careful in the oversight of their own souls.

3. Take heed to yourselves, because the tempter will more ply you with his temptations than other men. If you will be the leaders against the prince of darkness, he will spare you no further than God restrained him. He bears the greatest malice to those that are engaged to do him the greatest mischief As he hates Christ more than any of us, because he is the General of the field, the Captain of our salvation, and does more than all the world besides against his kingdom; so does he hate the leaders under him, more than the common soldiers: he knows what a rout he may make among them, if the leaders fall before their eyes (Hebrews 2:10). He has long tried that way of fighting, neither against great nor small comparatively, but of smiting the shepherds, that he may scatter the flock: and so great has been his success this way, that he will continue to follow it as far as he is able. Take heed, Therefore, brethren, for the enemy has a special eye upon you. You shall have his most subtle insinuations, and incessant solicitations, and violent assaults. As wise and learned as you are, take heed to yourselves, lest he outwit you. The devil is a greater scholar than you, and a nimbler disputant: he can transform himself into an angel of light to deceive:(2 Corinthians 11:14) he will get within you, and trip up your heels before you are aware: he will play the juggler with you undiscerned, and cheat you of your faith or innocence, and you

shall not know that you have lost it; no, he will make you believe it is multiplied or increased, when it is lost. You shall see neither hook nor line, much less the subtle angler himself, while he is offering you his bait. And his bait shall be so fitted to your temper and disposition, that he will be sure to find advantages within you, and make your own principles and inclinations betray you; and whenever he ruins you, he will make you the instruments of ruin to others.

O what a conquest will the devil think he has got, if he can make a minister lazy and unfaithful, if he can tempt a minister into covetousness or scandal! He will glory against the Church, and say, "These are your holy preachers! See what their preciseness is, and where it brings them." He will glory against Jesus Christ himself, and say, "These are your champions! I can make your chief servants abuse you; I can make the stewards of your house unfaithful." If he did so insult God upon a false surmise, and tell him he could make Job curse him to his face, what will he do if he should prevail against you (Job 1:1-22; Job 2:1-13)? And at last he will insult as much over you, that he could draw you to be false to your great trust, and to blemish your holy profession, and to do so much service to him that was your enemy. O, do not so far gratify Satan; do not make him so much sport; suffer him not to use you as the Philistines did Samson, first to deprive you of your strength, and then to put out your eyes, and so to make you the matter of his triumph and derision (Judges 13:1-25; Judges 14:1-20; Judges 15:1-20; Judges 16:1-31; Judges 17:1-13).

4. Take heed to yourselves, because there are many eyes upon you, and there will be many to observe your falls. You cannot miscarry but the world will ring of it (Hebrews 12:1-2, Matthew 5:16). The eclipses of the sun by day are seldom without witnesses. As you take yourselves for the lights of the churches, you may expect that men’s eyes will be upon you. If other men may sin without observation, you cannot. And you should thankfully consider how great a mercy this is, that you have so many eyes to watch over you, and so many ready to tell you of your faults; and thus have greater helps than others, at least for restraining you from sin. Though they may do it with a malicious mind, yet you have the advantage of it.

God forbid that we should prove so impudent as to do evil in the public view of all, and to sin willfully while the world is gazing on us! "Those who sleep, sleep in the night; and those who be drunken are drunken in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:7." Why, consider that you are ever in the open light: even the light of your own doctrine will expose your evil doings. While you are as lights set upon a hill, do not think to lie hid (Matthew 5:14). Take heed therefore to yourselves, and do your work as those that remember that the world looks on them, and that with the quick–sighted eye of malice, ready to make the worst of all, to find the smallest fault where it is, to aggravate it where they find it, to divulge it and to take advantage of it to their own designs, and to make faults where they cannot find them. How cautiously, then, should we walk before so many ill–minded observers!

5. Take heed to yourselves, for your sins have more heinous aggravations than other men’s. It was a saying of king Alphonsus, that "a great man cannot commit a small sin;" much more may we say, that a learned man, or a teacher of others, cannot commit a small sin; or, at least, that the sin is great as committed by him, which is smaller as committed by another (James 3:1).

(1) You are more likely than others to sin against knowledge, because you have more than they; at least, you sin against more light, or means of knowledge. What! do you not know that covetousness and pride are sins? do you not know what it is to be unfaithful to your trust, and, by

negligence or self–seeking, to betray men’s souls? You know your "Master’s will; and, if you do it not, you shall be beaten with many stripes (Luke 12:47)." There must be the more willfulness, by how much there is the more knowledge.

(2) Your sins have more hypocrisy in them than other men’s, by how much the more you have spoken against them. O what a heinous dining is it in us, to study how to disgrace sin to the utmost, and make it as odious in the eyes of our people as we can, and when we have done, to live in it, and secretly cherish that which we publicly disgrace! What vile hypocrisy is it, to make it our daily work to cry it down, and yet to keep to it; to call it publicly all nothing, and privately to make it our bed–fellow and companion; to bind heavy burdens on others, and not to touch them ourselves with a finger! What can you say to this in judgment? Did you think as ill of sin as you spoke, or did you not? If you did not, why would you dissemblingly speak against it? If you did, why would you keep it and commit it? O bear not that badge of a hypocritical Pharisee, "They say, but do not (Matthew 23:3)." Many a minister of the gospel will be confounded, and not be able to look up, by reason of this heavy charge of hypocrisy.

(3) Your sins have more perfidiousness in them than other men’s, by how much the more you have engaged yourselves against them. Besides all your common engagements as Christians, you have many more as ministers. How often have you proclaimed the evil and danger of sin, and called sinners from it? How often have you denounced against it the terrors of the Lord? All this surely implied that you renounced it yourselves. Every sermon that you preached against it, every exhortation, every confession of it in the congregation, did lay an engagement upon you to forsake it. Every soul that you baptized, and every administration of the supper of the Lord, did import your own renouncing of the world and the flesh, and your engagement to Christ. How often, and how openly, have you borne witness to the odiousness and damnable nature of sin? and yet will you entertain it, notwithstanding all these professions and testimonies of your own? O what treachery is it to make such a stir against it in the pulpit, and, after all, to entertain it in your heart, and give it the room that is due to God, and even prefer it before the glory of the saints!

6. Take heed to yourselves, because such great works as ours require greater grace than other men’s. Weaker gifts and graces may carry a man through in a more even course of life, that is not liable to so great trials. Smaller strength may serve for lighter works and burdens. But if you will venture on the great undertakings of the ministry; if you will lead on the troops of Christ against Satan and his followers; if you will engage yourselves against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places; if you will undertake to rescue captive sinners out of the devil’s paws; do not think that a heedless, careless course will accomplish so great a work as this (Ephesians 6:12). You must look to come off with greater shame and deeper wounds of conscience, than if you had lived a common life, if you think to go through such momentous things as these with a careless soul. It is not only the work that calls for heed, but the workman also, that he may be fit for business of such weight. We have seen many men who lived as private Christians, in good reputation for parts and piety, when they took upon them either the magistracy or military employment, where the work was above their gifts, and temptations did overmatch their strength, they proved scandalous disgraced men. And we have seen some private Christians of good esteem, who, having thought too highly of their parts, and thrust themselves into the ministerial office, have proved weak and empty men, and have become greater burdens to the Church than some whom we endeavored to cast out. They might have done God more service in

the higher rank of private men, than they do among the lowest of the ministry. If, then, you will venture into the midst of enemies, and bear the burden and heat of the day, take heed to yourselves.

7. Take heed to yourselves, for the honor of your Lord and Master, and of his holy truth and ways, lies more on you than on other men. As you may render him more service, so you may do him more disservice than others. The nearer men stand to God, the greater dishonor has he by their miscarriages; and the more will they be imputed by foolish men to God himself. The heavy judgments executed on Eli and on his house were because they kicked at his sacrifice and offering: "Therefore was the sin of the young men very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord (1 Samuel 2:17)." It was that great aggravation, of "causing the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme (2 Samuel 12:14)," which provoked God to deal more sharply with David, than he would otherwise have done.

If you be indeed Christians, the glory of God will be dearer to you than your lives. Take heed therefore what you do against it, as you would take heed what you do against your lives. Would it not wound you to the heart to hear the name and truth of God reproached for your sakes? to see men point to you, and say, "There goes a covetous priest, a secret tippler, a scandalous man; these are those who preach for strictness, while they themselves can live as loose as others; they condemn us by their sermons, and condemn themselves by their lives; notwithstanding all their talk, they are as bad as we"? O brethren, could your hearts endure to hear men cast the dung of your iniquities in the face of the holy God, and in the face of the gospel, and of all that desire to fear the Lord? Would it not break your hearts to think that all the godly Christians about you should suffer reproach for your misdoings? Why, if one of you that is a leader of the flock, should be ensnared but once into some scandalous crime, there is scarcely a man or woman that seeks diligently after their salvation, within the hearing of it, but, besides the grief of their hearts for your sin, are likely to have it cast in their teeth by the ungodly about them, however much they may detest it, and lament it. The ungodly husband will tell his wife, and the ungodly parents will tell their children, and ungodly neighbors and fellow–servants will be telling one another of it, saying, "These are your godly preachers! See what comes of all your stir. What better are you than others? You are even all alike." Such words as these must all the godly in the country hear for your sakes. "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offense comes (Matthew 18:7)!"

O take heed, brethren, of every word you speak and of every step you tread, for you bear the ark of the Lord, you are entrusted with his honor! If you that "know his will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourselves are guides of the blind, and lights to them that are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes (Romans 2:18-20),"—if you, I say, should live contrary to your doctrine, and "by breaking the law should dishonor God, the name of God will be blasphemed" among the ignorant and ungodly "through you (Romans 2:23-24)." And you are not unacquainted with that standing decree of heaven "Them that honor me I will honor; and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed (1 Samuel 2:30)." Never did man dishonor God, but it proved the greatest dishonor to himself. God will find out ways enough to wipe off any stain that is cast upon him; but you will not so easily remove the shame and sorrow from yourselves.

4.01. The Oversight of OURSELVES contd

8.Lastly, Take heed to yourselves, for the success of all your labors does very much depend upon this. God uses to fit men for great works, before he employs them as his instruments in accomplishing them. Now, if the work of the Lord be not soundly done upon your own hearts, how can you expect that he will bless your labors for effecting it in others? He may do it, if he please, but you have much cause to doubt whether he will. I shall here mention some reasons which may satisfy you, that he who would be a means of saving others, must take heed to himself, and that God does more seldom prosper the labors of unsanctified men.

(1) Can it be expected that God will bless that man's labors (I mean comparatively, as to other ministers), who works not for God, but for himself (1 Corinthians 4:2)? Now, this is the case with every unsanctified man. None but converted men do make God their chief end, and do all or anything heartily for his honor; others make the ministry but a trade to live by. They choose it rather than another calling, because their parents destined them to it, or because it affords them a competent maintenance; because it is a life wherein they have more opportunity to furnish their intellects with all kind of science; or because it is not so toilsome to the body, to those that have a mind to favor their flesh; because it is accompanied with some reverence and respect from men, and because they think it a fine thing to be leaders and teachers, and have others "receive the law at their mouth." For such ends as these are they ministers, and for these do they preach; and, were it not for these, or similar objects, they would soon give over. And can it be expected, that God should much bless the labors of such men as these? It is not for him they preach, but themselves, and their own reputation or gain. It is not him, but themselves, that they seek and serve; and, therefore, no wonder if he leave them to themselves for the success, and if their labors have no greater a blessing than themselves can give, and if the word reach no further than their own strength can make it reach.

(2) Can you think that he is likely to be as successful as others, who deals not heartily and faithfully in his work, who believes not what he says, and is not truly serious when he seems to be most diligent? And can you think that any unsanctified man can be hearty and serious in the ministerial work? A kind of seriousness indeed he may have, such as proceeds from a common faith or opinion, that the Word is true; or he may be actuated by a natural fervor, or by selfish ends. But the seriousness and fidelity of a sound believer, who ultimately intends God's glory, and men's salvation, this he has not. O sirs, all your preaching and persuading of others, will be but dreaming and vile hypocrisy, until the work be thoroughly done upon your own hearts. How can you set yourselves, day and night, to a work that your carnal hearts are averse to? How can you call, with serious fervor, upon poor sinners to repent and return to God, that never repented or returned yourselves? How can you heartily follow poor sinners, with importunate solicitations to take heed of sin, and to lead a holy life, that never felt yourselves the evil of sin, or the worth of holiness?

These things are never well known until they are felt, nor well felt until they are possessed; and he who feels them not himself, is not likely to speak feelingly of them to others, nor to help others to

the feeling of them. How can you follow sinners, with compassion in your hearts and tears in your eyes, and beseech them, in the name of the Lord, to stop their course, and return and live, and never had so much compassion on your own soul, as to do this much for yourselves? What! can you love other men better than yourselves? Can you have pity on them, who have no pity upon yourselves? Sirs, do you think they will be heartily diligent to save men from hell, that be not heartily persuaded that there is a hell? Or to bring men to heaven, that do not truly believe that there is a heaven? As Calvin says on my text; "For never will the man take diligent care for the salvation of others who neglects his own salvation." He who has not so strong a belief of the Word of God, and of the life to come, as will withdraw his own heart from the vanities of this world, and excite him to holy diligence for salvation, cannot be expected to be faithful in seeking the salvation of other men. Surely he that dare damn himself, dare let others alone in the way to damnation; he that, like Judas, will sell his Master for silver, will not sick to make merchandise of the flock; he who will let go his hopes of heaven, rather than leave his worldly and fleshly delights, will hardly leave them for the saving of others. We may naturally conceive, that he will have no pity on others, that is willfully cruel to himself; that he is not to be trusted with other men's souls, who is unfaithful to his own, and will sell it to the devil for the short pleasures of sin, I confess, that man shall never have my consent to have the charge of other men's souls, and to oversee them in order to their salvation, that takes not heed to himself, but is careless of his own, except it were in case of absolute necessity, that no better could be had.

(3) Do you think it is a likely thing, that he will fight against Satan with all his might, who is himself a servant to Satan? Will he do any great harm to the kingdom of the devil, who is himself a member and a subject of that kingdom? Will he be true to Christ who is in covenant with his enemy? Now, this is the case of all unsanctified men, of whatever rank or profession they be. They are the servants of Satan, and the subjects of his kingdom; it is he that rules in their hearts; and are they like to be true to Christ that are ruled by the devil? What prince will choose the friends and servants of his enemy to lead his armies in war against him? This is it that has made so many preachers of the gospel to be enemies to the work of the gospel which they preach. No wonder if such deride the holy obedience of the faithful; and if while they take on them to preach a holy life, they cast reproaches, on them that practice it! O how many such traitors have been in the Church of Christ in all ages, who have done more against him, under his colors, than they could have done in the open field! They speak well of Christ and of godliness in the general, and yet slyly do what they can to bring them into disgrace, and make men believe that those who set themselves to seek God with all their hearts are a company of enthusiasts or hypocrites. And when they cannot for shame speak that way in the pulpit, they will do it in private among their acquaintance. Alas! how many such wolves have been set over the sheep! If there was a traitor among the twelve in Christ's family, no wonder if there be many now. It cannot be expected that a slave of Satan, "whose god is his belly, and who minds earthly things," should be any better than "an enemy to the cross of Christ (Php 3:18)." What though he live civilly, and preach plausibly, and maintain outwardly a profession of religion? He may be as fast in the devil's snares, by worldliness, pride, a secret distaste of diligent godliness, or by an unsound heart that is not rooted in the faith, nor unreservedly devoted to Christ, as others are by drunkenness, uncleanness, and similar disgraceful sins. Publicans and harlots do sooner enter heaven than Pharisees, because they are sooner convinced of their sin and misery (Matthew 21:31).

And, though many of these men may seem excellent preachers, and may cry down sin as loudly as others, yet it is all but an affected fervency, and too commonly but a mere useless bawling; for he who cherishes sin in his own heart does never fall upon it in good earnest in others. I know, indeed, that a wicked man may be more willing of the reformation of others than of his own, and hence may show a kind of earnestness in dissuading them from their evil ways; because he can preach against sin at an easier rate than he can forsake it, and another man's reformation may consist with his own enjoyment of his lusts. And, therefore, many a wicked minister or parent may be earnest with their people or children to amend, because they lose not their own sinful profits or pleasures by another's reformation, nor does it call them to that self–denial which their own does. But yet for all this, there is none of that zeal, resolution, and diligence, which are found in all that are true to Christ. They set not against sin as the enemy of Christ, and as that which endangers their people's souls. A traitorous commander, that shoots nothing against the enemy but powder, may cause his guns to make as great a sound or report as those that are loaded with bullets; but he does no hurt to the enemy. So one of these men may speak as loudly, and mouth it with an affected fervency, but he seldom does any great execution against sin and Satan. No man can fight well, but where he hates, or is very angry; much less against them whom he loves, and loves above all. Every unrenewed man is so far from hating sin to purpose, that it is his dearest treasure. Hence you may see, that an unsanctified man, who loves the enemy, is very unfit to be a leader in Christ's army; and to draw others to renounce the world and the flesh, seeing he cleaves to them himself as his chief good.

(4) It is not likely that the people will much regard the doctrine of such men, when they see that they do not live as they preach. They will think that he does not mean as he speaks, if he do not live as he speaks. They will hardly believe a man that seems not to believe himself. If one bid you run for your lives, because a bear, or an enemy is at your backs, and yet do not mend his own pace, you will be tempted to think that he is but in jest, and that there is really no such danger as he alleges. When preachers tell people of the necessity of holiness, and that without it no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14), and yet remain unholy themselves, the people will think that they do but talk to pass away the hour, and because they must say somewhat for their money, and that all these are but words of course. Long enough may you lift up your voice against sin, before men will believe that there is any such evil or danger in it as you talk of, while they see the same man that reproaches it, cherishing it in his bosom, and making it his delight. You rather tempt them to think that there is some special good in it, and that you dispraise it as gluttons do a dish which they love, that they may have it all to themselves. As long as men have eyes as well as ears, they will think they see your meaning as well as hear it; and they are apter to believe their sight than their hearing, as being the more perfect sense of the two.

All that a minister does, is a kind of preaching; and if you live a covetous or a careless life, you preach these sins to your people by your practice. If you dank, or game, or trifle away your time in vain discourse, they take it as if you said to them, "Neighbors, this is the life you should all live; on this course you may venture without any danger." If you are ungodly, and teach not your families the fear of God, nor contradict the sins of the company you are in, nor turn the stream of their vain talking, nor deal with them plainly about their salvation, they will take it as if you preached to them that such things are needless, and that they may boldly do so as well as you. No, you do worse than all this, for you teach them to think evil of others that are better than yourselves.

How many a faithful minister, and private Christian, is hated and reproached for the sake of such as you! What say the people to them? "You are so precise, and tell us so much of sin, and duty, and make such a stir about these matters, while such or such a minister, that is as great a scholar as you, and as good a preacher, will be merry and jest with us, and let us alone, and never trouble himself or us with such discourse. You can never be quiet, but make more ado than needs; and love to frighten men with talk of damnation, when sober, learned, peaceable divines are quiet, and live with us like other men."

Such are the thoughts and talk of people, which your negligence does occasion. They will give you leave to preach against their sins, and to talk as much as you will for godliness in the pulpit, if you will but let them alone afterwards, and be friendly and merry with them when you have done, and talk as they do, and live as they, and be indifferent with them in your conversation. For they take the pulpit to be but a stage; a place where preachers must show themselves, and play their parts; where you have liberty for an hour to say what you list; and what you say they regard not, if you show them not, by saying it personally to their faces, that you were in good earnest, and did indeed mean them. Is that man then likely to do much good, or fit to be a minister of Christ, that will speak for him an hour on the Sabbath, and, by his life, will preach against him all the week besides, yes, and give his public words the lie? And if any of the people be wiser than to follow the examples of such men, yet the loathsomeness of their lives will make their doctrine the less effectual. Though you know the meat to be good and wholesome, yet it may make a weak stomach rise against it, if the cook or the servant that carries it have leprous or even dirty hands. Take heed therefore to yourselves, if ever you mean to do good to others.

Lastly, Consider whether the success of your labors depends not on the assistance and blessing of the Lord. And where has he made any promise of his assistance and blessing to ungodly men? If he promises his Church a blessing even by such, yet does he not promise them any blessing. To his faithful servants he has promised that he will be with them, that he will put his Spirit upon them, and his word into their mouths, and that Satan shall fall before them as lightning from heaven. But where is there any such promise to ungodly ministers? No, do you not, by your hypocrisy and your abuse of God, provoke him to forsake you, and to blast all your endeavors, at least as to yourselves, though he may bless them to his chosen? For I do not deny but that God may do good to his Church by wicked men; yet does he it not so ordinarily, nor so eminently, as by his own servants. And what I have said of the wicked themselves, holds true in part for the godly, while they are scandalous and backsliding, in proportion to the measure of their sin.

4.02. The Oversight of the FLOCK

THE OVERSIGHT OF THE FLOCK 1. The NATURE of This Oversight Having shown you what it is to take heed to ourselves, I am to show you next what it is to take heed to all the flock.

It was first necessary to take into consideration, what we must be, and what we must do for our own souls, before we come to that which must be done for others: "He cannot succeed in healing the wounds of others who is himself unhealed by reason of neglecting himself. He neither benefits his neighbors nor himself. He does not raise up others, but himself falls (1 Timothy 4:16)." Yes, lest all his labors come to nothing, because his heart and life are nothing that does perform them. "For some persons there are who, though expert in spiritual ministry, go about it in a headstrong manner, and while acting intelligently, tread underfoot any good they do. They teach too hurriedly what can only be rendered holy by meditation; and what they proclaim in public they impugn by their conduct. Whence it is that as pastors they walk in paths too rugged for the flock to follow."When we have led them to the living waters, if we muddy it by our filthy lives, we may lose our labor, and they be never the better.

Before we speak of the work itself, we shall notice somewhat that is presupposed in the words before us.

1. It is here implied, that every flock should have its own pastor, and every pastor his own flock. As every troop or company in a regiment of soldiers must have its own captain and other officers, and every soldier knows his own commander and colors; so it is the will of God that every church should have its own pastor, and that all Christ’s disciples "should know their teachers that are over them in the Lord" (Hebrews 13:7). Though a minister is an officer in the Church universal, yet is he in a special manner the overseer of that particular church which is committed to his charge. When we are ordained ministers without a special charge, we are licensed and commanded to do our best for all, as we shall have opportunity for the exercise of our gifts: but when we have undertaken a particular charge, we have restrained the exercise of our gifts so specially to that congregation, that we must allow others no more than it can spare of our time and help, except where the public good requires it, which must, no doubt, be first regarded. From this relation of pastor and flock, arise all the duties which they mutually owe to each other.

2. When we are commanded to take heed to all the flock, it is plainly implied, that flocks must ordinarily be no greater than we are capable of overseeing, or "taking heed to." God will not lay upon us natural impossibilities: he will not bind men to leap up to the moon, to touch the stars, or to number the sands of the sea. If the pastoral office consists in overseeing all the flock, then surely the number of souls under the care of each pastor must not be greater than he is able to take such heed to as is here required. Will God require one bishop to take the charge of a whole county, or of so many parishes or thousands of souls, as he is not able to know or to oversee ? Yes, and to take the sole government of them, while the particular teachers of them are free from that undertaking? Will God require the blood of so many parishes at one man’s hands, if he do not that which ten, or twenty, or a hundred, or three hundred men can no more do, than I can move a

mountain ? Then woe to poor prelates! Is it not, then, a most doleful case, that learned, sober men should plead for this as a desirable privilege; that they should willfully draw on themselves such a burden; and that they do not rather tremble at the thoughts of so great an undertaking? O, happy had it been for the Church, and happy for the bishops themselves, if this measure, that is intimated by the apostle here, had still been observed: that the diocese had been no greater than the elders or bishops could oversee and rule, so that they might have taken heed to all the flock: or that pastors had been multiplied as churches increased, and the number of overseers been proportioned to the number of souls, that they might not have let the work be undone, while they assumed the empty titles, and undertook impossibilities! And that They had rather prayed the Lord of the harvest to send forth more laborers, even so many as were proportioned to the work (Matthew 9:37-38), and not to have undertaken all themselves. I should scarcely commend the prudence or humility of that laborer, let his parts be ever so great, that would not only undertake to gather in all the harvest in this county himself, and that upon pain of death, yes, of damnation, but would also earnestly contend for this prerogative. But it may be said, there are others to teach, though one only have the rule. To this I answer: Blessed be God it is so; and no thanks to some of them. But is not government of great concernment to the good of souls, as well as preaching? If it be not, then what use is there for church governors? If it be, then those who nullify it by undertaking impossibilities, do go about to ruin the churches and themselves. If only preaching be necessary, let us have none but mere preachers; what needs there then such a stir about government? But if discipline, in its place, be necessary too, what is it but enmity to men’s salvation to exclude it? And it is unavoidably excluded, when it is made to be his work that is naturally incapable of performing it. The general that will command an army alone, may as well say, Let it be destroyed for want of command. The schoolmaster that will oversee or govern all the schools in the county alone, may as well say, Let them all be ungoverned. The physician that will undertake the care of all the sick people in a whole nation, or county, when he is not able to visit the hundredth man of them, may as well say, Let them perish.

Yet still it must be acknowledged, that in case of necessity, where there are not more to be had, one man may undertake the charge of more souls than he is well able to oversee particularly. But then he must undertake only to do what he can for them, and not to do all that a pastor ordinarily ought to do. This is the case of some of us, who have greater parishes than we are able to take that special heed to which their state requires. I profess for my own part, I am so far from their boldness that dare venture on the sole government of a county, that I would not, for all England, have undertaken to be one of the two that should do all the pastoral work that God requires in the parish where I live, had I not this to satisfy my conscience, that, through the Church’s necessities, more cannot be had. Therefore, I must rather do what I can, than leave all undone because I cannot do all. But cases of unavoidable necessity are not to be the ordinary condition of the Church; or at least, it is not desirable that it should so be. O happy Church of Christ, were the laborers but able and faithful, and proportioned in number to the number of souls; so that the pastors were so many, or the particular churches so small, that we might be able to "take heed to all the flock".

Having noticed these things, which are presupposed, we shall now proceed to consider the duty which is recommended in the text, Take heed to all the flock (Acts 20:28).

It is, you see, all the flock, or every individual member of our charge. To this end it is necessary, that we should know every person that belongs to our charge; for how can we take heed to them, if we do not know them? We must labor to be acquainted, not only with the persons, but with the state of all our people, with their inclinations and conversations; what are the sins of which they are most in danger, and what duties they are most apt to neglect, and what temptations they are most liable to. For if we know not their temperament or disease, we are not likely to prove successful physicians. Being thus acquainted with all the flock, we must afterward take heed to them. One would imagine that every reasonable man would be satisfied of this, and that it would need no further proof . Does not a careful shepherd look after every individual sheep, and a good schoolmaster after every individual scholar, and a good physician after every particular patient, and a good commander after every individual soldier? Why then should not the shepherds, the teachers, the physicians, the guides of the churches of Christ, take heed to every individual member of their charge? Christ himself, the great and good Shepherd, that has the whole to look after, does yet take care of every individual; like him whom he describes in the parable, who left "ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, to seek after one that was lost (Luke 15:4)." The prophets were often sent to single men. Ezekiel was made a watchman over individuals, and was commanded to say to the wicked, "You shall surely die (Ezekiel 3:18)." Paul taught his hearers not only "publicly but from house to house (Acts 20:20):" and in another place he tells us, that he "warned every man, and taught every man, in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:28)". Many other passages of Scripture make it evident that it is our duty to take heed to every individual of our flock; and many passages in the ancient Councils do plainly show that this was the practice of the primitive times. But I shall quote only one from Ignatius: "Let assemblies," says he, "be often gathered; inquire after all by name: despise not servant–men or maids". You see it was then considered as a duty to look after every member of the flock by name, not excepting the lowest servant–man or maid.

But, some one may object, "The congregation that I am set over is so great that it is impossible for me to know them all, much more to take heed to all individually." To this I answer, Is it necessity or is it not, that has cast you upon such a charge? If it be not, you excuse one sin by another. How dare you undertake that which you knew yourself unable to perform, when you were not forced to it? It would seem you had some other ends in undertaking it, and never intended to be faithful to your trust. But if you think that you were necessitated to undertake it, I would ask you, might you not have procured assistance for so great a charge? Have you done all that you could with your friends and neighbors, to get maintenance for another to help you? Have you not as much maintenance yourself, as might serve yourself and another? What thought it will not serve to maintain you in fullness? Is it not more reasonable That you should pinch your flesh and family, than undertake a work that you cannot perform, and neglect the souls of so many of your flock? I know that what I say will seem hard to some; but to me it is an unquestionable thing, that, if you have but a hundred pounds a year, it is your duty to live upon part of it, and allow the rest to a competent assistant, rather than that the flock which you are over should be neglected. If you say, that is a hard measure, and that your wife and children cannot so live; I answer, do not many families in your parish live on less? Have not many able ministers in the prelates' days been glad of less, with liberty to preach the gospel? There are some yet living, as I have heard, who have offered the bishops to enter into bond to preach for nothing, if they might but have liberty to preach the gospel. If you shall still say, that you cannot live so meanly as poor people do, I further ask,

can your parishioners better endure damnation, than you can endure want and poverty? What! do you call yourselves ministers of the gospel, and yet are the souls of men so base in your eyes, that you had rather they should eternally perish, than that you and your family should live in a low and poor condition? No, should you not rather beg your bread, than put so great a matter as men's salvation upon a hazard, or disadvantage; yes, as hazard the damnation of but one soul? O sirs, it is a miserable thing when men study and talk of heaven and hell, and the fewness of the saved, and the difficulty of salvation, and be not all the while in good earnest. If you were, you could never surely stick at such matters as these, and let your people go down to hell, that you might live in higher style in this world. Remember this, the next time you are preaching to them, that they cannot be saved without knowledge. Hearken whether conscience does not tell you, "It is likely they might be brought to knowledge, if they had but diligent instruction and exhortation privately, man by man; and if there were another minister to assist me, this might be done: and if I would live sparingly and deny my flesh, I might have an assistant. Dare I, then, let my people live in that ignorance which I myself have told them is damning, rather than put myself and family to a little want?"

Must I turn to my Bible to show a preacher where it is written, that a man's soul is worth more than a world (Matthew 16:26), much more therefore than a hundred pounds a year; much more are many souls more worth? Or That both we and all that we have are God's, and should be employed to the utmost for his service? Or that it is inhuman cruelty to let souls go to hell, for fear my wife and children should fare somewhat the harder, or live at lower rates; when, according to God's ordinary way of working by means, I might do much to prevent their misery, if I would but a little displease my flesh, which all, who are Christ's, have crucified with its lusts? Every man must render to God the things that are God's, and that, let it be remembered, is all he is and all he possesses. How are all things sanctified to us, but in the separation and dedication of them to God? Are they not all his talents, and must be employed in his service? Must not every Christian first ask, In what way may I most honor God with my substance? Do we not preach these things to our people? Are they true as to them, and not as to us? Yes more, is not the church–maintenance devoted, in a special manner, to the service of God for the church? And should we not then use it for the utmost furtherance of that end ? If any minister who has two hundred pounds a year can prove that a hundred pounds of it may do God more service, if it be laid out on himself, or wife and children, than if it maintain one or two suitable assistants to help forward the salvation of The flock, I shall not presume to reprove his expenses; but where this cannot be proved, let not the practice be justified. And I must further say, that this poverty is not so intolerable and dangerous a thing as it is pretended to be. If you have but food and clothing, must you not therewith be content (1 Timothy 6:8)? And what would you have more than that which may fit you for the work of God? It is not "being clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day (Luke 16:19)," that is necessary for this end. "A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesses (Luke 12:15)" If your clothing be warm, and your food be wholesome, you may be as well supported by it to do God service as if you had the fullest satisfaction to your flesh. A patched coat may be warm, and bread and water are wholesome food. He who lacks not these, has but a poor excuse to make for hazarding men's souls, that he may live on dainties.

But, while it is our duty to take heed to all the flock, we must pay special attention to some classes in particular. By many, this is very imperfectly understood, and therefore I shall dwell a little upon

it.

1. We must labor, in a special manner, for the conversion of the unconverted. The work of conversion is the first and great thing we must drive at; after this we must labor with all our might. Alas! the misery of the unconverted is so great, that it calls loudest to us for compassion. If a truly converted sinner do fall, it will be but into sin which will be pardoned, and he is not in that hazard of damnation by it as others are. Not but that "God hates their sins as well as others", or that he will bring them to heaven, let them live ever so wickedly; but the spirit that is within them will not suffer them to live wickedly, nor to sin as the ungodly do. But with the unconverted it is far otherwise. They "are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity (Acts 8:23)", and have yet no part nor fellowship in the pardon of their sins, or the hope of glory. We have, therefore, a work of greater necessity to do for them, even "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified (Acts 26:18)." He who sees one man sick of a mortal disease, and another only pained with the toothache, will be moved more to compassion for the former, than the latter; and will surely make more haste to help him, though he were a stranger, and the other a brother or a son. It is so sad a case to see men in a state of damnation, wherein, if they should die, they are lost forever, that methinks we should not be able to let them alone, either in public or private, whatever other work we may have to do. I confess, I am frequency forced to neglect that which should tend to the further increase of knowledge in the godly, because of the lamentable necessity of the unconverted. Who is able to talk of controversies, or of nice unnecessary points, or even of truths of a lower degree of necessity, how excellent whatever, while he sees a company of ignorant, carnal, miserable sinners before his eyes, who must be changed or damned? Methinks I even see them entering upon their final woe! Methinks I hear them crying out for help, for speediest help! Their misery speaks the louder, because they have not hearts to ask for themselves. Many a time have I known, that I had some hearers of higher fancies that looked for rarities and were addicted to despise the ministry, if I told them not somewhat more than ordinary. Yet I could not find in my heart to turn from the necessities of the impenitent, for the humoring of them; nor even to leave speaking to miserable sinners for their salvation, in order to speak to such novelists; no, nor so much as should otherwise be done, to weak saints for their confirmation and increase in grace. Methinks, as Paul’s "spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the Athenians wholly given to idolatry (Acts 17:16)", so it should cast us into one of his paroxysms, to see so many men in the utmost danger of being everlastingly undone. Methinks, if by faith we did indeed look upon them as within a step of hell, it would more effectually untie our tongues, than Croesus’ danger, as they tell us, did his son’s. He who will let a sinner go down to hell for want of speaking to him, does set less by souls than did the Redeemer of souls; and less by his neighbor, than common charity will allow him to do by his greatest enemy. O, therefore, brethren, whomsoever you neglect, neglect not the most miserable! Whatever you pass over, do not forget poor souls that are under the condemnation and curse of the law, and who may look every hour for the infernal execution, if a speedy change does not prevent it. O call after the impenitent and ply this great work of converting souls, whatever else you leave undone.

2. We must be ready to give advice to inquirers, who come to us with cases of conscience; especially the great case which the Jews put to Peter, and the jailer to Paul and Silas, "What must we do to be saved (Acts 16:31)?". A minister is not to be merely a public preacher, but to be

known as a counselor for their souls, as the physician is for their bodies, and the lawyer for their estates: so that each man who is in doubts and straits, may bring his case to him for resolution; as Nicodemus came to Christ, and as it was usual with the people of old to go to the priest, "who must keep knowledge, and at whose mouth they must ask the law, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:7). But as the people have become unacquainted with this office of the ministry, and with their own duty and necessity in this respect, it belongs to US to acquaint them with it, and publicly to press them to come to us for advice about the great concerns of their souls. We must not only be willing to take the trouble, but should draw it upon ourselves, by inviting them to come. What abundance of good might we to, could we but bring them to this! And, doubtless, much might be done in it, if we did our duty. How few have I ever heard of, who have heartily pressed their people to their duty in this way! O! it is a sad case that men's souls should be so injured and hazarded by the total neglect of so great a duty, and that ministers should scarcely ever tell them of it, and awaken them to it. Were your hearers but duly sensible of the need and importance of this, you would have them more frequently knocking at your doors, and making known to you their sad complaints, and begging your advice. I beseech you, then, press them more to this duty for the future; and see that you perform it carefully when they do seek your help. To this end it is very necessary that you be well acquainted with practical cases, and especially that you be acquainted with the nature of saving grace, and able to assist them in trying their state, and in resolving the main question that concerns their everlasting life or death. One word of seasonable, prudent advice, given by a minister to persons in necessity, may be of more use than many sermons. "A word fitly spoken," says Solomon, "how good is it (Proverbs 25:11)!"

3. We must study to build up those who are already truly converted. In this respect our work is various, according to the various states of Christians.

(1) There are many of our flock that are young and weak, who, though they are of long standing, are yet of small proficiency or strength. This, indeed, is the most common condition of the godly. Most of them content themselves with low degrees of grace, and it is no easy matter to get them higher. To bring them to higher and stricter opinions is easy, that is, to bring them from the truth into error, on the right hand as well as on the left; but to increase their knowledge and gifts is not easy, and to increase their graces is the hardest of all. It is a very sad thing for Christians to be weak: it exposes us to dangers; it abates our consolations and delight in God, and takes off the sweetness of wisdom's ways; it makes us less serviceable to God and man, to bring less honor to our Master, and to do less good to all about us. We get small benefit in the use of the means of grace. We too easily play with the serpent's baits, and are ensnared by his wiles. A seducer will easily shake us, and evil may be made to appear to us as good, truth as falsehood, sin as duty, and so on the contrary. We are less able to resist and stand in an encounter; we sooner fall; we less easily rise; and are more apt to prove a scandal and reproach to our profession. We less know ourselves, and are more apt to be mistaken as to our own estate, not observing corruptions when they have got advantage of us. We are dishonorable to the gospel by our very weakness, and little useful to any about us. In a word, though we live to less profit to ourselves or others, yet are we unwilling and too unready to die. Now, seeing the case of weakness in the converted is so sad, how diligent should we be to cherish and increase their grace! The strength of Christians is the honor of the Church When they are inflamed with the love of God, and live by a lively working faith, and set light by the profits and honors of the world, and love one another with a pure heart

fervently and can bear and heartily forgive a wrong, and suffer joyfully for the cause of Christ, and study to do good, and walk inoffensively and harmlessly in the world, are ready to be servants to all men for their good, becoming all things to all men in order to win them to Christ, and yet abstaining from the appearance of evil, and seasoning all their actions with a sweet mixture of prudence, humility, zeal, and heavenly–mindedness. O, what an honor are such to their profession (1 Peter 1:22, Ephesians 4:32, Acts 5:41, 1 Thessalonians 4:11, 1 Corinthians 9:22, 1 Thessalonians 5:22)! What an ornament to the Church; and how serviceable to God and man! Men would sooner believe that the gospel is from heaven, if they saw more such effects of it upon the hearts and lives of those who profess it. The world is better able to read the nature of religion in a man's life than in the Bible. "Those who obey not the word, may be won by the conversation" of such as are thus eminent for godliness (1 Peter 3:1). It is, therefore, a most important part of our work, to labor more in the polishing and perfecting of the saints, that they may be strong in the Lord, and fitted for their Master's service.

(2) Another class of converts that need our special help, are those who labor under some particular corruption, which keeps under their graces, and makes them a trouble to others, and a burden to themselves. Alas! there are too many such persons. Some are specially addicted to pride, and others to worldly–mindedness; some to sensual desires, and others to frowardness or other evil passions. Now it is our duty to give assistance to all these; and partly by dissuasions, and clear discoveries of the odiousness of the sin, and partly by suitable directions about the remedy, to help them to a more complete conquest of their corruptions. We are leaders of Christ's army against the powers of hell, and must resist all the works of darkness wherever we find them, even though it should be in the children of light (Ephesians 5:6). We must be no more tender of the sins of the godly, than of the ungodly, nor any more befriend them or favor them. By how much more we love their persons, by so much the more must we manifest it, by making opposition to their sins. And yet we must look to meet with some tender persons here, especially when iniquity has got any head, and made a party, and many have fallen in love with it; they will be as pettish and as impatient of reproof as some worse men, and perhaps will interest even piety itself in their faults. But the ministers of Christ must do their duty, notwithstanding their peevishness; and must not so far hate their brother, as to forbear rebuking him, or suffer sin to lie upon his soul. It must, no doubt, be done with much prudence, yet done it must be.

(3) Another class who demand special help are declining Christians, that are either fallen into some scandalous sin, or else abate their zeal and diligence, and show that they have lost their former love (Revelation 2:4). As the case of backsliders is very sad, so our diligence must be very great for their recovery. It is sad to them to lose so much of their life, and peace, and serviceableness to God; and to become so serviceable to Satan and his cause. It is sad to us to see that all our labor is come to this; and that, when we have taken so much pains with them, and have had so much hopes of them, all should be so far frustrated. It is saddest of all, to think that God should be so dishonored by those whom he has so loved, and for whom he has done so much; and that Christ should be so wounded in the house of his friends. Besides, partial backsliding has a natural tendency to total apostasy, and would effect it, if special grace did not prevent it.

Now, the more sad the case of such Christians is, the more must we exert ourselves for their recovery. We must "restore those that are overtaken in a fault, in the spirit of meekness (Galatians

6:1)," and yet see that the sore be thoroughly searched and healed, and the joint be well set again, what pain whatever it may cost. We must look especially to the honor of the gospel, and see that they give such evidence of true repentance, and make such free and full confession of their sin, that some reparation be thereby made to the Church and their holy profession, for the wound they have given to religion. Much skill is required for restoring such a soul.

(4) The last class whom I shall here notice, as requiring our attention, are the strong; for they, also, have need of our assistance: partly to preserve the grace they have; partly to help them in making further progress; and partly to direct them in improving their strength for the service of Christ, and the assistance of their brethren; and, also, to encourage them to persevere, that they may receive the crown.

All these are the objects of the ministerial work, and in respect to each of them, we must " take heed to all the flock".

4. We must have a special eye upon families, to see that they are well ordered, and the duties of each relation performed. The life of religion, and the welfare and glory of both the Church and the State, depend much on family government and duty. If we suffer the neglect of this, we shall undo all. What are we like to do ourselves to the reforming of a congregation, if all the work be cast on us alone; and masters of families neglect that necessary duty of their own, by which they are bound to help us? If any good be begun by the ministry in any soul, a careless, prayerless, worldly family is like to stifle it, or very much hinder it; whereas, if you could but get the rulers of families to do their duty, to take up the work where you left it, and help it on, what abundance of good might be done! I beseech you, therefore, if you desire the reformation and welfare of your people, do all you can to promote family religion. To this end, let me entreat you to attend to the following things:

(1) Get information about how each family is ordered, that you may know how to proceed in your endeavors for their further good.

(2) Go occasionally among them, when they are likely to be most at leisure, and ask the master of the family whether he prays with them, and reads the Scripture, or what he does? Labor to convince such as neglect this, of their sin; and if you have opportunity, pray with them before you go, and give them an example of what you would have them do. Perhaps, too, it might be well to get a promise from them, that they will make more conscience of their duty for the future.

(3) If you find any, through ignorance and want of practice, unable to pray, persuade them to study their own wants, and to get their hearts affected with them, and, in the meanwhile, advise them to use a form of prayer, rather than not pray at all. Tell them, however, that it is their sin and shame that they have lived so negligently, as to be so unacquainted with their own necessities as not to know how to speak to God in prayer, when every beggar can find words to ask an alms. And, therefore, that a form of prayer is but for necessity, as a crutch to a cripple, while they cannot do well without it; but that they must resolve not to be content with it, but to learn to do better as speedily as possible, seeing that prayer should come from the feelings of the heart, and be varied according to our necessities and circumstances.

(4) See that in every family there are some useful moving books, beside the Bible. If they have none, persuade them to buy some: if they be not able to buy them, give them some if you can. If you are not able yourself, get some gentlemen, or other rich persons, that are ready to good

works, to do it. And engage them to read them at night, when they have leisure, and especially on the Lord’s day.

(5) Direct them how to spend the Lord’s day; how to dispatch their worldly business, so as to prevent encumbrances and distractions; and when they have been at church, how to spend the time in their families. The life of religion depends much on this, because poor people have no other free considerable time; and, therefore, if they lose this, they lose all, and will remain ignorant and brutish. Persuade the master of every family to cause his children and servants to repeat the Catechism to him, every Sabbath evening, and to give him some account of what they have heard at church during the day.

Neglect not, I beseech you, this important part of your work. Get masters of families to do their duty, and they will not only spare you a great deal of labor, but will much further the success of your labors. If a captain can get the officers under him to do their duty, he may rule the soldiers with much less trouble, than if all lay upon his own shoulders. You are not like to see any general reformation, until you procure family reformation. Some little religion there may be, here and there; but while it is confined to single persons, and is not promoted in families, it will not prosper, nor promise much future increase.

5. We must be diligent in visiting the sick, and helping them to prepare either for a fruitful life, or a happy death. Though this should be the business of all our life and theirs, yet does it, at such a season, require extraordinary care both of them and us. When time is almost gone, and they must now or never be reconciled to God, O, how does it concern them to redeem those hours, and to lay hold on eternal life! And when we see that we are like to have but a few days or hours more to speak to them, in order to their everlasting welfare, who, that is not a block or an infidel, would not be much with them, and do all he can for their salvation in that short space? Will it not awaken us to compassion, to look on a languishing man, and to think that within a few days his soul will be in heaven or in hell? Surely it will try the faith and seriousness of ministers, to be much about dying men! They will thus have opportunity to discern whether they themselves are in good earnest about the matters of the life to come. So great is the change that is made by death, that it should awaken us to the greatest sensibility to see a man so near it, and should excite in us the deepest pangs of compassion, to do the office of inferior angels for the soul, before it departs from the body, that it may be ready for the convoy of superior angels to the "inheritance of the saints in light (Colossians 1:12)". When a man is almost at his journey’s end, and the next step brings him to heaven or hell, it is time for us, while there is hope, to help him if we can. And as their present necessity should move us to embrace that opportunity for their good, so should the advantage that sickness and the prospect of death affords. Even the stoutest sinners will hear us on their death–bed, though they scorned us before. They will then let fall their fury, and be as gentle as lambs, who were before as intractable as lions. I find not one in ten, of the most obstinate scornful wretches in my parish, but when they come to die, will humble themselves, confess their faults, and seem penitent, and promise, if they should recover, to reform their lives. Cyprian says to those in health, " He who everyday reminds himself that he is dying, despises the present and hastens to things to come. Much more he who feels himself to be in the very act of dying." O how resolvedly will the worst of sinners seem to cast away their sins and promise reformation, and cry out of their folly, and of the vanity of this world, when they see that death is in good earnest with them, and away they must without delay! Perhaps you will say, that these forced changes are not cordial, and

that, therefore, we have no great hope of doing them any saving good. I confess it is very common for sinners to be frightened into ineffectual purposes, but not so common to be at such a season converted to the Savior. It is a remark of Augustine, " He cannot die badly who lives well; and scarcely shall he die well who lives badly." Yet "scarcely" and "never" are not all one. It should make both them and us the more diligent in the time of health, because it is "scarcely" ; but yet we should bestir us at the last, in the use of the best remedies, because it is not " never" . But as I do not intend to furnish a directory for the whole ministerial work, I will not stop to tell you particularly what must be done for men in their last extremity; but shall notice only three or four things, as specially worthy of your attention.

(1) Stay not until their strength and understanding are gone, and the time so short that you scarcely know what to do; but go to them as soon as you hear they are sick, whether they send for you or not.

(2) When the time is so short, that there is no opportunity to instruct them in the principles of religion in order, be sure to ply the main points, and to dwell on those truths which are most calculated to promote their conversion, showing them the glory of the life to come, and the way by which it was purchased for us, and the great sin and folly of their having neglected it in time of health; but yet the possibility that remains of their still obtaining it, if they will believe in Christ, the only Savior, and repent of their sins.

(3) If they recover, be sure to remind them of their promises and resolutions in time of sickness. Go to them purposely to set these home to their consciences; and whenever, afterwards, you see them remiss, go to them, and put them in mind of what they said when they were stretched on a sick–bed. And because it is of such use to them who recover, and has been the means of the conversion of many a soul, it is very necessary that you go to them whose sickness is not mortal, as well as to those who are dying, that so you may have some advantage to move them to repentance, and may afterward have this to plead against their sins; as a bishop of Cologne is said to have answered the Emperor Sigismund, when he asked him what was the way to be saved, " He must be what he purposed, or promised to be, when he was last troubled with the stone and the gout."

6. We must reprove and admonish those who live offensively or impenitently. Before we bring such matters before the church, or its rulers, it is ordinarily most fit for the minister to try himself what he can do in private to bow the sinner to repentance, especially if it be not a public crime. Here there is required much skill, and a difference must be made, according to the various tempers of the offenders; but with the most it will be necessary to speak with the greatest plainness and power, to shake their careless hearts, and make them see what it is to dally with sin; to let them know the evil of it, and its sad effects as regards both God and themselves.

7. The last part of our oversight, which I shall notice, consists in the exercise of Church discipline. This consists, after the aforesaid private reproofs, in more public reproof, combined with exhortation to repentance, in prayer for the offender, in restoring the penitent, and in excluding and avoiding the impenitent.

(1) In the case of public offenses, and even of chose of a more private nature, when the offender remains impenitent, he must be reproved before all, and again invited to repentance. This is not

the less our duty, because we have made so little conscience of the practice of it. It is not only Christ's command to tell the church, but Paul's to " rebuke before all (Matthew 18:17, 1 Timothy 5:20)"; and the Church did constantly practice it, until selfishness and formality caused them to be remiss in this and other duties. There is no room to doubt whether this be our duty, and as little is there any ground to doubt whether we have been unfaithful as to the performance of it. Many of us, who would be ashamed to omit preaching or praying half so much, have little considered what we are doing, while living in the willful neglect of this duty, and other parts of discipline, so long as we have done. We little think how we have drawn the guilt of swearing, and drunkenness, and fornication, and other crimes upon our own heads, by neglecting to use the means which God has appointed for the cure of them.

If any shall say, There is little likelihood that public reproof will do them good, that they will rather be enraged by the shame of it; I answer

[a] It ill becomes a creature to plead the ordinances of God as useless, or to reproach God's service instead of doing it, and to set his wits in opposition to his Maker. God can render useful his own ordinances, or else he would never have appointed them.

[b] The usefulness of discipline is apparent, in the shaming of sin and humbling the sinner, and in manifesting the holiness of Christ, and of his doctrine and Church, before all the world.

[c] What will you do with such sinners? Will you give them up as hopeless? That would be more cruel than administering reproof to them. Will you use other means? Why, it is supposed that all other means have been used without success; for this is the last remedy.

[d] The principal use of this public discipline is not for the offender himself, but for the Church. It tends exceedingly to deter others from the like crimes, and so to keep the congregation and their worship pure. Seneca could say, " He who excuses present evils transmits them to posterity." And elsewhere, " He who spares the guilty harms the good."

(2) With reproof we must join exhortation of the offender to repentance, and to the public profession of it for the satisfaction of the church. As the church is bound to avoid communion with impenitent scandalous sinners, so, when they have had evidence of their sin, they must also have some evidence of their repentance; for we cannot know them to be penitent without evidence; and what evidence can the church have but their profession of repentance, and afterwards their actual reformation?

Much prudence, I confess, is to be exercised in such proceedings, lest we do more hurt than good; but it must be such Christian prudence as orders duties, and suits them to their ends, not such carnal prudence as shall enervate or exclude them. In performing this duty, we should deal humbly, even when we deal most sharply, and make it appear that it is not from any ill will, nor any lordly disposition, nor from revenge for any injury, but a necessary duty which we cannot conscientiously neglect; and, therefore, it may be meet to show the people the commands of God obliging us to do what we do, in some such words as the following:

'Brethren, sin is so hateful an evil in the eyes of the most holy God, how light whatever impenitent sinners make of it, that he has provided the everlasting torments of hell for the punishment of it; and no lesser means can prevent that punishment than the sacrifice of the Son of God, applied to

chose who truly repent of and forsake it; and therefore God, who calls all men to repentance, has commanded us to "exhort one another daily, while it is called To–day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," (Hebrews 3:13) and that we do not hate our brother in our heart, but in any wise rebuke our neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him, (Leviticus 19:17) and that if our brother offend us, we should tell him his fault between him and us; and if he hear us not, we should take two or three more with us; and if he hear not them, we should tell the church; and if he hear not the church, he must be to us as a heathen man and a tax-collector; (Matthew 18:15–I7) and those that sin, we must rebuke before all, that others may fear, (1 Timothy 5:20) and rebuke with all authority: (Titus 2:15) yes, were it an apostle of Christ that should sin openly, he must be reproved openly, as Paul did Peter; (Galatians 2:11; Galatians 2:14) and if they repent not, we must avoid them, and with such not so much as eat (2 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13).'

'Having heard of the scandalous conduct of A.B. of this church, or parish, and having received sufficient proof that he has committed the odious sin of , we have seriously dealt with him to bring him to repentance; but, to the grief of our hearts, we perceive no satisfactory result of our endeavors; but he seems still to remain impenitent (or he still lives in the same sin, though he verbally professes repentance). We therefore judge it our duty to proceed to the use of that further remedy which Christ has commanded us to try; and hence we beseech him, in the name of the Lord, without further delay, to lay to heart the greatness of his sin, the wrong he has done to Christ and to himself, and the scandal and grief that he has caused to others. And I do earnestly beseech him, for the sake of his own soul, that he will consider, what it is that he can gain by his sin and impenitency, and whether it will pay for the loss of everlasting life; and how he thinks to stand before God in judgment, or to appear before the Lord Jesus, when death shall snatch his soul from his body, if he be found in this impenitent state. And I do beseech him, for the sake of his own soul, and, as a messenger of Jesus Christ, require him, as he will answer the contrary at the bar of God, that he lay aside the stoutness and impenitency of his heart, and unfeignedly confess and lament his sin before God and this congregation. And this desire I here publish, not out of any ill will to his person, as The Lord knocks, but in love to his soul, and in obedience to Christ who has made it my duty; desiring that, if it be possible, he may be saved from his sin, and from the power of Satan, and from the everlasting wrath of God, and may be reconciled to God and to his church; and, therefore, that he may be humbled by true contrition, before he be humbled by remediless condemnation.' To this purpose I conceive our public admonitions should proceed; and, in some cases, where the sinner considers his sin to be small, it may be necessary to point out the aggravations of it, particularly by citing some passages of Scripture which speak of its evil and its danger.

(3) With these reproofs and exhortations, we must join the prayers of the congregation in behalf of the offender. This should be done in every case of discipline, but particularly if the offender will not be present to receive admonition, or gives no evidence of repentance, and shows no desire for the prayers of the congregation. In such cases, especially, it will be meet that we beg the prayers of the congregation for him ourselves, entreating them to consider what a fearful condition the impenitent are in, and to have pity on a poor soul that is so blinded and hardened by sin and Satan, that he cannot pity himself; and to think what it is for a man to appear before the living God in such a case, and, therefore, that they would join in earnest prayer to God, that he would open

his eyes, and soften, and humble his stubborn heart, before he be in hell beyond remedy. And, accordingly, let us be very earnest in prayer for him, that the congregation may be excited affectionately to join with us; and who knows but God may hear our prayers, and the sinner's heart may relent under them, more than under all our exhortations?

It is, in my judgment, a very laudable course of some churches, that use, for the next three days together, to desire the congregation to join in earnest prayer to God for the opening of the sinner's eyes, and the softening of his heart, and the saving of him from impenitency and eternal death.

If ministers would be conscientious in performing this duty entirely and self-denyingly, they might make something of it, and expect a blessing upon it; but when we shrink from all that is dangerous or ungrateful in our work, and shift off all that is costly or troublesome, we cannot expect that any great good should be effected by such a carnal, partial use of means; and though some may here and there be wrought upon, yet we cannot look That the gospel should run and be glorified when we do our duty so lamely and so defectively.

(4) We must restore the penitent to the fellowship of the church. As we must not teach an offender to make light of discipline by too much facility, so neither must we discourage him by too much severity. If he appear to be truly sensible of the sinfulness of his conduct, and penitent on account of it, we must see that he confess his guilt, and that he promise to fly from such sins for the time to come, to watch more narrowly and to walk more warily, to avoid temptation, to distrust his own strength, and to rely on the grace which is in Christ Jesus (Galatians 6:1, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

We must assure him of the riches of God's love, and the sufficiency of Christ's blood to pardon his sins, if he believe and repent.

We must see that he begs to be restored to the communion of the church, and desires their prayers to God for his pardon and salvation.

We must charge the church That they imitate Christ, in forgiving and in retaining the penitent person; or, if he were cast out, in restoring him to their communion; and that they must never reproach him with his sins, nor cast them in his teeth, but forgive them, even as Christ does.

Finally, we must give God thanks for his recovery, and pray for his confirmation and future preservation.

(5) The last part of discipline is the excluding from the communion of the church those who, after sufficient trial, remain impenitent.

Exclusion from church communion, commonly called excommunication, is of diverse sorts or degrees, which are not to be confounded; but that which is most commonly to be practiced among us, is, only to remove an impenitent sinner from our communion, until it shall please the Lord to give him repentance. In this exclusion or removal, the minister or governors of the church are authoritatively to charge the people, in the name of the Lord, to have no communion with him, and to pronounce him one whose communion the church is bound to avoid; and it is the people's duty carefully to avoid him, provided the pastor's charge contradict not the Word of God.

Nevertheless, we must pray for the repentance and restoration even of the excommunicated; and if God shall give them repentance, we must gladly receive them again into the communion of the

church. Would we were but so far faithful in the practice of this discipline, as we are satisfied both of the matter and manner of it; and did not dispraise and reproach it by our negligence, while we write and plead for it with the highest commendations! It is worthy of our consideration, who is like to have the heavier charge about this matter at the bar of God whether those who have reproached and hindered discipline by their tongues, because they knew not its nature and necessity; or we who have so vilified it by our constant omission, while with our tongues we have magnified it? If hypocrisy be no sin, or if the knowledge of our Master's will by no aggravation of disobedience, then we may be in a better case than they; but if these be great evils, we must be much worse than the very persons whom we so loudly condemn. I will not advise the zealous maintainers, and obstinate neglecters of discipline, to unsay all that they have said, until they are ready to do as they say; nor to recant their defenses of discipline, until they mean to practice it; nor to burn all the books which they have written for it, and all the records of their cost and hazards for it, lest they rise up in judgment against them, to their confusion. But I would persuade them, without any more delay, to conform their practice to these testimonies which they have given, lest the more they are proved to have commended discipline, the more they are proved to have condemned themselves for neglecting it.

It has somewhat amazed me to hear some, that I took for reverend, godly divines, reproach, as a sect, the Sacramentarians and Disciplinarians. And, when I desired to know whom they meant, they told me they meant them that will not give the sacrament to all the parish, and them that will make distinctions by their discipline. I had thought the tempter had obtained a great victory, if he had got but one godly pastor of a church to neglect discipline, as well as if he had got him to neglect preaching; much more if he had got him to approve of that neglect: but it seems that he has got some to scorn at the performers of the duty which they neglect. Sure I am, if it were well understood how much of the pastoral authority end work consists in church guidance, it would be also discerned, that to be against discipline, is near to being against the ministry; and to be against the ministry is near to being absolutely against the church; and to be against the church, is near to being absolutely against Christ. Blame not the harshness of the inference, until you can avoid it, and free yourselves from the charge of it before the Lord.

2. The MANNER of This Oversight

Having thus considered the nature of this oversight, we shall next speak of the manner; not of each part distinctly, lest we be tedious, but of the whole in general.

1. The ministerial work must be carried on purely for God and the salvation of souls, not for any private ends of our own. A wrong end makes all the work bad as from us, how good whatever it may be in its own nature. It is not serving God, but ourselves, if we do it not for God, but for ourselves. They who engage in this as a common work, to make a trade of it for their worldly livelihood, will find that they have chosen a bad trade, though a good employment. Self–denial is of absolute necessity in every Christian, but it is doubly necessary in a minister, as without it he cannot do God an hour's faithful service. Hard studies, much knowledge, and excellent preaching, if the ends be not right, is but more glorious hypocritical sinning. The saying of Bernard is commonly known: "Some desire to know merely for the sake of knowing, and that is shameful curiosity. Some desire to know that they may sell their knowledge, and that too is shameful. Some desire to know for reputation's sake, and that is shameful vanity. But there are some who desire to

know that they may edify others, and that is praiseworthy; and there are some who desire to know that they themselves may be edified, and that is wise."

2. The ministerial work must be carried on diligently and laboriously, as being of such unspeakable consequence to ourselves and others. We are seeking to uphold the world, to save it from the curse of God, to perfect the creation, to attain the ends of Christ's death, to save ourselves and others from damnation, to overcome the devil, and demolish his kingdom, to set up the kingdom of Christ, and to attain and help others to the kingdom of glory. And are these works to be done with a careless mind, or a lazy hand? O see, then, that this work be done with all your might! Study hard, for the well is deep, and our brains are shallow; and, as Cassiodorus says: "Here the common level of knowledge is not to be the limit; here a true ambition is demonstrated; the more a deep knowledge is sought after, the greater the honor in attaining it." But especially be laborious in the practice and exercise of your knowledge. Let Paul's words ring continually in your ears, "Necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16)!" Ever think with yourselves what lies upon your hands: "If I do not bestir myself, Satan may prevail, and the people everlastingly perish, and their blood be required at my hand. By avoiding labor and suffering, I shall draw on myself a thousand times more than I avoid; whereas, by present diligence, I shall prepare for future blessedness." No man was ever a loser by God.

3. The ministerial work must be carried on prudently and orderly. Milk must go before strong meat; the foundation must be laid before we attempt to raise the superstructure (Hebrews 5:14, 1 Peter 2:1-2). Children must not be dealt with as men of full stature. Men must be brought into a state of grace, before we can expect from them the works of grace. The work of conversion, and repentance from dead works, and faith in Christ, must be first and frequently and thoroughly taught. We must not ordinarily go beyond the capacities of our people, nor teach them the perfection, that have not learned the first principles of religion: for, as Gregory of Nyssa says: " We teach not infants the deep precepts of science, but first letters, and then syllables, etc. So the guides of the Church do first propound to their hearers certain documents, which are as the elements; and so by degrees do open to them the more perfect and mysterious matters." Therefore did the Church take so much pains with their catechumens, before they baptized them, and would not lay unpolished stones into the building.

4. Throughout the whole course of our ministry, we must insist chiefly upon the greatest, most certain, and most necessary truths, and be more seldom and sparing upon the rest. If we can but teach Christ to our people, we shall teach them all. Get them well to heaven, and they will have knowledge enough. The great and commonly acknowledged truths of religion are those that men must live upon, and which are the great instruments of destroying men's sins, and raising the heart to God. We must, therefore, ever have our people's necessities before our eyes. To remember the "one thing needful" will take us off gauds and needless ornaments, and unprofitable controversies (Luke 10:42). Many other things are desirable to be known; but this must be known, or else our people are undone forever. I confess I think NECESSITY should be the great disposer of a minister's course of study and labor. If we were sufficient for everything, we might attempt everything, and take in order the whole Encyclopedia: but life is short, and we are dull, and eternal things are necessary, and the souls that depend on our teaching are precious. I confess, necessity has been the conductor of my studies and life. It chooses what book I shall read, and tells me when, and how long. It chooses my text, and makes my sermon, both for matter and manner, so

far as I can keep out my own corruption. Though I know the constant expectation of death has been a great cause of this, yet I know no reason why the most healthy man should not make sure of the most necessary things first, considering the uncertainty and shortness of all men’s lives. Xenophon thought, "there was no better teacher than necessity, which teaches all things most diligently." Who can, in studying, preaching, or laboring, be doing other matters, if he do but know that this MUST be done? Who can trifle or delay, you feels the urgent spurs of necessity? As the soldier says, "No lengthy discussing, but speedy and strong contending is needed where necessity urges on" , so much more must we, as our business is more important. Doubtless this is the best way to redeem time, to see that we lose not an hour, when we spend it only on necessary things. This is the way to be most profitable to others, though not always to be most pleasing and applauded; because, through men’s frailty, it is true what Seneca says, that "We are attracted to novelties rather than to great things."

Hence it is, that a preacher must be often upon the same things, because the matters of necessity are few. We must not either feign necessaries, or fall much upon unnecessaries, to satisfy them that look for novelties, though we must clothe the same truths with a grateful variety in the manner of our delivery. The great volumes and tedious controversies that so much trouble us and waste our time, are usually made up more of opinions than of necessary verities; for, as Ficinus says, "Necessity is shut up within narrow limits; not so with opinion;" and, as Gregory Nazianzen and Seneca often say, "Necessaries are common and obvious; it is superfluities that we waste our time for, and labor for, and complain that we attain them not." Ministers, therefore, must be observant of the case of their flocks, that they may know what is most necessary for them, both for matter and for manner; and usually the matter is to be first regarded, as being of more importance than the manner. If you are to choose what authors to read yourselves, will you not rather take those that tell you what you know not, and that speak the most necessary truths in the clearest manner, though it be in barbarous or unhandsome language, than those that will most learnedly and elegantly tell you that which is false or vain, and "by a great effort say nothing." I purpose to follow Augustine’s counsel: "Give first place to the meaning of the Word, so that the soul is given preference over the body; from which it follows that we seek the more true as much as the more discerning discourses to be met with, just as we seek the more sensible, as much as the more handsome, to be our friends." And surely, as I do in my studies for my own edification, I should do in my teaching for other men’s. It is commonly empty, ignorant men who want the matter and substance of true learning, that are over curious and solicitous about words and ornaments, when the old, experienced, and most learned men, abound in substantial verities delivered usually in the plainest dress. As Aristotle makes it the reason why women are more addicted to pride in apparel than men, that, being conscious of little inward worth, they seek to make it up with outward borrowed ornaments; so is it with empty, worthless preachers, who affect to be esteemed that which they are not, and have no other way to procure that esteem.

5. All our teaching must be as plain and simple as possible. This does best suit a teacher’s ends. He who would be understood must speak to the capacity of his hearers. Truth loves the light, and is most beautiful when most naked. It is the sign of an envious enemy to hide the truth; and it is the work of a hypocrite to do this under presence of revealing it; and therefore painted obscure sermons (like painted glass in windows which keeps out the light) are too often the marks of painted hypocrites. If you would not teach men, what do you in the pulpit? If you would, why do

you not speak so as to be understood? I know the height of the matter may make a man not understood, when he has studied to make it as plain as he can; but that a man should purposely cloud the matter in strange words, and hide his mind from the people, whom he pretends to instruct, is the way to make fools admire his profound learning, and wise men his folly, pride, and hypocrisy. Some men conceal their sentiments, under the presence of necessity, because of men's prejudices, and the unpreparedness of common understandings to receive the truth. But truth overcomes prejudice by the mere light of evidence, and there is no better way to make a good cause prevail, than to make it as plain, and as generally and thoroughly known as we can. It is this light that will dispose an unprepared mind. It is, at best, a sign that a man has not well digested the matter himself, if he is not able to deliver it plainly to others. I mean as plainly as the nature of the matter will bear, in regard of capacities prepared for it by prerequisite truths; for I know that some men cannot at present understand some truths, if you speak them as plainly as words can express them; as the easiest rules in grammar, most plainly taught, will not be understood by a child that is but learning his alphabet.

6. Our work must be carried on with great humility. We must carry ourselves meekly and condescendingly to all; and so teach others, as to be as ready to learn of any that can teach us, and so both teach and learn at once; not proudly venting our own conceits, and disdaining all that any way contradict them, as if we had attained to the height of knowledge, and were destined for the chair, and other men to sit at our feet. Pride is a vice that ill becomes them that must lead men in such an humble way to heaven: let us, therefore, take heed, lest, when we have brought others there, the gate should prove too strait for ourselves. For, as Grotius says, " Pride is born in heaven, but as if unmindful that the way from that place is closed, it is impossible for it to return afterwards!" God, that thrust out a proud angel, will not entertain there a proud preacher. Methinks we should remember, at least the tide of a Minister, which, though the popish priests disdain, yet so do not we. It is this pride at the root that feeds all the rest of our sins. Hence the envy, the contention, and unpeaceableness of ministers; hence the stops to all reformation; all would lead, and few will follow or concur. Hence, also, is the non–proficiency of too many ministers, because they are too proud to learn. Humility would teach them another lesson. I may say of ministers as Augustine to Jerome, even of the aged among them, " although it is more fitting for the aged to teach than to learn, much more is it fitting to learn than to be ignorant."

7. There must be a prudent mixture of severity and mildness both in our preaching and discipline; each must be predominant, according to the quality or character of the person, or matter, that we have in hand. If there be no severity, our reproofs will be despised. If all severity, we shall be taken as usurpers of dominion, rather than persuaders of the minds of men to the truth (Rom. 19:22).

8. We must be serious, earnest, and zealous in every part of our work. Our work requires greater skill, and especially greater life and zeal than any of us bring to it. It is no small matter to stand up in the face of a congregation, and to deliver a

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8. We must be serious, earnest, and zealous in every part of our work. Our work requires greater skill, and especially greater life and zeal than any of us bring to it. It is no small matter to stand up in the face of a congregation, and to deliver a message of salvation or damnation, as from the living God, in the name of the Redeemer. It is no easy matter to speak so plainly, that the most ignorant may understand us; and so seriously that the deadest hearts may feel us; and so convincingly, that the contradicting cavilers may be silenced. The weight of our matter condemns coldness and sleepy dullness. We should see that we be well awakened ourselves, and our spirits in such a plight as may make us fit to awaken others. If our words be not sharpened, and pierce not as nails, they will hardly be felt by stony hearts. To speak slightly and coldly of heavenly things is nearly as bad as to say nothing of them at all.

9. The whole of our ministry must be carried on in tender love to our people. We must let them see that nothing pleases us but what profits them; and that what does them good does us good; and that nothing troubles us more than their hurt. We must feel toward our people, as a father toward his children: yes, the tenderest love of a mother must not surpass ours. We must even travail in birth, until Christ be formed in them (Galatians 4:19). They should see that we care for no outward thing, neither wealth, nor liberty, nor honor, nor life, in comparison of their salvation; but could even be content, with Moses, to have our names blotted out of the book of life, that is, to be removed from the number of the living, rather than they should not be found in the Lamb’s book of life (Exodus 32:32). Thus should we, as John says, be ready to " lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16)," and, with Paul, not count our lives dear to us, so we may but " finish our course with joy (2 Timothy 4:7), and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus ,(Ephesians 4:15)." When the people see that you unfeignedly love them, they will hear anything and bear any thing from you; as Augustine says, " Love God, and do what you please." We ourselves will take all things well from one that we know does entirely love us. We will put up with a blow that is given us in love, sooner than with a foul word that is spoken to us in malice or in anger. Most men judge of the counsel, as they judge of the affection of him that gives it: at least, so far as to give it a fair hearing. O, therefore, see that you feel a tender love to your people in your breasts, and let them perceive it in your speeches, and see it in your conduct. Let them see that you spend, and are spent, for their sakes; and that all you do is for them, and not for any private ends of your own. To this end the works of charity are necessary, as far as your estate will reach; for bare words will hardly convince men that you have any great love to them. But, if you are not able to give, show that you are willing to give if you had it, and do that sort of good you can. But see that your love be not carnal, flowing from pride, as one that is a suitor for himself rather than for Christ, and, therefore, does love because he is loved, or that he may be loved. Take heed, therefore, that you do not connive at the sins of your people, under presence of love, for that were to cross the nature and end of love. Friendship must be cemented by piety. A wicked man cannot be a true friend; and, if you befriend their wickedness, you show that you are wicked yourselves. Pretend not to love them, if you favor their sins, and seek not their salvation. By favoring their sins,

you will show your enmity to God; and then how can you love your brother? If you be their best friends, help them against their worst enemies. And do not think all sharpness inconsistent with love: parents correct their children, and God himself " chastens every son whom he receives (Hebrews 12:6)." Augustine says, " Better it is to love even with the accompaniment of severity, than to mislead by (excess of) lenity."

10. We must carry on our work with patience. We must bear with many abuses and injuries from chose to whom we seek to do good. When we have studied for them, and prayed for them, and exhorted them, and beseeched them with all earnestness and condescension, and given them what we are able, and tended them as if they had been our children, we must look that many of them will requite us with scorn and hatred and contempt, and account us their enemies, because we "tell them the truth (Galatians 4:16)." Now, we must endure all this patiently, and we must unweariedly hold on in doing good, "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth (2 Timothy 2:25)." We have to deal with distracted men who will fly in the face of their physician, but we must not, therefore, neglect their cure. He is unworthy to be a physician, who will be driven away from a frenetic patient by foul words. Yet, alas, when sinners reproach and slander us for our love, and are more ready to spit in our faces, than to thank us for our advice, what heart–risings will there be, and how will the remnants of old Adam (pride and passion) struggle against the meekness and patience of the new man! And how sadly do many ministers come off under such trials!

11. All our work must be managed reverently, as beseems them that believe the presence of God, and use not holy things as if they were common. Reverence is that affection of the soul which proceeds from deep apprehensions of God and indicates a mind that is much conversant with him. To manifest irreverence in the things of God is to manifest hypocrisy, and that the heart agrees not with the tongue. I know not how it is with others, but the most reverent preacher, that speaks as if he saw the face of God, does more affect my heart, though with common words, than an irreverent man with the most exquisite preparations. Yes, though he bawl it out with never so much seeming earnestness, if reverence be not answerable to fervency, it works but little. Of all preaching in the world, (that speaks not stark lies) I hate that preaching which tends to make the hearers laugh, or to move their minds with tickling levity, and affect them as stage–plays used to do, instead of affecting them with a holy reverence of the name of God. Jerome says, "Teach in your church, not to get the applause of the people, but to set in motion the groan; the tears of the hearers are your praises." The more of God appears in our duties, the more authority will they have with men. We should, as it were, suppose we saw the throne of God, and the millions of glorious angels attending him, that we may be awed with his majesty when we draw near him in holy things, lest we profane them and take his name in vain.

12. All our work must be done spiritually, as by men possessed of the Holy Spirit. There is in some men’s preaching a spiritual strain, which spiritual hearers can discern and relish; whereas, in other men’s, this sacred tincture is so wanting, that, even when they speak of spiritual things, the manner is such as if they were common matters. Our evidence and illustrations of divine truth must also be spiritual, being drawn from the Holy Scriptures, rather than from the writings of men. The wisdom of the world must not be magnified against the wisdom of God; philosophy must be taught to stoop and serve, while faith does bear the chief sway. Great scholars in Aristotle’s school must take heed of glorying too much in their master, and despising those that are below them, lest

they themselves prove lower in the school of Christ, and "least in the kingdom of God," while they would be great in the eyes of men (Galatians 6:14). As wise a man as any of them would glory in nothing but the cross of Christ, and determined to know nothing but him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). Those who are so confident that Aristotle is in hell, should not too much take him for their guide in the way to heaven. It is an excellent memorandum that Gregory has left: "God in the first place gathers together the unlearned; afterwards the wise ones. And not of orators does he make fishermen, but of fishermen he produces orators." The most learned men should think of this.

Let all writers have their due esteem, but compare none of them with the Word of God. We will not refuse their service, but we must abhor them as rivals or competitors. It is the sign of a distempered heart that loses the relish of Scripture excellency. For there is in a spiritual heart a co–naturality to the Word of God, because this is the seed which did regenerate him. The Word is that seal which made all the holy impressions that are in the hearts of true believers, and stamped the image of God upon them; and, therefore, they must needs be like that Word and highly esteem it as long as they live (1 Peter 1:23).

13. If you would prosper in your work, be sure to keep up earnest desires and expectations of success. If your hearts be not set on the end of your labors, and you long not to see the conversion and edification of your hearers, and do not study and preach in hope, you are not likely to see much success. As it is a sign of a false, self–seeking heart, that can be content to be still doing, and yet see no fruit of his labor; so I have observed that God seldom blesses any man's work so much as his, whose heart is set upon the success of it. Let it be the property of a Judas to have more regard to the bag than to his work, and not to care much for what they pretend to care; and to think, if they have their salaries, and the love and commendations of their people, they have enough to satisfy them: but, let all who preach for Christ and men's salvation, be unsatisfied until they have the thing they preach for. He never had the right ends of a preacher, who is indifferent whether he obtain them, and is not grieved when he misses them, and rejoiced when he can see the desired issue. When a man does only study what to say, and how, with commendation, to spend the hour, and looks no more after it, unless it be to know what people think of his abilities, and thus holds on from year to year, I must needs think that this man does preach for himself, and not for Christ, even when he preaches Christ, how excellency whatever he may seem to do it. No wise or charitable physician is content to be always giving physic, and to see no amendment among his patients, but to have them all die upon his hands. Nor will any wise and honest schoolmaster be content to be still teaching, though his scholars profit not by his instructions, but both of them would rather be weary of the employment.

I know that a faithful minister may have comfort when he wants success; and "though Israel be not gathered, our reward is with the Lord (Isaiah 49:5);" and our acceptance is not according to the fruit, but according to our labor: but then, he who longs not for the success of his labors can have none of this comfort, because he was not a faithful laborer. What I say is only for them that are set upon the end, and grieved if they miss it. Nor is this the full comfort that we must desire, but only such a part as may quiet us, though we miss the rest. What if God will accept a physician, though the patient die? He must, notwithstanding that, work in compassion, and long for a better issue, and be sorry if he miss it. For it is not merely our own reward that we labor for, but other men's salvation. I confess, for my part, I marvel at some ancient reverend men, that have lived twenty, thirty, or forty years with an unprofitable people, among whom they have scarcely been able to

discern any fruits of their labors, how they can, with so much patience, continue among them. Were it my case, though I dare not leave the vineyard, nor quit my calling, yet I should suspect that it was God’s will I should go somewhere else, and another come in my place that might be fitter for them; and I should not be easily satisfied to spend my days in such a manner.

14. Our whole work must be carried on under a deep sense of our own insufficiency, and of our entire dependence on Christ. We must go for light, and life, and strength to him who sends us on the work. And when we feel our own faith weak, and our hearts dull, and unsuitable to so great a work as we have to do, we must have recourse to him, and say, "Lord, will you send me with such an unbelieving heart to persuade others to believe? Must I daily plead with sinners about everlasting life and everlasting death, and have no more belief or feeling of these weighty things myself? Oh send me not naked and unprovided to the work; but, as you command me to do it, furnish me with a spirit suitable thereto." Prayer must carry on our work as well as preaching: he preaches not heartily to his people, that prays not earnestly for them. If we prevail not with God to give them faith and repentance, we shall never prevail with them to believe and repent. When our own hearts are so far out of order, and theirs so far out of order, if we prevail not with God to mend and help them, we are like to make but unsuccessful work.

15. Having given you these concomitants of our ministerial work, as singly to be performed by every minister, let me conclude with one other, that is necessary to us as we are fellow–laborers in the same work; and that is this, we must be very studious of union and communion among ourselves, and of the unity and peace of the churches that we oversee. We must be sensible how needful this is to the prosperity of the whole, the strengthening of our common cause, the good of the particular members of our flock, and the further enlargement of the kingdom of Christ. And, therefore, ministers must smart when the Church is wounded, and be so far from being the leaders in divisions, that they should take it as a principal part of their work to prevent and heal them. Day and night should they bend their studies to find out means to close such breaches. They must not only hearken to motions for unity, but propound them and prosecute them; not only entertain an offered peace, but even follow it when it flies from them. They must, therefore, keep close to the ancient simplicity of the Christian faith, and the foundation and center of catholic unity. They must abhor the arrogance of them that frame new engines to rack and tear the Church of Christ under pretense of obviating errors and maintaining the truth. The Scripture sufficiency must be maintained, and nothing beyond it imposed on others; and if papists, or others, call to us for the standard and rule of our religion, it is the Bible that we must show them, rather than any confessions of churches, or writings of men. We must learn to distinguish between certainties and uncertainties, necessaries and unnecessary, catholic verities and private opinions; and to lay the stress of the Church’s peace upon the former, not upon the latter. We must avoid the common confusion of speaking of those who make no difference between verbal and real errors, and hate that "madness formerly among theologians," who tear their brethren as heretics, before they understand them. And we must learn to see the true state of controversies, and reduce them to the very point where the difference lies, and not make them seem greater than they are. Instead of quarreling with our brethren, we must combine against the common adversaries; and all ministers must associate and hold communion, and correspondence, and constant meetings to these ends; and smaller differences of judgment are not to interrupt them. They must do as much of the work of God, in unity and concord, as they can, which is the use of synods; not to rule over one another,

and make laws, but to avoid misunderstandings, and consult for mutual edification, and maintain love and communion, and go on unanimously in the work that God has already commanded us. Had the ministers of the gospel been men of peace, and of catholic, rather than factious spirits, the Church of Christ had not been in the case it now is. The nations of Lutherans and Calvinists abroad, and the differing parties here at home, would not have been plotting the subversion of one another, nor remain at that distance, and in that uncharitable bitterness, nor strengthen the common enemy, and hinder the building and prosperity of the Church as they have done.

3. MOTIVES to the Oversight of the Flock

Having considered the manner in which we are to take heed to the flock, I shall now proceed to lay before you some motives to this oversight; ant here I shall confine myself to those contained in my text.

1. The first consideration which the text suggests to us, is drawn from our relation to the flock: We are overseers of it.

(1) The nature of our office requires us to ‘take heed to the flock.’ What else are we overseers for? "‘Bishop’ is a title which intimates more of labor than of honor," says Polydore Virgil. To be a bishop, or pastor, is not to be set up as an idol for the people to bow to, or as idle ‘slow bellies’, to live to our fleshly delight and ease; but it is to be the guide of sinners to heaven (Titus 1:12). It is a sad case that men should be of a calling of which they know not the nature, and undertake they know not what. Do these men consider what they have undertaken, that live in ease and pleasure, and have time to take their superfluous recreations and to spend an hour and more at once, in loitering, or in vain discourse, when so much work does lie upon their hands? Brethren, do you consider what you have taken upon you? Why, you have undertaken the conduct, under Christ, of a band of his soldiers "against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12)." You must lead them on to the sharpest conflicts; you must acquaint them with the enemies’ stratagems and assaults; you must watch yourselves, and keep them watching. If you miscarry, they and you may perish. You have a subtle enemy, and therefore you must be wise. You have a vigilant enemy, and therefore you must be vigilant. You have a malicious and violent and unwearied enemy, and therefore you must be resolute, courageous and indefatigable. You are in a crowd of enemies, encompassed by them on every side, and if you heed one and not all, you will quickly fall. And oh, what a world of work have you to do! Had you but one ignorant old man or woman to teach, what a hard task would it be, even though they should be willing to learn! But if they be as unwilling as they are ignorant, how much more difficult will it prove! But to have such a multitude of ignorant persons, as most of us have, what work will it find us! What a pitiful life is it, to have to reason with men that have almost lost the use of reason, and to argue with them that neither understand themselves nor you! O brethren, what a world of wickedness have we to contend against in one soul; and what a number of these worlds! And when you do you think have done something, you leave the seed among the fowls of the air; wicked men are at their elbows to rise up and contradict all you have said. You speak but once to a sinner, for ten or twenty times that the emissaries of Satan speak to them.

Moreover, how easily do the business and cares of the world choke the seed which you have sown. And if the truth had no enemy but what is in themselves, how easily will a frozen carnal heart extinguish those sparks which you have been long in kindling! yes, for want of fuel, and

further help, they will go out of themselves. And when you think your work does happily succeed, and have seen men confessing their sins, and promising reformation, and living as new creatures and zealous converts, alas! they may, after all this, prove unsound and false at the heart, and such as were but superficially changed and took up new opinions and new company, without a new heart. O how many, after some considerable change, are deceived by the profits and honors of the world, and are again entangled by their former lusts! How many do but change a disgraceful way of flesh–pleasing, for a way that is less dishonorable, and makes not so great a noise in their consciences! How many grow proud before they acquire a thorough knowledge of religion; and, confident in the strength of their unfurnished intellects, greedily snatch at every error that is presented to them under the name of truth; and, like chickens that straggle from the hen, are carried away by that infernal kite, while they proudly despise the guidance and advice of those that Christ has set over them for their safety! O brethren, what a field of work is there before us! Not a person that you see but may find you work. In the saints themselves, how soon do the Christian graces languish if you neglect them; and how easily are they drawn into sinful ways, to the dishonor of the gospel, and to their own loss and sorrow! If this be the work of a minister, you may see what a life he has to lead. Let us, then, be up and doing, with all our might; difficulties must quicken, not discourage us in so necessary a work. If we cannot do all, let us do what we can; for, if we neglect it, woe to us, and to the souls committed to our care! Should we pass over all these other duties, and, by a plausible sermon only, think to prove ourselves faithful ministers, and to put off God and man with such a shell and visor, our reward will prove as superficial as our work.

(2) Consider that it is by your own voluntary undertaking and engagement that all this work is laid upon you. No man forced you to be overseers of the Church. And does not common honesty bind you to be true to your trust?

(3) Consider that you have the honor to encourage you to the labor. And a great honor it is to be the ambassadors of God, and the instruments of men’s conversion, to "save their souls from death, and to cover a multitude of sins (James 5:20)." The honor, indeed, is but the attendant of the work. To do, therefore, as the prelates of the Church in all ages have done, to strive for precedence, and fill the world with contentions about the dignity and superiority of their seats, does show that we much forget the nature of that office which we have undertaken. I seldom see ministers strive so furiously, who shall go first to a poor man’s cottage to teach him and his family the way to heaven; or who shall first endeavor the conversion of a sinner, or first become the servant of all Strange, that notwithstanding all the plain expressions of Christ, men will not understand the nature of their office! If they did, would they strive who would be the pastor of a whole county and more, when there are so many thousand poor sinners in it that cry for help, and they are neither able nor willing to engage for their relief, No, when they can patiently live in the house with profane persons, and not follow them seriously and incessantly for their conversion? And that they would have the name and honor of the work of a county, who are unable to do all the work of a parish, when the honor is but the appendage of the work? Is it names and honor, or the work and end, that they desire? Oh! if they would faithfully, humbly, and self–denyingly lay out themselves for Christ and his Church, and never think of titles and reputation, they should then have honor whether they would or not; but by gaping after it, they lose it: for, this is the case of virtue’s shadow, "What follows I fly; what flies, the same I follow."

(4) Consider that you have many other excellent privileges of the ministerial office to encourage you to the work. If therefore you will not do the work, you have nothing to do with the privileges. It is something that you are maintained by other men's labors. This is for your work, that you may not be taken off from it, but, as Paul requires, may " give yourselves wholly to these things (1 Timothy 4:15)," and not be forced to neglect men's souls, while you are providing for your own bodies. Either do the work, then, or take not the maintenance. But you have far greater privileges than this. Is it nothing to be brought up to learning, when others are brought up to the cart and plow? and to be furnished with so much delightful knowledge, when the world lies in ignorance? Is it nothing to converse with learned men, and to talk of high and glorious things, when others must converse with almost none but the most vulgar and illiterate? But especially, what an excellent privilege is it, to live in studying and preaching Christ! to be continually searching into his mysteries, or feeding on them! to be daily employed in the consideration of the blessed nature, works, and ways of God! Others are glad of the leisure of the Lord's day, and now and then of an hour besides, when they can lay hold upon it. But we may keep a continual Sabbath. We may do almost nothing else, but study and talk of God and glory, and engage in acts of prayer and praise, and drink in his sacred, saving truths. Our employment is all high and spiritual. Whether we be alone, or in company, our business is for another world. O that our hearts were but more tuned to this work! What a blessed, joyful life should we then live. How sweet would our study be to us! How pleasant the pulpit! And what delight would our conference about spiritual and eternal things afford us! To live among such excellent helps as our libraries afford, to have so many silent wise companions whenever we please – all these, and many other similar privileges of the ministry, bespeak our unwearied diligence in the work.

(5) By your work you are related to Christ, as well as to the flock. You are the stewards of his mysteries, and rulers of his household; and he who entrusted you, will maintain you in his work. But then, " it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2)" Be true to him, and never doubt but he will be true to you. Do you feed his flock, and he will sooner feed you as he did Elijah, than leave you to want. If you be in prison, he will open the doors; but then you must relieve imprisoned souls. He will give you " a tongue and wisdom that no enemy shall be able to resist;" but then you must use it faithfully for him. If you will put forth your hand to relieve the distressed, he will wither the hand that is stretched out against you. The ministers of England, I am sure, may know this by large experience. Many a time has God rescued them from the jaws of the devourer. Oh, the admirable preservations and deliverances that they have had from cruel Papists, from tyrannical persecutors, and from misguided, passionate men! Consider, brethren, why it is that God has done all this. Is it for your persons, or for his Church? What are you to him more than other men, but for his work and people's sakes? Are you angels? Is your flesh formed of better clay than your neighbors? Are you not of the same generation of sinners, that need his grace as much as they? Up then, and work as the redeemed of the Lord, as those that are purposely rescued from ruin for his service. If you believe that God has rescued you for himself, live to him, as being unreservedly his who has delivered you.

2. The second motive in the text is drawn from the efficient cause of this relation. It is the Holy Spirit that has made us overseers of his Church, and, therefore, it behooves us to take heed to it (Acts 13:2). The Holy Spirit makes men bishops or overseers of the Church in three several respects: By qualifying them for the office; by directing the ordainers to discern their qualifications,

and know the fittest men; and by directing them, the people and themselves, for the affixing them to a particular charge. All these things were then done in an extraordinary way, by inspiration, or at least very often. The same are done now by the ordinary way of the Spirit's assistance. But it is the same Spirit still; and men are made overseers of the Church (when they are rightly called) by the Holy Spirit, now as well as then. It is a strange conceit, therefore, of the Papists, that ordination by the hands of man is of more absolute necessity in the ministerial office, than the calling of the Holy Spirit. God has determined in his Word, that there shall be such an office, and what the work and power of that office shall be, and what sort of men, as to their qualifications, shall receive it. None of these can be undone by man, or made unnecessary. God also gives men the qualifications which he requires; so that, all that the Church has to do, whether pastors or people, ordainers or electors, is but to discern and determine which are the men that God has thus qualified, and to accept of them that are so provided, and, upon consent, to install them solemnly in this office.

What an obligation, then, is laid upon us, by our call to the work! If our commission be sent from heaven, it is not to be disobeyed (Matthew 14:18-22). When the apostles were called by Christ from their secular employment, they immediately left friends, and house, and trade, and all, and followed him. When Paul was called by the voice of Christ, he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19)." Though our call is not so immediate or extraordinary, yet it is from the same Spirit. It is no safe course to imitate Jonah, in turning our back upon the commands of God. If we neglect our work, he has a spur to quicken us; if we run away from it, he has messengers enough to overtake us, and bring us back, and make us do it; and it is better to do it at first than at last.

3. The third motive in the text is drawn from the dignity of the object which is committed to our charge. It is the Church of GOD which we must oversee – that Church for which the world is chiefly upheld, which is sanctified by the Holy Spirit, which is the mystical body of Christ, that Church with which angels are present, and on which they attend as ministering spirits, whose little ones have their angels beholding the face of God in heaven (Hebrews 1:14, Matthew 18:10). Oh what a charge is it that we have undertaken! And shall we be unfaithful to it? Have we the stewardship of God's own family, and shall we neglect it? Have we the conduct of those saints that shall live for ever with God in glory, and shall we neglect them? God forbid! I beseech you, brethren, let this thought awaken the negligent. You that draw back from painful, displeasing, suffering duties, and put off men's souls with ineffectual formalities, do you think this is honorable treatment of Christ's spouse? Are the souls of men thought meet by God to see his face, and live forever in heaven, and are they not worthy of your utmost cost and labor on earth? Do you think so basely of the Church of God, as if it deserved not the best of your care and help? Were you the keepers of sheep or swine, you would scarcely let them go, and say, They are not worth the looking after; especially if they were your own. And dare you say so of the souls of men, of the Church of God? Christ walks among them: remember his presence, and see that you are diligent in your work. They are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth the praises of him that has called them (1 Peter 2:8-9)." And yet will you neglect them? What a high honor is it to be but one of them yes, but a door–keeper in the house of God! But to be the priest of these priests, and the ruler of these kings – this is such an honor as multiplies your obligations to diligence and fidelity in so noble an employment.

4. The last motive that is mentioned in my text, is drawn from the price that was paid for the Church which we oversee: "Which God," says the apostle, "has purchased with his own blood." Oh what an argument is this to quicken the negligent, and to condemn those who will not be quickened to their duty by it! "Oh," says one of the ancient doctors, "if Christ had but committed to my keeping one spoonful of his blood in a fragile glass, how curiously would I preserve it, and how tender would I be of that glass! If then he have committed to me the purchase of his blood, should I not as carefully look to my charge?" What! sirs, shall we despise the blood of Christ? Shall we think it was shed for them who are not worthy of our utmost care? You may see here, it is not a little fault that negligent pastors are guilty of. As much as in them lies, the blood of Christ would be shed in vain. They would lose him those souls which he has so dearly purchased.

Oh, then, let us hear these arguments of Christ, whenever we feel ourselves grow dull and careless: "Did I die for these souls, and will not you look after them? Were they worth my blood, and are they not worth your labor? Did I come down from heaven to earth, to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10);" and will you not go to the next door, or street, or village, to seek them? "How small is your condescension and labor compared to mine. I debased myself to this, but it is your honor to be so employed. Have I done and suffered so much for their salvation, and was I willing to make you a fellow–worker with me, and will you refuse to do that little which lies upon your hands?" Every time we look upon our congregations, let us believingly remember that they are the purchase of Christ's blood, and therefore should be regarded by us with the deepest interest and the most tender affection. Oh, think what a confusion it will be to a negligent minister, at the last day, to have this blood of the Son of God pleaded against him; and for Christ to say, " It was the purchase of my blood of which you did make so light, and do you think to be saved by it yourself?" O brethren, seeing Christ will bring his blood to plead with us, let it plead us to our duty, lest it plead us to damnation.

I have now done with the motives which I find in the text itself. There are many more that might be gathered from the rest of this exhortation of the apostle, but we must not stay to take in all. If the Lord set home but these few upon our hearts, I doubt not we shall see reason to mend our pace; and the change will be such on our hearts and in our ministry, that ourselves and our congregations will have cause to bless God for it. I know myself to be unworthy to be your monitor, but a monitor you must have; and it is better for us to hear of our sin and duty from anybody than from nobody. Receive the admonition, and you will see no cause in the monitor's unworthiness to repent of it. But if you reject it, the unworthiest messenger may bear that witness against you another day which will then confound you.

4.03. Application

APPLICATION 1. The Use of Humiliation

Reverend and dear brethren, our business here this day is to humble our souls before the Lord for our past negligence, and to implore God's assistance in our work for the time to come. Indeed, we can scarcely expect the latter without the former. If God will help us in our future duty, he will first humble us for our past sin. He who has not so much sense of his faults as unfeignedly to lament them, will hardly have so much more as to move him to reform them. The sorrow of repentance may exist without a change of heart and life; because a passion may be more easily wrought, than a true conversion. But the change cannot take place without some good measure of the sorrow. Indeed, we may here justly begin our confessions; it is too common with us to expect that from our people, which we do little or nothing in ourselves. What pains do we take to humble them, while we ourselves are unhumbled! How hard do we expostulate with them to wring out of them a few penitential tears (and all too little), while yet our own eyes are dry! Alas, how we set them an example of hard–heartedness, while we are endeavoring by our words to melt and mollify them! Oh, if we did but study half as much to affect and amend our own hearts, as we do those of our hearers, it would not be with many of us as it is (1 Corinthians 11:31)! It is a great deal too little that we do for their humiliation; but I fear it is much less that some of us do for our own. Too many do somewhat for other men's souls, while they seem to forget that they have souls of their own to regard. They so carry the matter, as if their part of the work lay in calling for repentance, and the hearers' in repenting; theirs in bespeaking tears and sorrow, and other men's in weeping and sorrowing; theirs in crying down sin, and the people's in forsaking it; theirs in preaching duty, and the hearers' in practicing it. But we find that the guides of the Church in Scripture did confess their own sins, as well as the sins of the people. Ezra confessed the sins of the priests, as well as of the people, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God. Daniel confessed his own sin, as well as the people's. I think, if we consider well the duties already stated, and how imperfectly we have performed them, we need not demur upon the question, whether we have cause of humiliation? I must needs say, though I condemn myself in saying it, that he who reads but this one exhortation of Paul to the elders of the church at Ephesus, and compares his life with it, must be stupid and hard–hearted, if he do not melt under a sense of his neglects, and be not laid in the dust before God and forced to bewail his great omissions, and to fly for refuge to the blood of Christ, and to his pardoning grace. I am confident, brethren, that none of you do in judgment approve of the libertine doctrine, that cries down the necessity of confession, contrition, and humiliation, yes, and in order to the pardon of sin! Is it not a pity, then, that our hearts are not as orthodox as our heads? But I see we have but half learned our lesson, when we know it, and can say it. When the understanding has learned it, there is more ado to teach our wills and affections, our eyes, our tongues, and hands. It is a sad thing that so many of us preach our hearers asleep; but it is sadder still, if we have studied and preached ourselves asleep, and have talked so long against hardness of heart, until our own has grown hardened under the noise of our own reproofs. And that you may see that it is not a causeless sorrow that God requires of us, I shall call to your

remembrance our manifold sins, and set them in order before you, that we may deal plainly and faithfully in a free confession of them, and that God who is ‘faithful and just may forgive them, and cleanse us from all iniquity (1 John 1:9).’ In this I suppose I have your hearty consent, and that you will be so far from being offended with me, though I should disgrace your persons, and others in this office, that you will readily subscribe the charge, and be humble self–accusers; and so far am I from justifying myself by the accusation of others, that I do unfeignedly put my name with the first in the bill of indictment. For how can a wretched sinner, one chargeable with so many and so great transgressions, presume to justify himself before God? Or how can he plead guiltless, whose conscience has so much to say against him? If I cast shame upon the ministry, it is not on the office, but on our persons, by opening that sin which is our shame. The glory of our high employment does not communicate any glory to our sin; for ‘sin is a reproach to any people.’ And be they pastors or people, it is only those who ‘confess and forsake their sins that shall have mercy,’ while ‘he who hardens his heart shall fall into mischief (Proverbs 14:34, Proverbs 28:13-14).’ The great sins that we are guilty of, I shall not undertake to enumerate; and therefore my passing over any particular one, is not to be taken as a denial or justification of it. But I shall consider it as my duty, to instance some few which cry loud for humiliation and speedy reformation.

Only I must needs first premise this profession, that, notwithstanding all the faults which are now among us, I do not believe that ever England had so able and faithful a ministry since it was a nation, as it has at this day; and I fear that few nations on earth, if any, have the like. Sure I am, the change is so great within these twelve years, that it is one of the greatest joys that ever I had in the world to behold it. Oh, how many congregations are now plainly and frequently taught, that lived then in great obscurity! How many able, faithful men are there now in a county, in comparison of what were then! How graciously has God prospered the studies of many young men, who were little children in the beginning of the late troubles, so that now they cloud the most of their seniors! How many miles would I have gone twenty years ago, and less, to have heard one of those ancient reverend divines, whose congregations are now grown thin, and their parts esteemed mean, by reason of the notable improvement of their juniors! And in particular, how mercifully has the Lord dealt with this poor county of Worcester, in raising up so many who do credit to the sacred office, and self–denyingly and freely, zealously and unweariedly, lay out themselves for the good of souls! I bless the Lord that has placed me in such a neighborhood, where I may have the brotherly fellowship of so many able, faithful, humble, unanimous, and peaceable men. Oh that the Lord would long continue this admirable mercy to this unworthy county! And I hope I shall rejoice in God while I have a being, for the common change in other parts, that I have lived to see: that so many hundred faithful men are so hard at work for the saving of souls, although with the muttering and gnashing of teeth of the enemy; and that more are springing up apace. I know there are some men, whose parts I reverence, who being, in point of government, of another mind from them, will be offended at my very mention of this happy alteration. But I must profess, if I were absolutely prelatical, if I knew my heart, I could not choose, for all that, but rejoice. What! Not rejoice at the prosperity of the Church, because the men do differ in one opinion about its order? Should I shut my eyes against the mercies of the Lord? The souls of men are not so contemptible to me, that I should envy them the bread of life because it is broken to them by a hand that had not the prelatical approbation. O that every congregation were thus supplied! But everything cannot be done at once. They had a long time to settle a corrupted ministry; and when the ignorant and

scandalous are cast out, we cannot create abilities in others for the supply; we must stay the time of their preparation and growth; and then, if England drive not away the gospel by their abuse, even by their willful unreformedness, and hatred of the light, they are like to be the happiest nation under heaven. For, as for all the sects and heresies that are creeping in and daily troubling us, I doubt not but the gospel, managed by an able self–denying ministry, will effectually disperse and shame them all. But you may say, this is not confessing sin, but applauding those whose sins you pretend to confess. To this I answer, it is the due acknowledgment of God's kindness, and thanksgiving for his admirable mercies, that I may not seem unthankful in confession, much less to cloud or vilify God's graces, while I open the frailties that in many do accompany them; for many things are sadly out of order in the best, as will appear from the following particulars.

1. One of our most heinous and palpable sins is PRIDE. This is a sin that has too much interest in the best of us, but which is more hateful and inexcusable in us than in other men. Yet is it so prevalent in some of us, that it indicts our discourses, it chooses our company, it forms our countenances, it puts the accent and emphasis upon our words. It fills some men's minds with aspiring desires, and designs. It possesses them with envious and bitter thoughts against those who stand in their light, or who by any means eclipse their glory, or hinder the progress of their reputation. Oh what a constant companion, what a tyrannical commander, what a sly and subtle insinuating enemy, is this sin of pride! It goes with men to the draper, the mercer, the tailor: it chooses them their cloth, their trimming, and their fashion. Fewer ministers would ruffle it out in the fashion in hair and habit, if it were not for the command of this tyrannous vice. And I would that this were all, or the worst. But, alas, how frequently does it go with us to our study, and there sit with us and do our work! How often does it choose our subject, and, more frequently still, our words and ornaments! God commands us to be as plain as we can, that we may inform the ignorant; and as convincing and serious as we are able, that we may melt and change their hardened hearts. But pride stands by and contradicts all, and produces its toys and trifles. It pollutes rather than polishes. And, under presence of laudable ornaments, dishonors our sermons with childish gauds, as if a prince were to be decked in the habit of a stage–player, or a painted fool. It persuades us to paint the window, that it may dim the light, and to speak to our people that which they cannot understand, to let them know that we are able to speak unprofitably. If we have a plain and cutting passage, it takes off the edge, and dulls the life of our preaching, under presence of filing off the roughness, unevenness, and superfluity. When God charges us to deal with men as for their lives, and to beseech them with all the earnestness that we are able, this cursed sin controls all, and condemns the most holy commands of God, and says to us, 'What! Will you make people do you think are mad? Will you make them say you rage or rave? Cannot you speak soberly and moderately?' And thus does pride make many a man's sermons; and what pride makes, the devil makes; and what sermons the devil will make and to what end, we may easily conjecture. Though the matter be of God, yet if the dress, and manner, and end be from Satan, we have no great reason to expect success. And when pride has made the sermon, it goes with us into the pulpit, forms our tone, animates us in the delivery, takes us off from that which may be displeasing, how necessary soever, and sets us in pursuit of vain applause. In short, the sum of all is this: it makes men, both in studying and preaching, to seek themselves, and deny God, when they should seek God's glory, and deny themselves. When they should inquire, What shall I say, and how shall I say it, to please God best, and do most good? it makes them ask, What shall I say, and how shall I deliver it, to be thought a learned able preacher, and to be applauded by all that hear me? When

the sermon is done, pride goes home with them, and makes them more eager to know whether they were applauded, than whether they did prevail for the saving of souls. Were it not for shame, they could find in their hearts to ask people how they liked them, and to draw out their commendations. If they perceive that they are highly thought of, they rejoice, as having attained their end; but if they see that they are considered but weak or common men, they are displeased, as having missed the prize they had in view. But even this is not all, nor the worst, if worse may be. Oh, that ever it should be said of godly ministers, that they are so set upon popular air, and on sitting highest in men's estimation, that they envy the talents and names of their brethren who are preferred before them. As if all were taken from their praise that is given to another; and as if God had given them his gifts to be the mere ornaments and trappings of their persons, that they may walk as men of reputation in the world; and as if all his gifts to others were to be trodden down and vilified, if they seem to stand in the way of their honor! What? A saint, a preacher of Christ, and yet envy that which has the image of Christ, and malign his gifts for which he should have the glory, and all because they seem to hinder our glory? Is not every true Christian a member of the body of Christ, and, therefore, partakes of the blessings of the whole, and of each particular member thereof? And does not every man owe thanks to God for his brethren's gifts, not only as having himself a part in them, as the foot has the benefit of the guidance of the eye; but also because his own ends may be attained by his brethren's gifts, as well as by his own? For if the glory of God, and the Church's felicity, be not his end, he is not a Christian. Will any workman malign another, because he helps him to do his master's work? Yet, alas, how common is this heinous crime among the ministers of Christ! They can secretly blot the reputation of those that stand in the way of their own; and what they cannot for shame do in plain and open terms, lest they be proved liars and slanderers, they will do in generals, and by malicious intimations, raising suspicions where they cannot fasten accusations. And some go so far, that they are unwilling that any one who is abler than themselves should come into their pulpits, lest they should be more applauded than themselves. A fearful thing it is, that any man, who has the least of the fear of God, should so envy God's gifts, and had rather that his carnal hearers should remain unconverted, and the drowsy unawakened, than that it should be done by another who may be preferred before him. Yes, so far does this cursed vice prevail, that in great congregations, which have need of the help of many preachers, we can scarcely, in many places, get two of equality to live together in love and quietness, and unanimously to carry on the work of God. But unless one of them be quite below the other in parts, and content to be so esteemed, or unless he be a curate to the other, and ruled by him, they are contending for precedency, and envying each other's interest, and walking with strangeness and jealousy towards one another, to the shame of their profession, and the great wrong of their people. I am ashamed to think of it, that when I have been laboring to convince persons of public interest and capacity, of the great necessity of more ministers than one in large congregations, they tell me, they will never agree together. I hope the objection is unfounded as to the most; but it is a sad case that it should be true of any. No, some men are so far gone in pride, that when they might have an equal assistant to further the work of God, they had rather take all the burden upon themselves, though more than they can bear, than that any one should share with them in the honor, or that their interest in the esteem of the people should be diminished.

Hence also it is that men do so magnify their own opinions, and are as censorious of any that differ from them in lesser things, as if it were all one to differ from them and from God. They expect that all should conform to their judgment, as if they were the rulers of the Church's faith; and while we

cry down papal infallibility, too many of us would be popes ourselves, and have all stand to our determination, as if we were infallible. It is true, we have more modesty than expressly to say so. We pretend that it is only the evidence of truth that appears in our reasons, that we expect men should yield to, and our zeal is for the truth and not for ourselves. But as that must needs be taken for truth which is ours, so our reasons must needs be taken for valid. And if they be but freely examined and be found fallacious, as we are exceedingly backward to see it ourselves because they are ours, so we are angry that it should be disclosed to others. We so espouse the cause of our errors, as if all that were spoken against them were spoken against our persons, and we were heinously injured to have our arguments thoroughly confuted, by which we injured the truth and the souls of men. The matter is come to this pass, through our pride, that if an error or fallacious argument do fall under the patronage of a reverend name (which is nothing rare), we must either allow it the victory, and give away the truth, or else become injurious to that name that does patronize it. For though you meddle not with their persons, yet do they put themselves under all the strokes which you give their arguments; and feel them as sensibly as if you had spoken of themselves, because they think it will follow in the eyes of others, that weak arguing is a sign of a weak man. If, therefore, you consider it your duty to shame their errors and false reasonings by discovering their nakedness, they take it as if you shamed their persons. And so their names must be a garrison or fortress to their mistakes, and their reverence must defend all their sayings from attack. So high indeed are our spirits, that when it becomes the duty of any one to reprove or contradict us, we are commonly impatient both of the matter and the manner. We love the man who will say as we say, and be of our opinion, and promote our reputation, though, in other respects, he be less worthy of our esteem. But he is ungrateful to us who contradicts us and differs from us, and deals plainly with us as to our miscarriages and tells us of our faults. Especially in the management of our public arguings, where the eye of the world is upon us, we can scarcely endure any contradiction or plain dealing. I know that railing language is to be abhorred, and that we should be as tender of each other's reputation, as our fidelity to the truth will permit. But our pride makes too many of us think all men condemn us, that do not admire us, yes, and admire all we say, and submit their judgments to our most palpable mistakes. We are so tender that a man can scarcely touch us but we are hurt. We are so high–minded that a man who is not versed in complimenting and skilled in flattery above the vulgar rate can scarcely tell how to handle us so observantly—and fit our expectations at every turn—without there being some word or some neglect which our high spirits will fasten on and take as injurious to our honor.

I confess I have often wondered that this most heinous sin should be made so light of, and thought so consistent with a holy frame of heart and life, when far less sins are, by ourselves, proclaimed to be so damnable in our people. And I have wondered more, to see the difference between godly preachers and ungodly sinners, in this respect. When we speak to drunkards, worldlings, or ignorant unconverted persons, we disgrace them to the utmost, and lay it on as plainly as we can speak, and tell them of their sin, and shame, and misery; and we expect that they should not only bear all patiently, but take all thankfully. And most that I deal with do take it patiently; and many gross sinners will commend the closest preachers most, and will say that they care not for hearing a man that will not tell them plainly of their sins. But if we speak to godly ministers against their errors or their sins, if we do not honor them and reverence them, and speak as smoothly as we are able to speak, yes, if we mix not commendations with our reproofs, and if the applause be not predominant, so as to drown all the force of the reproof or confutation, they take it as almost an

insufferable injury.

Brethren, I know this is a sad confession, but that all this should exist among us, should be more grievous to us than to be told of it. Could the evil be hid, I should not have disclosed it, at least so openly in the view of all. But, alas, it is long ago open to the eyes of the world. We have dishonored ourselves by idolizing our honor; we print our shame, and preach our shame, thus proclaiming it to the whole world. Some will think that I speak overcharitably when I call such persons godly men, in whom so great a sin does so much prevail. I know, indeed, that where it is predominant, not hated, and bewailed, and mortified in the main, there can be no true godliness; and I beseech every man to exercise a strict jealousy and search of his own heart. But if all be graceless that are guilty of any, or of most of the fore–mentioned discoveries of pride, the Lord be merciful to the ministers of this land, and give us quickly another spirit; for grace is then a rarer thing than most of us have supposed it to be.

Yet I must needs say, that I do not mean to involve all the ministers of Christ in this charge. To the praise of Divine grace be it spoken, we have some among us who are eminent for humility and meekness, and who, in these respects, are exemplary to their flocks and to their brethren. It is their glory, and shall be their glory; and makes them truly honorable and lovely in the eyes of God and of all good men, and even in the eyes of the ungodly themselves. O that the rest of us were but such! But, alas, this is not the case with all of us.

O that the Lord would lay us at his feet, in the tears of sincere sorrow for this sin! Brethren, may I expostulate this case a little with my own heart and yours, that we may see the evil of our sin, and be reformed! Is not pride the sin of devils, the first–born of hell? Is it not that wherein Satan's image does much consist? And is it to be tolerated in men who are so engaged against him and his kingdom as we are? The very design of the gospel is to abase us; and the work of grace is begun and carried on in humiliation. Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creature. It is a contradiction in terms, to be a Christian, and not humble. All who will be Christians must be Christ's disciples, and 'come to him to learn'; and the lesson which he teaches them is, to 'be meek and lowly (Matthew 11:29).' Oh, how many precepts and admirable examples has our Lord and Master given us to this end! Can we behold him washing and wiping his servants' feet, and yet be proud and lordly still (John 13:1-38)? Shall he converse with the lowest of the people, and shall we avoid them as below our notice, and think none but persons of wealth and honor fit for our society? How many of us are oftener found in the houses of gentlemen than in the cottages of the poor, who most need our help? There are many of us who would think it below us, to be daily with the most needy and beggarly people, instructing them in the way of life and salvation; as if we had taken charge of the souls of the rich only! Alas, what is it that we have to be proud of? Is it of our body? Why, is it not made of the like materials as the brutes; and must it not shortly be as loathsome and abominable as a carcass? Is it of our graces? Why, the more we are proud of them, the less we have to be proud of. When so much of the nature of grace consists in humility, it is a great absurdity to be proud of it. Is it of our knowledge and learning? Why, if we have any knowledge at all, we must needs know how much reason we have to be humble; and if we know more than others, we must know more reason than others to be humble. How little is it that the most learned know, in comparison of that of which they are ignorant! To know that things are past your reach, and to know how ignorant you are, one would think should be no great cause of pride. However, do not the devils know more than you? And will

you be proud of that in which the devils excel you? Our very business is to teach the great lesson of humility to our people; and how unfit, then, is it that we should be proud ourselves? We must study humility, and preach humility; and must we not possess and practice humility? A proud preacher of humility is at least a self–condemning man.

What a sad case is it, that so vile a sin is not more easily discerned by us, but many who are most proud can blame it in others, and yet take no notice of it in themselves! The world takes notice of some among us, that they have aspiring minds, and seek for the highest room, and must be the rulers, and bear the sway wherever they come, or else there is no living or acting with them. In any consultations, they come not to search after truth, but to dictate to others, who, perhaps, are fit to teach them. In a word, they have such arrogant domineering spirits, that the world rings of it, and yet they will not see it in themselves!

Brethren, I desire to deal closely with my own heart and yours. I beseech you consider whether it will save us to speak well of the grace of humility while we possess it not, or to speak against the sin of pride while we indulge in it? Have not many of us cause to inquire diligently, whether sincerity will consist with such a measure of pride as we feel? When we are telling the drunkard that he cannot be saved unless he become temperate, and the fornicator that he cannot be saved unless he become chaste, have we not as great reason, if we are proud, to say to ourselves, that we cannot be saved unless we become humble? Pride, in fact, is a greater sin than drunkenness or whoredom; and humility is as necessary as sobriety and chastity. Truly, brethren, a man may as certainly, and more slyly, make haste to hell, in the way of earnest preaching of the gospel, and seeming zeal for a holy life, as in a way of drunkenness and filthiness. For what is holiness, but a devotedness to God and a living to him? And what is a damnable state, but a devotedness to carnal self and a living to ourselves? And does any one live more to himself, or less to God, than the proud man? And may not pride make a preacher study for himself and pray and preach, and live to himself, even when he seems to surpass others in the work? It is not the work without the right principle and end that will prove us upright. The work may be God’s, and yet we may do it, not for God, but for ourselves. I confess I feel such continual danger on this point, that if I do not watch, lest I should study for myself, and preach for myself, and write for myself, rather than for Christ, I should soon miscarry; and after all, I justify not myself, when I must condemn the sin.

Consider, I beseech you, brethren, what baits there are in the work of the ministry, to entice a man to selfishness, even in the highest works of piety. The fame of a godly man is as great a snare as the fame of a learned man. But woe to him that takes up the fame of godliness instead of godliness! ‘Verily I say unto you, they have their reward (Matthew 6:25).’ When the times were all for learning and empty formalities, the temptation of the proud did lie that way. But now, when, through the unspeakable mercy of God, the most lively practical preaching is in credit, and godliness itself is in credit, the temptation of the proud is to pretend to be zealous preachers and godly men. Oh, what a fine thing is it to have the people crowding to hear us, and affected with what we say, and yielding up to us their judgments and affections! What a taking thing is it to be cried up as the ablest and godliest man in the country, to be famed through the land for the highest spiritual excellencies! Alas, brethren, a little grace combined with such inducements will serve to make you join yourselves with the forwardest in promoting the cause of Christ in the world. No, pride may do it without special grace.

Oh, therefore, be jealous of yourselves; and, amid all your studies, be sure to study humility. ‘He who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted (1 Peter 5:6).’ I commonly observe that almost all men, whether good or bad, do loathe the proud, and love the humble. So far indeed does pride contradict itself, that, conscious of its own deformity, it often borrows the homely dress of humility. We have the more cause to be jealous of it, because it is a sin most deeply rooted in our nature, and as hardly as any extirpated from the soul.

2. We do not so seriously, unreservedly, and laboriously lay out ourselves in the work of the Lord as becomes men of our profession and engagements. I bless the Lord that there are so many who do this work with all their might. But, alas, how imperfectly and how negligently do the most, even of those that we take for godly ministers, go through their work! How few of us do so behave ourselves in our office, as men that are wholly devoted thereto, and who have consecrated all they have to the same end! And because you shall see my grounds for this confession, I shall mention some instances of our sinful negligence.

(1) If we were duly devoted to our work, we should not be so negligent in our studies. Few men are at the pains that are necessary for the right informing of their understanding, and fitting them for their further work. Some men have no delight in their studies, but take only now and then an hour, as an unwelcome task which they are forced to undergo, and are glad when they are from under the yoke. Will neither the natural desire of knowledge, nor the spiritual desire of knowing God and things Divine, nor the consciousness of our great ignorance and weakness, nor the sense of the weight of our ministerial work—will none of all these things keep us closer to our studies, and make us more painful in seeking after truth? O what abundance of things are there that a minister should understand! And what a great defect is it to be ignorant of them! And how much shall we miss such knowledge in our work! Many ministers study only to compose their sermons, and very little more, when there are so many books to be read, and so many matters that we should not be unacquainted with. No, in the study of our sermons we are too negligent, gathering only a few naked truths, and not considering of the most forcible expressions by which we may set them home to men’s consciences and hearts. We must study how to convince and get within men, and how to bring each truth to the quick, and not leave all this to our extemporary promptitude, unless in cases of necessity. Certainly, brethren, experience will teach you that men are not made learned or wise without hard study and unwearied labor and experience.

(2) If we were heartily devoted to our work, it would be done more vigorously, and more seriously, than it is by the most of us. How few ministers do preach with all their might, or speak about everlasting joys and everlasting torments in such a manner as may make men believe that they are in good earnest! It would make a man’s heart ache, to see a company of dead, drowsy sinners sitting under a minister, and not hear a word that is likely to quicken or awaken them. Alas, we speak so drowsily and so softly, that sleepy sinners cannot hear. The blow falls so light that hard–hearted sinners cannot feel. The most of ministers will not so much as exert their voice, and stir up themselves to an earnest utterance. But if they do speak loud and earnestly, how few do answer it with weight and earnestness of matter! And yet without this, the voice does little good; the people will esteem it but mere bawling, when the matter does not correspond. It would grieve one to the heart to hear what excellent doctrine some ministers have in hand, while yet they let it die in their hands for want of close and lively application; what fit matter they have for convincing sinners, and how little they make of it; what good they might do if they would set it home, and yet

they cannot or will not do it.

O sirs, how plainly, how closely, how earnestly, should we deliver a message of such moment as ours, when the everlasting life or everlasting death of our fellow–men is involved in it! Methinks we are in nothing so wanting as in this seriousness; yet is there nothing more unsuitable to such a business, than to be slight and dull. What! Speak coldly for God, and for men's salvation? Can we believe that our people must be converted or condemned, and yet speak in a drowsy tone? In the name of God, brethren, labor to awaken your own hearts, before you go to the pulpit, that you may be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners. Remember they must be awakened or damned, and that a sleepy preacher will hardly awaken drowsy sinners. Though you give the holy things of God the highest praises in words, yet, if you do it coldly, you will seem by your manner to unsay what you said in the matter. It is a kind of contempt of great things, especially of so great things, to speak of them without much affection and fervency. The manner, as well as the words, must set them forth. If we are commanded, 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might (Ecclesiastes 9:10),' then certainly such a work as preaching for men's salvation should be done with all our might. But, alas, how few in number are such men! It is only here and there, even among good ministers, that we find one who has an earnest, persuasive, powerful way of speaking, that the people can feel him preach when they hear him.

Though I move you not to a constant loudness in your delivery (for that will make your fervency contemptible), yet see that you have a constant seriousness; and when the matter requires it (as it should do, in the application at least), then lift up your voice, and spare not your spirits. Speak to your people as to men that must be awakened, either here or in hell. Look around upon them with the eye of faith, and with compassion, and think in what a state of joy or torment they must all be forever; and then, methinks, it will make you earnest, and melt your heart to a sense of their condition. Oh, speak not one cold or careless word about so great a business as heaven or hell. Whatever you do, let the people see that you are in good earnest. Truly, brethren, they are great works which have to be done, and you must not think that trifling will dispatch them. You cannot break men's hearts by jesting with them, or telling them a smooth tale, or pronouncing a gaudy oration. Men will not cast away their dearest pleasures at the drowsy request of one that seems not to mean as he speaks, or to care much whether his request be granted or not. If you say that the work is God's, and he may do it by the weakest means, I answer, It is true, he may do so; but yet his ordinary way is to work by means, and to make not only the matter that is preached, but also the manner of preaching instrumental to the work. With the most of our hearers, the very pronunciation and tone of speech is a great point. The best matter will scarcely move them, if it be not movingly delivered. See, especially, that there be no affectation, but that you speak as familiarly to them as you would do, if you were talking to any of them personally. The want of a familiar tone and expression is a great fault in most of our deliveries, and that which we should be very careful to amend. When a man has a reading or declaiming tone, like a school–boy saying his lesson, or repeating an oration, few are moved with anything that he says. Let us, therefore, rouse up ourselves to the work of the Lord, and speak to our people as for their lives, and save them as by violence, 'pulling them out of the fire (Jude 2:3).' Satan will not be charmed out of his possession: we must lay siege to the souls of sinners, which are his garrison, and find out where his chief strength lies. We must lay the battery of God's ordnance against it, and ply it close, until a breach is made; and then suffer them not by their shifts to repair it again. As we have reasonable

creatures to deal with, and as they abuse their reason against the truth, we must see that our sermons be all convincing, and that we make the light of Scripture and Reason shine so bright in the faces of the ungodly, that it may even force them to see, unless they willfully shut their eyes. A sermon full of mere words, how needy soever it be composed, while it wants the light of evidence, and the life of zeal, is but an image or a well–dressed carcass. In preaching, there is a communion of souls, and a communication of somewhat from ours to theirs. As we and they have understandings and wills and affections, so must the bent of our endeavors be to communicate the fullest light of evidence from our understandings to theirs, and to warm their hearts, by kindling in them holy affections as by a communication from our own. The great things which we have to commend to our hearers have reason enough on their side, and lie plain before them in the Word of God. We should, therefore, be furnished with all kind of evidence, so that we may come as with a torrent upon their understandings, and with our reasonings and expostulations to pour shame upon all their vain objections, and bear down all before us, that they may be forced to yield to the power of truth.

(3) If we are heartily devoted to the work of God, why do we not compassionate the poor unprovided congregations around us, and take care to help them to find able ministers; and, in the mean time, go out now and then to their assistance, when the business of our particular charge will give us any leave? A sermon in the more ignorant places, purposely for the work of conversion, delivered by the most lively, powerful preachers, might be a great help where constant means are wanting.

3. Another sad discovery that we have not so devoted ourselves and all we have to the service of God as we ought, is our prevailing regard to our worldly interests in opposition to the interest and work of Christ. This I shall manifest in three instances:

(1) The temporizing of ministers. I would not have any to be contentious with those that govern them, nor to be disobedient to any of their lawful commands. But it is not the least reproach of ministers, that the most of them, for worldly advantage, do always suit themselves to the party which is most likely to promote their ends. If they look for secular advantages, they suit themselves to the secular power; if for popular applause, they suit themselves to the Church party that is most in credit. This, alas, is an epidemic malady. In Constantine’s days how prevalent were the Orthodox! In Constantine’s days they almost all turned Arians, so that there were very few bishops that did not apostatize or betray the truth, even of the very men that had been in the Council of Nicaea. Indeed when not only Liberius, but great Ossius himself fell, who had been the president in so many orthodox councils, what better could be expected of weaker men? Were it not for secular advantage, how should it come to pass that ministers, in all countries of the world, are either all, or almost all, of that religion that is most in credit, and most consistent with their worldly interests? Among the Greeks, they are all of the Greek profession; among the Papists, they are almost all Papists; in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, they are almost all Lutherans; and so in other countries. It is strange that they should be all in the right in one country, and all in the wrong in another, if carnal advantages did not sway much with men, when they engage in the search of truth. The variety of intellect, and numberless other circumstances, would unavoidably occasion a great variety of opinions on various points. But let the prince, and the stream of men in power, go one way, and you shall have the generality of ministers agree with them to a hair, and that without any extraordinary search. How generally did the common sort of ministers change their religion

with the prince, at several times, in this land! Not all, indeed, as our Martyrology can witness, but yet the most. And the same tractable distemper does still follow us, so that it occasions our enemies to say that reputation and preferment are our religion and our reward.

(2) We too much mind worldly things, and shrink from duties that will injure or hinder our temporal interests. How common is it for ministers to drown themselves in worldly business! Too many are such as the sectaries would have us to be, who tell us that we should go to the plough and labor for our living, and preach without so much study. This is a lesson which is easily learned. Men show no anxiety to cast off care, that their own souls and the Church may have all their care. And especially, how commonly are those duties neglected, that are likely, if performed, to diminish our estates! Are there not many, for example, that dare not, that will not, set up the exercise of discipline in their churches, because it may hinder the people from paying them their dues? They will not offend sinners with discipline, lest they offend them in their estates. I find money is too strong an argument for some men to answer, that yet can proclaim 'the love of it to be the root of all evil,' and can make long orations of the danger of covetousness. I will at present say no more to them but this: If it was so deadly a sin in Simon Magus to offer to buy the gift of God with money, what is it to sell his gift, his cause, and the souls of men for money? And what reason have we to fear, lest our money perish with us!

(3) Our barrenness in works of charity, and in improving all we have for our Master's service. If worldly interest did not much prevail against the interest of Christ and the Church, surely most ministers would be more fruitful in good works, and would more lay out what they have for his glory. Experience has fully proved that works of charity do most powerfully remove prejudice, and open the heart to words of piety. If men see that you are addicted to do good, they will the more easily believe that you are good, and that it is good which you persuade them to. When they see that you love them, and seek their good, they will the more easily trust you. And when they see that you seek not the things of the world, they will the less suspect your intentions, and the more easily be drawn by you to seek that which you seek. Oh, how much good might ministers do, if they did set themselves wholly to do good, and would dedicate all their faculties and substance to that end! Say not that it is a small matter to do good to men's bodies, and that this will but win them to us, and not to God; for it is prejudice that is a great hindrance of men's conversion, and this will help to remove it. We might do men more good, if they were but willing to learn of us; and this will make them willing, and then our further diligence may profit them. I beseech you, brethren, do not think that it is ordinary charity that is expected from you, any more than ordinary piety. You must, in proportion to your talents, go much beyond others. It is not enough to give a little to a poor man: others do that as well as you. But what singular thing do you do with your estates for your Master's service? I know you cannot give away that which you have not; but methinks all that you have should be devoted to God. I know the great objection is, 'We have a wife and children to provide for: a little will not serve them at present, and we are not bound to leave them beggars.' To this I answer:

[a] There are few texts of Scripture more abused than that of the apostle, 'He who provides not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' This is made a pretense for gathering up portions, and providing a full estate for posterity. Rather, the apostle speaks only against them that did cast their poor kindred and family on the Church, to be maintained out of the common stock, when they were able to do it themselves; as if

one has a widow in his house that is his mother or daughter, and would have her to be kept by the parish when he has enough himself. The following words show that it is present provision, and not future portions, that the apostle speaks of, when he bids 'them that have widows relieve them, and let not the church be charged, that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.'

[b] You may so educate your children as other persons do, that they may be able to gain their own livelihood by some honest trade or employment, without other great provisions. I know that your charity and care must begin at home, but it must not end there. You are bound to do the best you can to educate your children, so as they may be capable of being most serviceable to God, but not to leave them rich, nor to forbear other necessary works of charity, merely to make a larger provision for them. There must be some proportion between the provision we make for our families, and for the Church of Christ. A truly charitable self–denying heart, that has devoted itself and all that it has to God, would be the best judge of the due proportions, and would see which way of expense is likely to do God the greatest service, and that way it would take.

[c] I confess I would not have men lie too long under temptations to incontinency, lest they wound themselves and their profession by their falls. But yet methinks it is hard that men can do no more to mortify the concupiscence of the flesh, that they may live in a single condition, and have none of those temptations from wife and children, to hinder them from furthering their ministerial ends by charitable works. If he who marries not does better than he who does marry, surely ministers should labor to do that which is best. And if he who can 'receive this saying,' must receive it, we should endeavor after it (1 Corinthians 7:38). This is one of the highest points of the Romish policy, which alleges that it is the duty of bishops, priests, and other religious orders, not to marry, by which means they have no posterity to drain the church's revenues, nor to take up their care. But they make the public cause to be their interest, and they lay out themselves for it while they live, and leave all they have to it when they die (1 Timothy 4:3). It is a pity that for a better cause we can no more imitate them in self–denial, where it might be done.

[d] But those who must marry, should take such as can maintain themselves and their children, or maintain them at the rate which their temporal means will afford, and devote as much of the church's means to the church's service as they can.

I would put no man upon extremes. But in this case, flesh and blood does even make good men so partial, that they take their duties, and duties of very great worth and weight, to be extremes. If worldly vanities did not blind us, we might see when a public, or other greater good, did call us to deny ourselves and our families. Why should we not live more nearly and poorer in the world, rather than leave those works undone, which may be of greater use than our plentiful provision? But we consult in points of duty with flesh ant blood; and what counsel it will give us, we may easily know. It will tell us we must have a competency; and many pious men's competency is but little below the rich man's rates in the parable (Luke 16:19). If they be not clothed in the best, and 'fare sumptuously every day,' they have not a competency. A man that preaches an immortal crown, should not seek much after transitory vanity. And he who preaches the contempt of riches should himself condemn them and show it by his life. And he who preaches self–denial and mortification should practice these virtues in the eyes of them to whom he preaches, if he would have his doctrine believed. All Christians are sanctified; and, therefore, themselves, and all that they have, are consecrated 'to the Master's use (2 Timothy 2:21).' But ministers are doubly sanctified: they

are devoted to God, both as Christians and as ministers; and, therefore, they are doubly obligated to honor him with all they have.

Oh, brethren, what abundance of good works are before us, and to how few of them do we put our hands! I know the world expects more from us than we have; but if we cannot answer the expectations of the unreasonable, let us do what we can to answer the expectations of God, and of conscience, and of all just men. ‘This is the will of God, that with well doing we should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (1 Peter 2:15).’

Those ministers, especially, that have larger incomes must be larger in doing good. I will give but one instance at this time. There are some ministers who have a hundred and fifty, two hundred, or three hundred pounds a year of salary, and have so large parishes that they are not able to do a quarter of the ministerial work, nor once in a year to deal personally with half their people for their instruction. Yet they will content themselves with public preaching, as if that were all that was necessary, and leave almost all the rest undone, to the everlasting danger or damnation of multitudes, rather than maintain one or two diligent men to assist them. Or if they have an assistant, it is but some young man who is but poorly qualified for the work, and not one that will faithfully and diligently watch over the flock, and afford them that personal instruction which is so necessary. If this be not serving ourselves of God, and selling men’s souls for our fuller maintenance in the world, what is? Methinks such men should fear, lest, while they are accounted excellent preachers and godly ministers by men, they should be accounted cruel soul–murderers by Christ; and lest the cries of those souls which they have betrayed to damnation, should ring in their ears forever and ever. Will preaching a good sermon serve the turn, while you never look more after them, but deny them that closer help that is necessary, and alienate that maintenance to your own flesh, which should provide relief for so many souls? How can you open your mouths against oppressors, when you yourselves are so great oppressors, not only of men’s bodies, but of their souls? How can you preach against unmercifulness, while you are so unmerciful? And how can you talk against unfaithful ministers, while you are so unfaithful yourselves? The sin is not small because it is unobserved, and is not odious in the eyes of men, or because the charity which you withhold is such as the people blame you not for withholding. Satan himself, their greatest enemy, has their consent all along in the work of their perdition. It is no extenuation, therefore, of your sin, that you have their consent: for that you may sooner have for their everlasting hurt, than for their everlasting good. And now, sirs, I beseech you to take what has been said into consideration. See whether this be not the great and lamentable sin of the ministers of the gospel, that they be not fully devoted to God, and give not up themselves, and all that they have, to the carrying on of the blessed work which they have undertaken? See whether flesh–pleasing and self–seeking, and an interest distinct from that of Christ, do not make us neglect much of our duty, and serve Got in the cheapest and most applauded part of his work, and withdraw from that which would subject us to cost and sufferings? And see whether this do not show that too many of us are earthly that seem to be heavenly, and mind the things below, while they preach the things above, and idolize the world while they call men to condemn it? And as Salvian says, ‘No one neglects salvation more than he who prefers something above God.’ Despisers of God will prove despisers of their own salvation.

4. We are sadly guilty of undervaluing the unity and peace of the whole Church. Though I scarcely meet with any one who will not speak for unity and peace, or, at least, that will expressly speak

against it, yet is it not common to meet with those who are studious to promote it. But too commonly do we find men averse to it, and jealous of it, if not themselves the instruments of division. The Papists have so long abused the name of the catholic Church, that, in opposition to them, many either put it out of their creeds, or only retain the name while they understand not, or consider not the nature of the thing. Or they think it is enough to believe that there is such a body, though they behave not themselves as members of it. If the Papists will idolize the Church, shall we therefore deny it, disregard it, or divide it? It is a great and a common sin throughout the Christian world, to take up religion in a way of faction; and instead of a love and tender care of the universal Church, to confine that love and respect to a party. Not but that we must prefer, in our estimation and communion, the purer parts before the impure, and refuse to participate with any in their sins; yet the most infirm and diseased part should be compassionated and assisted to the utmost of our power. And communion must be held as far as is lawful, and nowhere avoided, but upon the urgency of necessity; as we must love those of our neighborhood that have the plague or leprosy, and afford them all the relief we can. We acknowledge all our just relations to them, and communicate to them, though we may not have local communion with them; and in other diseases which are not so infectious, we may be the more with them for their help, by how much the more they need it. Of the multitude that say they are of the catholic Church, it is rare to meet with men of a catholic spirit. Men have not a universal consideration of, and respect to, the whole Church, but look upon their own party as if it were the whole. If there be some called Lutherans, some Calvinists, some subordinate divisions among these, and so of other parties among us, most of them will pray hard for the prosperity of their party, and rejoice and give thanks when it goes well with them. But if any other party suffer, they little regard it, as if it were no loss at all to the Church. If it be the smallest parcel that possesses not many nations, no, nor cities on earth, they are ready to carry it, as if they were the whole Church, and as if it went well with the Church when it goes well with them. We cry down the Pope as Antichrist, for including the Church in the Romish pale, and no doubt but it is abominable schism: but, alas, how many do imitate them too far, while they reprove them! And as the Papists foist the word Roman into their creed, and turn the catholic Church into the Roman Catholic church, as if there were no other Catholics, and the Church were of no larger extent, so is it with many others as to their several parties. Some will have it to be the Lutheran catholic church, and some the Reformed catholic church; some the Anabaptist catholic church, and so of some others. And if they differ not among themselves, they are little troubled at differing from others, though it be from almost all the Christian world. The peace of their party they take for the peace of the Church. No wonder, therefore, if they carry it no further.

How rare is it to meet with a man that smarts or bleeds with the Church's wounds, or sensibly takes them to heart as his own, or that ever had solicitous thoughts of a curer. No; but almost every party thinks that the happiness of the rest consists in turning to them. And because they be not of their mind, they cry, Down with them! and are glad to hear of their fall, as thinking that is the way to the Church's rising, that is, their own. How few are there who understand the true state of controversies between the several parties; or that ever well discerned how many of them are but verbal, and how many are real! And if those that understand it do, in order to right information and accommodation, disclose it to others, it is taken as an extenuation of their error, and as a carnal compliance with them in their sin. Few men grow zealous for peace until they grow old, or have much experience of men's spirits ant principles; and see better the true state of the Church, and the several differences, than they did before. And then they begin to write their Irenicons, and

many such are extant at this day. As a young man in the heat of his lust and passion was judged to be no fit auditor of moral philosophy, so we find that those same young men who may be zealous for peace and unity, when they are grown more experienced, are zealous for their factions against these in their youthful heat. And therefore, such peacemakers as these before–mentioned do seldom do much greater good than to quiet their own consciences in the discharge of so great a duty; and to moderate some few, and save them from further guilt; and to leave behind them, when they are dead, a witness against a willful, self–conceited, unpeaceable world.

No, commonly it brings a man under suspicion either of favoring some heresy or abating his zeal, if he do but attempt a pacificatory work. As if there were no zeal necessary for the great fundamental verities of the Church's unity and peace, but only for parties, and some particular truths. And a great advantage the devil has got this way, by employing his own agents, the unhappy Socinians, in writing so many treatises for catholic and arch–catholic unity and peace, which they did for their own ends. By which means the enemy of peace has brought it to pass, that whoever makes motion for peace, is presently under suspicion of being one that has need of it for an indulgence to his own errors. A fearful case, that heresy should be credited, as if none were such friends to unity and peace as they; and that so great and necessary a duty, upon which the Church's welfare does so depend, should be brought into such suspicion or disgrace.

Brethren, I speak not all this without apparent reason. We have as sad divisions among us in England, considering the piety of the persons, and the smallness of the matter of our discord, as most nations under heaven have known. The most that keeps us at odds is but the right form and order of Church government. Is the distance so great, that Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Independent might not be well agreed? Were they but heartily willing and forward for peace, they might. I know they might. I have spoken with some moderate men of all the parties, and I perceive, by their concessions, it were an easy work. Were men's hearts but sensible of the Church's case, and unfeignedly touched with love to one another, and did they but heartily set themselves to seek it, the settling of a safe and happy peace were an easy work. If we could not in every point agree, we might easily narrow our differences, and hold communion upon our agreement in the main, determining on the safest way for managing our few and small disagreements, without the danger or trouble of the Church. But is this much done? It is not done. To the shame of all our faces be it spoken, it is not done. Let each party flatter themselves now as they please, it will be recorded to the shame of the ministry of England while the gospel shall abide in the world. And oh what heinous aggravations do accompany this sin! Never men, since the apostles' days, I think, did make greater profession of godliness. The most of them are bound by solemn oaths and covenants, for unity and reformation. They all confess the worth of peace, and most of them will preach for it, and talk for it, while yet they sit still and neglect it, as if it were not worth the looking after. They will read and preach on those texts that command us to 'follow peace with all men,' and 'as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with them (Hebrews 12:14, Romans 12:18).' Yet they are so far from following it, and doing all they possibly can for it, that many snarl at it, and malign and censure any that endeavor to promote it. They act as if all zeal for peace did proceed from an abatement of our zeal for holiness, and as if holiness and peace were so fallen out, that there were no reconciling them. Yet it has been found, by long experience, that concord is a sure friend to piety, and piety always moves to concord; while, on the other hand, errors and heresies are bred by discord, as discord is bred and fed by them. We have seen, to our sorrow, that where the

servants of God should have lived together as one—of one heart, and one soul, and one lip—and should have promoted each other's faith and holiness, and admonished and assisted each other against sin, and rejoiced together in the hope of future glory, we have, on the contrary, lived in mutual jealousies. We have drowned holy love in bitter contentions, and studied to disgrace and undermine one another, and to increase our own parties by right or wrong. We, that were used to glory of our love to the brethren as a mark of our sincerity in the faith, have now turned it into the love of a party only; and those that are against that party have more of our spleen and envy and malice, than our love. I know this is not so with all, nor prevalently with any true believer, yet it is so common that it may cause us to question the sincerity of many that are thought by themselves and others to be most sincere. And it is not ourselves only that are scorched in this flame, but we have drawn our people into it, and cherished them in it, so that most of the godly in the nation are fallen into parties, and have turned much of their ancient piety into vain opinions and disputes and envyings and animosities. Yes, whereas it was used to be made the certain mark of a graceless wretch to deride the godly, how few are there now that stick at secretly deriding and slandering those that are not of their opinions! A pious Prelatical man can reverently scorn and slander a Presbyterian; and a Presbyterian an Independent; and an Independent both. And, what is the worst of all, the common ignorant people take notice of all this, and do not only deride us, but are hardened by us against religion. And when we go about to persuade them to be religious, they see so many parties, that they know not which to join; and think that it is as good to be of none at all, as of any, since they are uncertain which is the right. Thus thousands are grown into a contempt of all religion, by our divisions; and many poor carnal wretches begin to think themselves in the better case of the two, because they hold to their old formalities, when we hold to nothing.

I know that some of these men are learned and reverend, and intend not such mischievous ends as these. The hardening of men in ignorance is not their design. But this is the thing effected. To intend well in doing ill is no rarity. Who can, in reverence to any man on earth, sit still and hold his tongue, while he sees people thus run to their own destruction, and the souls of men undone by the contentions of divines for their several parties and interests? The Lord that knows my heart, knows (if I know it myself) that as I am not of any one of these parties, so I speak not a word of this in a factious partiality for one party, or against another, as such, much less in spleen against any person. But if I dare in conscience, I would have silenced all this, for fear of giving them offence whom I must honor. But what am I but a servant of Christ? And what is my life worth, but to do him service? And whose favor can recompense me for the ruin of the Church? And who can be silent while souls are undone? Not I, for my part, while God is my Master, and his Word my rule; his work my business; and the success of it, for the saving of souls, my end. Who can be reconciled to that which so lamentably crosses his Master's interest, and his main end in life? Nor yet would I have spoken any of this, had it been only in respect to my own charge, where, I bless God, the sore is but small, in comparison of what it is in many other places. But the knowledge of some neighboring congregations, and of others more remote, has drawn out these observations from me.

4.03. Application contd

We may talk of peace, indeed, as long as we live, but we shall never obtain it but by returning to the apostolical simplicity. The Papists' faith is too big for all men to agree upon, or even all their own, if they enforced it not with arguments drawn from the fire, the halter, and the strappado. And many anti–Papists do too much imitate them in the tedious length of their subscribed confessions, and the novelty of their impositions, when they go furthest from them in the quality of the things imposed. When we once return to the ancient simplicity of faith, then, and not until then, shall we return to the ancient love and peace. I would therefore recommend to all my brethren, as the most necessary thing to the Church's peace, that they unite in necessary truths, and bear with one another in things that may be borne with; and do not make a larger creed, and more necessaries, than God has done. To this end, let me entreat you to attend to the following things:

(1) Lay not too great a stress upon controverted opinions, which have godly men, and, especially, whole churches, on both sides.

(2) Lay not too great a stress on those controversies that are ultimately resolvable into philosophical uncertainties, as are some unprofitable controversies about freewill, the manner of the Spirit's operations and the Divine decrees.

(3) Lay not too great a stress on those controversies that are merely verbal, and which if they were anatomized, would appear to be no more. Of this sort are far more (I speak it confidently upon certain knowledge) that make a great noise in the world, and tear the Church, than almost any of the eager contenders that ever I spoke with do seem to discern, or are like to believe.

(4) Lay not too much stress on any point of faith which was disowned by or unknown to the whole Church of Christ, in any age, since the Scriptures were delivered to us.

(5) Much less should you lay great stress on those of which any of the more pure or judicious ages were wholly ignorant.

(6) And least of all should you lay much stress on any point which no one age since the apostles did ever receive, but all commonly held the contrary.

I know it is said that a man may subscribe the Scripture, and the ancient creeds, and yet maintain Socinianism, or other heresies. To which I answer: So he may be put to another test which your own brains shall contrive. And while you make a snare to catch heretics, instead of a test for the Church's communion, you will miss your end. And the heretic, by the slipperiness of his conscience, will break through, and the tender Christian may possibly be ensnared. And by your new creed the Church is like to have new divisions, if you keep not close to the words of Scripture.

He who shall live to that happy time when God will heal his broken churches, will see all this that I am pleading for reduced to practice, and this moderation take place of the new–dividing zeal, and the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture established. All men's confessions and comments will be valued only as subservient helps, and not made the test of Church communion, any further

than they are the same with Scripture. Until, however, the healing age come, we cannot expect that healing truths will be entertained, because there are not healing spirits in the leaders of the Church. But when the work is to be done, the workmen will be fitted for it; and blessed will be the agents of so glorious a work.

5. Lastly, We are sadly negligent in performing acknowledged duties; for example, church discipline. If there be any work of reformation to be set afoot, how many are there that will go no further than they are drawn! It were well if all would do even that much. And when a work is like to prove difficult and costly, how backward are we to it, and how many excuses do we make for the omission of it! What has been more talked of, and prayed for, and contended about in England, for many years past, than discipline? There are, in fact, but few men who do not seem zealous in disputing for one side or other; some for the Prelatical way, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Congregational. And yet, when we come to the practice of it, for anything I see, we are quite agreed: most of us are for no way. It has made me wonder, sometimes, to look on the face of England, and see how few congregations in the land have any considerable execution of discipline. And to think withal what volumes have been written for it, and how almost all the ministry of the nation are engaged for it. How zealously they have contended for it, and made many a just exclamation against the opposers of it. And yet, notwithstanding all this, they will do little or nothing in the exercise of it. I have marveled what should make them so zealous in siding for that which their practice shows their hearts are against. But I see a disputing zeal is more natural than a holy, obedient, practicing zeal.

How many ministers are there in England that know not their own charge, and cannot tell who are the members of it. How many never cast out one obstinate sinner, nor brought one to public confession and promise of reformation, nor even admonished one publicly to call him to such repentance! But they think they do their duty, if they give them not the sacrament of the Lord's supper (when it is perhaps avoided voluntarily by the persons themselves). In the mean time, we leave them stated members of our churches (for church membership does not consist merely in partaking of the Lord's supper, else what are children who have been baptized in their infancy?), and grant them all other communion with the Church, and call them not to personal repentance for their sin. Is it not God's ordinance that they should be personally rebuked and admonished, and publicly called to repentance, and be cast out if they remain impenitent? If these be no duties, why have we made such a noise and stir in the world about them? If they be duties, why do we not practice them? Many of them avoid the very hearing of the Word. The ancient discipline of the Church was stricter, when the Sixth General Council at Trulli ordained that 'Whoever was three days together from church, without urgent necessity, was to be excommunicated.'

Brethren, I desire not to offend any party, but I must needs say that these sins are not to be cloaked over with excuses, extenuations, or denials. We have long cried up discipline, and every party its particular way. Would you have people value your form of government, or would you not? No doubt but you would. Now, if you would have them value it, it must be for some excellency. Show them then that excellency. What is it? Wherein does it consist? And if you would have them believe you, show it to them, not merely on paper, but in practice; not simply in words, but in deeds. How can the people know the worth of discipline, without the thing? Is it a name and a shadow that you have made all this noise about? How can they think that to be good, which does no good? Truly, I fear we take not the right way to maintain our cause; that we even betray it, while

we are hot disputers for it. Speak truly: is it not these two things that keep up the reputation of the long–contended–for discipline among men; namely, with the godly, the mere reputation of their ministers that stand for it, and with many of the ungodly, the non–execution of it, because they find it to be toothless, and not so troublesome to them as they expected? If once our Government come to be upholder by the votes of those who should be corrected or ejected by it, and the worst men be friends to it because it is a friend to them in their ungodliness, we shall then engage the Lord against it, and he will appear as engaged against us. Set all the execution of discipline together that has been practiced in a whole county, ever since it was so contended for, and I doubt it will not appear so observable as to draw godly people into a liking of it for its effects. How can you wonder, if many that desire deeds and not words, reformation, and not merely the name of reformation, do turn over to the separated congregations, when you show them nothing but the bare name of discipline in yours?

All Christians value God's ordinances, and think them not vain things; and, therefore, are unwilling to live without them. Discipline is not a needless thing to the Church: if you will not make a difference between the precious and the vile, by discipline, people will do it by separation. If you will keep many scores or hundreds in your churches that are notoriously ignorant and utterly destitute of religion, and never publicly (nor, perhaps, privately) reprove them, nor call them to repentance, nor cast them out, you need not marvel if some timorous souls should run out of your churches, as from a ruinous edifice, which they fear is ready to fall upon their heads. Consider, I pray you, if you should act in the same manner with them as to the sacrament as you do as to discipline, and should only show them the bread and wine, and never let them taste of these memorials of their Redeemer's love. Could you expect that the name of a sacrament would satisfy them, or that they would like your communion? Why should you then think that they will be satisfied with the empty sound of the word church–government?

Besides, consider what a disadvantage you cast upon your cause, in all your disputations with men of different views. If your principles be better than theirs, and their practice be better than yours, the people will suppose that the question is whether the name or the thing, the shadow or the substance, be more desirable. They will take your way to be a mere delusive formality, because they see you but formal in the use of it, yes, that you use it not at all. In what I now say, I speak not against your form of government, but for it; and tell you, that it is you who are against it that seem so earnest for it, while you more disgrace it for want of exercise, than you credit it by all your arguments. And you will find, before you have done, that the faithful execution of it would be your strongest argument. Until then, the people will understand you, as if you openly proclaimed, We would have no public admonitions, confessions, or excommunications; our way is to do no good, but to set up the naked name of a government.

I desire not to spur on any one to an unseasonable performance of this great duty. But will it never be a fit season? Would you forbear sermons and sacraments so many years on presence of unreasonableness? Will you have a better season for it when you are dead? How many are dead already, before they ever did anything in this important work, though they were long preparing for it! I know some have more discouragements and hindrances than others; but what discouragements and hindrances can excuse us from such a duty? Besides the reasons which we have already stated, let these few be seriously considered:

(1) How sad a sign do we make it to be in preaching to our people, to live in the willful and continued omission of any known duty! And shall we do so year after year, no, all our days? If excuses will take off the danger of this sign, what man will not find them as well as you?

(2) We plainly manifest laziness and sloth, if not unfaithfulness in the work of Christ. I speak from experience. It was laziness that kept me so long from this duty, and pleaded hard against it. It is indeed a troublesome and painful work, and such as calls for some self–denial, because it will bring upon us the displeasure of the wicked. But dare we prefer our carnal ease and quietness, or the love and peace of wicked men, before our service to Christ our Master? Can slothful servants expect a good reward? Remember, brethren, that we of this county have thus promised before God, in the second article of our agreement: 'We agree and resolve, by God's help, that so far as God does make known our duty to US, we will faithfully endeavor to discharge it, and will not desist through any fears or losses in our estates, or the frowns and displeasure of men, or any the like carnal inducements whatever.' I pray you study this promise, and compare your performance with it. And do not think that you were ensnared by thus engaging; for God's law has laid an obligation on you to the very same duty, before your engagement did it. Here is nothing but what others are bound to, as well as you.

(3) The neglect of discipline has a strong tendency to delude immortal souls, by making those think they are Christians that are not, while they are permitted to live with the character of such, and are not separated from the rest by God's ordinance. Also, it may make the scandalous think their sin a tolerable thing, which is so tolerated by the pastors of the church.

(4) We corrupt Christianity itself in the eyes of the world, and do our part to make them believe that Christ is no more for holiness than Satan, or that the Christian religion exacts holiness no more than the false religions of the world. For if the holy and unholy are all permitted to be sheep of the same fold, without any means being used to separate them, we defame the Redeemer, as if he were guilty of it, and as if this were the nature of his precepts.

(5) We keep up separation by permitting the worst to be uncensored in our churches, so that many honest Christians think they are obliged to withdraw from us. I have spoken with some members of the separated churches, who were moderate men, and have argued with them against separation. They have assured me that they were of the Presbyterian judgment, or had nothing to say against it, but they joined themselves to other churches from pure necessity, thinking that discipline, being an ordinance of Christ, must be used by all that can. Therefore, they dare no longer live without it when they might have it; and they could find no Presbyterian churches that executed discipline, as they wrote for it. And they told me that they separated only pro tempore, until the Presbyterians will use discipline, and then they will willingly return to them again. I confess I was sorry that such persons had any such occasion to withdraw from us. It is not keeping offenders from the sacrament that will excuse us from the further exercise of discipline, while they are members of our churches.

(6) We do much to bring the wrath of God upon ourselves and our congregations, and so to blast the fruit of our labors. If the angel of the church of Thyatira was reproved for suffering seducers in the church (Revelation 2:20), we may be reproved, on the same ground, for suffering open, scandalous, impenitent sinners. And what are the hindrances that now keep the ministers of England from the execution of that discipline, for which they have so much contended? The great

reason, as far as I can learn, is, ‘The difficulty of the work, and the trouble or suffering that we are like to incur by it. We cannot publicly reprehend one sinner, but he will storm at it, and bear us a deadly malice. We can prevail with very few to make a public profession of true repentance. If we proceed to excommunicate them, they will be raging mad against us. If we should deal as God requires us, with all the obstinate sinners in the parish, there would be no living among them. We should be so hated of all, that, as our lives would be uncomfortable, so our labors would become unprofitable; for men would not hear us when they are possessed with a hatred of us. Therefore duty ceases to be duty to us, because the hurt that would follow would be greater than the good.’

These are the great reasons for the non–execution of discipline, together with the great labor that private admonition of each offender would cost us. Now, to all this I answer:

[a] Are not these reasons as valid against Christianity itself, especially in some times and places, as they are against discipline? Christ came not to send peace on earth (Matthew 10:34). We shall have his peace, but not the world’s; for he has told us that it will hate us (John 15:18). Might not Bradford, or Hooper, or any that were burned in Queen Mary’s days, have alleged more than all this against the duty of owning the Reformation? Might they not have said, ‘It will make us hated, and it will expose our very lives to the flames?’ He is concluded by Christ to be no Christian, who hates not all that he has, and his own life, for him; and yet we can take the hazard of worldly loss as a reason against his work! What is it but hypocrisy to shrink from sufferings, and to take up none but safe and easy works, and make ourselves believe that the rest are no duties? Indeed this is the common way of escaping suffering, to neglect the duty that would expose us to it. If we did our duty faithfully, ministers would find the same lot among professed Christians as their predecessors have done among Pagans and other infidels. But if you cannot suffer for Christ, why did you put your hand to his plough? Why did you not first sit down and count the cost (Luke 9:62; Luke 14:28)? This makes the ministerial work so unfaithfully executed, because it is so carnally undertaken. Men enter upon it as a life of ease, and honor, and respectability, and they resolve to attain their ends, and have what they expected by right or wrong. They looked not for hatred and suffering, and they will avoid it, though by the avoiding of their work.

[b] As for the making yourselves incapable of doing them good, I answer, That reason is as valid against plain preaching, reproof, or any other duty which wicked men will hate us for. God will bless his own ordinances to do good, or else he would not have appointed them. If you publicly admonish and rebuke the scandalous, and call them to repentance, and cast out the obstinate, you may do good to many whom you reprove, and possibly to the excommunicated themselves. I am at least sure it is God’s means; and it is his last means when reproofs will do no good. It is therefore perverse to neglect the last means, lest we frustrate the foregoing means, when the last are not to be used but upon supposition that the former were all frustrated before. However, those within and those without may receive good by it, if the offender should receive none. And God will have the honor, when his Church is manifestly distinguished from the world, and the heirs of heaven and hell are not totally confounded, nor the world made to think that Christ and Satan do but contend for superiority, and that they have the like inclination to holiness or to sin.

[c] But yet let me tell you, that there are not such difficulties in the way, nor is discipline such a useless thing as you imagine. I bless God upon the small and too late trial which I have made of it myself. I can speak by experience, that it is not in vain; nor are the hazards of it such as may

excuse our neglect.

I confess, if I had my will, that man should be ejected as a negligent pastor that will not rule his people by discipline, as well as he is ejected as a negligent preacher that will not preach. For ruling I am sure is as essential a part of the pastor's office as preaching.

I shall proceed no further in these confessions. And now, brethren, what remains, but that we all cry guilty of these fore–mentioned sins, and humble our souls for our miscarriages before the Lord? Is this 'taking heed to ourselves and to all the flock (Acts 20:28)'? Is this like the pattern that is given us in the text? If we should now prove stout–hearted and unhumbled, how sad a symptom would it be to ourselves, and to the Church! The ministry has often been threatened and maligned by many sorts of adversaries; and though this may show their impious malice, yet may it also intimate to us God's just indignation. Believe it, brethren, the ministry of England are not the least nor the last in the sins of the land. It is time, therefore, for us to take our part of that humiliation to which we have been so long calling our people. If we have our wits about us, we may perceive that God has been offended with us, and that the voice that called this nation to repentance, did speak to us as well others. 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear' the precepts of repentance proclaimed in so many admirable deliverances and preservations (Revelation 2:7). He who has eyes to see, let him see them written in so many lines of blood. By fire and sword has God been calling us to humiliation; and as 'judgment has begun at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17),' so, if humiliation begin not there too, it will be a sad prognostication to us and to the land.

What! Shall we deny or extenuate our sins while we call our people to free and full confession? Is it not better to give glory to God by humble confession, than, in tenderness to ourselves, to seek for fig leaves to cover our nakedness? Is it not better to put God to it to build his glory, which we denied him, upon the ruins of our own, which we preferred before him; and to distrain for that by yet sorer judgments which we refused voluntarily to surrender to him? Alas, if you put God to get his honor as he can, he may get it, to your everlasting sorrow and dishonor! Sins openly committed are more dishonorable to us when we hide them, than when we confess them. It is the sin, and not the confession, that is our dishonor. We have committed them before the sun, so that they cannot be hid; and attempts to cloak them do but increase our guilt and shame. There is no way to repair the breaches in our honor, which our sin has made, but by free confession and humiliation. I dare not but make confession of my own sins. And if any be offended that I have confessed theirs, let them know, that I do but what I have done by myself. And if they dare disown the confession of their sin, let them do it at their peril. But as for all the truly humble ministers of Christ, I doubt not but they will rather be provoked to lament their sins more solemnly in the face of their several congregations, and to promise reformation.

2. The Duty of Personal Catechizing and Instructing the Flock Particularly Recommended

Having disclosed and lamented our miscarriages and neglects, our duty for the future lies plain before us. God forbid that we should now go on in the sins which we have confessed, as carelessly as we did before. Leaving these things, therefore, I shall now proceed to exhort you to the faithful discharge of the great duty which you have undertaken; namely, personal catechizing and instructing every one in your parishes or congregations that will submit thereto.

First, I shall state to you some motives to persuade you to this duty.

Secondly, I shall answer some objections which may be made to this duty.

Lastly, I shall give you some directions for performing this duty.

Part I. Motives to This Duty

Agreeably to this plan, I shall proceed to state to you some motives to persuade you to this duty. The first reasons by which I shall persuade you to this duty, are taken from the benefits of it; the second, from its difficulty; and the third, from its necessity, and the many obligations that are upon us for the performance of it.

Article 1 Motives from the Benefits of the Work When I look before me, and consider what, through the blessing of God, this work, if well managed, is like to effect, it makes my heart leap for joy. Truly, brethren, you have begun a most blessed work, and such as your own consciences may rejoice in, and your parishes rejoice in, and the nation rejoice in, and the child that is yet unborn rejoice in. Yes, thousands and millions, for anything we know, may have cause to bless God for it, when we shall have finished our course. And though it is our business this day to humble ourselves for the neglect of it so long, as we have very great cause to do, yet the hopes of a blessed success are so great in me, that they are ready to turn it into a day of rejoicing.

I bless the Lord that I have lived to see such a day as this, and to be present at so solemn an engagement of so many servants of Christ to such a work. I bless the Lord, that has honored you of this county to be the beginners and awakeners of the nation to this duty. It is not a controverted point, as to which the exasperated minds of men might pick quarrels with us. Nor is it a new invention, as to which envy might charge you as innovators, or pride might scorn to follow, because you had led the way. No; it is a well–known duty. It is but the more diligent and effectual management of the ministerial work. It is not a new invention, but simply the restoration of the ancient ministerial work. And because it is so pregnant with advantages to the Church, I will enumerate some of the particular benefits which we may hope to result from it, that when you see the excellency of it, you may be the more set upon it, and the more loath, by any negligence or failing of yours, to frustrate or destroy it. For certainly he who has the true intentions of a minister of Christ will rejoice in the appearance of any further hope of attaining the ends of his ministry; and nothing will be more welcome to him than that which will further the very business of his life. That this work is calculated to accomplish this, I shall now show you more particularly.

1. It will be a most hopeful mean of the conversion of souls; for it unites those great things which most further such an end (2 Timothy 3:15).

(1) As to the matter of it: it is about the most necessary things, the principles or essentials of the Christian faith.

(2) As to the manner of it: it will be by private conference, when we may have an opportunity to set all home to the conscience and the heart. The work of conversion consists of two parts: first, the informing of the judgment in the essential principles of religion; second, the change of the will by the efficacy of the truth. Now in this work we have the most excellent advantages for both. For the informing of their understandings, it must needs be an excellent help to have the sum of Christianity fixed in their memory. And though bare words, not understood, will make no change, yet, when the words are plain English, he who has the words is far more likely to understand the

meaning and matter than another. For what have we by which to make known things which are themselves invisible, but words or other signs? Those, therefore, who deride all catechisms as unprofitable forms, may better deride themselves for talking and using the form of their own words to make known their minds to others. Why may not written words, which are constantly before their eyes, and in their memories, instruct them, as well as the transient words of a preacher? These 'forms of sound words' are, therefore, so far from being unprofitable, as some persons imagine, that they are of admirable use to all (2 Timothy 1:13-14).

Besides, we shall have the opportunity, by personal conference, to try how far they understand the catechism, and to explain it to them as we go along; and to insist on those particulars which the persons we speak to have most need to hear. These two conjoined—a form of sound words, with a plain explication—may do more than either of them could do alone.

Moreover, we shall have the best opportunity to impress the truth upon their hearts, when we can speak to each individual's particular necessity, and say to the sinner, 'You are the man (2 Samuel 12:7),' and plainly mention his particular case, and set home the truth with familiar importunity. If anything in the world is likely to do them good, it is this. They will understand a familiar speech, who understand not a sermon; and they will have far greater help for the application of it to themselves. Besides, you will hear their objections, and know where it is that Satan has most advantage of them, and so may be able to show them their errors, and confute their objections, and more effectually convince them. We can better bang them to the point, and urge them to discover their resolutions for the future, and to promise the use of means and reformation, than otherwise we could do. What more proof need we of this, than our own experience? I seldom deal with men purposely on this great business, in private, serious conference, but they go away with some seeming convictions, and promises of new obedience, if not some deeper remorse, and sense of their condition.

O brethren, what a blow may we give to the kingdom of darkness, by the faithful and skillful managing of this work! If, then, the saving of souls, of your neighbors' souls, of many souls, from everlasting misery, be worth your labor, up and be doing! If you would be the fathers of many that are born again, and would 'see of the travail of your souls (Isaiah 53:10),' and would be able to say at last, 'Here am I, and the children whom you have given me'—up and ply this blessed work (Hebrews 2:13)! If it would do your heart good to see your converts among the saints in glory, and praising the Lamb before the throne; if it would rejoice you to present them blameless and spotless to Christ, prosecute with diligence and ardor this singular opportunity that is offered you. If you are ministers of Christ indeed, you will long for the perfecting of his body, and the gathering in of his elect; and you will 'travail as in birth' until Christ be formed in the souls of your people (Ephesians 4:12, Galatians 4:19). You will embrace such opportunities as your harvest–time affords, and as the sunshine days in a rainy harvest, in which it is unreasonable and inexcusable to be idle. If you have a spark of Christian compassion in you, it will surely seem worth your utmost labor to save so many 'souls from death, and to cover' so great a 'multitude of sins (James 5:19-20).' If, then, you are indeed fellow–workers with Christ, set to his work, and neglect not the souls for whom he died. O remember, when you are talking with the unconverted, that now you have an opportunity to save a soul, and to rejoice the angels of heaven, and to rejoice Christ himself, to cast Satan out of a sinner, and to increase the family of God! And what is your 'hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing'? Is it not your saved people 'in the presence of Christ Jesus at his coming'? Yes, doubtless 'they are

your glory and your joy.'

2. It will essentially promote the orderly building up of those who are converted, and the establishment of them in the faith. It hazards our whole work, or at least much hinders it, if we do it not in the proper order. How can you build, if you first do not lay a good foundation? Or how can you set on the top–stone, while the middle parts are neglected? 'Grace makes no leaps,' any more than nature. The second order of Christian truths have such a dependence upon the first, that they can never be well learned until the first are learned. This makes many labor so much in vain; they are 'ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 3:7),' because they would read before they learn to spell, or to know their letters. This makes so many fall away: they are shaken with every wind of temptation, because they were not well settled in the fundamental principles of religion. It is these fundamentals that must lead men to further truths; it is these they must build all upon; it is these that must actuate all their graces, and animate all their duties; it is these that must fortify them against temptations. He who knows not these, knows nothing; he who knows them well, does know so much as will make him happy; and he who knows them best, is the best and most understanding Christian. The most godly people, therefore, in your congregations, will find it worth their labor to learn the very words of a catechism. If, then, you would safely edify them, and firmly establish them, be diligent in this work.

3. It will make our public preaching better understood and regarded. When you have instructed them in the principles, they will the better understand all you say. They will perceive what you drive at, when they are once acquainted with the main points. This prepares their minds, and opens a way to their hearts; whereas, without this, you may lose the most of your labor, and the more pains you take in accurate preparation, the less good you may do. As you would not, therefore, lose your public labor, see that you be faithful in this private work.

4. By means of it, you will come to be familiar with your people, and may thereby win their affections. The want of this, with those who have very numerous congregations, is a great impediment to the success of our labors. By distance and unacquaintedness, abundance of mistakes between ministers and people are fomented. On the other hand, familiarity will tend to beget those affections which may open their ears to further instruction. Besides, when we are familiar with them, they will be encouraged to open their doubts to us and deal freely with us. But when a minister knows not his people, or is as strange to them as if he did not know them, it must be a great hindrance to his doing any good among them.

5. By means of it, we shall come to be better acquainted with each person's spiritual state, and so the better know how to watch over them. We shall know better how to preach to them, and carry ourselves to them, when we know their temper, and their chief objections, and so what they have most need to hear. We shall know better wherein to be 'jealous over them with a godly jealousy (2 Corinthians 11:3),' and what temptations to guard them most against. We shall know better how to lament for them, and to rejoice with them, and to pray for them. For as he who will pray rightly for himself must know his own wants, and the diseases of his own heart, so he that will pray rightly for others, should know theirs as far as possible.

6. By means of this trial and acquaintance with our people's state we shall be much assisted in the admission of them to the sacraments. I doubt not a minister may require his people to come to him at any convenient season, to give an account of their faith and proficiency, and to receive

instruction, and therefore he may do it as a preparation for the Lord's supper. Yet because ministers have laid the stress of that examination upon the mere necessity of fitness for that ordinance, and not upon their common duty to see the state and proficiency of each member of their flock at all fit seasons, and upon the people's duty to submit to the guidance and instruction of their pastors at all times, they have occasioned people ignorantly to quarrel with their examinations. Now, by this course we shall discover their fitness or unfitness, in a way that is unexceptionable, and in a way far more effectual than by some partial examination of them before they are admitted to the Lord's table.

7. It will show men the true nature of the ministerial office, and awaken them to the better consideration of it, than is now usual. It is too common for men to think that the work of the ministry is nothing but to preach, and to baptize, and to administer the Lord's supper, and to visit the sick. By this means the people will submit to no more; and too many ministers are such strangers to their own calling, that they will do no more. It has often grieved my heart to observe some eminent able preachers, how little they do for the saving of souls, save only in the pulpit; and to how little purpose much of their labor is, by this neglect. They have hundreds of people that they never spoke a word to personally for their salvation. If we may judge by their practice, they consider it not as their duty; and the principal thing that hardens men in this oversight is the common neglect of the private part of the work by others. There are so few that do much in it, and the omission has grown so common among pious, able men, that the disgrace of it is abated by their ability. A man may now be guilty of it without any particular notice or dishonor. Never does sin so reign in a church or state, as when it has gained reputation, or, at least, is no disgrace to the sinner, nor a matter of offence to beholders. But I make no doubt, through the mercy of God, that the restoring of the practice of personal oversight will convince many ministers that this is as truly their work as that which they now do. And it may awaken them to see that the ministry is another kind of business than too many excellent preachers take it to be.

Brethren, do but set yourselves closely to this work, and follow it diligently. Though you do it silently, without any words to them that are negligent, I am in hope that most of you who are present may live to see the day when the neglect of private personal oversight of all the flock shall be taken for a scandalous and odious omission, and shall be as disgraceful to them that are guilty of it, as preaching but once a day was heretofore. A schoolmaster must take a personal account of his scholars, or else he is like to do little good. If physicians should only read a public lecture on physic, their patients would not be much the better of them; nor would a lawyer secure your estate by reading a lecture on law. Now, the charge of a pastor requires personal dealing, as well as any of these. Let us show the world this by our practice; for most men are grown regardless of bare words. The truth is, we have been led to wrong the Church exceedingly in this respect, by the contrary extreme of the Papists, who bring all their people to auricular confession. In overthrowing this error of theirs, we have run into the opposite extreme, and have led our people much further into it than we have gone ourselves. It troubled me much to read, in an orthodox historian, that licentiousness, and a desire to be from under the strict inquiries of the priests in confession, did much further the entertainment of the reformed religion in Germany. And yet it is like enough to be true, that they who were against reformation in other respects, might, on this account, join with better men in crying down the Romish clergy. I have no doubt that the Popish auricular confession is a sinful novelty, which the ancient Church was unacquainted with. But perhaps some will think it

strange I should say that our common neglect of personal instruction is much worse, if we consider their confessions in themselves, and not as they respect their linked doctrines of satisfaction and purgatory. If any among us should be guilty of so gross a mistake, as to think that, when he has preached, he has done all his work, let us show him, by our practice of the rest, that there is much more to be done. ‘Taking heed to all the flock’ is another business than careless, lazy ministers imagine (Acts 20:28). If a man have an apprehension that duty, and the chief duty, is no duty, he is like to neglect it, and to be impenitent in the neglect.

8. It will help our people better to understand the nature of their duty toward their overseers, and, consequently, to discharge it better. This, indeed, were a matter of no consequence, if it were only for our sakes; but their own salvation is much concerned in it. I am convinced, by sad experience, that it is none of the least impediments to their salvation, and to a true reformation of the Church, that the people understand not what the work of a minister is, and what is their own duty towards him. They commonly think that a minister has no more to do with them, but to preach to them, and administer the sacraments to them, and visit them in sickness; and that, if they hear him, and receive the sacraments from him, they owe him no further obedience, nor can he require any more at their hands. Little do they know that the minister is in the church, as the schoolmaster in his school, to teach, and take an account of every one in particular; and that all Christians, ordinarily, must be disciples or scholars in some such school. They do not think that a minister is in the church, as a physician in a town, for all people to resort to, for personal advice for the curing of all their diseases; and that ‘your priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and the people should ask the law at his mouth, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts (Malachi 2:7).’ They consider not that all souls in the congregation are bound, for their own safety, to have personal recourse to him for the resolving of their doubts, for help against their sins, for direction in duty, and for increase of knowledge and all saving grace—that ministers are purposely settled in congregations to this end, to be still ready to advise and help the flock.

If our people did but know their duty, they would readily come to us, when they are desired, to be instructed, and to give an account of their knowledge, faith, and life. They would come of their own accord, without being sent for; and knock oftener at our doors; and call for advice and help for their souls; and ask, ‘What shall we do to be saved (Acts 16:31)?’ Whereas now the matter is come to that sad pass that they think a minister has nothing to do with them. And if he admonish them, or if he call them to be catechized and instructed, or if he would take an account of their faith and profiting, they would ask him by what authority he does these things (Matthew 21:23)? They would think that he is a busy, pragmatical fellow, who loves to be meddling where he has nothing to do, or a proud fellow, who would bear rule over their consciences. They may as well ask by what authority he preaches, or prays, or gives them the sacrament? They consider not that all our authority is but for our work, even a power to do our duty; and that our work is for them, so that it is but an authority to do them good. They talk not more wisely than if they should quarrel with a man who would help to quench a fire in their houses, and ask him by what authority he does it? Or that would give money to relieve the poor, and they should ask him, By what authority do you require us to take this money? Or as if I offered my hand to one that is fallen, to help him up, or to one that is in the water, to save him from drowning, and he should ask me by what authority I do it? And what is it that has brought our people to this ignorance of their duty, but custom? It is we, brethren, to speak truly and plainly, who are to blame, that have not accustomed them and ourselves to any

more than common public work. We see how much custom does with the people. Where it is the custom, as among the Papists, they hesitate not to confess all their sins to the priest; but, among us, they disdain to be catechized or instructed, because it is not the custom. They wonder at it, as a strange thing, and say, Such things were never done before. And if we can but prevail to make this duty as common as other duties, they will much more easily submit to it than now. What a happy thing would it be if you might live to see the day that it should be as ordinary for people of all ages to come in course to their ministers for personal advice and help for their salvation, as it is now usual for them to come to the church to hear a sermon, or receive the sacrament! Our diligence in this work is the way to bring this about.

9. It will give the governors of the nation more correct views about the nature and burden of the ministry, and so may procure from them further assistance. It is a lamentable impediment to the reformation of the Church, and the saving of souls, that, in most populous towns, there are but one or two men to oversee many thousand souls, and so there are not laborers in any degree equal to the work. It becomes an impossible thing for them to do any considerable measure of that personal duty which should be done by faithful pastors to all the flock. I have often said it, and still must say it, that this is a great part of England's misery, that a great degree of spiritual famine reigns in most cities and large towns throughout the land, even where they are insensible of it, and think themselves well provided. Alas, we see multitudes of ignorant, carnal, sensual sinners around us—here a family, and there a family, and there almost a whole street or village of them—and our hearts pity them, and we see that their necessities cry loud for our speedy and diligent relief, so that 'he who has ears to hear' must needs hear (Revelation 2:7). Yet if we were never so gladly, we cannot help them: and that not merely through their obstinacy, but also through our want of opportunity. We have found by experience, that if we could but have leisure to speak to them, and to open plainly to them their sin and danger, there were great hopes of doing good to many of them, that receive time by our public teaching. But we cannot come at them—more necessary work prohibits us. We cannot do both at once, and our public work must be preferred because there we deal with many at once. And it is as much as we are able to do, to perform the public work, or some time more. And if we do take the time when we should eat or sleep (besides the ruining of weakened bodies by it), we shall not be able, after all, to speak to one of very many of them. So that we must stand by and see poor people perish, and can but be sorry for them, and cannot so much as speak to them to endeavor their recovery. Is not this a sad case in a nation that glories of the fullness of the gospel? An infidel will say, No. But, methinks, no man that believes in everlasting joy or torment should give such an answer.

I will give you the instance of my own case. We are together two ministers, and a third at a chapel, willing to spend every hour of our time in Christ's work. Before we undertook this work, our hands were full, and now we are engaged to set apart two days every week, from morning to night, for private catechizing and instruction. Any man may see that we must leave undone all that other work that we were used to do at that time. Also, we are necessitated to run upon the public work of preaching with small preparation, and so must deliver the message of God so rawly and confusedly, and unanswerably to its dignity and the need of men's souls, that it is a great trouble to our minds to consider it, and a greater trouble to us when we are doing it. And yet it must be so; there is no remedy. Unless we will omit this personal instruction, we must needs run thus unpreparedly into the pulpit. And to omit this we dare not—it is so great and necessary a work.

And when we have incurred all the aforementioned inconveniences, and have set apart two whole days a week for this work, it will be as much as we shall be able to do, to go over the parish once in a year (being about 800 families). What is worse than that, we shall be forced to cut it short, and do it less effectually to those that we do it, having above fifteen families a week to deal with. And, alas, how small a matter is it to speak to men only once in a year, and that so cursorily as we must be forced to do, in comparison of what their necessities require. Yet are we in hope of some fruit of this much; but how much more might it be, if we could but speak to them once a quarter, and do the work more fully and deliberately, as you that are in smaller parishes may do. And many ministers in England have ten times the number of parishioners which I have, so that if they should undertake the work which we have undertaken, they can go over the parish but once in ten years. So that while we are hoping for opportunities to speak to them, we hear of one dying after another, and to the grief of our souls, are forced to go with them to their graves, before we could ever speak a word to them personally to prepare them for their change. And what is the cause of all this misery? Why, our rulers have not seen the necessity of any more than one or two ministers in such parishes; and so they have not allowed any maintenance to that end. Some have alienated much from the Church (the Lord humble all them that consented to it, lest it prove the consumption of the nation at last), while they have left this famine in the chief parts of the land. It is easy to separate from the multitude, and to gather distinct churches, and to let the rest sink or swim; and if they will not be saved by public preaching, to let them be damned. But whether this be the most charitable and Christian course, one would think should be no hard question. But what is the matter that wise and godly rulers should be thus guilty of our misery, and that none of our cries will awaken them to compassion? What! Are they so ignorant as not to know these things? Or are they grown cruel to the souls of men? Or are they false–hearted to the interest of Christ, and have a design to undermine his kingdom? No, I hope it is none of these; but, for anything I can find, it is we who are to blame, even we, the ministers of the gospel, whom they should thus maintain. For those ministers that have small parishes, and might do all this private part of the work yet do it not, or at least few of them. And those in great towns and cities, that might do somewhat, though they cannot do all, will do just nothing but what accidentally falls in their way, or next to nothing, so that the magistrate is not awakened to the observance or consideration of the weight of our work. Or if they do apprehend the usefulness of it, yet if they see that ministers are so careless and lazy that they will not do it, they think it in vain to provide them a maintenance for it—it would be but to cherish idle drones. So they think that if they maintain ministers enough to preach in the pulpit, they have done their part. And thus are they involved in heinous sin, and we are the occasion of it. Whereas, if we do but all heartily set ourselves to this work, we would show the magistrate to his face that it is a most weighty and necessary part of our business. We would do it thoroughly if we could, and if there were hands enough, the work might go on. When he shall see the happy success of our labors, then, no doubt, if the fear of God be in them, and they have any love to his truth and men’s souls, they will set to their helping hand, and not let men perish because there is no man to speak to them to prevent it. They will one way or other raise maintenance in such populous places for laborers, proportioned to the number of souls, and greatness of the work. Let them but see us fall to the work, and behold it prosper in our hands; as, if it be well managed, there is no doubt it will, through God’s blessing. Then their hearts will be drawn out to the promoting of it, and, instead of laying parishes together to diminish the number of teachers, they will either divide them, or allow more teachers to a parish. But when they see that many carnal ministers do make a

greater stir to have more maintenance to themselves, than to have more help in the work of God, they are tempted by such worldlings to wrong the Church, that particular ministers may have ease and fullness.

10. It will exceedingly facilitate the ministerial work in succeeding generations. Custom, as I said before, is the thing that sways much with the multitude, and they who first break a destructive custom must bear the brunt of their indignation. Now, somebody must do this. If we do it not, it will lie upon our successor; and how can we expect that they will be more hardy, and resolute, and faithful than we? It is we that have seen the heavy judgments of the Lord, and heard him pleading by fire and sword with the land. It is we that have been ourselves in the furnace, and should be the most refined. It is we that are most deeply obliged by oaths and covenants, by wonderful deliverances, experiences, and mercies of all sorts. And if we yet flinch and turn our backs, and prove false–hearted, why should we expect better from them, that have not been driven by such scourges as we, nor drawn by such cords? But, if they do prove better we, the same odium and opposition must befall those who we avoid, and that with some increase, because of our neglect; for the people will tell them that we, their predecessors did no such things. But if we would now break the ice for them that follow us, their souls will bless us, and our names will be dear to them, and they will feel the happy fruits of our labor every day of their ministry. Then the people shall willingly submit to their private instructions and examinations, yes, and to discipline too, because we have acquainted them with it, and removed the prejudice, and broken the evil custom which our predecessors had been the cause of. Thus we may do much to the saving of many thousand souls, in all ages to come, as well as in the present age in which we live.

11. It will much conduce to the better ordering of families, and the better spending of the Sabbath. When we have once got the masters of families to undertake that they will, every Lord's day, examine their children and servants, and make them repeat some catechism and passages of Scripture, this will find them most profitable employment. Otherwise many of them would be idle or ill–employed. Many masters, who know little themselves, may yet be brought to do this for others, and in this way they may even teach themselves.

12. It will do good to many ministers, who are too apt to be idle, and to spend their time in unnecessary discourse, business, journeys, or recreations. It will let them see that they have no time to spare for such things; and thus, when they are engaged in so much pressing employment of so high a nature, it will be the best cure for all that idleness, and loss of time. Besides, it will cut off that scandal, which usually follows thereupon; for people are apt to say, Such a minister can spend his time at bowls, or other sports, or vain discourse; and why may not we do so as well as he? Let us all set diligently to this part of our work, and then see what time we can find to spare to live idly, or in a way of voluptuousness, or worldliness, if we can.

13. It will be productive of many personal benefits to ourselves. It will do much to subdue our own corruptions, and to exercise and increase our own graces. It will afford much peace to our consciences, and comfort us when our past lives come to be reviewed. To be much in provoking others to repentance and heavenly–mindedness may do much to excite them in ourselves. To cry down the sin of others, and engage them against it, and direct them to overcome it, will do much to shame us out of our own; and conscience will scarcely suffer us to live in that which we make so much ado to draw others from (Matthew 7:3-5). Even our constant employment for God, and

busying our minds and tongues against sin, and for Christ and holiness, will do much to overcome our fleshly inclinations, both by direct mortification, and by diversion, leaving our fancies no room nor time for their old employment. All the austerities of monks and hermits, who addict themselves to unprofitable solitude, and who think to save themselves by neglecting to show compassion to others, will not do near so much in the true work of mortification, as this fruitful diligence for Christ.

14. It will be some benefit, that by this means we shall take off ourselves and our people from vain controversies, and from expending our care and zeal on the lesser matters of religion, which least tend to their spiritual edification. While we are taken up in teaching, and they in reaming the fundamental truths of the gospel, we shall divert our minds and tongues, and have less room for lower things. So it will cure much wranglings and contentions between ministers and people. For we do that which we need not and should not, because we will not fall diligently to do that which we need and should.

15. And then for the extent of the aforesaid benefits: The design of this work is the reforming and saving of all the people in our several parishes, for we shall not leave out any man that will submit to be instructed. And though we can scarcely hope that every individual will be reformed and saved by it, yet have we reason to hope that as the attempt is universal, so the success will be more general and extensive than we have hitherto seen of our other labors. Sure I am, it is most like to the spirit, and precept, and offers of the gospel, which requires us to preach Christ to every creature, and promises life to every man, if he will accept it by believing. If God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth (that is, as Rector and Benefactor of the world, he has manifested himself willing to save all men, if they be willing themselves, though his elect he will also make willing), then surely it beseems us to offer salvation unto all men, and to endeavor to bring them to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). And, if Christ ‘tasted death for every man,’ it is meet we should preach his death to every man (Hebrews 2:9). This work has a more excellent design than our accidental conferences with now and then a particular person. And I have observed that in such occasional discourses men satisfy themselves with having spoken some good words, but seldom set plainly and closely home the matter, to convince men of sin and misery and mercy, as in this purposely appointed work we are more like to do.

16. It is like to be a work that will reach over the whole land, and not stop with us that have now engaged in it. For though it be at present neglected, I suppose the cause is the same with our brethren as it has been with us; namely, that inconsiderateness and laziness, which we are here bewailing this day, but especially, despair of the submission of the people to it. But when they shall be reminded of so clear and great a duty, and shall see the practicability of it, in a good measure, when it is done by common consent, they will, no doubt, universally take it up, and gladly concur with us in so blessed a work. For they are the servants of the same God, as sensible of the interests of Christ and as compassionate to men’s souls, as conscientious and self–denying and ready to do or suffer for such excellent ends, as we are. Seeing, therefore, they have the same spirit, rule, and Lord, I will not be so uncharitable as to doubt whether all that are godly throughout the land (or at least the generality of them) will gladly join with us. And oh, what a happy thing it will be to see such a general combination for Christ—to see all England so seriously called upon, and importuned for Christ, and set in so fair a way to heaven! Methinks the consideration of it should make our hearts rejoice within us, to see so many faithful servants of Christ all over the land addressing every particular sinner with such importunity, as men that will hardly take a denial.

Methinks I even see all the godly ministers of England commencing the work already, and resolving to embrace the present opportunity, that unanimity may facilitate it.

17. Lastly, of so great weight and excellency is the duty which we are now recommending, that the chief part of Church reformation that is behind as to means consists in it; and it must be the chief means to answer the judgments, the mercies, the prayers, the promises, the cost, the endeavors, and the blood of the nation. Without this it will not be done. The ends of all these will never be well attained; a reformation to purpose will never be wrought; the Church will be still low; the interest of Christ will be much neglected; and God will still have a controversy with the land, and, above all, with the ministry that have been deepest in the guilt (Hosea 4:1).

How long have we talked of reformation, how much have we said and done for it in general, and how deeply and devoutly have we vowed it for our own parts. And, after all this, how shamefully have we neglected it, and neglect it to this day! We carry ourselves as if we had not known or considered what that reformation was which we vowed. Carnal men will take on them to be Christians, and profess with confidence that they believe in Christ, and accept of his salvation. They may contend for Christ and fight for him, and yet, for all this, will have none of him. They perish for refusing him, who little dreamed that ever they had been refusers of him; and all because they understood not what his salvation is, and how it is carried on. Instead they dream of a salvation without flesh–displeasing, and without self–denial and renouncing the world, and parting with their sins, and without any holiness, or any great pains and labor of their own in subserviency to Christ and the Spirit. In the same way did too many ministers and private men talk and write and pray and fight and long for reformation, and would little have believed that man who should have presumed to tell them, that, notwithstanding all this, their very hearts were against reformation—that they who were praying for it, and fasting for it, and wading through blood for it, would never accept it, but would themselves be the rejectors and destroyers of it. And yet so it is, and so it has too plainly proved. And whence is all this strange deceit of heart, that good men should no better know themselves? Why, the case is plain; they thought of a reformation to be given by God, but not of a reformation to be wrought on and by themselves. They considered the blessing, but never thought of the means of accomplishing it—as if they had expected that all things besides themselves should be mended without them. Perhaps the Holy Spirit should again descend miraculously, or every sermon should convert its thousands, or some angel from heaven or some Elijah should be sent to restore all things, or the law of the parliament, and the sword of the magistrate, would have converted or constrained all, and have done the deed. Little did they think of a reformation that must be wrought by their own diligence and unwearied labors, by earnest preaching and catechizing, and personal instructions, and taking heed to all the flock, whatever pains or reproaches it should cost them. They thought not that a thorough reformation would multiply their own work. But we had all of us too carnal thoughts, that when we had ungodly men at our mercy, all would be done, and conquering them was converting them, or such a means as would have frightened them to heaven. But the business is far otherwise, and had we then known how a reformation must be attained, perhaps some would have been colder in the prosecution of it. And yet I know that even foreseen labors seem small matters at a distance, while we do but hear and talk of them. But when we come nearer them, and must lay our hands to the work, and put on our armor, and charge through the thickest of opposing difficulties, then is the sincerity and the strength of men’s hearts brought to trial, and it will appear how they purposed

and promised before.

Reformation is to many of us as the Messiah was to the Jews. Before he came, they looked and longed for him, and boasted of him, and rejoiced in hope of him. But when he came they could not abide him, but hated him, and would not believe that he was indeed the person, and therefore persecuted and put him to death, to the curse and confusion of the main body of their nation. ‘The Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appears (Malachi 3:1-3)? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.’ And the reason was, because it was another manner of Christ that the Jews expected. It was one who would bring them riches and liberty, and to this day they profess that they will never believe in any but such. So it is with too many about reformation. They hoped for a reformation that would bring them more wealth and honor with the people, and power to force men to do what they would have them. And now they see a reformation that must put them to more condescension and pains than they were ever at before. They thought of having the opposers of godliness under their feet, but now they see they must go to them with humble entreaties, and put their hands under their feet, if they would do them good. They must meekly beseech even those that sometime sought their lives, and make it now their daily business to overcome them by kindness, and win them with love. O how many carnal expectations are here crossed!

Motives from the Difficulties of the Work

Having stated to you the first class of reasons, drawn from the benefits of the work, I come to the second sort, which are taken from the difficulties. If these, indeed, were taken alone, I confess they might be rather discouragements than motives. But taking them with those that go before and follow, the case is far otherwise: for difficulties must excite to greater diligence in a necessary work. And difficulties we shall find many, both in ourselves and in our people; but because they are things so obvious that your experience will leave you no room to doubt of them, I shall pass them over in a few words.

1. Let me notice the difficulties in ourselves.

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4.03. Application contd1

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1. Let me notice the difficulties in ourselves.

(1) In ourselves there is much dullness and laziness, so that it will not be easy to get us to be faithful in so hard a work. Like a sluggard in bed, that knows he should rise, and yet delays and would lie as long as he can, so do we by duties to which our corrupt natures are averse. This will put us to the use of all our powers. Mere sloth will tie the hands of many.

(2) We have a base man–pleasing disposition, which will make us let men perish lest we lose their love, and let them go quietly to hell lest we should make them angry with us for seeking their salvation. We are ready to venture on the displeasure of God, and risk the everlasting misery of our people, rather than draw on ourselves their ill–will. This distemper must be diligently resisted.

(3) Many of us have also a foolish bashfulness, which makes us backward to begin with them, and to speak plainly to them. We are so modest, forsooth, that we blush to speak for Christ, or to contradict the devil, or to save a soul, while, at the same time, we are less ashamed of shameful works.

(4) We are so carnal that we are drawn by our fleshly interests to be unfaithful in the work of Christ, lest we should lessen our income, or bring trouble upon ourselves, or set people against us, or such like. All these things require diligence in order to resist them.

(5) We are so weak in the faith that this is the greatest impediment of all. Hence it is, that when we should set upon a man for his conversion with all our might, if there be not the stirrings of unbelief within us, whether there be a heaven and a hell, yet at least the belief of them is so feeble that it will hardly excite in us a kindly, resolute, constant zeal. As a result, our whole motion will be but weak, because the spring of faith is so weak. O what need, therefore, have ministers for themselves and their work, to look well to their faith, especially that their assent to the truth of Scripture, about the joys and torments of the life to come, be sound and lively.

(6) Lastly, We have commonly a great deal of unskilfulness and unfitness for this work. Alas, how few know how to deal with an ignorant, worldly man, for his conversion! To get within him and win upon him; to suit our speech to his condition and temper; to choose the meet subjects, and follow them with a holy mixture of seriousness, and terror, and love, and meekness, and evangelical

allurements—oh! who is fit for such a thing? I profess seriously: It seems to me, by experience, as hard a matter to confer aright with such a carnal person, in order to his change, as to preach such sermons as ordinarily we do, if not much more. All these difficulties in ourselves should awaken us to holy resolution, preparation, and diligence, that we may not be overcome by them, and hindered from or in the work.

2. Having noticed these difficulties in ourselves, I shall now mention some which we shall meet with in our people.

(1) Many of them will be obstinately unwilling to be taught. They will scorn to come to us, as being too good to be catechized or too old to learn, unless we deal wisely with them in public and private, and study, by the force of reason and the power of love, to conquer their perverseness.

(2) Many that are willing are so dull that they can scarcely learn a leaf of a catechism in a long time, and therefore they will keep away, as ashamed of their ignorance, unless we are wise and diligent to encourage them.

(3) And when they do come, so great is the ignorance and unapprehensiveness of many, that you will find it a very hard matter to get them to understand you. So if you have not the happy are of making things plain, you will leave them as ignorant as before.

(4) And yet harder will you find it to work things upon their hearts, and to set them so home to their consciences as to produce that saving change, which is our grand aim, and without which our labor is lost. Oh what a block, what a rock, is a hardened, carnal heart! How strongly will it resist the most powerful persuasions, and hear of everlasting life or death, as a thing of nothing! If, therefore, you have not great seriousness, and fervency, and powerful matter, and fitness of expression, what good can you expect? And when you have done all, the Spirit of grace must do the work. But as God and men usually choose instruments suitable to the nature of the work or end, so the Spirit of wisdom, life, and holiness does not usually work by foolish, dead, carnal instruments, but by such persuasions of light and life and purity as are like to itself, and to the work that is to be wrought thereby.

(5) Lastly, When you have made some desirable impressions on their hearts, if you look not after them, and have a special care of them, their hearts will soon return to their former hardness, and their old companions and temptations will destroy all again. In short, all the difficulties of the work of conversion, which you use to acquaint your people with, are before us in our present work.

Motives from the Necessity of the Work The third sort of motives are drawn from the necessity of the work. For if it were not necessary, the slothful might be discouraged rather than excited by the difficulties now mentioned. But because I have already been longer than I intended, I shall give you only a brief hint of some of the general grounds of this necessity.

1. This duty is necessary for the glory of God. As every Christian lives to the glory of God, as his end, so will he gladly take that course which will most effectually promote it. For what man would not attain his ends? O brethren, if we could set this work on foot in all the parishes of England, and get our people to submit to it, and then prosecute it skillfully and zealously ourselves, what a glory would it put upon the face of the nation, and what glory would, by means of it, redound to God! If our common ignorance were thus banished, and our vanity and idleness turned into the study of

the way of life, and every shop and every house were busied in learning the Scriptures and catechisms, and speaking of the Word and works of God, what pleasure would God take in our cities and country! He would even dwell in our habitations, and make them his delight. It is the glory of Christ that shines in his saints, and all their glory is his glory. That, therefore, which honors them, in number or excellency, honors him. Will not the glory of Christ be wonderfully displayed in the New Jerusalem, when it shall descend from heaven in all that splendor and magnificence with which it is described in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 21:2)? If, therefore, we can increase the number or strength of the saints, we shall thereby increase the glory of the King of saints; for he will have service and praise where before he had disobedience and dishonor. Christ will also be honored in the fruits of his blood shed, and the Spirit of grace in the fruit of his operations. And do not such important ends as these require that we use the means with diligence?

Every Christian is obliged to do all he can for the salvation of others; but every minister is doubly obliged, because he is separated to the gospel of Christ, and is to give up himself wholly to that work (Romans 1:1). It is needless to make any further question of our obligation, when we know that this work is needful to our people's conversion and salvation, and that we are in general commanded to do all that is needful to these ends, as far as we are able. Whether the unconverted have need of conversion, I hope is not doubted among us. And whether this be a means, and a most needful means, experience may put beyond a doubt, if we had no more. Let them that have taken most pains in public, examine their people, and try whether many of them are not nearly as ignorant and careless as if they had never heard the gospel. For my part, I study to speak as plainly and movingly as I can (and next to my study to speak truly, these are my chief studies), and yet I frequently meet with those that have been my hearers eight or ten years, who know not whether Christ be God or man, and wonder when I tell them the history of his birth and life and death, as if they had never heard it before. And of those who know the history of the gospel, how few are there who know the nature of that faith, repentance, and holiness which it requires, or, at least, who know their own hearts? But most of them have an ungrounded trust in Christ, hoping that he will pardon, justify, and save them, while the world has their hearts, and they live to the flesh. And this trust they take for justifying faith. I have found by experience that some ignorant persons, who have been so long unprofitable hearers, have got more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half an hour's close discourse, than they did from ten years' public preaching.

I know that preaching the gospel publicly is the most excellent means, because we speak to many at once. But it is usually far more effectual to preach it privately to a particular sinner, as to himself. For the plainest man that is can scarcely speak plain enough in public for them to understand; but in private we may do it much more. In public we may not use such homely expressions, or repetitions, as their dullness requires, but in private we may. In public our speeches are long, and we quite over–run their understandings and memories, and they are confounded and at a loss, and not able to follow us, and one thing drives out another, and so they know not what we said. But in private we can take our work gradatim, and take our hearers along with us; and, by our questions, and their answers, we can see how far they understand us, and what we have next to do. In public, by length and speaking alone we lose their attention; but when they are interlocutors, we can easily cause them to attend. Besides, we can better answer their objections, and engage them by promises before we leave them, which in public we cannot do. I conclude, therefore, that

public preaching will not be sufficient: for though it may be an effectual means to convert many, yet not so many as experience, and God's appointment of further means, may assure us. Long may you study and preach to little purpose, if you neglect this duty.

2. This duty is necessary to the welfare of our people. Brethren, can you look believingly on your miserable people and not perceive them calling to you for help? There is not a sinner whose case you should not so far compassionate, as to be willing to relieve them at a much dearer rate than this comes to. Can you see them, as the wounded man by the way, and unmercifully pass by? Can you hear them cry to you, as the man of Macedonia to Paul, in vision, 'Come and help us,' and yet refuse your help (Acts 16:9)? Are you intrusted with the charge of a hospital, where one languishes in one corner, and another groans in another, and cries out, 'Oh, help me, pity me for the Lord's sake!' and where a third is raging mad, and would destroy himself and you; and yet will you sit idle and refuse your help? If it may be said of him that relieves not men's bodies, how much more of him that relieves not men's souls: 'If he see his brother have need, and shut up his affections of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him (1 John 3:17)?' You are not such monsters, such hard–hearted men, but you will pity a leper; you will pity the naked, the imprisoned, or the desolate; you will pity him that is tormented with grievous pain or sickness; and will you not pity an ignorant, hard–hearted sinner? Will you not pity one that must be shut out from the presence of the Lord, and lie under his remediless wrath, if thorough repentance speedily prevent it not? Oh what a heart is it that will not pity such a one! What shall I call the heart of such a man? A heart of stone, a very rock or adamant; the heart of a tiger; or rather the heart of an infidel: for surely if he believed the misery of the impenitent, it is not possible but he should take pity on him. Can you tell men in the pulpit that they shall certainly be damned, except they repent, and yet have no pity on them when you have proclaimed to them such a danger? And if you pity them, will you not do this much for their salvation?

How many around you are blindly hastening to perdition, while your voice is appointed to be the means of arousing and reclaiming them! The physician has no excuse who is doubly bound to relieve the sick, when even every neighbor is bound to help them. Brethren, what if you heard sinners cry after you in the streets, 'O sir, have pity on me, and afford me your advice! I am afraid of the everlasting wrath of God. I know I must shortly leave this world, and I am afraid lest I shall be miserable in the next.' Could you deny your help to such poor sinners? What if they came to your study–door and cried for help, and would not go away until you had told them how to escape the wrath of God? Could you find in your hearts to drive them away without advice? I am confident you could not. Why, alas, such persons are less miserable than they who will not cry for help. It is the hardened sinner who cares not for your help that most needs it. And he who has not so much life as to feel that he is dead, nor so much light as to see his danger, nor so much sense left as to pity himself—this is the man that is most to be pitied.

Look upon your neighbors around you, and think how many of them need your help in no less a case than the apparent danger of damnation. Suppose that you heard every impenitent person whom you see and know about you, crying to you for help: 'As ever you pitied poor wretches, pity us, lest we should be tormented in the flames of hell; if you have the hearts of men, pity us.' Now, do that for them that you would do if they followed you with such expostulations. Oh how can you walk, and talk, and be merry with such people, when you know their case? Methinks, when you look them in the face, and think how they must suffer everlasting misery, you should break forth

into tears (as the prophet did when he looked upon Hazael) (2 Kings 8:11-12), and then fall on with the most importunate exhortations. When you visit them in their sickness, will it not wound your hearts to see them ready to depart into misery, before you have ever dealt seriously with them for their conversion? Oh, then, for the Lord's sake, and for the sake of poor souls, have pity on them, and bestir yourselves, and spare no pains that may conduce to their salvation.

3. This duty is necessary to your own welfare, as well as to your people's. This is your work, according to which, among others, you shall be judged. You can no more be saved without ministerial diligence and fidelity, than they or you can be saved without Christian diligence and fidelity. If, therefore, you care not for others, care at least for yourselves. Oh what a dreadful thing is it to answer for the neglect of such a charge! And what sin more heinous than the betraying of souls? Does not that threatening make you tremble—'If you could not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but HIS BLOOD WILL I REQUIRE AT YOUR HAND (Ezekiel 33:8)'? I am afraid, no, I have no doubt, that the day is near when unfaithful ministers will wish that they had never known the charge of souls. They would have rather been colliers, or sweeps, or tinkers, than pastors of Christ's flock when, besides all the rest of their sins, they shall have the blood of so many souls to answer for. O brethren, our death, as well as our people's, is at hand, and it is as terrible to an unfaithful pastor as to any. We need to see that die we must, and that there is no remedy—that no wit, nor learning, nor popular applause, can avert the stroke, or delay the time—but, willing or unwilling, our souls must be gone, and that into a world which we never saw, where our persons and our worldly interest will not be respected. Oh, then, for a clear conscience that can say, 'I lived not to myself but to Christ; I spared not my pains; I hid not my talents; I concealed not men's misery, nor the way of their recovery.' O sirs, let us therefore take time while we have it, and work while it is day, 'for the night comes, when no man can work (John 9:4).' This is our day too; and by doing good to others, we must do good to ourselves. If you would prepare for a comfortable death, and a great and glorious reward, the harvest is before you. Gird up the loins of your minds, and quit yourselves like men, that you may end your days with these triumphant words: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give unto me in that day.' If you would be blessed with those that die in the Lord, labor now, that you may rest from your labors then, and do such works as you would wish should follow you, and not such as will prove your terror in the review (1 Peter 1:13, 1 Corinthians 16:13, 2 Tim. 9:6-8).

Application of These Motives

Having found so many and so powerful reasons to move us to this work, I shall now apply them further for our humiliation and excitation.

1. What cause have we to bleed before the Lord this day, that we have neglected so great and good a work so long; that we have been ministers of the gospel so many years, and done so little by personal instruction and conference for the saving of men's souls! If we had but set about this business sooner, who knows how many souls might have been brought to Christ, and how much happier our congregations might have been? And why might we not have done it sooner as well as now? I confess, there were many impediments in our way, and so there are still, and will be while there is a devil to tempt, and a corrupt heart in man to resist the light. But if the greatest

impediment had not been in ourselves, even in our own darkness, and dullness, and indisposedness to duty, and our dividedness and unaptness to close for the work of God, I see not but much might have been done before this. We had the same God to command us, and the same miserable objects of compassion, and the same liberty from governors as now we have. We have sinned, and have no just excuse for our sin; and the sin is so great, because the duty is so great, that we should be afraid of pleading any excuse. The God of mercy forgive us, and all the ministry of England, and lay not this or any of our ministerial negligences to our charge! Oh that he would cover all our unfaithfulness, and, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, wash away our guilt of the blood of souls; that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, we may stand before him in peace, and may not be condemned for the scattering of his flock. And oh that he would put up his controversy which he has against the pastors of his Church, and not deal the worse with them for our sakes, nor suffer underminers or persecutors to scatter them, as they have suffered his sheep to be scattered. And that he will not care as little for us, as we have done for the souls of men; nor think his salvation too good for us, as we have thought our labor and sufferings too much for men's salvation (Hebrews 13:20, 1 Peter 5:4)! As we have had many days of humiliation in England for the sins of the land, and the judgments that have befallen us, I hope we shall hear that God will more thoroughly humble the ministry. May God cause them to bewail their own neglects, and to set apart some days through the land to that end, that they may not think it enough to lament the sins of others, while they overlook their own. And may God not abhor our solemn national humiliations, because they are managed by unhumbled guides; and may we first prevail with him for a pardon for ourselves, that we may be the fitter to beg for the pardon of others. And oh that we may cast out the dung of our pride, contention, self–seeking, and idleness; lest God should cast our sacrifices as dung in our faces, and should cast us out as the dung of the earth, as of late he has done many others for a warning to us. Oh that we may presently resolve in concord to mend our pace, before we feel a sharper spur than hitherto we have felt.

2. And now, brethren, what have we to do for the time to come, but to deny our lazy flesh, and rouse up ourselves to the work before us. The harvest is great; the laborers are few (Matthew 9:37-38). The loiterers and hinderers are many; the souls of men are precious. The misery of sinners is great, and the everlasting misery to which they are near is greater. The joys of heaven are inconceivable, the comfort of a faithful minister is not small, and the joy of extensive success will be a full reward. To be fellow–workers with God and his Spirit is no little honor; to subserve the blood–shedding of Christ for men's salvation is not a light thing. To lead on the armies of Christ through the thickest of the enemy; to guide them safely through a dangerous wilderness; to steer the vessels through such storms and rocks and sands and shoals, and bring them safe to the harbor of rest, requires no small skill and diligence (John 4:35). The fields now seem even white unto harvest; the preparations that have been made for us are very great; the season of working is more calm than most ages before us have ever seen. We have carelessly loitered too long already. The present time is posting away. While we are trifling, men are dying; oh how fast are they passing into another world! And is there nothing in all this to awaken us to our duty, nothing to resolve us to speedy and unwearied diligence? Can we think that a man can be too careful and painful under all these motives and engagements? Or can that man be a fit instrument for other men's illumination, who is himself so blind? Or for the quickening of others, who is himself so senseless? What, sirs! Are you, who are men of wisdom, as dull as the common people? And do we need to heap up a multitude of words to persuade you to a known and weighty duty? One

would think it should be enough to set you to work, to show a line in the Book of God; to prove it to be his will; or to prove to you that the work has a tendency to promote men's salvation. One would think that the very sight of your miserable neighbors would be motive sufficient to draw out your most compassionate endeavors for their relief. If a cripple do but unwrap his sores, and show you his disabled limbs, it will move you without words; and will not the case of souls, that are near to damnation, move you? O happy church, if the physicians were but healed themselves; and if we had not too much of that infidelity and stupidity against which we daily preach in others. And were more soundly persuaded of that of which we persuade others; and were more deeply affected with the wonderful things with which we would affect them! Were there but such clear and deep impressions upon our own souls of those glorious things which we daily preach, oh what a change would it make in our sermons, and in our private course of life! Oh what a miserable thing it is to the Church and to themselves, that men must preach of heaven and hell, before they soundly believe that there are such things, or have felt the weight of the doctrines which they preach! It would amaze a sensible man to think what matters we preach and talk of; what it is for the soul to pass out of this flesh, and appear before a righteous God, and enter upon unchangeable joy or unchangeable torment! Oh, with what amazing thoughts do dying men apprehend these things! How should such matters be preached and discoursed of! Oh the gravity, the seriousness, the incessant diligence, which these things require! I know not what others think of them; but for my part, I am ashamed of my stupidity, and wonder at myself that I deal not with my own and others' souls as one that looks for the great day of the Lord. I wonder that I can have room for almost any other thoughts or words, and that such astonishing matters do not wholly absorb my mind. I marvel how I can preach of them slightly and coldly, and how I can let men alone in their sins, and that I do not go to them, and beseech them, for the Lord's sake, to repent, however they may take it, and whatever pains or trouble it may cost me! I seldom come out of the pulpit, but my conscience smites me that I have been no more serious and fervent in such a case. It accuses me not so much for want of ornaments or elegancy, nor for letting fall an unhandsome word. It asks me, 'How could you speak of life and death with such a heart? How could you preach of heaven and hell in such a careless, sleepy manner? Do you believe what you say? Are you in earnest or in jest? How can you tell people that sin is such a thing, and that so much misery is upon them and before them, and be no more affected with it? Should you not weep over such a people, and should not your tears interrupt your words? Should not you cry aloud, and show them their transgressions, and entreat and beseech them as for life and death?' Truly, this is the peal that conscience does ring in my ears, and yet my drowsy soul will not be awakened.

Oh what a thing is a senseless, hardened heart! O Lord, save us from the plague of infidelity and hard–heartedness ourselves, or else how shall we be fit instruments of saving others from it? Oh, do that on our own souls, which you would use us to do on the souls of others! I am even confounded to think what a difference there is between my sickbed apprehensions, and my pulpit apprehensions, of the life to come. That ever that can seem so light a matter to me now, which seemed so great and astonishing a matter then, and I know will do so again when death looks me in the face, when yet I daily know and think of that approaching hour. And yet these forethoughts will not recover such working apprehensions! O sirs, surely if you had all conversed with neighbor Death as often as I have done, and as often received the sentence in yourselves, you would have an unquiet conscience, if not a reformed life, as to your ministerial diligence and fidelity. You would have something within you that would frequently ask you such questions as these: 'Is this all your

compassion for lost sinners? Will you do no more to seek and to save them? Is there not such and such—oh how many round about you!—that are yet the visible sons of death? What have you said to them, or done for their conversion? Shall they die and be in hell before you will speak to them one serious word to prevent it? Shall they there curse you forever that did no more in time to save them?'

Such cries of conscience are daily ringing in mine ears, though, the Lord knows, I have too little obeyed them. The God of mercy pardon me, and awaken me, with the rest of his servants that have been thus sinfully negligent. I confess to my shame that I seldom hear the bell toll for one that is dead, but conscience asks me, 'What have you done for the saving of that soul before it left the body? There is one more gone to judgment; what did you to prepare him for judgment?' And yet I have been slothful and backward to help them that survive. How can you choose, when you are laying a corpse in the grave, but think with yourselves, 'Here lies the body; but where is the soul? And what have I done for it, before it departed? It was part of my charge; what account can I give of it?'

O sirs, is it a small matter to you to answer such questions as these? It may seem so now, but the hour is coming when it will not seem so. 'If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts,' and will condemn us much more, even with another kind of condemnation than conscience does (1 John 3:20). The voice of conscience is a still voice, and the sentence of conscience is a gentle sentence, in comparison of the voice and the sentence of God. Alas, conscience sees but a very little of our sin and misery, in comparison of what God sees. What mountains would these things appear to your souls, which now seem molehills? What beams would these be in your eyes, that now seem motes, if you did but see them with a clearer light? (I dare not say, As God sees them). We can easily make shift to plead the cause with conscience, and either bribe it, or bear its sentence; but God is not so easily dealt with, nor his sentence so easily borne. 'Wherefore we receiving,' and preaching, 'a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence, and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:28-29).' Because you shall not say that I affright you with bugbears, and tell you of dangers and terrors when there are none, I will here show you the certainty and sureness of that condemnation that is like to befall negligent pastors, particularly how many will be ready to rise up against us and condemn us, if we shall hereafter be willful neglecters of this great work.

(1) Our parents, that destined us to the ministry, will condemn us, and say, 'Lord, we devoted them to your service, and they made light of it, and served themselves.'

(2) Our masters that taught us, our tutors that instructed us, the schools and universities where we lived, and all the years that we spent in study, will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us; for why was all this, but for the work of God?

(3) Our learning and knowledge and ministerial gifts will condemn us; for to what end were we made partakers of these, but for the work of God?

(4) Our voluntary undertaking the charge of souls will condemn us; for all men should be faithful to the trust which they have undertaken.

(5) All the care of God for his Church, and all that Christ has done and suffered for it, will rise up in judgment against us if we be negligent and unfaithful, and condemn us; because by our neglect

we destroyed them for whom Christ died.

(6) All the precepts and charges of Holy Scripture, all the promises of assistance and reward, all the threatenings of punishment, will rise up against us and condemn us; for God did not speak all this in vain.

(7) All the examples of the prophets and apostles, and other preachers recorded in Scripture, and all the examples of the faithful and diligent servants of Christ in these latter times, and in the places around us, will rise up in judgment and condemn us; for all these were for our imitation, and to provoke us to a holy emulation in fidelity and ministerial diligence.

(8) The Holy Bible that lies open before us, and all the books in our studies that tell us of our duty, directly or indirectly, will condemn the lazy and unprofitable servant; for we have not all these helps and furniture in vain.

(9) All the sermons that we preach to persuade our people to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, to lay violent hands upon the crown of life, and take the kingdom by force, to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and so to run as to obtain, will rise up against the unfaithful and condemn them. For if it so nearly concern them to labor for their salvation, does it not concern us who have the charge of them to be also violent, laborious, and unwearied in striving to help on their salvation? Is it worth their labor, and patience, and is it not also worth ours (Php 2:12, Matthew 7:13)?

(10) All the sermons that we preach to them to set forth the evil of sin, the danger of a natural state, the need of a Savior, the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, yes, and the truth of the Christian religion, will rise up in judgment against the unfaithful, and condemn them. And a sad review it will be to themselves, when they shall be forced to think, ‘Did I tell them of such great dangers and hopes in public, and would I do no more, in private, to help them? What? Tell them daily of damnation, and yet let them run into it so easily? Tell them of such a glory, and scarcely speak a word to them personally, to help them to it? Were these such great matters with me at church, and so small matters when I came home?’ Ah, this will be dreadful self–condemnation!

(11) All the sermons that we have preached to persuade other men to such duties – as neighbors to exhort one another daily, and parents and masters to teach their children and servants the way to heaven – will rise up in judgment against the unfaithful, and condemn them; for will you persuade others to that which you will not do, as far as you can, yourselves? When you threaten them for neglecting their duty, how much more do you threaten your own souls!

(12) All the maintenance which we take for our service, if we be unfaithful, will condemn us; for who is it that will pay a servant to take his pleasure, or sit idle, or work for himself? If we have the fleece, surely it is that we may look after the flock; and, by taking the wages, we oblige ourselves to the work.

(13) All the witness that we have borne against the scandalous, negligent ministers of this age, and all the endeavors that we have used for their removal, will condemn the unfaithful; for God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11). If we succeed them in their sins, we have spoken all that against ourselves; and, as we condemned them, God and others will condemn us, if we imitate them. And, though we should not be so bad as they, it will prove sad if we are even like them.

(14) All the judgments that God has, in this age, executed on negligent ministers, before our eyes, will condemn us, if we be unfaithful. Has he made the idle shepherds and sensual drones to stench in the nostrils of the people? And will he honor us, if we be idle and sensual? Has he sequestrated them, and cast them out of their habitations, and out of their pulpits, and laid them by as dead, while they are yet alive, and made them a hissing and a byword in the land? And yet dare we imitate them? Are not their sufferings our warnings? And did not all this befall them as an example to us? If anything in the world would awaken ministers to self–denial and diligence, methinks we have seen enough to do it. Would you have imitated the old world if you had seen the flood that drowned it? Would you have indulged in the sins of Sodom—idleness, pride, fullness of bread—if you had stood by, and seen the flames which consumed it ascending up to heaven? Who would have been a Judas, that had seen him hanged and burst asunder? And who would have been a lying, sacrilegious hypocrite, that had seen Ananias and Sapphira die? And who would not have been afraid to contradict the gospel, that had seen Elymas smitten with blindness (2 Peter 2:5-6, Acts 1:18, Acts 5:5, Acts 13:10-12)? And shall we prove idle, self–seeking ministers, when we have seen God scourging such out of his temple, and sweeping them away as dirt into the channels? God forbid! For then how great and how manifold will our condemnation be!

(15) Lastly, All the days of fasting and prayer, which have, of late years, been kept in England for a reformation, will rise up in judgment against the unreformed, who will not be persuaded to the painful part of the work. This, I confess, is so heavy an aggravation of our sin, that it makes me ready to tremble to think of it. Was there ever a nation on the face of the earth, which so long and so solemnly followed God with fasting and prayer, as we have done? Before the parliament began, how frequent and fervent were we in secret! After that, for many years together, we had a monthly fast commanded by the parliament, besides frequent private and public fasts on other occasions. And what was all this for? Whatever was, for some time, the means we looked at, yet still the end of all our prayers was Church–reformation, and, therein, especially these two things: a faithful ministry, and the exercise of discipline in the Church. And did it once enter then into the hearts of the people, or even into our own hearts, to imagine, that when we had all we would have, and the matter was put into our own hands, to be as painful as we could, and to exercise what discipline we would, that then we would do nothing but publicly preach? That we would not be at the pains of catechizing and instructing our people personally, nor exercise any considerable part of discipline at all? It astonishes me to think of it. What a depth of deceit is the heart of man (Jeremiah 17:9)! What? Are good men's hearts so deceitful? Are all men's hearts so deceitful? I confess, I then told many soldiers and other sensual men that though they had fought for a reformation, I was confident they would abhor it, and be enemies to it, when they saw and felt it. I thought that the yoke of discipline would have pinched their necks, and that, when they were catechized and personally dealt with, and reproved for their sin in private and public, and brought to public confession and repentance or avoided as impenitent, they would scorn and spurn at all this, and take the yoke of Christ for tyranny. But little did I think that the ministers would let all fall, and put almost none of this upon them; but let them alone for fear of displeasing them, and let all run on as it did before.

Oh the earnest prayers which I have heard for a painful ministry, and for discipline! It was as if they had even wrestled for salvation itself. Yes, they commonly called discipline 'the kingdom of Christ, or the exercise of his kingly office in his church,' and so preached and prayed for it, as if the setting

up of discipline had been the setting up of the kingdom of Christ. And did I then think that they would refuse to set it up when they might? What! Is the kingdom of Christ now reckoned among things indifferent?

If the God of heaven, who knew our hearts, had, in the midst of our prayers and cries, on one of our public monthly fasts, returned us this answer, with his dreadful voice, in the audience of the assembly: ‘You deceitful–hearted sinners! What hypocrisy is this, to weary me with your cries for that which you will not have, if I would give it to you; and thus to lift up your voices for that which your souls abhor! What is reformation, but the instructing and importunate persuading of sinners to entertain my Christ and grace, as offered to them, and the governing of my Church according to my Word? Yet these, which are your work, you will not be persuaded to, when you come to find it troublesome and ungrateful. When I have delivered you, it is not me, but yourselves, that you will serve; and I must be as earnest to persuade you to reform the Church, in doing your own duty, as you are earnest with me to grant you liberty for reformation. And, when all is done, you will leave it undone, and will be long before you will be persuaded to my work.’ If the Lord, or any messenger of his, had given us such an answer, would it not have amazed us? Would it not have seemed incredible to us, that our hearts should be such as now they prove? And would we not have said, as Hazael, ‘Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?’ or as Peter, ‘Though all men forsake you, yet will not I (2 Kings 8:13, Matthew 26:33),’? Well, brethren, sad experience has showed us our frailty. We have refused the troublesome and costly part of the reformation that we prayed for; but Christ yet turns back, and looks with a merciful eye upon us. Oh that we had yet the hearts immediately to go out and weep bitterly, and to do no more as we have done, lest a worse thing come upon us; and now to follow Christ, whom we have so far forsaken, through labor and suffering, even though it were to death!

I have thus showed you what will come of it, if you will not set yourselves faithfully to this work, to which you are under so many obligations and engagements; and what an inexcusable thing our neglect will be, and how great and manifold a condemnation it will expose us to. Truly, brethren, if I did not apprehend the work to be of exceeding great moment to yourselves, to the people, and to the honor of God, I would not have troubled you with so many words about it, nor have presumed to speak so sharply as I have done. But when the question is about life and death, men are apt to forget their reverence and courtesy and compliments and good manners. For my own part I apprehend this is one of the best and greatest works I ever in my life put my hand to; and I verily think, that if your thoughts of it are as mine, you will not think my words too many or too keen. I can well remember the time when I was earnest for the reformation of matters of ceremony; and, if I should be cold in such substantial matter as this, how disorderly and disproportionable would my zeal appear! Alas, can we think that the reformation is wrought, when we cast out a few ceremonies, and changed some vestures, and gestures, and forms! Oh no, sirs! It is the converting and saving of souls that is our business. That is the chief part of reformation, that does most good, and tends most to the salvation of the people. And now, brethren, the work is before you. In these personal instructions of all the flock, as well as in public preaching, does it consist. Others have done their part, and borne their burden, and now comes in yours. You may easily see how great a matter lies upon your hands, and how many will be wronged by your failing of your duty, and how much will be lost by the sparing of your labor. If your labor be more worth than the souls of men, and than the blood of Christ, then sit still, and look not after the ignorant or the

ungodly. Follow your own pleasure or worldly business, or take your ease. Displease not sinners, nor your own flesh, but let your neighbors sink or swim; and, if public preaching will not save them, let them perish. But, if the case be far otherwise, you had best look about you.

Part II. Objections to This Duty I shall next answer some of those objections which may be made to the practice I have been recommending.

OBJECTION 1. We teach our people in public; and how then are we bound to teach them, man by man, besides?

ANSWER: You pray for them in public: must you not also pray for them in private? Paul taught every man, and exhorted every man, and that both publicly, and from house to house, night and day, with tears (Acts 20:27). But what need we say more, when experience speaks so loudly on this subject? I am daily forced to wonder how lamentably ignorant many of our people are, who have seemed diligent hearers of me these ten or twelve years, while I spoke as plainly as I was able to speak. Some know not that each person in the Trinity is God; nor that Christ is God and man; nor that he took his human nature to heaven; nor what they must trust to for pardon and salvation; nor many similar important principles of our faith. No, some who come constantly to private meetings are grossly ignorant; whereas, in one hour's familiar instruction of them in private, they seem to understand more, and better entertain it than they did in all their lives before.

OBJECTION 2. All the parish are not the church, nor do I take the pastoral charge of them, and therefore I am not satisfied that I am bound to take these pains with them.

ANSWER: I will pass by the question, Whether all the parish are to be taken for your church, because in some places it is so, and in others not.

[a] The common maintenance which most receive is for teaching the whole parish, though you be not obliged to take them all for a church.

[b] What need we look for a stronger obligation than the common bond that lies on all Christians, to further the work of men's salvation and the good of the Church, and the honor of God, to the utmost of their power; together with the common bond that is on all ministers, to further these ends by ministerial teaching to the utmost of their power? Is it a work so good, and apparently conducing to so great benefits to the souls of men, and yet can you perceive no obligation to the doing of it?

OBJECTION 3: This course will take up so much time, that a man will have no opportunity to follow his studies. Most of us are young and inexperienced, and have need of much time to improve our own abilities and to increase our own knowledge, which this course will entirely prevent.

ANSWER: (1) We suppose those whom we persuade to this work to understand the substance of the Christian religion and to be able to teach it to others; and the addition of lower and less necessary things is not to be preferred before this needful communication of the fundamental principles of religion. I highly value common knowledge, and would not encourage any to set light by it; but I value the saving of souls more. That work which is our great end must be done, whatever be left undone. It is a very desirable thing for a physician to be thoroughly studied in his are, and to be able to see the reason of his practice, and to resolve such difficult controversies as

are before him. But what if he had the charge of a hospital, or lived in a city where the pestilence was raging, and he would be studying fermentation, the circulation of the blood, blisters, and the like, and such like excellent points, when he should be visiting his patients, and saving men's lives. What if he should even turn them away, and let them perish, and tell them that he has not time to give them advice, because he must follow his own studies. I would consider that man as a most preposterous student, who preferred the remote means before the end itself of his studies. Indeed, I would think him but a civil kind of murderer. Men's souls may be saved without knowing whether God did predetermine the creature in all its acts; whether the understanding necessarily determines the will; whether God works grace in a physical or in a moral way of causation; what freewill is; whether God have scientiam mediam or positive decrees concerning the blame for evil deeds; and a hundred similar questions, which are probably the things you would be studying when you should be saving souls. Get well to heaven, and help your people there, and you shall know all these things in a moment, and a thousand more, which now, by all your studies, you can never know. And is not this the most expeditious and certain way to knowledge?

(2) If you grow not extensively in knowledge, you will by this way of diligent practice obtain the intensive more excellent growth. If you know not so many things as others, you will know the great things better than they; for this serious dealing with sinners for their salvation, will help you to far deeper apprehensions of the saving principles of religion than you will get by any other means. A little more knowledge of these is worth all the other knowledge in the world. Oh, when I am looking heavenward and gazing towards the inaccessible light, and aspiring after the knowledge of God, and find my soul so dark and distant that I am ready to say, 'I know not God—he is above me quite out of my reach,' methinks I could willingly exchange all the other knowledge I have, for one glimpse more of the knowledge of God and of the life to come. Oh that I had never known a word in logic or metaphysics, nor known whatever schoolmen said, so I had but one spark more of that light which would show me the things that I must shortly see. For my part, I conceive, that by serious talking of everlasting things and teaching the creed, or some short catechism, you may grow more in knowledge (though not in the knowledge of more things) and prove much wiser men than if you spent that time in studying common or curious, yet less necessary things. And perhaps it will be found, before we have done, that this employment tends to make men much abler pastors for the Church than private studies alone. He will be the ablest physician, lawyer, and divine too, that adds practice and experience to his studies. Meanwhile that man shall prove a useless drone that refuses God's service all his life, under presence of preparing for it, and lets men's souls pass on to perdition, while he pretends to be studying how to recover them, or to get more ability to help and save them.

(3) Yet let me add, that though I count this the chief, I would have you to have more, because these subservient sciences are very useful. Therefore I say that you may have competent time for both, lose no time upon vain recreations and employments; consume it not in needless sleep; trifle not away a minute. Do what you do with all your might; and then see whether you have not competent time for these other pursuits. If you set apart but two days in a week to this great work, you may find some time for common studies out of the other four.

Indeed, are not four days in the week (after so many years spent in the university) a fair proportion for men to study controversies and sermons? Though my weakness deprive me of abundance of time, and extraordinary works take up six, if not eight parts of my time, yet I bless God I can find

time to provide for preaching two days a week, notwithstanding the two days for personal instruction. Now, for those that are not troubled with any extraordinary work (I mean writings, and vocations of several sorts, besides the ordinary work of the ministry), I cannot believe, but, if they are willing, they may find two half days a week at least for this work.

(4) Duties are to be taken together: the greatest is to be preferred, but none are to be neglected that can be performed. No one is to be pleaded against another, but each is to know its proper place. But if there were such a case of necessity, that we could not carry on further studies and instruct the ignorant too, I would throw aside all the libraries in the world, rather than be guilty of the perdition of one soul; or at least, I know that this would be my duty.

OBJECTION 4: But this course will destroy the health of our bodies, by continually spending our spirits, and allowing us no time for necessary recreations. And it will wholly lock us up from friendly communion with others, so that we must never stir from home, nor enjoy ourselves a day with our friends, for the relaxation of our minds But as we shall seem uncourteous and morose to others, so we shall tire ourselves, and the bow that is always bent will be in danger of breaking at last.

ANSWER: (1) This is the plea of the flesh for its own interest. The sluggard says, ‘There is a lion in the way,’ nor will he plough because of the cold. There is no duty of moment and self–denial, but, if you consult with flesh and blood, it will give you as wise reasons as these against it. Who would ever have been burned at a stake for Christ, if this reasoning had been good? Yes, or who would ever have been a Christian?

(2) We may take time for necessary recreation, and yet attend to this work. An hour, or half an hour’s walk before meat, is as much recreation as is necessary for the health of most of the weaker sort of students. I have reason to know somewhat of this by long experience. I have a body that has languished under great weaknesses for many years, and my diseases have been such as require as much exercise as almost any in the world. I have found exercise the principal means of my preservation until now, and, therefore, have as great reason to plead for it as any man that I know. Yet I have found that the foresaid proportion has been blessed to my preservation, though I know that much more had been like to have tended to my greater health. Indeed, I do not know one minister in a hundred that needs so much exercise as myself. Yes, I know abundance of ministers, that scarce ever use any exercise at all, though I commend them not in this. I doubt not but it is our duty to use so much exercise as is necessary for the preservation of our health, so far as our work requires. Otherwise, we should, for one day’s work, lose the opportunity of many. But this may be done, and yet the work that we are engaged in, be done too. On those two days a week that you set apart for this work, what hinders but you may take an hour or two to walk for the exercise of your bodies, and much more on other days? But as for those men who limit not their recreations to stated hours, but must have them for the pleasing of their voluptuous humor and not merely to fit them for their work, such sensualists have need to study better the nature of Christianity. They need to learn the danger of living after the flesh, and to get more mortification and self–denial before they preach these things to others. If you must needs have your pleasures, you should not have put yourselves into a calling that requires you to make God and his service your pleasure, and restrains you so much from fleshly pleasures. Is it not your baptismal engagement to fight against the flesh? And do you not know that much of the Christian warfare consists in the combat between the flesh and the spirit? And that this is the difference

between a true Christian and an unconverted man, that the one lives after the spirit, and mortifies the deeds and desires of the body, and the other lives after the flesh? And do you make it your calling to preach all this to others; and, notwithstanding this, must you needs have your pleasures? If you must, then, for shame, give over the preaching of the gospel and the profession of Christianity, and profess yourselves to be what you are; and as ‘you sow to the flesh, so of the flesh you shall reap corruption.’(Galatians 6:8)Does even Paul say: ‘I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway’? (1 Corinthians 9:26)And have not such sinners as we still more need to do so? What? Shall we pamper our bodies and give them their desires in unnecessary pleasure, when Paul must keep under his body, and bring it into subjection? Must Paul do this, lest, after all his preaching, he should be a castaway? And have not we much more cause to fear it of ourselves? I know that some pleasure is lawful; that is, when it is of use to fit us for our work. But for a man to be so far in love with his pleasures, as for the sake of them to waste unnecessarily his precious time, and to neglect the great work of men’s salvation, yes, and to plead for this, as if it must or might be done, and so to justify himself in such a course, is a wickedness inconsistent with the common fidelity of a Christian, much more with the fidelity of a minister of Christ. Such wretches as are ‘lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God’ (2 Timothy 3:5) must look to be loved of him accordingly, and are fitter to be cast out of Christian communion, than to be the chief in the Church; for we are commanded ‘from such to turn away.’ (2 Timothy 3:5)Recreations for a student must be specially for the exercise of his body, he having before him such variety of delights to his mind. And they must be used as whetting is by the mower; that is, only so far as is necessary to his work. We must be careful that they rob us not of our precious time, but be kept within the narrowest possible bounds.

(3) The labor in which we are engaged is not likely much to impair our health. It is true, it must be serious; but that will but excite and revive our spirits, and not so much spend them. Men can talk all day long about other matters without any abatement of their health; and why may we not talk with men about their salvation without such great abatement of ours?

(4) What have we our time and strength for, but to lay them out for God? What is a candle made for, but to burn? Burned and wasted we must be; and is it not fitter it should be in lighting men to heaven, and in working for God, than in living to the flesh? How little difference is there between the pleasure of a long and of a short life, when they are both at an end! What comfort will it be to you at death, that you lengthened your life by shortening your work? He who works much, lives much. Our life is to be esteemed according to the ends and works of it, and not according to the mere duration. As Seneca says of a drone, ‘There he lies, not there he lives; and long he abode, not long he lived.’ Will it not comfort us more at death to review a short time faithfully spent, than a long life spent unfaithfully?

(5) As for visits and civilities, if they be of greater use than our ministerial employments, you may break the Sabbath for them, you may forbear preaching for them, and you may also forbear this private work. But if it be otherwise, how dare you make them a presence for neglecting so great a duty? Must God wait on your friends? What though they be lords, or knights, or gentlemen; must they be served before God? Or is their displeasure or censure a greater hurt to you than God’s displeasure or censure? Or dare you think, when God will question you for your neglects, to put

him off with this excuse: ‘Lord, I would have spent more of my time in seeking men’s salvation; but such a gentleman, or such a friend, would have taken it ill, if I had not waited on them’? If you yet ‘seek to please men,’ (Galatians 1:10) you are no longer the servants of Christ. He who dare spend his life in flesh–pleasing, and man–pleasing, is bolder than I am. And he who dare waste his time in compliments, does little consider what he has to do with it. Oh that I could but improve my time, according to my convictions of the necessity of improving it! He who has looked death in the face as often as I have done, I will not thank him if he value his time. I profess I wonder at those ministers who have time to spare; who can hunt or shoot or bowl, or use the like recreations two or three hours, yes, whole days together; that can sit an hour together in vain discourse, and spend whole days in complimental visits, and journeys to such ends. Good Lord! What do these men think on, when so many souls around them cry for help, and death gives us no respite, and they know not how short a time their people and they may be together; when the smallest parish has so much work that may employ all their diligence, night and day?

Brethren, I hope you are content to be plainly dealt with. If you have no sense of the worth of souls, and of the preciousness of that blood which was shed for them, and of the glory to which they are going, and of the misery of which they are in danger, you are not Christians, and consequently are very unfit to be ministers. And if you have, how can you find time for needless recreations, visits or discourses? Dare you, like idle gossips, chat and trifle away your time, when you have such works as these to do, and so many of them? O precious time! How swiftly does it pass away! How soon will it be gone! What are the forty years of my life that are past? Were every day as long as a month, methinks it were too short for the work of a day. Have we not already lost time enough, in the days of our vanity? Never do I come to a dying man that is not utterly stupid, but he better sees the worth of time. O then, if they could call time back again, how loud would they call! If they could but buy it, what would they not give for it? And yet we can afford to trifle it away; yes, and to allow ourselves in this, and willfully to cast off the greatest works of God. O what a befooling thing is sin, that can thus distract men that seem so wise! Is it possible that a man of any compassion and honesty, or any concern about his ministerial duty, or any sense of the strictness of his account, should have time to spare for idleness and vanity? And I must tell you further, brethren, that if another might take some time for mere delight, which is not necessary, yet so cannot you; for your undertaking binds you to stricter attendance than other men are bound to. May a physician, when the plague is raging, take any more relaxation or recreation than is necessary for his life, when so many are expecting his help in a case of life and death? As his pleasure is not worth men’s lives, still less is yours worth men’s souls. Suppose a city were besieged, and the enemy watching, on one side, all advantages to surprise it, and, on the other, seeking to fire it with grenades, which they are throwing in continually. I pray you, tell me, if certain men undertake, as their office, to watch the ports, and others to quench the fire that may be kindled in the houses, what time will you allow these men for recreation or relaxation when the city is in danger, and the fire will burn on and prevail, if they intermit their diligence? Or would you excuse one of these men if he come off his work and say, I am but flesh and blood, I must have some relaxation and pleasure? Surely, at the utmost, you would allow him none but what was absolutely necessary. Do not grudge at this, and say, ‘This is a hard saying; who can hear it?’ For it is your mercy; and you are well, if you know when you are well, as I shall show you in answering the next objection.

OBJECTION 5: I do not think that it is required of ministers that they make drudges of themselves. If they preach diligently, and visit the sick, and perform other ministerial duties, and occasionally do good to those they converse with, I do not think that God does require that we should thus tie ourselves to instruct every person distinctly, and to make our lives a burden and a slavery.

ANSWER: Of what use and weight the duty is, I have showed before, and how plainly it is commanded. And do you think God does not require you to do all the good you can? Will you stand by and see sinners gasping under the pangs of death and say, 'God does not require me to make myself a drudge to save them'? Is this the voice of Christian or ministerial compassion? Or rather is it not the voice of sensual laziness and diabolical cruelty? Does God set you work to do, and will you not believe that he would have you do it? Is this the voice of obedience, or of rebellion? It is all one whether your flesh prevail with you to deny obedience to acknowledged duty, and say plainly, I will obey no further than it pleases me; or whether it may make you willfully reject the evidence that should convince you that it is a duty, and say, I will not believe it to be my duty, unless it please me. It is the character of a hypocrite, to make a religion to himself of the cheapest part of God's service which will stand with his fleshly ends and felicity, and to reject the rest, which is inconsistent therewith. And to the words of hypocrisy, this objection superadds the words of gross impiety. For what a wretched calumny is this against the most high God, to call his service a slavery and drudgery! What thoughts have such men of their Master, their work, and their wages? The thoughts of a believer, or of an infidel? Are these men like to honor God, and promote his service, that have such base thoughts of it themselves? Do these men delight in holiness, that account it a slavish work? Do they believe indeed the misery of sinners, that account it such a drudgery to be diligent to save them? Christ says, that 'he who denies not himself, and forsakes not all, and takes not up his cross, and follows him, cannot be his disciple.' (Luke 14:26) (Matthew 10:38) But these men count it a slavery to labor hard in his vineyard, and to deny their ease, at a time when they have all accommodations and encouragements. How far is this from forsaking all! And how can these men be fit for the ministry, who are such enemies to self–denial, and so to true Christianity?

I am, therefore, forced to say that hence arises the chief misery of the Church, THAT SO MANY ARE MADE MINISTERS BEFORE THEY ARE CHRISTIANS. If these men had seen the diligence of Christ in doing good when he neglected his meat to talk with one woman, and when he had no time to eat bread, would they not have been of the mind of his carnal friends, who went to lay hold on him, and said, 'He is beside himself'? (John 4:34) (Mark 3:21) They would have told Christ he made a drudge or a slave of himself, and God did not require all this ado. If they had seen him all day in preaching, and all night in prayer, it seems he would have had this censure from them for his labor. I cannot but advise these men to search their own hearts, whether they unfeignedly believe that Word which they preach. Do you indeed believe that such glory awaits those who die in the Lord, and such torment those that die unconverted? If you do, how can you think any labor too much for such weighty ends? If you do not, say so, and get you out of the vineyard, and go with the prodigal to keep swine, and undertake not to feed the flock of Christ. Do you not know, brethren, that it is your own benefit which you grudge at? The more you do, the more you will receive; the more yo

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Do you not know, brethren, that it is your own benefit which you grudge at? The more you do, the more you will receive; the more you lay out, the more you will have coming in. If you are strangers to these Christian paradoxes, you should not have undertaken to teach them to others. At present, our incomes of spiritual life and peace are commonly in the way of duty, so that he who is most in duty has most of God. Exercise of grace increases it. And is it a slavery to be more with God, and to receive more from him, than other men? It is the chief solace of a gracious soul to be doing good, and receiving by doing; and to be much exercised about those Divine things which have his heart. Besides, we prepare for fuller receivings hereafter; we put out our talents to usury, and, by improving them, we shall make five become ten, and so be made rulers of ten cities. Is it a drudgery to send to the most distant parts of the world, to exchange our trifles for gold and jewels? Do not these men seek to justify the profane, who make all diligent godliness a drudgery, and reproach it as a precise and tedious life, and say they will never believe but a man may be saved without all this ado? Even so say these in respect to the work of the ministry. They take this diligence for ungrateful tediousness, and will not believe but a man may be a faithful minister without all this ado!

It is a heinous sin to be negligent in so great a business. But to approve of that negligence, and so to be impenitent; and to plead against duty as if it were none; and when they should lay out themselves for the saving of souls, to say, I do not believe that God requires it—this is so great an aggravation of the sin. Where the Church's necessity does not force us to make use of such men for want of better, I cannot but think them worthy to be cast out as rubbish, and as 'salt that has lost its savor, that is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the ash-heap.' (Luke 14:34-35) 'He who has ears to hear,' (Revelation 2:7) adds Christ, 'let him hear.' And if such ministers become a byword and a reproach, let them thank themselves; for it is their own sin that makes them vile. And while they thus debase the service of Christ, they do but debase themselves, and prepare for a greater debasement at the last.

OBJECTION 6: The times that Paul lived in required more diligence than ours. The churches were but in the planting, the enemies many, and persecution great. But now it is not so.

ANSWER: This argument savors of a man locked up in a study and unacquainted with the world. Good Lord! Are there such multitudes round about us that know not whether Christ be God or man, whether he has taken his body to heaven or left it on earth, nor what he has done for their salvation, nor what they must trust to for pardon and everlasting life? Are there so many thousands round about us who are drowned in presumption, security, and sensuality, and, when we have done all we can in the pulpit, will neither feel us nor understand us? Are there so many willful drunkards, worldlings, self–seekers, railers, haters of a holy life, that want nothing but death to make them remediless? Are there so many ignorant, dull, and scandalous professors, so many dividers, seducers, and troublers of the Church? And yet is the happiness of our times so great, that we may excuse ourselves from personal instruction, because of the less necessity of the

times? What needs there but faith and experience to answer this objection? Believe better within and look more without among the miserable, and I warrant you, you will not see cause to spare your pains for want of work, or of necessities to invite you. What conscientious minister finds not work enough to do from one end of the year to another, if he have not even an hundred souls to care for? Are ungodly men the less miserable, because they make profession of Christianity, or the more?

OBJECTION 7: But if you make such severe laws for ministers, the Church will be left without them. For what man will choose such a toilsome life for himself? Or what parents will impose such a burden on their children? Men will avoid it both for the bodily toil, and the danger to their consciences, if they should not well discharge it.

ANSWER: (1) It is not we, but Christ who has made and imposed these laws which you call severe; and if I should silence them or misinterpret them, that would not relax them, nor excuse you. He who made them, knew why he did it, and will expect obedience to them. Is infinite goodness to be questioned or suspected by us, as making bad or unmerciful laws? No, it is pure mercy in him to impose this great duty upon us. If physicians were required to be as diligent as possible in hospitals, or pest–houses, or with other patients in order to save their lives, would there not be more of mercy than of rigor in this law? What! Must God let the souls of your neighbors perish to save you a little labor and suffering, and this in mercy to you? Oh, what a miserable world should we have, if blind, self–conceited man had the ruling of it!

(2) As to a supply of pastors, Christ will take care of that. He who imposes duty has the fullness of the Spirit, and can give men hearts to obey his laws. Do you think Christ will suffer all men to be as cruel, unmerciful, fleshly, and self–seeking as you? He who himself undertook the work of our redemption, and bore our transgressions, and has been faithful as the chief Shepherd of the Church, will not lose all his labor and suffering for want of instruments to carry on his work. Nor will he come down again to do all himself, because no other will do it. But he will provide men to be his servants and ushers in his school who shall willingly take the labor on them, and rejoice to be so employed. They shall account that the happiest life in the world, which you account so great a toil, and would not exchange it for all your ease and carnal pleasure. But for the saving of souls, and the propagating of the gospel of Christ, they will be content to bear the burden and heat of the day, and to fill up the measure of the sufferings of Christ in their bodies. They will joy to work while it is day; to do what they do with all their might; to be the servants of all, and not to please themselves, but others, for their edification; and to become all things to all men, that they may save some. They will gladly endure all things for the elect's sake, and spend and be spent for their fellow–creatures; though the more they love, the less they should be beloved, and should be accounted their enemies for telling them the truth. Such pastors will Christ provide his people, after his own heart, who will 'feed them with knowledge and understanding,' as men that 'seek not theirs, but them.' What? Do you think Christ will have no servants, if such as you shall, with Demas, turn to the present world, and forsake him?

If you dislike his service, you may seek a better where you can find it, and boast of your gain in the end; but do not threaten him with the loss of your service. He has made such laws as you will call severe, for all who will be saved, as well as for his ministers. For all who will be his disciples must 'deny themselves, and mortify the flesh, and be crucified to the world, and take up their cross, and

follow him.' And yet Christ will not be without disciples, nor will he conceal his seeming hard terms from men to entice them to his service; but he will tell them of the worst, and then let them come or not, as they choose. He will call to them beforehand to count the cost, and will tell them that 'the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head.' He will tell them that he comes not to give them worldly peace and prosperity, but to call them to 'suffer with him, that they may reign with him' and 'in patience to possess their souls'; to conquer, that they may be crowned and 'sit down with him on his throne.' And all this he will cause his chosen to perform. If you be come to that pass with Christ, as the Israelites were once with David, and say, 'Will the son of Jesse give you fields and vineyards? Every man to your tents, O Israel!' And if you say 'Now look to your own house, you Son of David,' you shall see that Christ will look to his own house. And do you look to yours as well as you can, and tell me, at the hour of death and judgment, which is the better bargain, and whether Christ had more need of you, or you of him. As to scruples of conscience, for fear of failing, let it be remarked: First, it is not involuntary imperfections that Christ will take so heinously; it is unfaithfulness and willful negligence. Second, it will not serve your turn to run out of the vineyard on presence of scruples that you cannot do the work as you ought. He can follow you, and overtake you, as he did Jonah, with such a storm as shall lay you 'in the belly of hell.' To cast off a duty because you cannot be faithful in the performance of it will prove but a poor excuse at last. If men had but reckoned well at first the difference between things temporal and things eternal, and what they shall lose or get by Christ, and had possessed that faith which is 'the evidence of things not seen,' and had lived by faith, and not by sense, all these objections would be easily resolved by us. All the pleas of flesh and blood for its interest would appear as the reasoning of children, or rather of men who had lost their senses.

OBJECTION 8: But to what purpose is all this, when most of the people will not submit? They will not come to us to be catechized, and will tell us that they are now too old to go to school. And therefore it is better to let them alone, as trouble them and ourselves to no purpose.

ANSWER: (1) It is not to be denied that too many people are obstinate in their wickedness, that the 'simple ones love simplicity, and the scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge.' But the worse they are, the sadder is their case, and the more to be pitied. And the more diligent should we be for their recovery.

(2) I would it were not the blame of ministers, that a great part of the people are so obstinate and contemptuous. If we did but burn and shine before them as we ought; had we convincing sermons and convincing lives; did we set ourselves to do all the good we could, whatever it might cost us; were we more meek and humble, more loving and charitable, and let them see that we set light by all worldly things, in comparison of their salvation—much more might be done by us than is done. The mouths of many would be stopped, and though the wicked will still do wickedly, yet more would be tractable and the wicked would be fewer and calmer than they are. If you say that some of the ablest and godliest ministers in the country have had as untractable and scornful parishioners as others, I answer, that some able godly men have been too lordly and strange. Some have been too uncharitable and worldly, and backward to costly though necessary good works. And some have done but little in private, when they have done excellency in public, and so have hindered the fruit of their labors. But where there are not these impediments, experience tells us that the success is much greater, at least as to the bowing of people to more calmness and

teachableness; yet we cannot expect they all will be brought to so much reason.

(3) The willfulness of the people will not excuse us from our duty. If we offer them not our help, how do we know who will refuse it? Offering it is our part, and accepting it is theirs. If we offer it not, we leave them excusable, for then they refuse it not; but then we are left without excuse. But if they refuse our help when it is offered, we have done our part, and delivered our own souls.

(4) If some refuse our help, others will accept it; and the success with them may be so much as may reward all our labor, were it even greater. All our people are not wrought on by our public preaching, and yet we must not, on this account, give it over as unprofitable.

OBJECTION 9: But what likelihood is there that men will be converted by this means, who are not converted by the preaching of the Word, when that is God's chief ordinance for that end? 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the preaching of the word.'

ANSWER: (1) The advantages of this course I have showed you before, and therefore I will not now repeat them; only, lest any think that this will hinder them from preaching, I may add, to the many benefits before mentioned, that it will be an excellent means of helping you in preaching. For as the physician's work is half done when he understands the disease, so, when you are well acquainted with your people's case, you will know what to preach on. It will furnish you with useful matter for your sermons, to talk an hour with an ignorant or obstinate sinner—as much as an hour's study will do—for you will learn what you have need to insist on, and what objections of theirs to repel.

(2) I hope there are none so silly as to think this conference is not preaching. What? Does the number we speak to make it preaching? Or does interlocution make it none? Surely a man may as truly preach to one, as to a thousand. And, as we have already said, if you examine, you will find that most of the preaching recorded in the New Testament was by conference, and frequently interlocutory, and that with one or two, fewer or more, as opportunity served. Thus Christ himself did most commonly preach. Besides, we must take account of our people's learning, if we regard the success of our work.

There is, therefore, nothing from God, from the Scriptures, or from right reason, to cause us to make any question of our work, or to be unwilling to it. But from the world, from the flesh, and from the devil, we shall have much, and more, perhaps, than we anticipate. But against all temptations, if we have recourse to God, and look, on the one hand, to our great obligations, and to the hopeful effects and the blessed reward on the other, we shall see that we have little cause to draw back, or to faint.

Let us set before us the pattern in our text, and learn thence our duty. O what a lesson is here before us! But how ill is it learned by those who still question whether these things be their duty! I confess, some of these words of Paul have been so often presented before my eyes, and impressed upon my conscience, that I have been much convinced by them of my duty and my neglect. And I think this one speech better deserves a twelve months' study, than most things that young students spend their time upon. O brethren, write it on your study doors—set it in capital letters as your copy, that it may be ever before your eyes. Could we but well learn two or three lines of it, what preachers should we be!

[a] Our general business—SERVING THE LORD WITH ALL HUMILITY OF MIND, AND WITH MANY TEARS.

[b] Our special work—TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES, AND TO ALL THE FLOCK.

[c] Our doctrine—REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD, AND FAITH TOWARD OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

[d] The place and manner of teaching—I HAVE TAUGHT YOU PUBLICLY, AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE.

[e] His diligence, earnestness, and affection—I CEASED NOT TO WARN EVERY ONE NIGHT AND DAY WITH TEARS. This is that which must win souls, and preserve them.

[f] His faithfulness—I KEPT BACK NOTHING THAT WAS PROFITABLE UNTO YOU, AND HAVE NOT SHUNNED TO DECLARE UNTO YOU ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD.

[g] His disinterestedness and self–denial for the sake of the gospel—I HAVE COVETED NO MAN'S SILVER OR GOLD OR APPAREL: YES, THESE HANDS HAVE MINISTERED UNTO MY NECESSITIES, AND TO THEM THAT WERE WITH ME, REMEMBERING THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS, HOW HE SAID, IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.

[h] His patience and perseverance—NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME, NEITHER COUNT I MY LIFE DEAR UNTO ME, SO THAT I MIGHT FINISH MY COURSE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I HAVE RECEIVED OF THE LORD JESUS.

[i] His prayerfulness—I COMMEND YOU TO GOD AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP, AND TO GIVE YOU AN INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THOSE WHO ARE SANCTIFIED.

[j] His purity of conscience—WHEREFORE I TAKE YOU TO RECORD THIS DAY, THAT I AM PURE FROM THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN.

Write all this upon your hearts, and it will do yourselves and the Church more good than twenty years' study of those lower things, which, though they may get you greater applause in the world, yet, if separated from these, they will make you but as 'sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.' The great advantage of ministers having a sincere heart is this, that the glory of God and the salvation of souls are their very end. And where that end is truly intended, no labor or suffering will stop them or turn them back, for a man must have his end, whatever it cost him. Whatever he forgets, he will still retain this lesson: ONE THING IS NEEDFUL; SEEK YOU FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Hence he says, 'Necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.' This is what will most effectually make easy all our labors, make light all our burdens, make tolerable all our sufferings, and cause us to venture on any hazards, if we may only win souls to Christ. That which I once made the motto of my colors in another warfare, I desire may be still before my eyes in this, which yet, according to my intentions, is not altogether another. On one side, 'He who saves his life shall lose it,' and on the other, 'Ruin not the cause for the sake of keeping one's life.' He who knows that he serves a God that will never suffer any man to be a loser by him, need not fear what hazards he runs in his cause. And he who knows that he seeks a prize, which, if obtained, will infinitely overbalance his cost, may boldly engage his

whole estate on it, and sell all to purchase so rich a pearl. Well, brethren, I will spend no more words in exhorting wise merchants to such a bargain, nor telling teachers themselves such common truths; and if I have already said more than is needful, I shall be glad. I hope I may now take it for granted that you are resolved on the utmost diligence and fidelity in the work; and, on this supposition, I shall now proceed to give you some directions for the right management of it.

Part III: Directions for This Duty

It is so great a work which we have before us, that it is a thousand pities it should be destroyed in the birth, and perish in our hands. I know that we have a knotty generation to deal with, and that it is past the power of any of us to change a carnal heart without the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit. Yet it is so usual with God to work by means and to bless the right endeavors of his servants, that I cannot fear but great things will be accomplished and a wonderful blow will be given to the kingdom of darkness by this work, if it do not miscarry through the fault of the ministers themselves. The main danger arises from the want either of diligence or of skill. Of the former, I have spoken much already. As to the latter, I am so conscious of my own unskilfulness, that I am far from imagining that I am fit to give directions to any but the younger and more inexperienced of the ministry. Therefore, I expect so much justice in your interpretation of what I say, as that you will suppose me now to speak to none but such. But yet something I shall say, and not pass over this part in silence, because the number of such is so great; and I am apprehensive that the welfare of the Church and nation does so much depend on the right management of this work. The points as to which you need to be solicitous are these two:

1. To bring your people to submit to this course of private catechizing or instruction; for, if they will not come to you, or allow you to come to them, what good can they receive?

2. To do the work in such a way as will most tend to the success of it.

Article 1

I am first to give you some directions for bringing your people to submit to this course of catechizing and instruction.

1. The chief means of all is this, for a minister so to conduct himself in the general course of his life and ministry, as to convince his people of his ability, sincerity, and sincere love to them. For if they take him to be ignorant, they will despise his teaching, and think themselves as wise as he. And if they think him self–seeking, or hypocritical, and one that does not mean as he says, they will suspect all he says and does for them, and will not regard him. Whereas, if they are convinced that he understands what he does, and have high thoughts of his abilities, they will reverence him, and the more easily stoop to his advice. When they are persuaded of his uprightness, they will the less suspect his motives. When they perceive that he intends no private ends of his own, but merely their good, they will the more readily be persuaded by him. And because those to whom I write are supposed to be none of the ablest ministers, and may therefore despair of being reverenced for their parts, I would say to them, you have the more need to study and labor for their increase. And that which you want in ability must be made up in other qualifications, and then your advice may be as successful as others.

If ministers were content to purchase an interest in the affections of their people at the dearest rates to their own flesh, and would condescend to them, and be familiar, affectionate, and prudent in their carriage, and abound, according to their ability, in good works, they might do much more with their people than ordinarily they do. We should not much regard an interest in them for our own sakes, but that we may be more capable of promoting the interest of Christ, and of furthering their salvation. Were it not for their own sakes, it were no great matter whether they love or hate us; but what commander can do any great service with an army that hates him? And how can we think that they will much regard our counsel while they abhor or disregard the persons that give it them? Labor, therefore, for some competent interest in the estimation and affection of your people, and then you may the better prevail with them. But perhaps some will say, What should a minister do who finds he has lost the affections of his people? To this I answer, If they be so vile a people that they hate him not for any weakness or misconduct of his, but merely for endeavoring their good, and would hate any other that should do his duty, then must he with patience and meekness continue to ‘instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.’ But if it be on account of any weakness of his, or difference about lesser opinions, or prejudice against his own person, let him first try to remove the prejudice by all lawful means. If he cannot, let him say to them, ‘It is not for myself, but for you that I labor; and therefore, seeing that you will not obey the Word from me, I desire that you will agree to accept of some other that may do you that good which I cannot.’ And so leave them, and try whether another man may not be fitter for them, and he fitter for another people. For an ingenuous man can hardly stay with a people against their wills. And a sincere man can still more hardly, for any benefit of his own, remain in a place where he is like to be unprofitable and to hinder the good which they might receive from another man, who has the advantage of a greater interest in their affection and esteem.

2. Supposing this general preparation, the next thing to be done is to use the most effectual means to convince them of the benefit and necessity of this course to their own souls. The way to win the consent of people to anything that you propose, is to prove that it is good and profitable for them. You must therefore preach to them some powerful convincing sermons to this purpose before hand, and show them the benefit and necessity of the knowledge of divine truths in general, and of knowing the first principles in particular. You must also show that the aged have the same duty and need as others, and in some respects much more: e.g. from Hebrews 5:12, ‘For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat.’ This verse affords us many observations suitable to our present object, as:

(1) That God’s oracles must be a man’s lessons.

(2) Ministers must teach these, and people must learn them from ministers.

(3) The oracles of God have some fundamental principles, which all must know who wish to be saved.

(4) These principles must be first learned: that is the right order.

(5) It may be reasonably expected that people should thrive in knowledge, according to the means of instruction which they possess; and if they do not, it is their great sin.

(6) If any have lived long in the church, under the means of knowledge, and yet are ignorant of these first principles, they have need to be yet taught them, how old soever they may be.

All this is plain from the text; whence we have a fair opportunity, by many clear convincing reasons, to show them: First, the necessity of knowing God's oracles. Secondly, and more especially of knowing the fundamental principles. Thirdly, and particularly for the aged, who have sinfully lost so much time already. They have so long promised to repent when they were old, and should be teachers of the young. Their ignorance is a double sin and shame, who have now so little time in which to learn. They are so near to death and judgment, and have souls to save or lose as well as others. Convince them how impossible it is to go the way to heaven without knowing it, when there are so many difficulties and enemies in the way. Why, men cannot do even their worldly business without knowledge, nor learn a trade without an apprenticeship. Convince them what a contradiction it is to be a Christian, and yet to refuse to learn; for what is a Christian but a disciple of Christ? And how can he be a disciple of Christ, that refuses to be taught by him? And he who refuses to be taught by his ministers, refuses to be taught by him. For Christ will not come down from heaven again to teach them by his own mouth, but has appointed his ministers to keep school and teach them under him. To say, therefore, that they will not be taught by his ministers is to say they will not be taught by Christ; and that is to say, they will not be his disciples, or no Christians.

Make them understand that it is not an arbitrary business of our own devising and imposing; but that necessity is laid upon us. If we look not to every member of the flock according to our ability, they may perish in their iniquity; but their blood will be required at our hand. Show them that it is God, and not we, who is the contriver and imposer of the work, and that therefore they blame God more than us in accusing it. Ask them, would they be so cruel to their minister as to wish him to cast away his own soul, knowingly and willfully, for fear of troubling them by trying to hinder their damnation? Acquaint them fully with the nature of the ministerial office, and the Church's need of it; how it consists in teaching and guiding all the flock. Show them that, as they must come to the congregation as scholars to school, so must they be content to give an account of what they have learned, and to be further instructed, man by man. Let them know what a tendency this has to their salvation, what a profitable improvement it will be of their time, and how much vanity and evil it will prevent. And when they once find that it is for their own good, they will the more easily yield to it.

3. When this is done, it will be very necessary that we give one of the catechisms to every family in the parish, whether rich or poor, that so they may be without excuse. For if you leave it to themselves to buy them, perhaps the half of them will not get them; whereas, when they have copies put into their hands, the receiving of them will be a kind of engagement to learn them. And if they do but read the exhortation (as it is likely they will), it will perhaps convince them and incite them to submit. As to the delivery of them, the best way is for the minister first to give notice in the congregation that they shall be brought to their houses, and then to go himself from house to house and deliver them, taking the opportunity of persuading them to the work. As he goes round, he should take a list of all the persons who have come to years of discretion in the several families, that he may know whom he has to take care of and instruct, and whom he has to expect when it comes to their turn. I have formerly, in distributing some other books among my people, desired every family to call for them, but I found more confusion and uncertainty in that way. I now adopt this as the better method, but in small congregations, either way may do. As to the expense of the

catechisms, if the minister be able, it will be well for him to bear it. If not, the best affected of his people of the richer sort should bear it among them. Or, on a day of humiliation, in preparation for the work, let the collection that is made for the poor be employed in buying catechisms, and the people be desired to be more liberal than ordinary; and what is wanting, the well–affected to the work may make up. As to the order of proceeding, it will be necessary that we take the people in order, family by family, beginning a month or six weeks after the delivery of the catechisms, that they may have time to learn them. And thus, taking them together in common, they will be the more willing to come, and the backward will be the more ashamed to keep off.

4. Be sure that you deal gently with them, and take off all discouragements as effectually as you can.

(1) Tell them publicly that if they have learned any other catechism already, you will not urge them to learn this unless they desire it themselves, for the substance of all catechisms that are orthodox is the same. Let them know your reason for offering them this was its brevity and fullness—that you might give them as much as possible in few words, and so make their work more easy. Or, if any of them would rather learn some other catechism, let them have their choice.

(2) As for the old people who are of weak memories, and not likely to live long in the world, and who complain that they cannot remember the words; tell them that you do not expect them to perplex their minds overmuch about it. But encourage them to hear it often read over, to see that they understand it, and to get the matter into their minds and hearts. Then they may be borne with, though they remember not the words.

(3) Let your dealing with those you begin with be so gentle, convincing, and winning, that the report of it may be an encouragement to others to come.

5. Lastly, If all this will not serve to bring any particular persons to submit, do not cast them off. Instead, go to them and expostulate with them, and learn what their reasons are, and convince them of the sinfulness and danger of their neglect of the help that is offered them. A soul is so precious that we should not lose one for want of labor, but follow them while there is any hope. Do not give them up as desperate, until there be no remedy. Before we give them over let us try the utmost, that we may have the experience of their obstinate contempt to warrant our forsaking them. Charity bears and waits long.

Article 2

Having used these means to procure them to come and submit to your instructions, we are next to consider how you may deal most effectually with them in the work. And again I must say that I think it an easier matter by far to compose and preach a good sermon, than to deal rightly with an ignorant man for his instruction in the more essential principles of religion. As much as this work is condemned by some, I doubt not it will try the gifts and spirit of ministers, and show you the difference between one man and another, more fully than preaching will do. And here I shall, as fitting my purpose, transcribe the words of a most learned, orthodox, and godly man, Archbishop Ussher, * in his sermon before King James at Wanstead on Ephesians 4:13: ‘Your Majesty’s care can never be sufficiently commended, in taking order that the chief heads of the catechism should, in the ordinary ministry, be diligently propounded and explained unto the people throughout the land; which I wish were as duly executed every where, as it was piously by you intended.’

‘Great scholars possibly may think, that it stands not so well with their credit to stoop thus low, and to spend so much of their time in teaching these rudiments and first principles of the doctrine of Christ; but they should consider, that the laying of the foundation skillfully, as it is the matter of greatest importance in the whole building, so is it the very masterpiece of the wisest–building. "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master–builder, I have laid the foundation," says the great apostle. And let the most learned of us all try it whenever we please, we shall find, that to lay this groundwork rightly (that is, to apply ourselves to the capacity of the common auditory, and to make an ignorant man to understand these mysteries in some good measure) will put us to the trial of our skill, and trouble us a great deal more, than if we were to discuss a controversy, or handle a subtle point of learning in the schools. Yet Christ did give as well his apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, as his ordinary pastors and teachers, to bring us all, both learned and unlearned, unto the unity of this faith and knowledge; AND THE NEGLECTING OF THIS, IS THE FRUSTRATING OF THE WHOLE WORK OF THE MINISTRY. For, let us preach ever so many sermons to the people, our labor is but lost, as long as the foundation is unlaid, and the first principles untaught, upon which all other doctrine must be.’ The directions which I think it necessary to give for the right managing of the work are the following:

1. When your people come to you, one family or more, begin with a brief preface, to mollify their minds and to take off all offence, unwillingness, or discouragement, and to prepare them for receiving your instructions. ‘My friends,’ you may say, ‘it may perhaps seem to some of you an unusual and a troublesome business that I put you upon; but I hope you will not think it needless: for if I had thought so, I would have spared both you and myself this labor. But my conscience has told me, yes, God has told me in his Word, so solemnly, what it is to have the charge of souls, and how the blood of them that perish will be required at the hands of a minister that neglects them, that I dare not be guilty of it as I have hitherto been. Alas, all our business in this world is to get well to heaven; and God has appointed us to be guides to his people, to help them safe decipher. If this be well done, all is done; and if this be not done, we are forever undone. The Lord knows how short a time you and I may be together; and therefore it concerns us to do what we can for our own and your salvation before we leave you, or you leave the world. All other business in the world is but as toys and dreams in comparison of this. The labors of your calling are but to prop up a cottage of clay, while your souls are hastening to death and judgment, which may even now be near at hand. I hope, therefore, you will be glad of help in so needful a work, and not think it much that I put you to this trouble, when the trifles of the world cannot be got without much greater trouble.’ This, or something to this purpose, may tend to make them more willing to hear you, and receive instruction, and to give you some account of their knowledge and practice.

2. When you have spoken thus to them all, take them one by one, and deal with them as far as you can in private, out of the hearing of the rest. For some cannot speak freely before others, and some will not endure to be questioned before others, because they think that it will tend to their shame to have others hear their answers. And some persons that can make better answers themselves, will be ready, when they are gone, to talk of what they heard, and to disgrace those that speak not so well as themselves. Thus people will be discouraged, and persons who are backward to the exercise will have presences to forbear and forsake it, and to say, ‘We will not come to be made a scorn and a laughingstock.’ You must, therefore, be very careful to prevent all these inconveniences. But the main reason is, as I find by experience, people will better take plain

close dealing about their sin and misery and duty when you have them alone, than they will before others; and, if you have not an opportunity to set home the truth, and to deal freely with their consciences, you will frustrate all. If, therefore, you have a convenient place, let the rest stay in one room, while you confer with each person by himself in another room; only, in order to avoid scandal, we must speak to the women only in presence of some others; and, if we lose some advantage by this there is no remedy. It is better to do so, than, by giving occasion of reproach to the malicious, to destroy all the work. Yet we may so contrive it, that, though some others be in the room, yet what things are less fit for their observance may be spoken in a low voice that they may not hear it; and therefore they may be placed at the remotest part of the room; or, at least, let none be present but the members of the same family, who are more familiar with each other, and not so likely to reproach one another. And then, in your most rousing examinations and reproofs, deal most with the ignorant, secure, and vicious, that you may have the clearer ground for your close dealing, and the hearing of it may awaken the bystanders, to whom you seem not so directly to apply it. These small things deserve attention, because they are in order to a work that is not small: and small errors may hinder a great deal of good.

3. Begin your work by taking an account of what they have learned of the words of the catechism, and receiving their answer to each question; and, if they are able to repeat but little or none of it, try whether they can rehearse the creed and the decalog.

4. Then choose out some of the weightiest points, and try, by further questions, how far they understand them. And therein be careful of the following things:

(1) That you do not begin with less necessary point, but with those which they themselves may perceive most nearly concern the. Fore example; ‘What do you think becomes of men when they die? What shall become of us after the end of the world? Do you believe that you have any sin; or that you were born with sin? What does every sin deserve? What remedy has God provided for the saving of sinful, miserable souls? Has any one suffered for you sins in our stead; or must we suffer for them ourselves? Who are those who God will pardon; and who shall be saved by the blood of Christ? What change must be made on all who shall be saved; and how is this change effected? Wherein lies our chief happiness? And what is it that our hearts must be most set upon?’ And such like other questions.

(2) Beware of asking them nice, or needless, or doubtful, or very difficult questions, though about those matters that are of greatest weight in themselves. Some self–conceited persons will be as busy with such questions which they cannot answer themselves, and as a censorious of the poor people that cannot answer them, as if life and death depended on the.

You will ask them perhaps, ‘What is God?’: and how defective an answer must you make yourselves! You may tell what he is not sooner than what he is. If you ask, ‘What is repentance, what faith, or what is forgiveness of sin?’, how many ministers may you ask before you have a right answer, or else they would not be so disagreed in the point! Likewise if you ask them what regeneration is, what sanctification is. But you will perhaps say, ‘If men know not what God is, what repentance, faith, conversion, justification, and sanctification are, how can they be true Christians and be saved?’. I answer, It is one thing to know exactly what they are, and another thing to know them in their nature and effects, though with a more general and indistinct knowledge; and it is one thing to know, and another thing to tell what this or that is. The very name

as commonly used does signify to the, and express from theme the thing without a definition; and they partly understand what that name signifies, when they cannot tell it to you in other words; as they know what it is to repent, to believe, to be forgiven. By custom of speech they know what these mean, and yet cannot define them, but perhaps put you off with the country answer: ‘To repent is to repent; and to be forgiven is to be forgiven;’ or if they can say ‘It is to be pardoned,’ it is fair. Yet do I not absolutely dissuade you from the use of such questions; but do it cautiously, in case you suspect some gross ignorance in the point, especially about God himself.

(3) So contrive your questions, that they may perceive what you mean, and that it is not a nice definition, but simply a solution, that you expect. Look not after words, but things, and even leave them to a bare Yes, or No, or the mere election of one of the two descriptions which you yourself may have propounded. For example: ‘What is God? Is he made of flesh and blood, as we are; or is he an invisible Spirit? Is he a man, or is he not? Had he any beginning? Can he die? What is faith? Is it a believing all the Word of God? What is it to believe in Christ? Is it all one as to become a true Christian? Or to believe that Christ is the Savior of sinners, and to trust in him, as your Savior, to pardon, sanctify, govern, and glorify you? What is repentance? Is it only to be sorry for sin? Or is it the change of the mind from sin to God, and a forsaking of it? or does it include both?’

(4) When you perceive that they do not understand the meaning of your question, you must draw out their answer by an equivalent, or expository question. Or, if this will not do, you must frame the answer into your question, and require in reply but Yes or No. I have often asked some very ignorant people, ‘How do you think that your sins, which are so many and so great, can be pardoned?’ And they tell me, ‘By our repenting, and amending our lives,’ and never mention Jesus Christ. I ask them further, ‘But do you think that your amendment can make God any amends or satisfaction for the sin that is past?’ They will answer, ‘We hope so, or else we know not what will.’ One would now think that these men had no knowledge of Christ at all, since they make no mention of him. Some I indeed find have no knowledge of him; and when I tell them the history of Christ, and what he is, and did, and suffered, they stand wondering at it as a strange thing. And some say they never heard this much before, nor knew it, though they came to church every Lord’s day. But some, I perceive, give such answers because they understand not the scope of my question. They suppose that I take Christ’s death for granted, and that I only ask them, ‘What shall make God satisfaction?’ as their part under Christ—though in this, also, they reveal sad ignorance. And when I ask them whether their good deeds can merit anything from God, they answer, ‘No, but we hope God will accept us.’ And if I ask further, ‘Can you be saved without the death of Christ?’ they say, ‘No.’ And if I ask still further, ‘What has he done or suffered for you?’ they will say, ‘He died for us; or he shed his blood for us,’ and will profess that they place their confidence in that for salvation.

Many men have that in their minds which is not ripe for utterance; and, through an imperfect education and disuse, they are strangers to the expression of those things of which they yet have some conception. And, by the way, you may here see reason why you should deal very tenderly with the common people for matter of knowledge and defect of expression, if they are teachable and tractable, and willing to use the means For many, even ancient godly persons, cannot express themselves with any tolerable propriety, nor yet learn when expressions are put into their mouths. Some of the most pious, experienced, approved Christians that I know (aged people) complain to me, with tears, that they cannot learn the words of the catechism. And when I consider their

advantages—that they have enjoyed the most excellent helps, in constant duty, and in the best company, for forty, fifty, or sixty years together—it teaches me what to expect from poor ignorant people, who never had such company and converse for one year or week. I must not reject them so hastily as some hot and too high professors would have us do.

(5) If you find them at a loss and unable to answer your questions, do not drive them too hard or too long with question after question, lest they conceive you intend only to puzzle them, and disgrace them. But when you perceive that they cannot answer, step in yourself, and take the burden off them and answer the question yourselves. Do it thoroughly and plainly, and give a full explanation of the whole truth to them, that, by your teaching, they may be brought to understand it before you leave them. And herein it is commonly necessary that you fetch up the matter from the beginning, and take it in order, until you come to the point in question.

5. When you have done what you see cause in the trial of their knowledge, proceed next to instruct them yourselves, and this must be according to their several capacities. If it be a professor that understands the fundamental principles of religion, fall upon somewhat which you perceive that he most needs. It may be explaining further some of the mysteries of the gospel, or laying the grounds of some duty which he may doubt of, or showing the necessity of what he neglects, or pointing out his sins or mistakes that will be most convincing and edifying to him. If, on the other hand, it be one who is grossly ignorant, give him a plain, familiar recital of the sum of the Christian religion in a few words. For though it be in the catechism already, yet a more familiar way may better help him to understand it. Thus: ‘You must know, that from everlasting there was one God, who had no beginning, and will have no end, who is not a body as we are, but a most pure, spiritual Being, that knows all things, and can do all things; and has all goodness and blessedness in himself. This God is but one, but yet Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, in a manner that is above our understanding. And you must know, that this one God did make all the world by his Word; the heavens he made to be the place of his glory, and a multitude of holy angels to serve him. But some of these did, by pride or some other sin, fall from their high estate, and are become devils, and shall be miserable forever. When he had created the earth, he made man, as his noblest creature here below, even one man and one woman, Adam and Eve; and he made them perfect, without any sin, and put them into the garden of Eden, and forbade them to eat of one tree in the garden, and told them that if they ate of it they should die. But the devil, who had first fallen himself, did tempt them to sin, and they yielded to his temptation, and thus fell under the curse of God’s law. But God, of his infinite wisdom and mercy, did send his own Son, Jesus Christ, to be their Redeemer, who, in the fullness of time, was made man, being born of a virgin, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and lived on earth, among the Jews, about thirty–three years, during which time he preached the gospel himself, and wrought many miracles to prove his doctrine, healing the lame, the blind, the sick, and raising the dead by his Divine power; and in the end he was offered upon the cross as a sacrifice for our sins to bear that curse which we should have borne.’

‘And now, if sinners will but believe in him, and repent of their sins, he will freely pardon all that is past, and will sanctify their corrupted nature, and will at length bring them to his heavenly kingdom and glory. But if they make light of their sins and of his mercy, he will condemn them to everlasting misery in hell. This gospel, Christ, having risen from the dead on the third day, appointed his ministers to preach to all the world; and when he had given this in charge to all his apostles, he

ascended up into heaven, before their faces, where he is now in glory, with God the Father, in our nature. And at the end of this world, he will come again in our nature, and will raise the dead to life again, and bring them all before him, that they may "give an account of all the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil." If, therefore, you mean to be saved, you must believe in Christ, as the only Savior from the wrath to come; you must repent of your sins; you must, in short, be wholly new creatures, or there will be no salvation for you.' Some such short rehearsal of the principles of religion, in the most familiar manner that you can devise, with a brief touch of application in the end, will be necessary when you deal with the grossly ignorant. And if you perceive they understand you not, go over it again, and ask them whether they understand it, and try to fix it in their memories.

6. Whether they be grossly ignorant or not, if you suspect them to be unconverted, endeavor next to make some prudent inquiry into their state. The best and least offensive way of doing this will be to prepare them for the inquiry by saying something that may mollify their minds, and convince them of the necessity of the inquiry, and then to take occasion from some article in the catechism to touch their consciences. For example: 'You see that the Holy Spirit does, by the Word, enlighten men's minds, and soften and open their hearts, and turn them from the power of Satan unto God, through faith in Christ, and "purifies them unto himself a peculiar people"; and that none but these shall be made partakers of everlasting life. Now, though I have no desire, needlessly, to pry into any man's secrets, yet, because it is the office of ministers to give advice to their people in matters of salvation, and because it is so dangerous a thing to be mistaken as to points which involve everlasting life or everlasting death, I would entreat you to deal honestly, and tell me whether or not you ever found this great change upon your own heart? Did you ever find the Spirit of God, by the Word, come in upon your understanding, with a new and heavenly life, which has made you a new creature? The Lord, who sees your heart, does know whether it be so or not; I pray you, therefore, see that you speak the truth.'

If he tell you that he hopes he is converted—all are sinners but he is sorry for his sins, or the like—then tell him more particularly, in a few words, of some of the plainest marks of true conversion. And so renew and enforce the inquiry thus: 'Because your salvation or damnation is involved in this, I would gladly help you a little in regard to it, that you may not be mistaken in a matter of such moment, but may find out the truth before it be too late; for as God will judge us impartially, so we have his Word before us, by which we may judge ourselves; for this Word tells us most certainly who they are that shall go to heaven, and who to hell. Now the Scripture tells us that the state of an unconverted man is this: he sees no great felicity in the love and communion of God in the life to come, which may draw his heart there from this present world. But he lives to his carnal self, or to the flesh; and the main bent of his life is, that it may go well with him on earth. And that religion which he has is but a little by the by, lest he should be damned when he can keep the world no longer; so that the world and the flesh are highest in his esteem, and nearest to his heart, and God and glory stand below them, and all their service of God is but a giving him that which the world and flesh can spare. This is the case of every unconverted man; and all who are in this case are in a state of misery. But he who is truly converted, has had a light shining into his soul from God, which has showed him the greatness of his sin and misery, and made it a heavy load upon his soul; and showed him what Christ is, and what he has done for sinners, and made him admire the riches of God's grace in him.'

‘Oh, what glad news it is to him, that yet there is hope for such lost sinners as he; that so many and so great sins may be pardoned; and that pardon is offered to all who will accept of it! How gladly does he entertain this message and offer! And for the time to come, he resigns himself and all that he has to Christ, to be wholly his, and to be disposed of by him, in order to the everlasting glory which he has promised. He has now such a sight of the blessed state of the saints in glory, that he despises all this world as dross and dung, in comparison of it; and there he lays up his happiness and his hopes, and takes all the affairs of this life but as so many helps or hindrances in the way to that; so that the main care and business of his life is to be happy in the life to come. This is the case of all who are truly converted and who shall be saved. Now, is this the case with you, or is it not? Have you experienced such a change as this upon your soul?’

If he says, he hopes he has, descend to some particulars, thus: ‘I pray you then answer me these two or three questions:

(1) Can you truly say that all the known sins of your past life are the grief of your heart; and that you have felt that everlasting misery is due to you for them; and that, under a sense of this heavy burden, you have felt yourself a lost man; and have gladly entertained the news of a Savior, and cast your soul upon Christ alone, for pardon by his blood?

(2) Can you truly say that your heart is so far turned from sin, that you hate the sins which you once have loved, and love that holy life which you had no mind to before; and that you do not now live in the willful practice of any known sin? Is there no sin which you are not heartily willing to forsake, whatever it cost you, and no duty which you are not willing to perform?

(3) Can you truly say that you have so far taken the everlasting enjoyment of God for your happiness; that it has the most of your heart, of your love, desire, and care; that you are resolved, by the strength of Divine grace, to let go all that you have in the world, rather than hazard it; and that it is your daily, and your principal business to seek it? Can you truly say, that though you have your failings and sins, yet your main care, and the bent of your whole life, is to please God, and to enjoy him forever; that you give the world God’s leavings, as it were, and not God the world’s leavings; and that your worldly business is but as a traveler seeking for provision in his journey, and heaven is the place that you take for your home?’

If he answer in the affirmative to these questions, tell him how great a thing it is for a man’s heart to abhor his sin, and to lay up his happiness unfeignedly in another world; and to live in this world for another that is out of sight. And, therefore, desire him to see that it be so indeed. Then turn to some of the articles in the catechism, which treat of those duties which you most suspect him to omit, and ask him whether he performs such or such a duty; as for instance, prayer in his family, or in private, and the holy spending of the Lord’s day.

I would, however, advise you to be very cautious how you pass too hasty or absolute censures on any you have to do with, because it is not so easy a matter to discern a man to be certainly graceless, as many imagine it to be. And you may do the work in hand as well without such an absolute conclusion as with it.

7. If, however, you have, either by former discovery of gross ignorance, or by these later inquiries into his spiritual state, discerned an apparent probability that the person is yet in an unconverted state, your next business is to employ all your skill to bring his heart to a sense of his condition.

For example: ‘Truly, my friends, I have no mind, the Lord knows, to make your condition worse than it is, nor to occasion you any causeless fear or trouble; but, I suppose, you would account me a treacherous enemy, and not a faithful minister, if I should flatter you, and not tell you the truth. If you seek a physician in your sickness, you would have him tell you the truth, though it were the worst. Much more here! For there the knowledge of your disease may, by your fears, increase it; but here you must know it, or else you can never be recovered from it. I much fear that you are yet a stranger to the Christian life. For if you were a Christian indeed, and truly converted, your very heart would be set on God and the life to come, and you would make it your chief business to prepare for everlasting happiness; and you dare not, you would not, live in any willful sin, nor in the neglect of any known duty.’

‘Alas, what have you done? How have you spent your time until now? Did you not know that you had a soul to be saved or lost; and that you must live in heaven or in hell forever; and that you had your life and time in this world chiefly for the purpose of preparing for another? Alas, what have you been doing all your days that you are so ignorant, or so unprepared for death, if it should now find you? If you had but as much mind of heaven as of earth, you would have known more of it, and done more for it, and inquired more diligently after it, than you have done. You can learn how to do your business in the world; and why could you not learn more of the will of God, if you had but attended to it? You have neighbors that could learn more, that have had as much to do in the world as you, and who have had as little time. Do you think that heaven is not worth your labor? Or that it can be had without any care or pains, when you cannot have the trifles of this world without them, and when God has bid you seek first his kingdom and the righteousness thereof? Alas, my friends, what if you had died before this hour in an unconverted state? What then had become of you, and where had you now been? Alas, that you were so cruel to yourselves as to venture your everlasting state so desperately as you have done! What did you think of? Did you not all this while know that you must shortly die, and be judged as you were then found? Had you any greater work to do, or any greater business to mind, than your everlasting salvation? Do you think that all that you can get in this world will comfort you in a dying hour, or purchase your salvation, or ease the pains.’

Set these things home with a peculiar earnestness, for if you get not to the heart, you do little or nothing; and that which affects not is soon forgotten.

8. Conclude the whole with a practical exhortation, which must contain two parts: first, the duty of believing in Christ; and second, of using the external means of grace for the time to come, and the avoiding of former sins. For example: ‘My friend, I am heartily sorry to find you in so sad a case, but I should be more sorry to leave you in it, and therefore let me entreat you, for the Lord’s sake, and for your own sake, to regard what I shall say to you, as to the time to come. It is of the Lord’s great mercy that he did not cut you off in your unconverted state, and that you have yet life and time, and that there is a remedy provided for you in the blood of Christ, and that pardon and sanctification and everlasting life are offered to you as well as to others. God has not left sinful man to utter destruction, as he has done the devils; nor has he made any exception in the offer of pardon and eternal life against you any more than against any other.’

‘If you had yet but a bleeding heart for sin, and could come to Christ believingly for recovery, and resign yourself to him as your Savior and Lord, and would be a new man for the time to come, the

Lord would have mercy on you in the pardon of your sins, and the everlasting salvation of your soul. And I must tell you that, as it must be the great work of God's grace to give you such a heart, so if ever he mean to pardon and save you, he will make this change upon you. He will make you feel your sin as the heaviest burden in the world, as that which is most odious in itself, and has rendered you liable to his wrath and curse. He will make you see that you are a lost man, and that there is nothing for you but everlasting damnation, unless you are pardoned by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit. He will make you see the need you have of Christ, and how all your hope and life is in him. He will make you see the vanity of this world and all that it can afford you, and that all your happiness is with God, in that everlasting life in heaven, where you may, with the saints and angels, behold his glory, and live in his love, and be employed in his praises. Let me tell you that, until this work be done upon you, you are a miserable man; and if you die before it is done, you are lost forever. Now you have hope and help before you, but then there will be none.'

'Let me therefore entreat you, as you love your soul, first, that you will not rest in the condition in which you at present are. Be not quiet in your mind until a saving change is wrought in your heart. Think, when you rise in the morning, Oh, what if this day should be my last, and death should find me in an unrenewed state? Think, when you are about your labor, Oh, how much greater a work have I yet to do, to get my soul reconciled to God, and sanctified by his Spirit! Think, when you are eating, or drinking, or looking on anything that you possess in the world, What good will all this do me, if I live and die an enemy to God, and a stranger to Christ and his Spirit, and so perish forever? Let these thoughts be day and night upon your mind until your soul be changed. Secondly, I entreat you to bethink yourself seriously what a vain world this is, and how shortly it will leave you to a cold grave, and to everlasting misery, if you have not a better treasure than it. And consider what it is to live in the presence of God, and to reign with Christ, and be like the angels; and that this is the life that Christ has procured you, and is preparing for you, and offers you, if you will only accept of it. And oh think, whether it be not madness to slight such an endless glory, and to prefer these fleshly dreams and earthly shadows before it. Accustom yourself to such considerations as these when you are alone, and let them dwell upon your mind. Thirdly, I entreat, that you will presently, without any more delay, accept of this felicity, and this Savior. Close with the Lord Jesus that offers you this eternal life. Joyfully and thankfully accept his offer as the only way to make you happy. And then you may believe that all your sins will be done away by him. Fourthly, resolve presently against your former sins; find out what has defiled your heart and life, and cast it from you, as you would do poison out of your stomach, and abhor the thought of taking it again.'

'My last request to you is, that you will set yourself to the diligent use of the means of grace until this change be wrought, and then continue the use of these means until you are confirmed, and at last perfected.

(1) As you cannot of yourself effect this change upon your heart and life, betake yourself daily to God in prayer, and beg earnestly, as for your life, that he will pardon all your sins, and change your heart, and show you the riches of his grace in Christ, and the glory of his kingdom. Follow God day and night with these requests.

(2) Fly from temptations and occasions of sin, and forsake your former evil company, and betake yourself to the company of those that fear God, and will help you in the way to heaven.

(3) Be specially careful to spend the Lord's day in holy exercises, both public and private, and lose not one quarter of an hour of any of your time—but especially of that most precious time which God has given you purposely, that you may set your mind upon him, and be instructed by him, and prepare yourself for your latter end. What say you to these things? Will you do this presently or at least so much of it as you can? Will you give me a promise to this effect, and study henceforth to keep that promise?' And here be sure, if you can, to get their promise, and engage them to amendment, especially to use the means of grace, and to change their company, and to forsake their sins, because these are more within their reach; and in this way they may wait for the accomplishing of that change that is not yet wrought. And do this solemnly, reminding them of the presence of God who hears their promises, and who will expect the performance of them. And when you afterward have opportunity, you may remind them of their promise.

4.03. Application contd3

9. At the dismissing of them, do these two things:

(1) Mollify their minds again by a few words, deprecating anything like offence. For example: ‘I pray you, take it not ill that I have put you to this trouble, or dealt thus freely with you. It is as little pleasure to me as to you. If I did not know these things to be true and necessary, I would have spared this labor to myself and you; but I know that we shall be here together but a little while. We are almost at the world to come already; and therefore it is time for us all to look about us, and see that we be ready when God shall call us.’

(2) As you may not soon have an opportunity to speak with the same persons, set them in the way of perfecting what you have begun. Engage the master of each family to call all his family to repeat, every Lord’s day, what they have learned of the catechism; and to continue this practice until they have all learned it perfectly. And when they have done so, still to continue to hear them regularly recite it, that they may not forget it; for, even to the most judicious, it will be an excellent help to have in memory a Sum of the Christian Religion, as to matter, method, and words. As to the rulers of families themselves, or those that are under such masters as will not help them, if they have learned some part of the catechism only, engage them either to come again to you (though before their course) when they have learned the rest, or else to go to some able experienced neighbor, and repeat it to him; and do you take the assistance of such persons, when you cannot have time yourself.

10. Have the names of all your parishioners by you in a book, and when they come and repeat the catechism, note in your book who come, and who do not; and who are so grossly ignorant as to be unfit for the Lord’s supper and other holy communion, and who not. And as you perceive the necessities of each, so deal with them for the future. But as to those that are utterly obstinate, and will not come to you, nor be instructed by you, deal with them as the obstinate despisers of instruction should be dealt with, in regard to sealing and confirming ordinances; which is, to avoid them, and not to hold holy or familiar communion with them in the Lord’s supper or other ordinances. And though some reverend brethren are for admitting their children to baptism (and offended with me for contradicting it), yet so cannot I, nor shall I dare to do it upon any presences of their ancestors’ faith, or of a dogmatical faith of these rebellious parents.

11. Through the whole course of your conference with them, see that the manner as well as the matter be suited to the end. And concerning the manner observe these particulars:

(1) That you make a difference according to the character of the persons whom you have to deal with. To the youthful, you must lay greater shame on sensual voluptuousness, and show them the nature and necessity of mortification. To the aged, you must do more to disgrace this present world, and make them apprehensive of the nearness of their change, and the aggravations of their sin, if they shall live and die in ignorance or impenitency. To inferiors and the young, you must be more free; to superiors and elders, more reverend. To the rich, you must show the vanity of this

world, the nature and necessity of self–denial, and the damnableness of preferring the present state to the next, together with the necessity of improving their talents in doing good to others. To the poor, you must show the great riches of glory which are offered to them in the gospel, and how well present comfort may be spared when everlasting joy may be got. Those sins must also be most insisted on which each one's age, or sex, or temperament, or calling and employment in the world, does most incline them to: as in females, loquacity, evil speeches, passion, malice, pride; in males, drunkenness, ambition, etc.

(2) Be as condescending, familiar, and plain as possible, with those that are of weaker capacity.

(3) Give them Scripture proof of all you say, that they may see that it is not you only, but God by you that speaks to them.

(4) Be as serious as you can in the whole exercise, but especially in the applicatory part. I scarce fear anything more than that some careless ministers will slubber over the work, doing all superficially and without life and destroying this as they do all other duties by turning it into a mere formality. In putting a few cold questions to their people, and giving them two or three cold words of advice without any life and feeling in themselves, they are not likely to produce any feeling in the hearers. But surely he who values souls, and knows what an opportunity is before him, will go through the exercise with deep seriousness, and will be as earnest with them as for life or death.

(5) To this end, I should think it very necessary that, both before and in the work, we take special pains with our own hearts, to excite and strengthen our belief of the truth of the gospel and of the invisible glory and misery that are to come. I am confident this work will exceedingly try the strength of our belief. For he who is but superficially a Christian, and not sound at bottom, will likely feel his zeal quite fail him, especially when the duty is grown common for want of a belief of the things of which he is to treat. An affected hypocritical fervency will not hold out long in duties of this kind. A pulpit shall have more of it, than a conference with poor ignorant souls. For the pulpit is the hypocritical minister's stage: there, and in the press, and in other public acts, where there is room for ostentation, you shall have his best, perhaps his all. It is other kind of men that must effectually do the work now in hand.

(6) It is, therefore, very meet that we prepare ourselves for it by secret prayer; and, if time would permit, and there be many together, it were well if we began and ended with a short prayer with our people.

(8) If you have not time to deal so fully with each individual as is here directed, then omit not the most necessary parts. Take several of them together who are friends, and who will not seek to divulge each other's weaknesses, and speak to them in common as much as concerns all. Only the examinations of their knowledge and state, and of their convictions of sin and misery, and special directions to them, must be used to the individuals alone. But take heed of slubbering it over with an unfaithful laziness, or by being too brief, without a real necessity.

12. Lastly, If God enable you, extend your charity to those of the poorest sort, before they part from you. Give them somewhat towards their relief and for the time that is thus taken from their labors, especially for the encouragement of them that do best. And to the rest, promise them so much when they have learned the catechism. I know you cannot give what you have not, but I speak to them that can. And now, brethren, I have done with my advice, and leave you to the

practice. Though the proud may receive it with scorn, and the selfish and slothful with distaste or even indignation, I doubt not but God will use it. He will use it, in despite of the opposition of sin and Satan, to the awakening of many of his servants to their duty, and the promoting of the work of a right reformation. His blessing will accompany the present undertaking for the saving of many a soul, the peace of you that undertake and perform it, the exciting of his servants throughout the nation to second you, and the increase of the purity and the unity of his churches. Amen.

5.00. Studies for Young Christians

Studies for Young Christians,

Beginners in Religion by Richard Baxter This chapter consists of twenty directions to (as Mr. Baxter says) "young Christians or beginners in religion, for their establishment and safe proceeding." Though these studies were written specifically for "young" Christians, I think that you will find (as I did), there is much in here worthy of meditation for those who have been walking with God for many years.]--Ed.

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20. God as All

5.01. Direction I - Concerning the Novelty of Godliness

Direction I - Concerning the Novelty of Godliness

Take heed lest it be the novelty or reputation of truth and godliness, that takes with you, more than the solid evidence of their excellency and necessity; lest when the novelty and reputation are gone, your religion wither and consume away.

It is said of John [the Baptist] and the Jews by Christ, "He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (John 5:35). All men are affected most with things that seem new and strange to them. It is not only the infirmity of children, that are pleased with new clothes, and new toys and games; but even to graver, wiser persons, new things are most affecting, and commonness and custom dulls delight. Our habitations, and possessions, and honours, are most pleasing to us at the first; and every condition of life doth most affect us at the first: if nature were not much for novelty, the publishing of news-books would not have been so gainful a trade so long, unless the matter had been truer and more desirable. Hence it is that changes are so welcome to the world, though they prove ordinarily to their cost. No wonder then, if religion be the more acceptable, when it comes with this advantage. When men first hear the doctrine of godliness, and the tidings of another world, by a powerful preacher opened and set home, no wonder if things of so great moment affect them for a time: it is said of them that received the seed of God’s word as into stony ground, that "forthwith it sprung up," and they "anon with joy received it" (Matthew 13:5,Matthew 13:20); but it quickly withered for want of rooting. These kind of hearers can no more delight still in one preacher, or one profession, or way, than a glutton in one dish, or an adulterer in one harlot: for it is but a kind of sensual or natural pleasure that they have in the highest truths; and all such delight must be fed with novelty and variety of objects. The Athenians were inquisitive after Paul’s doctrine as novelty, though after they rejected it, as seeming to them incredible: "`May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.’ For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but to tell or hear some new thing" (Acts 17:19-21). To this kind of professor, the greatest truths grow out of fashion, and they grow weary of them, as of dull and ordinary things; they must have some new light, or new way of religion that lately came in fashion; their souls are weary of that manna that at first was acceptable to them, as angels’ food. Old things seem low, and new things high to them; and to entertain some novelty in religion, is to grow up to more maturity: and too many such at last so far overthrive their old apparel, that the old Christ and old gospel are left behind them. The light of the gospel is speedilier communicated, than the heat; and this first part being most acceptable to them, is soon received; and religion seemeth best to them at first. At first they have the light of knowledge alone; and then they have the warmth of a new and prosperous profession: there must be some time for the operating of the heat, before it burneth them; and then they have enough, and cast it away in as much haste as they took it up. If preachers would only lighten, and shoot no thunderbolts, even a Herod himself would hear them gladly, and do many things after them; but when their Herodias is meddled with, they cannot bear it. If preachers would

speak only to men’s fancies or understandings, and not meddle too smartly with their hearts, and lives, and carnal interests, the world would bear them, and hear them as they do stageplayers, or at least as lecturers in philosophy or physic. A sermon that hath nothing but some general toothless notions in a handsome dress of words, doth seldom procure offence or persecution: it is rare that such men’s preaching is distasted by carnal hearers, or their persons hated for it. "It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun" (Ecclesiastes 11:7); but not to be scorched by its heat. Christ Himself at a distance as promised, was greatly desired by the Jews; but when He came, they could not bear Him; His doctrine and life were so contrary to their expectations. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come into His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap" (Malachi 3:1-3). Many when they come first (by profession) to Christ, do little think that He would cast them into the fire, and refine them, and purge away their dross, and cast them anew into the mould of the gospel (see Romans 6:17). Many will play a while by the light, that will not endure to be melted by the fire. When the preacher cometh once to this, he is harsh and intolerable, and loseth all the praise which he had won before, and the pleasing novelty of religion is over with them. The gospel is sent to make such work in the soul and life, as these tender persons will not endure; it must captivate every thought to Christ, and kill every lust and pleasure which is against His will, and put a new and heavenly life into the soul; it must possess men with deep and lively apprehensions of the great things of eternity; it is not wavering dull opinions, that will raise and carry on the soul to such vigorous, constant, victorious action, as is necessary to salvation. When the gospel cometh to the heart, to do this great prevailing work, then these men are impatient of the search and smart, and presently have done with it. They are like children, that love the book for the gilding and fineness of the cover, and take it up as soon as any; but it is to play with, and not to learn; they are weary of it when it comes to that. At first many come to Christ with wonder, and will needs be His servants for something in it that seemeth fine; till they hear that the Son of man hath not the accommodation of the birds or foxes; and that His doctrine and way hath an enmity to thier worldly, fleshly interest, and then they are gone. They first entertained Christ in compliment, thinking that He would please them, or not much contradict them; but when they find that they have received a guest that will rule them, and not be ruled by them, that will not suffer them to take their pleasure, nor enjoy their riches, but hold them to a life which they cannot endure, and even undo them in the world, He is then no longer a guest for them. Whereas if Christ had been received as Christ, and truth and godliness deliberately entertained for their well-discerned excellency and necessity, the deep rooting would have prevented this apostasy, and cured such hypocrisy.

But, alas! poor ministers find by sad experience, that all prove not saints that flock to hear them, and make up the crowd; nor "that for a season rejoice in their light," and magnify them, and take their parts. The blossom hath its beauty and sweetness; but all that blossometh or appeareth in the bud, doth not come to perfect fruit: some will be blasted, and some blown down; some nipped with frosts, some eaten by worms; some quickly fall, and some hang on till the strongest blasts do cast them down; some are deceived and poisoned by false teachers; some by worldly cares, and the deceitfulness of riches, become unfruitful and are turned aside; the lusts of some had deeper rooting than the word; and the friends of some had greater interest in them than Christ, and therefore they forsake Him to satisfy their importunity; some are corrupted by the hopes of

preferment, or the favour of man; some feared from Christ by their threats and frowns, and choose to venture on damnation to escape persecution; and some are so worldly wise, that they can see reason to remit their zeal, and can save their souls and bodies too; and prove that to be their duty, which other men call sin (if the end will but answer their expectations); and some grow weary of truth and duty, as a dull and common thing, being supplied with that variety which might still continue the delights of novelty.

Yet mistake not what I have said, as if all the affection furthered by novelty, and abated by commonness and use, were a sign that the person is but a hypocrite. I know that there is something in the nature of man, remaining in the best, which disposeth us to be much more passionately affected with things when they seem new to us, and are first apprehended, than when they are old, and we have known or used them long. There is not, I believe, one man of a thousand, but is much more delighted in the light of truth, when it first appeareth to him, than when it is trite and familiarly known; and is much more affected with a powerful minister at first, than when he hath long sat under him. The same sermon that even transported them at the first hearing, would affect them less, if they had heard it preached a hundred times. The same books which greatly affected us at the first or second reading, will affect us less when we have read them over twenty times. The same words of prayer that take much with us when seldom used, do less move our affections when they are daily used all the year. At our first conversion, we have more passionate sorrow for our sin, and love to the godly, than we can afterwards retain. And all this is the case of learned and unlearned, the sound and unsound, though not of all alike. Even heaven itself is spoken of by Christ, as if it did participate of this, when He saith, that "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, that need no repentance" (Luke 15:7,Luke 15:10). And I know it is the duty of ministers to take notice of this disposition in their hearers, and not to dull them with giving them still the same, but to profit them by a pleasant and profitable variety: not by preaching to them another Christ, or a new gospel: it is the same God, and Christ, and Spirit, and Scripture, and the same heaven, the same church, the same faith, and hope, and repentance, and obedience, that we must preach to them as long as we live; though they say, we have heard this a hundred times, let them hear it still, and bring them not a new creed. If they hear so oft of God, and Christ, and heaven, till by faith, and love, and fruition, they attain them as their end, they have heard well. But yet there is a grateful variety of subordinate particulars, and of words, and methods, and seasonable applications, necessary to the right performance of our ministry, and to the profiting of the flocks: though the physician use the same apothecary's shop, and dispensatory, and drugs, yet how great a variety must he use of compositions, and times, and manner of administration. But for all this, though the best are affected most with things that seem new, and are dulled with the long and frequent use of the same expressions, yet they are never weary of the substance of their religion, so as to desire a change. And though they are not so passionately affected with the same sermons, and books, or with the thoughts or mention of the same substantial matters of religion, as at first they were; yet do their judgments more solidly and tenaciously embrace them, and esteem them, and their wills as resolvedly adhere to them, and use them, and in their lives they practise them, better than before. Whereas, they that take up their religion but for novelty, will lay it down when it ceaseth to be new to them, and must either change for a newer, or have none at all. And as unsound are they that are religious, only because their education, or their friends, or the laws or judgment of their rulers, or the custom of the country, hath made it necessary to their reputation: these are

hypocrites at the first setting out, and therefore cannot be saved by continuance in such a carnal religiousness as this. I know law, and custom, and education, and friends, when they side with godliness, are a great advantage to it, by affording helps, and removing those impediments that might stick much with carnal minds. But truth is not your own, till it be received in its proper evidence; nor your faith divine, till you believe what you believe, because God is true who doth reveal it; nor are you the children of God, till you love Him for Himself; nor are you truly religious, till the truth and goodness of religion itself be the principal thing that maketh you religious. It helpeth much to discover a man's sincerity, when he is not only religious among the religious, but among the profane, and the enemies, and scorners, and persecutors of religion; and when a man doth not pray only in a praying family, but among the prayerless, and the deriders of fervent constant prayer; and when a man is heavenly among them that are earthly, and temperate among the intemperate and riotous, and holdeth the truth among those that reproach it and that hold the contrary; when a man is not carried only by a stream of company, or outward advantages, to his religion, nor avoideth sin for want of a temptation, but is religious though against the stream, and innocent when cast (unwillingly) upon temptations; and is godly where godliness is accounted singularity, hypocrisy, faction, humour, disobedience, or heresy; and will rather let go the reputation of his honesty, than his honesty itself.

5.02. Direction II - Concerning Balance in Christianity

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Take heed of being religious only in opinion, without zeal and holy practice; or only in zealous affection, without a sound, well grounded judgment; but see that judgment, zeal, and practice be conjunct. To change your opinions is an easier matter than to change the heart and life. A holding of the truth will save no man, without a love and practice of the truth. This is the meaning of James 2:1-26, where he speaketh so much of the unprofitableness of a dead, unaffected belief, that worketh not by love, and commandeth not the soul to practice and obedience. To believe that there is a God, while you neglect Him and disobey Him, is unlikely to please Him. To believe that there is a heaven, while you neglect it, and prefer the world before it, will never bring you thither. To believe your duty, and not to perform it, and to believe that sin is evil, and yet to live in it, is to sin with aggravation, and have no excuse, and not the way to be accepted or justified with God. To be of the same belief with holy men, without the same hearts and conversations, will never bring you to the same felicity. "He that knoweth His master’s will and doth it not" shall be so far from being accepted for it that he "shall be beaten with many stripes" (see Luke 12:47). To believe that holiness and obedience is the best way, will never save the disobedient and unholy. And yet if judgment be not your guide, the most zealous affections will but precipitate you; and make you run, though quite out of the way, like the horses when they have cast the coachman or the riders. To ride post when you are quite out of the way, is but laboriously to lose your time, and to prepare for further labour. The Jews that persecuted Christ and His apostles, had the testimony of Paul himself, that they had a "zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2). And Paul saith of the deceivers and troublers of the Galatians, (whom he wished even cut off), that they did zealously affect them, but not well (see Galatians 4:17). And he saith of himself, while he persecuted Christians to prison and to death, "I was zealous towards God as ye are all this day" (Acts 22:3-4). Was not St. Dominick that stirred up the persecution against the Christians in France and Savoy, to the murdering of many thousands of them, a very zealous man? And are not the butchers of the Inquisition zealous men? And were not the authors of the third Canon of the General Council at the Lateran, under Pope Innocent the Third, very zealous men, who decreed that the pope should depose temporal lords, and give away their dominions, and absolve their subjects, if they would not exterminate the godly, called heretics? Hath not zeal caused many of latter times to rise up against their lawful governors? and many to persecute the church of God, and to deprive the people of their faithful pastors without compassion on the people’s souls? Doth not Christ say of such zealots, "The time cometh, when whosoever killeth you, will think He doth God service" (John 16:2); or offereth a service acceptable to God. Therefore Paul saith, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good matter" (Galatians 4:18); showing you that zeal indeed is good, if sound judgment be its guide. Your first question must be whether you are in the right way? and your second, whether you go apace? It is sad to observe what odious actions are committed in all ages of the world, by the instigation of misguided zeal! And what a shame an imprudent zealot is to his profession! While making himself ridiculous in the eyes of the adversaries, he

brings his profession itself into contempt, and maketh the ungodly think that the religious are but a company of transported brain-sick zealots; and thus they are hardened to their perdition. How many things doth unadvised affection provoke well-meaning people to, that afterwards will be their shame and sorrow?

Labour therefore for knowledge, and soundness of understanding; that you may know truth from falsehood, good from evil; and may walk confidently, while you walk safely; and that you become not a shame to your profession, by a furious persecution of that which you must afterwards confess to be an error; by drawing others to that which you would after wish that you had never known yourselves. And yet see that all your knowledge have its efficacy upon your heart and life; and take every truth as an instrument of God, to reveal Himself to you, or to draw your heart to Him, and conform you to His holy will.

5.03. Direction III - Labouring for Understanding

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Labour to understand the true method of divinity, and see truths in their several degrees and order; that you take not the last for the first, nor the lesser for the greater. Therefore see that you be well grounded in the catechism[10]; and refuse not to learn some catechism that is sound and full, and keep it in memory while you live.

Method, or right order, exceedingly helpeth understanding, memory, and practice. Truths have a dependence on each other; the lesser branches spring out of the greater, and those out of the stock and root. Some duties are but means to other duties, or subservient to them, and to be measured accordingly; and if it be not understood which is the chief, the other cannot be referred to it. When two things materially good come together, and both cannot be done, the greater must take place, and the lesser is no duty at that time, but a sin, as preferred before the greater. Therefore it is one of the commonest difficulties among cases of conscience, to know which duty is the greater, and to be preferred. Upon this ground, Christ healed on the sabbath day, and pleaded for His disciples rubbing the ears of corn, and for David’s eating the shew-bread, and telleth them, that "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27) and that God "will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Matthew 12:7).

Divinity is a curious, well-composed frame. As it is not enough that you have all the parts of your watch or clock, but you must see that every part be in its proper place, or else it will not go, or answer its end; so it is not enough that you know the several parts of divinity or duty, unless you know them in their true order and place. You may be confounded before you are aware, and led into many dangerous errors, by mistaking the order of several truths; and you may be misguided into heinous sins, by mistaking the degrees and order of duties; as, when duties of piety and charity seem to be competitors; and when you think that the commands of men contradict the commands of God; and when the substance and the circumstances or modes of duty are in question before you as inconsistent; or when the means seemeth to cease to be a means, by crossing of the end; and in abundance of such cases, you cannot easily conceive what a snare it may prove to you, to be ignorant of the methods and ranks of duty.

Objection. If that be so, what man can choose but be confounded in his religion; when there be so few that observe any method at all, and few that agree in method, and none that hath published a scheme or method so exact and clear, as to be commonly approved by divines themselves? What then can ignorant Christians do?

Answer. Divinity is like a tree that hath one trunk, and thence a few greater arms or boughs, and thence a thousand smaller branches; or like the veins, or nerves, or arteries in the body, that have first one or few trunks divided into more, and those into a few more, and those into more, till they multiply at last into more than can easily be seen or numbered. Now it is easy for any man to begin at the chief trunk, and to discern the first divisions, and the next, though not to comprehend the

number and order of all the extreme and smaller branches. So is it in divinity: it is not very hard to begin at the unity of the eternal God-head, and see there a Trinity of Persons, and of primary attributes, and of relations; and to arise to the principal attributes and works of God as in these relations, and to the relations of man to God, and to the great duties of these relations, to discern God's covenants and chiefest laws, and the duty of man in obedience thereto, and the judgment of God in the execution of His sanctions; though yet many particular truths be not understood. And He that beginneth, and proceedeth as he ought, doth know methodically so much as he knoweth; and he is in the right way to the knowledge of more: and the great mercy of God hath laid so great a necessity on us to know these few points that are easily known, and so much less need of knowing the many small particulars, that a young Christian may live uprightly, and holily, and comfortably, that well understandeth his catechism, or the creed, Lord's prayer, and Ten Commandments; and may find daily work and consolation in the use of these. A sound and well composed catechism studied well and kept in memory, would be a good measure of knowledge, to ordinary Christians, and make them solid and orderly in their understanding, and in their proceeding to the smaller points, and would prevent a great deal of error and miscarriage, that many by ill teaching are cast upon, to their own and the church's grief! Yea, it were to be wished, that some teachers of late had learnt so much and orderly themselves.

5.04. Direction IV - On Dealing with Controversy

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Begin not too early with controversies in religion; and when you come to them, let them have but their due proportion of your time and zeal; but live daily upon [the] certain great substantials, which all Christians are agreed in.

1. Plunge not yourselves too soon into controversies: For (1.) It will be exceedingly to your loss, by diverting your souls from greater and more necessary things: you may get more increase of holiness, and spend your time more pleasingly to God, by drinking in deeper the substantials of religion, and improving them on your hearts and lives.

(2.) It will corrupt your minds, and instead of humility, charity, holiness, and heavenly-mindedness, it will feed your pride, and kindle faction and a dividing zeal, and quench your charity, and possess you with a wrangling, contentious spirit, and you will make a religion of these sins and lamentable distempers.

(3.) And it is the way to deceive and corrupt your judgments, and make you erroneous or heretical, to your own perdition and the disturbance of the church; for it is two to one, but either you presently err, or else get such an itch after notions and opinions that will lead you to error at the last. Because you are not yet ripe and able to judge of those things, till your minds are prepared by those truths that are first in order to be received. When you undertake a work that you cannot do, no wonder if it be ill done, and must be all undone again, or worse.

Perhaps you will say, that you must not take your religion upon trust, but must "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Answer. Though your religion must not be taken upon trust, there are many controverted smaller opinions that you must take upon trust, till you are capable of discerning them in their proper evidence. Till you can reach them yourselves, you must take them on trust, or not at all. Though you must believe all things of common necessity to salvation with a divine faith; yet many subservient truths must be received first by a human faith, or not received at all, till you are more capable of them. Nay, there is a human faith necessarily subservient to the divine faith, about the substance of religion; and the officers of Christ are to be trusted in their office, as helpers of your faith. Nay, let me tell you, that while you are young and ignorant, you are not fit for controversies about the fundamentals of religion themselves. You may believe that there is a God, long before you are fit to hear an atheist proving that there is no God. You may believe the Scripture to be the Word of God, and Christ to be the Savior, and the soul to be immortal, long before you will be fit to manage or study controversies hereupon. For nothing is so false or bad, which a wanton or wicked wit may not put a plausible gloss upon; and your raw unfurnished understandings will scarce be able to see through the pretence, or escape the cheat. When you cannot answer the arguments of seducers, you will find them leave a doubting in your minds; for you know not how plain the answer of them is, to wiser men. And though you must prove all things, you must do it in due

order, and as you are able; and stay till your furnished minds are capable of the trial. If you will needs read before you know your letters, or pretend to judge of Greek and Hebrew authors, before you can read English, you will but become ridiculous in your undertaking.

2. When you do come to smaller controverted points, let them have but their due proportion of your time and zeal. And that will not be one hour in many days, with the generality of private Christians. By that time you have well learned the more necessary truths, and practiced daily the more necessary duties, you will find that there will be but little time to spare for lesser controversies. Opinionists that spend most of their time in studying and talking of such points, do steal that time from greater matters, and therefore from God, and from themselves. Better work is undone the while. And they that here lay out their chiefest zeal, divert their zeal from things more necessary, and turn their natural heat into a fever.

3. The essential necessary truths of your religion, must imprint the image of God upon your hearts, and must dwell there continually, and you must live upon them as your bread, and drink, and daily necessary food; all other points must be studied in subserviency to those; all lesser duties must be used as the exercise of the love of God or man, and of a humble heavenly mind. The articles of your creed, and points of catechism, are fountains ever running, affording you matter for the continual exercise of grace; it is both plentiful and solid nourishment of the soul, which these great substantial points afford. To know God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, the laws and covenant of God, and His judgment, and rewards and punishments, with the parts and method of the Lord’s prayer, which must be the daily exercise of our desires, and love, this is the wisdom of a Christian; and in these must he be continually exercised.

You will say perhaps that the apostle saith: "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works," etc. (Hebrews 6:1).

Answer. By "leaving" he meaneth not passing over the practice of them as men that have done with them, and are past them; but leaving at that time to discourse of them, or his supposing them taught already; though he lay not the foundation again, yet he doth not pluck it up. 2. By "principles" he meaneth the first points to be taught, and learnt, and practised; and indeed regeneration and baptism is not to be done again; but the essentials of religion which I am speaking of, contain much more: especially to live in the love of God, which Paul calls the more excellent way (see 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 and 1 Corinthians 13:1-13). 3. Going on to perfection, is not by ceasing to believe and love God, but by a more distinct knowledge of the mysteries of salvation, to perfect our faith, and love, and obedience. The points that opinionists call higher, and think to be the principal matter of their growth, and advancement in understanding, are usually but some smaller, less necessary truths, if not some uncertain, doubtful questions. Mark well 1 Timothy 1:4; 1 Timothy 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9; compared with John 17:3; Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 John 3:1-24; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Corinthians 15:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:2; Galatians 6:14; James 2:1-26; James 3:1.

5.05. Direction V - On Spiritual Infancy and Christian Growth

Direction V - On Spiritual Infancy and Christian Growth Be very thankful for the great mercy of your conversion: but yet overvalue not your first degrees of knowledge or holiness, but remember that you are yet but in your infancy, and must expect your growth and ripeness as the consequent of time and diligence.

You have great reason to be more glad and thankful for the least measure of true grace, than if you had been made the rulers of the earth; it being of a far more excellent nature, and entitling you to more than all the kingdoms of the world. . . "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Christ will warrant you to rejoice, though enemies envy you, and repine both at your victory and triumph. If there be "joy in heaven in the presence of the angels" (Luke 15:10) at your conversion, there is great reason you should be glad yourselves. If the prodigal's father will needs have the best robe and ring brought forth, and the fat calf killed, and the music to attend the feast, that they may eat and be merry (see Luke 15:23), there is great reason that the prodigal son himself should not have the smallest share of joy; though his brother repine. But yet, take heed lest you think the measure of your first endowments to be greater than it is. Grace imitateth nature, in beginning, usually, with small degrees, and growing up to maturity by leisurely proceeding. We are not new-born in a state of manhood, as Adam was created. Though those texts that liken the kingdom of God to a grain of mustard seed, and to a little leaven (see Matthew 13:31,Matthew 13:33) be principally meant of the small beginnings and great increase of the church of kingdom of Christ in the world; yet it is true also of His grace or kingdom in the soul. Our first stature is but to be "newborn babes desiring the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow by it" (1 Peter 2:2). Note here, that the new birth bringeth forth but babes, but growth is by degrees, by feeding on the word. The word is received by the heart, as seed into the ground (see Matthew 13:1-58). And seed useth not to bring forth the blade and fruit to ripeness in a day.

Yet I deny not, but that some men (as Paul) may have more grace at their first conversion, than many others have at their full growth. For God is free in the giving of His own, and may give more or less as pleaseth Himself. But yet in Paul himself, that greater measure is but his smallest measure, and he himself is capable of increase to the last. And so great a measure at first is as rare, as his greater measure, at last, in its full growth, is rare, and scarce to be expected now. And if God should give a great measure of holiness at first, to any now, as possibly He may, yet their measure of gifts is never great at first, unless they had acquired or received them before conversion. If grace find a man of great parts and understanding, which by study and other helps he had attained before, no wonder if that man, when his parts are sanctified, be able in knowledge the first day; for he had it before, though he had not a heart to use it. But if grace find a man ignorant, unlearned, and of mean abilities, he must not expect to be suddenly lifted up to great understanding and high degrees of knowledge by grace. For this knowledge is not given, now, by sudden infusion, as gifts were, extraordinarily, in the primitive church. You need no other proof of this but experience, to stop the mouth of any gainsayer. Look about you, and observe whether

those that are men of knowledge, did obtain it by infusion, in a moment, or whether they did not obtain it by diligent study, by slow degrees (though I know God blesseth some men's studies more than others). Name one man that ever was brought to great understanding, but by means and labour, and slow degrees; or that knoweth any truth, in nature, or divinity, but what he read or heard, or studied for, as the result of what he read or heard. The person that is proudest of his knowledge, must confess that he came to it in this way himself. But you will ask, What then is the illumination of the Spirit, and enlightening the mind, which the Scripture ascribeth to the Holy Ghost? Hath not our understanding need of the Spirit for light, as well as the heart or will for life?

Answer. Yes, no doubt; and it is a great and wonderful mercy: and I will tell you what it Isaiah 1:1-31. The Holy Spirit, by immediate inspiration, revealed to the apostles the doctrine of Christ, and caused them infallibly to indite the Scriptures. But this is not the way of ordinary illumination now. 2. The Holy Spirit assisteth us in our hearing, reading, and studying the Scripture, that we may come, by diligence, to the true understanding of it; but doth not give us that understanding, without hearing, reading or study. "Faith cometh by hearing" (Romans 10:17). It blesseth the use of means to us, but blesseth us not in the neglect of means. 3. The Holy Spirit doth open the eyes and heart of a sinner, who hath heard, and notionally understood the substance of the gospel, that he may know that piercingly, and effectually, and practically, which before he knew but notionally, and ineffectually; so that the knowledge of the same truth is now become powerful, and, as it were, of another kind. And this is the Spirit's sanctifying of the mind, and principal work of saving illumination; not by causing us to know any thing of God, or Christ, or heaven, without means; but by opening the heart, that, through the means, it may take in that knowledge deeply, which others have but notionally, and in a dead opinion; and, by making our knowledge clear, and quick, and powerful, to affect the heart, and rule the life. 4. The Holy Spirit sanctifieth all that notional knowledge which men had before their renovation. All their learning and parts are now made subservient to Christ, and to the right end, and turned into their proper channel. 5. And the Holy Ghost doth, by sanctifying the heart, possess it with such a love to God, and heaven, and holiness, and truth, as is a wonderful advantage to us, in our studies for the attaining of further knowledge. Experience telleth us, how great a help it is to knowledge, to have a constant love, delight, and desire to the thing which we would know. All these ways the Spirit is the enlightener of believers. The not observing this direction, will have direful effects; which I will name, that you may see the necessity of avoiding them.

1. If you imagine that you are presently men of great understanding, and abilities, and holiness, while you are young beginners, and but newborn babes, you are entering into "the snare and condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:7), even into the odious sin of pride; yea, a pride of those spiritual gifts which are most contrary to pride; yea, and a pride of that which you have not, which is most foolish pride. Mark the words of Paul, when he forbids to choose a young beginner in religion to the ministry: "Not a novice" (that is, a young, raw Christian) "lest being lifted up" (or besotted) "with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). Why are young beginners more in danger of this than other Christians? One would think their infancy should be conscious of its own infirmity. But Paul knew what he said. It is, (1.) Partly because the suddenness of their change; coming out of darkness into a light which they never saw before, doth amaze them, and transport them, and make them think they are almost in heaven, and that there is not much more to be attained. Like the beggar that had a hundred pounds given him, having

never seen the hundredth part before, imagined that he had as much money as the king. (2.) And it is partly because they have not knowledge enough to know how many things there are that yet they are ignorant of! They never heard of the Scripture difficulties, and the knots in school divinity, nor the hard cases of conscience: whereas, one seven years' painful studies, will tell them of many hundred difficulties which they never saw; and forty or fifity years' study more, will clothe them with shame and humility, in the sense of their lamentable darkness. (3.) And it is also because the devil doth with greatest industry lay this net to entrap young converts, it being the way in which he hath the greatest hope.

2. Your hasty conceits of your own goodness or ability, will make you presumptuous of your own strength, and so to venture upon dangerous temptations, which is the way to ruin. You will think you are not so ignorant, but you may venture into the company heretics or deceivers, or read their books, or be present at their worship. And I confess you may escape; but it may be otherwise, and God may leave you to "show you all that was in your hearts," as it is said of Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 32:21,2 Chronicles 32:25-26).

3. And your overvaluing your first grace, will make you too secure (when your souls have need of holy awfulness and care) to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Php 2:12); and to "serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, as knowing that He is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28-29). And security is the forerunner of a fall.

4. It will make you neglect the due labour and patience in the use of means, for further knowledge and increase of grace, while you think you are so well already. And so you will be worse than those that are ever learning, and never come to any ripe knowledge; for you will think that you are fit to be teachers, when you have need to be taught that which you will not submit to learn. And then, "when for the time ye ought to have been teachers, you will have need to be catechised, or taught again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, as having need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12). Mark here, how the Holy Ghost maketh time and exercise necessary to such growth as must enable you to be teachers (see Hebrews 5:12-14). Therefore, he addeth, "but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age; those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). Mark here, how wisdom and strength is to be expected.

5. This over-hasty conceit of your own ability, will tempt you to run into controversies, and matters that you are not fit for; and so divert you from necessary and seasonable studies.

6. It will make you over-confident of all your own opinions, and stiff in all your own conceits; too like him, "The fool rageth and is confident" (Proverbs 14:16). How many and many a time have I heard a man that understood not what he talked of, and could scarce speak sense, to plead for his opinion so confidently, as to scorn or pity the wisest contradicter, when his ignorance, and phrenetic confidence and rage, did make him a real object of pity, to men of ordinary understandings. There is a kind of madness in this disease, that will not leave you with enough to know that you are mad.

7. It will make you also very censorious of others: this ignorant pride will make you think other men's knowledge to be ignorance, if they be not just of your fond opinions; and other men's graces to be none, if they be not of your mind and way. None are so ready as such to censure those that

are better than themselves, or that they have no acquaintance with, as being but civil, moral men, or being erroneous or deluded. It is a very loathsome thing, to hear an ignorant, self-conceited fellow to talk of those that are a hundred times wiser and much better than himself, as magisterially, with a proud compassion or contempt, as if he were indeed the wise man, that knoweth not what he saith.

8. And it will make you rebellious against your governors and teachers, and utterly unteachable, as despising those that should instruct and rule you. You will think yourselves wiser than your teachers, while you are but in the lowest form. It is such that James speaks to: "My brethren, be not many masters" (or teachers) "knowing that ye shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). And that whole chapter, well worth your studying, is spoke to such.

9. And thus it will entangle you in heretical opinions, to which there is no greater preparatory, than pride-possessing, half-witted young beginners in religion.

10. And so it will make you troublers of the church, contending unpeaceably for that which you understand not.

11. And it tendeth to hypocrisy, making you give thanks for that which you never had; as puffed up with a knowledge that is not enough to keep you humble, and wanting the charity which would edify yourselves and others (see 1 Corinthians 8:1).

12. And it tendeth to delude you in point of assurance of salvation; taking your own over-valuing self-esteem for true assurance; which is not ordinarily to be expected, till grace be come to strength.

13. Lastly, it tendeth to corrupt your apprehensions of the nature of Christianity itself; while you will judge of it in others according to your own overvalued measure: when, if you knew it as it is in the heart and practice of the sober, wise, humble, charitable, peaceable, mortified, heavenly believer, you would see that it hath a higher glory than any that is manifested by you.

I have named to you all these sad effects of overvaluing your beginnings in religion, that as you love your souls, you may avoid them. I take it to be a matter of exceeding great moment, for your safety and perseverance, that while you are infants in grace, you know yourself to be such; that you may keep your form, and learn first the lessons that must first be learned, and "walk humbly with you God, and obey those that are over you in the Lord" (Hebrews 13:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:5), and may wait on the Spirit, in the use of means, and may not rejoice the tempter, by corrupting all that you have received, and imitating him, in falling from your state of hope.

5.06. Direction VI - On Difficulties and Opposition

Direction VI - On Difficulties and Opposition Be not discouraged at the difficulties and oppositions which will rise up before you, when you begin resolvedly to walk with God. As discouragements keep off multitudes from religion, so they are great temptations to many young beginners to turn back, and as the Israelites in the wilderness, ready to wish themselves again in Egypt. Three sorts of discouragements arise before them: 1. Some from the nature of the work; 2. Some from God's trials; 3. And some from the malice of the devil and his instruments; Or all these.

1. It cannot be expected but that infants and weaklings should think a little burden heavy, and an easy work or journey to be wearisome. Young beginners are ordinarily puzzled, and at a loss, in every trade, or art, or science. Young scholars have a far harder task, than when they are once well entered: learning is wondrous hard and unpleasant to them, at the first; but when they are once well entered, the knowledge of one thing helps another, and they go on with ease. So a young convert, that hath been bred up in ignorance, and never used to prayer, or to heavenly discourse, nor to hear or join with any that did, will think it strange and hard at first. And those that were used to take their pleasure, and fulfill the desires of the flesh, and perhaps to swear, and talk filthily, or idly, or to lie, will find, at first, some difficulty to overcome their customs, and live a mortified, holy life: yet grace will do it, and prevail. Especially in point of knowledge, and ability of expression, be not too hasty in your expectation, but wait with patience, in a faithful, diligent use of means, and that will be easy and delightful to you afterwards, which before discouraged you with its difficulties.

2. And God Himself will have His servants, and His graces, tried and exercised by difficulties. He never intended us the reward for sitting still; nor the crown of victory, without a fight; nor a fight, without an enemy and opposition. Innocent Adam was unfit for his state of confirmation and reward, till he had been tried by temptation. Therefore the martyrs have the most glorious crown, as having undergone the greatest trial. And shall we presume to murmur at the method of God?

3. And Satan, having liberty to tempt and try us, will quickly raise up storms and waves before us, as soon as we are set to sea; which make young beginners often fear, that they shall never live to reach the haven. He will show thee the greatness of thy former sins, to persuade thee that they shall not be pardoned. He will show thee the strength of thy passions and corruptions, to make thee think they will never be overcome. He will show thee the greatness of the opposition and suffering which thou art like to undergo, to make thee think thou shall never persevere. He will do his worst to meet thee with poverty, losses, crosses, injuries, vexations, persecutions, and cruelties, yea, and unkindness from thy dearest friends, as he did by Job, to make thee think ill of God, or of his service. If he can, he will make them thy enemies that are of thine own household. He will stir up thy own father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or brother, or sister, or children, against thee, to persuade or persecute thee from Christ: therefore Christ tells us, that if we hate not all these, that is, cannot forsake them, and use them as men do hated things, when they would turn us from him, we cannot be his disciples (see Luke 14:26; Matthew 10:1-42). Look for the

worst that the devil can do against thee, if thou hast once lifted thyself against him, in the army of Christ, and resolvest, whatever it cost thee, to be saved. Read Hebrews 11:1-40. But how little cause you have to be discouraged, though earth and hell should do their worst, you may perceive by these few considerations:

(1.) God is on your side, who hath all your enemies in His hand, and can rebuke them, or destroy them in a moment. Oh what is the breath or fury of dust or devils, against the Lord Almighty! "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Read often that chapter, Romans 8:1-39. In the day when thou didst enter into covenant with God, and He with thee, thou didst enter into the most impregnable rock and fortress, and house thyself in that castle of defence, where thou mayest (modestly) defy all adverse powers of earth or hell. If God cannot save thee, He is not God. And if He will not save thee, He must break His covenant. Indeed, He may resolve to save thee, not from affliction and persecution, but in it, and by it. But in all these sufferings you will "be more than conquerors, through Christ that lovelth you" (Romans 8:37): that is, it is far more desirable and excellent to conquer by patience, in suffering for Christ, than to conquer our persecutors in the field, by force of arms. O think on the saints' triumphant boastings in their God. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Psalms 46:1-3). When his "enemies were many" and "wrested his words daily," and "fought against him, and all their thoughts were against him," yet he saith, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God will I praise His word; in God have I put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me" (Psalms 56:1-5). Remember Christ's charge: "Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear Him, which after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear Him" (Luke 12:4). If all the world were on thy side, thou might yet have cause to fear; but to have God on thy side, is infinitely more.

(2.) Jesus Christ is the Captain of thy salvation (Hebrews 2:10), and hath gone before thee this way himself, and hath conquered for thee; and now is engaged to make thee conqueror: and darest thou not go on where Christ doth lead the way? He was perfected through suffering Himself, and will see that thou be not destroyed by it. Canst thou draw back, when thou seest His steps, and His blood?

(3.) Thou art not to conquer in thy own strength, but by the Spirit of God, and the power of that grace which is sufficient for thee, and His strength which appeareth most in our weakness (see 2 Corinthians 12:9). And "you can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you" (Php 4:13). "Be of good cheer, he hath overcome the world" (John 16:33).

(4.) All that are in heaven have gone this way, and overcome such oppositions and difficulties as these: they were tempted, troubled, scorned, opposed, as well as you; and yet they now triumph in glory. "These are they that come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (Revelation 7:14). And all that ever come to heaven (at age) are like to come this way. And doth not the company encourage you? and the success of those that have overcome before you? Will you have the end, and yet refuse the way?

(5.) Consider how much greater difficulties ungodly men go through to hell. They have stronger enemies than you have: the devil and wicked men are your enemies; but God Himself is theirs, and yet they will go on. Men threaten but death to discourage you, and God threateneth damnation to discourage them; and yet they go on, and are not discouraged. And will you be more afraid of man, than sinners are of God? and of death or scorns, than they are of hell?

(6.) Yea, and you yourselves must cast your souls on these greater evils, if by discouragement you turn from the way of godliness. You must run into hell for fear of burning; and upon everlasting death, to escape a temporal death, or less: you will choose God for your enemy, to escape the enmity of man; and how wise a course this is, judge you; when if you do but see that your ways please God, He can "make your enemies be at peace with you," if He see it for your good (see Proverbs 16:7). If you will fear, fear Him that can damn the soul.

(7.) Lastly, remember what abundance of mercies you have to sweeten your present life, and to make your burden easy to you: you have all that is good for you in this life, and the promise of everlasting joy; for godliness thus "is profitable to all things" (1 Timothy 4:8). What abundance of mercy have you in your bodies, estates, friends, names, or souls, which are the greatest! What promises and experiences to refresh you! What liberty of access to God! A Christ to rejoice in, a heaven to rejoice in! and yet shall a stony or a dirty way discourage you more than these shall comfort you? The sum of all is, your work will grow easier and sweeter to you, as your skill and strength increase. Your enemies are as grasshoppers before you; the power of the Almighty is engaged by love and promise for your help; and do you pretend to trust in God, and yet will fear the face of man? "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting: for the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded, therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me: who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up" (Isaiah 50:6-10). "Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings: for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation" (Isaiah 51:7-8). He is no soldier for Christ, that will turn back for fear of scorns, or of anything that man can do against him. And consider whether heaven should be [more easily] come to? They are things of unspeakable glory that you strive for; and they are unworthily despised, if anything be thought too good to part with for them, or any labour, or difficulties, or sufferings too great to undergo to procure them.

5.07. Direction VII - On Living Under a Good Pastor

Direction VII - On Living Under a Good Pastor

If it be in your power, live under a judicious, faithful, serious, searching, powerful minister; and diligently attend his public teaching, and use his private counsel for more particular directions and applications, for the settling and managing the affairs of your souls; even as you take the advice of physicians for your health, and of lawyers for your estates, and tutors for your studies.

I give this direction only to those that may enjoy so great a mercy if they will. Some live where no such minister is. Some are children, or servants, or wives, that are bound and cannot remove their habitations or enjoy such liberty, by reason of the unwillingness and restraint of others. Some are so poor, that they cannot remove their dwelling for such advantages. And some are so serviceable in their places, that they may be bound to stay under a very weak minister, that they may do good to others, where they have best opportunity. But let him that can be free, and possess so great a mercy, accept it thankfully, though to his cost. As Christ said in another case, "Every man cannot receive the saying; but he that can receive it, let him" (Matthew 19:11).

There is abundance of difference between a weak, unskillful, unexperienced, dead-hearted, formal teacher, and such a one as is described in the direction. Some that are senseless or indifferent in such matters as these themselves, would persuade you to be so too, and look first in your settlement to your bodily conveniences, and be content with such a teacher as accidentally you are cast upon. And they will tell you, that the work of grace dependeth not on the preacher’s gifts, but on the gift and blessing of the Spirit of God. The formalists and the enthusiasts concur in this, though from different principles: but though God can frustrate the fittest means, and can work without means or by that which is least fitted to the end, yet it is His ordinary way to work by means, and that for the soul as well as for the body; and to work most by the aptest means. And I am sure it is the duty of every teacher, to preach in the fittest manner that he can for the people’s edification; and not to do God’s work deceitfully, and ineptly, because God can bless the unfittest means; and it is the people’s duty to attend upon the best they can enjoy, though God can equally work by the weakest or by none. As that pretence will not excuse the contemners of God’s ordinances, that upon every little business stay at home, and attend upon no ministry at all; no more will it excuse them, that refuse that help which is most suited to their edification, and take up with a worse, when they might have better. We are not to neglect duty upon a presumptuous expectation of miraculous or extraordinary works; when we can have no better, we may hope for the greater benefit from the weakest; but not when it is the choice of our own presumptuous, irreligious hearts. God can make Daniel and his companions to thrive better by eating pulse, than others that fed at the table of the king: and rather than sin against God, we must cast ourselves on Him for unusual supplies, or leave all to His will. But few would therefore be persuaded causelessly to live on pulse, when they may have better. And one would think this truth should have no contradiction, especially from those men that are apt to obscure and extenuate the Spirit’s operations on the soul, and to confess no grace, but what consisteth in a congruous ordination of

means and circumstances. When their doctrine layeth all a man's hopes of salvation upon this congruity of means and circumstances, should they afterwards teach men to undervalue or neglect the fittest, and willfully cast their souls upon the most unfit and unlikely means? But godliness first resolveth what to speak against, before it resolveth what to say; and will contradict God's word, though it contradict its own; and will oppose holiness, though by a self-opposing. But the spiritual relish and experience of the godly is a very great preservative to them against such deluding reasonings as these. It is harder for a sophister of greatest subtilty or authority, to persuade him that hath tasted them, that sugar is bitter, or wormwood sweet, than to persuade him to believe it, that never tasted them; and it is hard to make a healthful man believe it is best for him to eat but once a week, or best to live on grass or snow. I doubt not but those that now I speak to, have such experience and perception of the benefit of a judicious and lively ministry, in comparison of the ignorant, cold, and lifeless, that no words will make them indifferent herein. Have you not found the ministry of one sort to enlighten, and warm, and quicken, and comfort, and strengthen you, much more than of the other? I am sure I have the common sense and experience of the faithful on my side in this, which were enough of itself against more than can be said against it. Even new-born babes in Christ have in their new natures a desire (not to senseless or malicious pratings, but) to the rational sincere milk, that they may grow by it, and to perform to God a rational service (see Romans 12:1). And it must needs be a very proud and stupid heart that can be so insensible of its own infirmity, sinfulness, and necessity, as to think the weakest, dullest minister may serve their turns, and that they are able to keep up their life, and vigour, and watchfulness, and fruitfulness, with any little ordinary help. I cannot but fear such men know not what the power and efficacy of the word upon the heart and conscience meaneth; nor what it is to live a life of faith and holiness, and to watch the heart, and walk with God. If they did, they could not but find so much difficulty herein, and so much backwardness and unskillfulness in themselves hereto, as would make them feel the necessity of the greatest helps; and it could not be but they must feel the difference between a clear and quickening sermon, and an ignorant, heartless, dead discourse, that is spoken as if a man were talking in his sleep, or of a matter that he never understood, or had experience of.

Alas, how apt are the best to cool, if they be not kept warm by a powerful ministry! How apt to lose the hatred of sin, the tenderness of conscience, the fervency in prayer, the zeal and fullness in edifying discourse, and the delights and power of heavenly meditations, which before we had! How apt is faith to stagger if it be not powerfully underpropt by the helpers of our faith! How hardly do we keep up the heat of love, the confidence of hope, the resolution and fullness of obedience, without the help of a powerful ministry! Nay, how hardly do we do our part in these, in any tolerable sort, even while we have the clearest, liveliest helps, that are ordinarily to be had! And can any that are not blind and proud, imagine that they are so holy and good, that they are above the necessity of such assistance, and that the weakest breath is enough to kindle the fire of holy love and zeal, and keep them in the fear and obedience of God? Alas, we are under languishing weakness, and must be dieted with the best, or we shall soon decay; we are cripples, and cannot go or stand without our crutches. And there must be some savour of the Spirit in him that will be fit to make us spiritual, and some savour of faith and love in him that would kindle faith and love in us; and he must speak clearly and convincingly that will be understood, and will prevail with such as we; and he must speak feelingly, that would make us feel, and speak seriously, that would be much regarded by us, and would make us serious. And ministers are not set up only for public

preaching, but for private counsel also, according to our particular needs. As physicians are not only to read you instructions for the dieting and curing of yourselves but to be present in your sickness to direct you in the particular application of remedies; and as lawyers are to assist you in your particular cases to free your estates from encumbrances, and preserve or rescue them from contentious men; choose therefore some able minister to be your ordinary counsellor in the matters of God. And let him be one that is humble, faithful, experienced, and skillful, that hath leisure, ability, and willingness to assist you. As infants in a family are unable to help themselves, and need the continual help of others, and therefore God hath put into the hearts of parents a special love to them, to make them diligent and patient in helping them; so is it in the family of Christ; most Christians, by far, are young or weak, in understanding and in grace; it is long before you will be past the need of others' help, if ever in this life. If you feel not this your infirmity and need, it is so much the greater. God will have no men to be self-sufficient; we shall all have need of one another; and God may use us as His messengers and instruments of conveying His mercies to each other; and that even self-love may help us to be sociable, and to love one another: and our souls must receive their part of mercy, by this way of communication, as well as our bodies: and therefore, as the poor, above all men, should not be against charity and communicating, that need it most; so those Christians that are weak and unexperienced, above all others, should be most desirous of help, especially from an able, faithful guide. But be sure you deal sincerely, and cheat not yourselves, by deceiving your counsellor, and hiding your case. To do so by your lawyer is the way to lose your suit; and to do so by your physician is the way to lose your life; and to do so with your pastor and soul-counsellor is the way to lose your souls. And let the judgment of your pastor or judicious friend about the state of your souls be much regarded by you, though it be not infallible.

5.08. Direction VIII - On Unity Among Believers

Direction VIII - On Unity Among Believers

Keep right apprehensions of the excellency of charity and unity among believers, and receive nothing hastily that is against them; especially take heed lest under pretence of their authority, their number, their soundness, or their holiness, you too much addict yourselves to any sect or party, to the withdrawing of your special love and just communion from other Christians, and turning your zeal to the interest of your party, with a neglect of the common interest of the church; but love a Christian as a Christian, and promote the unity and welfare of them all.

Use often to read and well consider the meaning and reason of those many urgent passages in Scripture, which exhort all Christians to unity and love, such as John 11:52; John 17:11, John 17:21-23; 1 Corinthians 3:10-17; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 2 Corinthians 11:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Php 2:1-3; 1 Peter 3:8; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 1 Corinthians 11:18. And John 13:35; Romans 12:9-10; Romans 13:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 5:6,Galatians 5:13,Galatians 5:22; Colossians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 3:11,1 John 3:14,1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:7,1 John 4:11,1 John 4:16,1 John 4:19-21. Surely if the very life of godliness lay not much in unity and love, we should never have had such words spoken of it, as here you find. Love is to the soul, as our natural heat is to the body: whatever destroyeth it, destroyeth life; and therefore cannot be for our good. Be certain, that opinion, course, or motion, tends to death, that tends to abate your love to your brethren, much more which under pretence of zeal, provoketh you to hate and hurt them. To divide the body is to kill it or to maim it; dividing the essential, necessary parts, is killing it; cutting off any integral part, is maiming it. The first can never be an act of friendship, which is the worst that an enemy can do; the second is never an act of friendship, but when the cutting off a member which may be spared is of absolute necessity to the saving of the whole man, from the worse division between soul and body. By this judge what friends dividers are to the church, and how well they are accepted of God.

He that loveth any Christian aright, must needs love all that appear to him as Christians. And when malice will not suffer men to see Christianity in its profession, and credible appearance in another, this is as well contrary to Christian love, as hating him when you know him to be a true Christian. Censoriousness (not constrained by just evidence) is contrary to love, as well as hatred is.

There is a union and communion with Christians as such: this consisteth in having one God, one Head, one Spirit, one faith, one baptismal covenant, one rule of holy living, and in loving and praying for all, and doing good to as many as we can. This is a union and communion of mind, which we must hold with the [Christian] church through the world. And there is a bodily local union and communion, which consisteth in our joining in body, as well as mind, with particular congregations; and this, as we cannot hold it with all, nor with any congregation, but one at once; so we are not bound to hold it with any that will drive us from it, unless we will commit some sin: statedly we must hold it with the church which regularly we are joined to and live with; and occasionally we must hold it with all others, where we have a call and opportunity, who in the

substance worship God according to His word, and force us not to sin in conformity to them. It is not schism to lament the sins of any church, or of all the churches in the world: the church on earth consists of sinners. It is not schism to refuse to be partaker in any sin of the purest church in the world: obedience to God is not schism. It is not schism that you join not bodily with those congregations where you dwell not, nor have any particular call to join with them; nor that you choose the purest and most edifying society, rather than ones less pure and profitable to you, supposing you are at liberty; nor that you hold not bodily communion with that church, that will not suffer you to do it, without sinning against God; nor that you join not with the purest churches, when you are called to abide with one less pure. But it is worse than schism to separate from the universal church: to separate from its faith is apostasy to infidelity. To separate from it in some one or few essential articles, while you pretend to hold to Christ the Head, is heresy; to separate from it in Spirit, by refusing holiness, and not loving such as are truly holy, is damning ungodliness or wickedness; to differ from it by any error of judgment or life against the law of God is sin. To magnify any one church or party, so as to deny due love and communion to the rest, is schism. To limit all the church to your party, and deny all or any of the rest to be Christians, and parts of the universal church, is schism by a dangerous breach of charity; and this is the principal schism that I here admonish you to avoid. It is schism also to condemn unjustly any particular church, as no church; and it is schism to withdraw your bodily communion from a church that you were bound to hold that communion with, upon a false supposition that it is no church, or is not lawfully to be communicated with. And it is schism to make divisions or parties in a church, though you divide not from that church. Thus I have (briefly) told you what is schism.

1. One pretence for schism is (usurped) authority, which some one church may claim to command others that owe them no subjection. Thus pride, which is the spirit of hell, having crept into the church of Christ, and animated to usurpations of lordship and dominion, and contending for superiority, hath caused the most dangerious schisms in the church, that it was ever infested with. The bishop of Rome (advantaged by the seat and constitution of that empire) having claimed the government of all the Christian world, condemneth all the churches that will not be his subjects; and so hath made himself the head of a sect, and of the most pernicious schisms that ever did rend the church of Christ; and the bishop of Constantinople, and too many more, have followed the same method in a lower degree, exalting themselves above their brethren, and giving them laws, and then condemning and persecuting them that obey them not. And when they have imposed upon other churches their own usurped authority and laws, they have laid the plot to call all men schismatics and sectaries, that own not their tyrannical usurpation, and that will not be schismatics and sectaries with them: and the cheat lieth in this, that they confound the churches' unity with their pretended authority, and schism with the refusal of subjection to them. If you will not take them for your lords, they cry out that you divide from the church (as if we could hold communion with no churches but those whose bishops we obey). Communion with other churches is maintained by faith and charity, and agreement in things necessary, without subjection to them. As we may hold all just communion with the churches in Armenia, Arabia, Russia, without subjection to their bishops; so may we with any other church besides that of which we are members. Division or schism is contrary to unity and concord, and not to a usurped government: though disobedience to the pastors which God hath set over us is a sin, and dividing from them is a schism. Both the pope and all the lower usurpers should do well first to show their commission from God to be our rulers, before they call it schism to refuse their government. If they had not made better advantage

of fire and sword, than of Scripture and argument, the world would but have laughed them to scorn, when they had heard them say, "All are schismatics that will not be our subjects: our dominion and will shall be necessary to the unity of the church." The universal church indeed is one, united under one head and governor: but it is only Jesus Christ who is that head, and not any usurping vicar or vice-christ. The bishops of particular churches are his officers; but he hath deputed no vicar to his own office, as the universal head. Above all sects, take heed of this pernicious sect, who pretend their usurped authority for their schism, and have no way to promote their sect, but by calling all sectaries that will not be sectaries and subjects unto them.

2. Another pretence for schism is the numbers of the party... [Schismatics] say, "We are the most, and therefore you should yield to us"; [at times], by the sword they force the most to submit to them. But we answer them, "As many as they are, they are too few to be the universal church." The universal church, containing all true, professing Christians, is much more than they... I will be against dividing the body of Christ into any sects, rather than to be one of that sect or dividing party, which [claims to be] the greatest.

3. Another pretence for schism is the soundness or orthodoxness of a party. Almost all sects pretend that they are wiser and of sounder judgment than all the Christian world besides: yea, those that most palpably contradict the Scriptures,... and have no better reason why they so believe or do, but because others have so believed and done already.

But, (1.) the greatest pretenders to orthodoxness are not the most orthodox: (2.) and if they were, I can value them for that in which they excel, without abating my due respect to the rest of the church. (3.) For the whole church is orthodox in all the essentials of Christianity, or else they were not Christians: and I must love all that are Christians with that special love that is due to the members of Christ, though I must superadd such esteem for those that are a little wiser or better than others, as they deserve.

4. The fourth pretence for schism, is the holiness of the party that men adhere to. But this must make but a gradual difference, in our esteem and love to some Christians above others: if really they are most holy, I must love them most, and labour to be as holy as they; but I must not therefore unjustly deny communion, or due respect, to other Christians that are less holy; nor cleave to them as a sect or divided party, whom I esteem most holy. For the holiest are most charitable, and most against the divisions among Christians, and tenderest of their unity and peace. The sum of this direction is: 1. Highly value Christian love and unity. 2. Love those most that are most holy, and be most familiar with them, for your own edification: and if you have your choice, hold local personal communion with the soundest, purest, and best qualified church. 3. But entertain not hastily any odd opinion of a divided party; or, if you do hold it as an opinion, lay not greater weight on it than there is a cause. 4. Own the best as best, but none as a divided sect; and espouse not their dividing interest. 5. Confine not your special love to a party, especially for agreeing in some opinions with you, but extend it to all the members of Christ. 6. Deny not local communion, when there is occasion for it, to any church that hath the substance of true worship, and forceth you not to sin. 7. Love them as true Christians and churches, even when they thus drive you from their communion.

It is a most dangerous thing to a young convert, to be ensnared in a sect: it will, before you are aware, possess you with a feverish, sinful zeal for the opinions and interest of that sect; it will

make you bold in bitter invectives and censures, against those that differ from them; it will corrupt your church communion, and fill your very prayers with partiality and human passions; it will secretly bring malice, under the name of zeal, into your minds and words: in a word, it is a secret but deadly enemy to Christian love and peace. Let them that are wiser, and more orthodox and godly, than others, show it as the Holy Ghost directeth them:

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:13-18).

5.09. Direction IX - Warnings Concerning Ill Effects of Affliction

Direction IX - Warnings Concerning Ill Effects of Affliction

Take heed lest any persecution or wrong from others, provoke you to any unwarrantable passions and practices, and deprive you of the charity, meekness, and innocency of a Christian; or make you go beyond your bounds, in censuring, reviling or resisting your rulers, who are the officers of God.

Persecution and wrongs are called temptations in Scripture because they try you, whether you will hold your integrity. As many fall in such trials, through the fear of men, and love of the world, and their prosperity; so when you seem most confirmed against any sinful compliance, there is a snare laid for you on the other side, to draw you into passions and practices that are unwarrantable.

Those that are tainted with pride, uncharitableness, and schism, will itch to be persecuting those that comply not with them in their way; and yet, while they do it, they will most cry out against pride, uncharitableness and schism themselves. This is, and hath been, and will be too ordinary in the world. You may think that schism should be far from them, that seem to do all for order and unity. But never look to see this generally cured, when you have said and done the best you can: you must, therefore, resolve, not only to fly from church division yourselves, but also to undergo the persecutions or wrongs of proud or zealous church dividers. It is great weakness in you, to think such usage strange: do you not know that enmity is put, from the beginning, between the woman’s and the serpent’s seed? And do you think the name or dead profession of Christianity doth extinguish the enmity in the serpent’s seed? Do you think to find more kindness from proud, ungodly Christians, than Abel might have expected from his brother Cain? Do you not know that the Pharisees (by their zeal for their pre-eminence, and traditions, and ceremonies, and the expectation of worldly dignity and rule from the Messiah) were more zealous enemies of Christ than the heathens were? and that the carnal members of the church are oft the greatest persecutors of the spiritual member? "As then he that was born after the flesh, did persecute him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now," (Galatians 4:29), and will be. It is enough for you, that you shall have the inheritance, when the sons of the bondwoman shall be cast out. It is your taking the ordinary case of the godly for a strange thing that makes you so disturbed and passionate, when you suffer: and reason is down, when passion is up. It is by overwhelming reason with passion and discontent, that "oppression maketh" some "wise men mad," (Ecclesiastes 7:7); for passion is a short, imperfect madness. You will think in your passion, that you do well, when you do ill; and you will not perceive the force of reason, when it is never so plain and full against you. Remember, therefore, that the great motive that causeth the devil to persecute you is not to hurt your bodies, but to tempt your souls to impatience and sin: and if it may be said of you as of Job: "In all this Job sinned not," (Job 1:22), you have got the victory, and are "more than conqueror" (Romans 8:37-39).

Doth it seem strange to you that "few rich men are saved," when Christ telleth you it is "so hard" as to be " impossible with men"? (Luke 18:27; Mark 10:27). Or is it strange that rich men should be

the ordinary rulers of the earth? Or is it strange that the wicked should hate the godly, and the world hate them that are "chosen out of the world"? What of all this should seem strange? Expect it as the common lot of the faithful, and you will be prepared for it.

See therefore that you "resist not evil" (Matthew 5:39), by any revengeful, irregular violence. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, and not resist, lest they receive damnation," (Romans 13:1-3). Imitate your Lord, that "when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not, but committed all to Him that judgeth righteously; leaving us an ensample, that ye should follow in His steps," (1 Peter 2:21-22). An angry zeal against those that cross and hurt us is so easily kindled and hardly suppressed, that it appeareth there is more in it of corrupted nature than of God. We are very ready to think that we may "call for fire from heaven" upon the enemies of the gospel; but "you know not what manner of spirit ye are then of" (Luke 9:55). But Christ saith unto you, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45). You find no such prohibition against patiently suffering wrong from any. Take heed of giving way to secret wishes of hurt to your adversaries, or to reproachful words against them: take heed of hurting yourself by passion or sin, because others hurt you by slanders or persecutions. Keep yourself in the way of your duty, and leave your names and lives to God. Be careful that you keep your innocency, and in your patience possess your souls, and God will keep you from any hurt from enemies, but what He causes to work for your good. Read Psalms 37:1-40. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of Him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pan. Cease from anger and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil" (Psalms 37:5-8).

5.10. Direction X - On Avoiding Extremes

Direction X - On Avoiding Extremes When you are repenting of or avoiding any extreme, do it not without sufficient fear and caution of the contrary extreme. In the esteem and love of God, your ultimate end, you need not fear overdoing: nor anywhere, when impediments, and backwardness or impotency do tell you that you can never do too much. But sin lieth on both sides the rule and way: and nothing is more common, than to turn from one sin to another, under the name of duty or amendment. Especially this is common in matter of opinion. Some will first believe, that God in nothing else but mercy and after, take notice of nothing but his justice. First, they believe that almost all are saved, and afterwards, that almost none; first, that every profession is credible, and next, that none is credible without some greater testimony; first, that Christ satisfied for none at all that will not be saved, and next, that he died for all alike; first, that none are now partakers of the Holy Spirit, and next, that all saints have the Spirit, not only to illuminate and sanctify them by transcribing the written word upon their hearts, but also to inspire them with new revelations instead of Scripture... Now, they are for legal bondage, and anon for libertinism; today for liberty in religion to none that agree not with them in every circumstance, and tomorrow for a liberty for all; this year, all things are lawful to them, and the next year, nothing is lawful, but they scruple all that they say or do. One while, they are all for a worship of mere show and ceremony; and another while, against the determination of mere circumstances of order and decency, by man. One while, they cry up nothing but free grace; and another while nothing but free will. One while, they are for a discipline stricter than the rule; and another while, for no discipline at all. First, for timorous compliance with evil and afterwards, for boisterous contempt of government. Abundance of such instances we might give you. The remedy against this disease is to proceed deliberately, and receive nothing and do nothing rashly and unadvisedly in religion. For, when you have found out your first error, you will be affrighted from that into the contrary error. See that you look round about you, as well, to the error that you may run into on the other side, as into that which you have run into already. Consult also with wise, experienced men; and mark their unhappiness that have fallen on both sides; and stay not to know evil by sad experience. True [balance] is the only way that is safe: though negligence and lukewarmness be odious, even when cloaked with that name.

5.11. Direction XI - Encouraging Modesty in First Opinions

Direction XI - Encouraging Modesty in First Opinions

Let not your first opinions about controverted difficulties in religion, where Scripture is not very plain, be too peremptory, confident, or fixed; but hold them modestly with a due suspicion of your unripe understandings, and with room for further information, supposing it possible (or probable) that upon better instruction, evidence, and maturity, you may, in such things, change your minds.

I know the factions that take up their religion on the credit of their party are against this direction, thinking that you must first hit on the right church, and then hold all that the church doth hold, and therefore change your mind in nothing which you this way receive. I know, also, that some libertines and half-believers would corrupt this direction, by extending it to the most plain and necessary truths, persuading you to hold Christianity itself but as an uncertain, probable opinion.

But, as God's foundation standeth sure, so we must be surely built on his foundation. He that believeth not the essentials of Christianity, as a certain, necessary revelation of God, is not a Christian, but an infidel. And he that believeth not all that which he understandeth in the word of God, believeth nothing on the credit of that word. Indeed faith hath its weakness on those that are sincere, and they are fain to lament the remnants of unbelief, and cry, "Lord, increase our faith; help thou our unbelief." But he that approveth of his doubting, and would have it so, and thinks the revelation is uncertain, and such as will warrant no firmer a belief, I should scarcely say, this man is a Christian. Christianity must be received as of divine, infallible revelation. But controversies about less necessary things cannot be determined peremptorily by the ignorant or young beginners, without hypocrisy, or a human going under the name of a divine. I am far from abating your divine belief of all that you can understand in Scripture, and implicitly of all the rest in general. And I am far from diminishing the credit of any truth of God. But the reasons of this direction are these:

1. When it is certain that you have but a dark, uncertain apprehension of any point, to think it is clear and certain is but to deceive yourselves by pride. And to cry out against all uncertainty, as scepticism, which yet you cannot lay aside, is but to revile your own infirmity, and the common infirmity of mankind, and foolishly to suppose that every man can be as wise and certain, when he list, as he should be. Now reason and experience will tell you, that a young, unfurnished understanding, is not like to see the evidence of difficult points as, by nearer approach and better advantage, it may do.

2. If your conclusions be peremptory, upon mere self-conceitedness, you may be in an error for aught you know; and so you are but confident in an error. And then how far may you go in seducing others, and censuring dissenters, and come back when you have done, and confess that you were all this while mistaken yourselves.

3. For a man to be confident that he knoweth what he knoweth not, is but the way to keep him ignorant, and abut the door against all means of further information. When the opinion is fixed by

prejudice and conceit, there is no ready entrance for the light.

4. And, to be ungroundedly confident, so young, is not only to take up with your teacher's word, instead of a faith and knowledge of your own, but also to forestall all diligence to know more. And so you may lay by all your studies, save only to know what those men hold, whose judgments are your religion.

5. If you must never change your first opinions or apprehensions, how will you grow in understanding? Will you be no wiser at age, than you were in childhood, and after long study and experience, than before? Nature and grace do tend to increase.

Indeed, if you should be never so peremptory in your opinions, you cannot resolve to hold them to the end, for light is powerful, and may change you whether you will or no: you cannot tell what that light will do, which you never saw. But prejudice will make you resist the light, and make it harder for you to understand.

I speak this upon much experience and observation. Our first unripe apprehensions of things will certainly be greatly changed if we are studious and of improved understandings. Study the controversies about grace and free-will, or about other such points of difficulty, when you are young, and it is two to one that ripeness will afterward make them quite another thing to you. For my own part, my judgment is altered from many of my youthful, confident apprehensions; and where it holdeth the same conclusion, it rejecteth abundance of the arguments as vain, which once it rested in. And where I keep to the same conclusions and arguments, my apprehension of them is not the same, but I see more satisfying light in many things, which I took but upon trust before. And if I had resolved to hold to all my first opinions, I must have forborne most of my studies and lost much truth which I have discovered, and not made that my own which I did hold; and I must have resolved to live and die a child. The sum is: Hold fast the substance of religion, and every clear and certain truth, which you see in its own evidence. And also reverence your teachers, especially the [true] church, or the generality of wise and godly men; and be not hasty to take up any private opinion, and especially to contradict the opinion of your governors and teachers in small and controverted things. But yet, in such matters, receive their opinions but with a human faith, till indeed you have more, and therefore, with a supposition that time and study is very like to alter your apprehensions, and with a reserve, impartially to study and entertain the truth, and not to sit still just where you were born.

5.12. Direction XII - On Divisions Within the Church

Direction XII - On Divisions Within the Church

If controversies occasion any divisions where you live, be sure to look first to the interest of common truth and good, and to the exercise of charity. And become not passionate contenders for any party in the division, or censurers of the peaceable, or of your teachers that will not overrun their own understandings to obtain with you the esteem of being orthodox or zealous men; but suspect your own unripe understandings, and silence your opinions till you are clear and certain; and join rather with the moderate and the peacemakers, than with the contenders and dividers.

You may easily be sure that division tendeth to the ruin of the church, and the hinderance of the gospel, and the injury of the common interest of religion. You know it is greatly condemned in the Scriptures. You may know that it is usually the exercise and the increase of pride, uncharitableness, and passion; and that the devil is best pleased with it, as being the greatest gainer by it. But, on the other side, you are not easily certain which party is in the right; and if you were, you are not sure that the matter will be worth the cost of the contention; or if it be, it is to be considered whether the truth is not like to get more advantage by managing it in a more peaceable way, that hath no contention, nor stirreth up other men so much against it, as the way of controversy doth. And whatever it prove, you may and should know, that young Christians that [lack] both parts, and helps, and time, and experience to be thoroughly seen in controversies, are very unfit to make themselves parties; and that they are yet more unfit to be the hottest leaders of these parties, and to spur on their teachers that know more than they. If the work be fit for another to do that knoweth on what ground he goeth, and can foresee the end, yet certainly it is not fit for you. And therefore forbear it till you are more fit.

I know those that would draw you into such a contentious zeal will tell you that their cause is the cause of God, and that you desert Him and betray it if you be not zealous in it; and that it is but the counsel of flesh and blood which maketh you pretend moderation and peace; and that it is a sign that you are hypocrites that are so lukewarm and carnally comply with error; and that the cause of God is to be followed with the greatest zeal and self-denial. And all this is true, if you but be sure that it is indeed the cause of God; and that the greater works of God be not neglected on such pretences; and that your zeal be much greater for faith, and charity, and unity, than for your opinions. But upon great experience, I must tell you, that of the zealous contenders in the world that cry up, "The cause of God, and truth," there is not one of very many that understandeth what he talks of; but some of them cry up the cause of God, when it is a brat of a proud and ignorant brain, and such as a judicious person would be ashamed of. And some of them are rashly zealous, before they have parts or time to come to any judicious trial. And some of them are misguided by some person or party that captivateth their minds. And some of them are hurried away by passion and discontent. And many of the ambitious and worldly are blinded by their carnal interests. And many of them, in mere pride, think highly of an opinion in which they are somewhat singular, and which they can, with some glorying, call their own, as either invented by them or that in which they

think they know more than ordinary men do. And abundance, after long experience, confess that to have been their own erroneous cause, which they before entitled the cause of God. Now when this is the case, and one crieth, "Here is Christ," and another, "There is Christ;" one saith, "This is the cause of God," and another saith, "That is it;" no man that hath any care of his conscience, or of the honor of God and his profession, will leap before he looketh where he shall alight; or run after every one that will whistle him with the name or pretence of truth or a good cause. It is a sad thing to go on many years together in censuring, opposing, and abusing those that are against you, and in seducing others, and misemploying your zeal, and parts, and time, and poisoning all your prayers and discourses, and in the end to see what mischief you have done for want of knowledge, and with Paul to confess that you were mad in opposing the truth and servants of God, though you did it in a zeal of God through ignorance. Were it not much better to stay till you have tried the ground and prevent so many years' grievous sin, than to escape by a sad repentance, and leave behind you stinking and venomous fruit of your mistake? Your own and your brethren's souls are not to lightly be ventured upon dangerous, untried ways. It will not make the truth and church amends, to say at last, I had thought I had done well. Let those go to the wars of disputing and contending and censuring, and siding with a sect, that are riper, and better understand the cause: wars are not for children. Do you suspend your judgment till you can solidly and with certainty inform it, and serve God in charity, quietness, and peace; and it is two to one, but you will live to see the day that the contenders that would have led you into their wars, will come off with so much loss themselves as will teach them to approve your peaceable course, or teach you to bless God that kept you in your place and duty. In all this I deny not, but every truth of God is to be valued at a very high rate; and that he that shall carry himself in a neutrality, when faith or godliness is the matter in controversy, or shall do it merely for his worldly ends to save his stake by temporizing, is a false-hearted hypocrite, and at the heart of no religion. But withal I tell you that all is not matter of faith or godliness that passionate parties shall call so; and that as we must avoid contempt of the smallest truth, so we must much more avoid the most heinous sins which we may commit for the defending of an error; and that some truths must be silenced for a time, though not denied, when the contending for them is unseasonable, and tendeth to the injury of the church. If you were masters in the church, you must not teach your scholars to their hurt, though it be truth you teach them. And if you were physicians, you must not cram them, or medicate them to their hurt. Your power and duty is not to destruction, but to edification. The good of the patient is the end of your physic. All truth is not to be spoken, nor all good to be done, by all men, nor at all times. He that will do contrary, and take this for a carnal principle, doth but call folly and sin by the name of zeal and duty, and set the house on fire to roast his egg, and with the Pharisees, prefer the outward rest of their sabbath before his brother's life or health. Take heed what you do when God's honor, and men's souls, and the church's peace are concerned in it. And let me tell you my own observation. As far as my judgment hath been able to reach, the men that have stood for a pacification and moderation, have been the most judicious, and those that have best understood themselves in most controversies that ever I heard under debate among good Christians; but those that furiously censured them as lukewarm or corrupted, have been men that had least judgment and most passion, pride, and foul mistakes in the points in question.

Nay, I will tell you more of my observation, of which these times have given us too much proof. Profane and formal enemies on the one hand, and ignorant, self-conceited wranglers on the other hand, who think they are champions for the truth when they are venting their passions and fond

opinions, are the two thieves between whom the church hath suffered from the beginning to this day. The first are the persecutors, and the other the dividers and disturbers of the church. Mark what the Holy Ghost saith in this case:

"But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do engender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men!" (2 Timothy 2:23-24). "Do all things without murmuring and disputing: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine, as lights in the world." (Php 2:14-15). "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds," &c. (1 Timothy 6:3-6). So 1 Timothy 1:4-5: "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith: now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned!"

Yet I must here profess, that if any false-hearted, worldly hypocrite, that resolveth to be on the saving side, and to hold all to be lawful that seemeth necessary to his safety or preferments, shall take any encouragement from what I have here said, to debauch his conscience, and sell his soul, and then call all those furious zealots that will not be as false to God as he, let that man know that I have given him no cloak for so odious a sin, nor will he find a cover for it at the bar of God, though he may delude his conscience, and bear it out by his carnal advantages before the world.

5.13. Direction XIII - The Blessings of Godliness

Direction XIII - The Blessings of Godliness

Know that true godliness is the best life upon earth, and the only way to perfect happiness. Still apprehend it therefore, and use it as the best; and with great diligence resist those temptations which would make it seem to you a confounding, grievous, or unpleasant thing.

There are all things concurrent in a holy life to make it the most delectable life on earth, to a rational, purified mind that is not captivated to the flesh, and liveth not on air or dung. The object of it is the eternal God Himself, the infallible truth, the only satisfactory good; and all these condescending and appearing to us in the mysterious but suitable glass of a mediator: redeeming, reconciling, teaching, governing, sanctifying, justifying, and glorifying all that are His own. The end of it is the pleasing and glorifying of our Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; and the everlasting happiness of ourselves and others. The rule of it is the infallible revelation of God, delivered to the church by His prophets, and His Son, and His apostles, and comprised in the Holy Scriptures, and sealed by the miracles and operations of the Holy Ghost that did indite them. The work of godliness is a living unto God, and preparing for everlasting life, by foreseeing, foretasting, seeking, and rejoicing in that endless happiness which we shall have with God; and by walking after the Spirit, and avoiding the filthiness, delusions, and vexations of the world and the flesh. The nature of man is not capable of a more noble, profitable, and delectable life, than this which God hath called us to by His Son. And if we did but rightly know it, we should follow it with continual alacrity and delight. Be sure, therefore, to conceive of godliness as it is, and not as it is misrepresented by the devil and the ungodly. As long as a man conceiveth of religion as it is, even the most sweet and delectable life, so long he will follow it willingly and with his heart, and despise the temptations and avocations of fleshly gain and pleasure. He will be sincere, as not being only drawn by other men or outward advantages, nor frightened into it by passion or fearfulness, but loving religion for itself and for its excellent ends: and then he will be cheerful in all the duties, and under all the sufferings and difficulties of it; and he will be most likely to persevere unto the end. We cannot expect that the heart or will should be any more for God and godliness than the understanding practically apprehendeth them as good. Nay, we must always perceive in them a transcendent goodness, above all that is to be found in a worldly life; or else the appearing goodness of the creature will divert us, and carry away our minds. We may see in the very brutes what a power apprehension hath upon their actions. If your horse be but going to home or pasture, how freely will he go through thick and thin! But if he go unwillingly, his travel is troublesome and slow, and you have much ado to get him on. It will be so with you in your way to heaven.

It is therefore the principal design of the devil to hide the goodness and pleasantness of religion from you, and to make it appear to you as a terrible or tedious life. By this means it is that he keeps men from it; and by this means he is still endeavouring to draw you back again, and frustrate your good beginning and your hopes. If he can thus misrepresent religion to your understandings, he will suddenly alienate your wills, and corrupt your lives, and make you turn to

the world again, and seek for pleasure somewhere else, and only take up with some heartless lip-service to keep up some deceitful hope of being saved. And the means which Satan useth to these ends are such as these:

1. He will do his work to overwhelm you with appearing doubts and difficulties, and bring you to a loss, and make religion seem to you a confounding and not a satisfying thing. This is one of his most dangerous assaults upon the weak and young beginners. Difficulties and passions are the things which he makes use of to confound you, and put you out of a regular, cheerful seeking of salvation. When you read the Scriptures, he will mind you of abundance of difficulties in all you read or hear. He will show you seeming contradictions, and tell you that you will never be able to understand these things. He will cast in thoughts of unbelief and blasphemy, and cause you, if he can, to roll them in your mind. If you cast them not out with abhorrence, but dispute with the devil, he hopes to prove too hard at least for such children and unprovided soldiers as you. And if you do reject them, and refuse to dispute it with him, he will sometimes tell you that your cause is naught, or else you need not be afraid to think of all that can be said against it. This way he gets advantage of you to draw you to unbelief. If you escape better than so, he will molest and terrify you with the hideousness of his temptations, and make you to think you are forsaken of God, because such blasphemous thoughts have been so often in your minds. Thus he will one while tempt you to blasphemy, and another while affright and torment you with the thoughts of such temptations. So also in the study of other good books, he will tempt you to fix upon all that seems difficult to you, and there to confound and perplex yourselves. In your meditations, he will seek to make all to tend but to confound and overwhelm you, keeping still either hard or fearful things before your eyes, or breaking and scattering your thoughts in pieces, so that you cannot reduce them to any order, nor set them together, nor make anything of them, nor drive them to any desirable end. So in your prayers he would fain confound you, either with fear, or with doubtful and distracting thoughts about God, or your sins, or the matter or manner of your duty, or questioning whether your prayers will be heard. And so in your self-examination, he will still seek to puzzle you, and leave you more in darkness than you began, and make you afraid of looking homeward, or conversing with yourselves, like a man that is afraid to lie in his own house when he thinks it haunted with some apparitions. And thus the devil would make all your religion to be but like the unwinding of a bottom of yarn, or a skein of silk that is ravelled, that you may cast it away in weariness or despair. Your remedy against this dangerous temptation is to remember that you are yet young in knowledge, and that ignorance is like darkness that will cause doubts, and difficulties, and fears; and that all these will vanish as your light increaseth. Therefore you must wait in patience, till your riper knowledge fit you for satisfaction. And in the mean time, be sure that you take up your hearts most with the great, fundamental, necessary, plain, and certain points, which your salvation is laid upon, and which are more suited to your state and strength. If you will be gnawing bones, when you should be sucking milk, and have not patience to stay till you are past your childhood, no marvel if you find them hard, and if they stick in your throats, or break your teeth. See that you live upon God in Christ, and love and practice what you know, and think of the excellency of so much as is already revealed to you. You know already what is the end that you must seek, and where your happiness consisteth; and what Christ hath done to prepare it for you, and how you must be justified, and sanctified, and walk with God. Have you God, and Christ, and heaven to think on, and all the mercies of the gospel to delight in, and will you lay by these as common matters, or overlook them, and perplex yourselves about every difficulty in your way?

Make clean work before you as you go, and live in the joyful acknowledgment of the mercies which you have received, and in the practice of the things you know, and then your difficulties will vanish as you go on.

2. Another of Satan’s wiles is to confound you with the noise of sectaries, and divers opinions in religion. While one sect tells you, that if you will be saved, you must be of their church; and others say, you must be of theirs. When you find that the sects are many, and their reasonings such as you cannot answer, you will be in danger either to take up some of their deceits, or to be confounded among them all, not knowing which church and religion to choose. But here consider, that there is but one universal church of Christians in the world, of which Christ is the only King and Head, and every Christian is a member. You were sacramentally admitted into this [true] church by baptism, and spiritually by your being, "born of the Spirit" (John 3:6). You have all the promises of the gospel that if you believe in Christ you shall be saved; and that all the living members of this church are loved by Christ as members of his body, and shall be presented unspotted to the Father, by Him who is the Saviour of his body (see Ephesians 5:23-29); "and that by one Spirit we are all baptized or entered into this one body," (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). If then thou hast faith, and love, and the Spirit thou art certainly a Christian, and a member of Christ, and of this universal church of Christians. And if there were any other church, but what are the parts of this one, then this were not universal, and Christ must have two bodies. Thou art not saved for being a member of the church of Rome, or Corinth, or Ephesus, or Philippi or Thessalonica, or of any other such; but for being a member of the [true] church or body of Christ, that is, a Christian. And as thou art a subject of the King, and a member of this kingdom, whatever corporation thou be a member of (perhaps sometime of one, and sometime of another) so thou art a subject of Christ, whatever particular church thou be of; for it is no church, if they be not Christians, or subjects of Christ. For one sect then to say, "Our’s is the true church", and another to say, "Nay, but ours is the true church", is as mad as to dispute whether your hall, or kitchen, or parlour, or coal-house, is your house; and for one to say, "This is the house", and another, "Nay", but that, when a child can tell them, that the best is but a part, and the house containeth them all: and for [those] that take on them to be the whole, and deny all others to be Christians and saved, except the subjects of [their church], it is so irrational, antichristian a fiction and usurpation, and odious, cruel, and groundless a damnation, of the far greatest part of the body of Christ, that it is fitter for detestation than dispute. And if such a crack would frighten the world out of their wits, no doubt but other bishops also would make use of it, and say, "All are damned that will not be subject to us."

3. Another temptation to confound you in your religion is by filling your heads with practical scrupulosity, so that you cannot go on for doubting every step whether you go right; and when you should cheerfully serve your Master, you will do nothing but disquiet your mind with scruples, whether this or that be right or wrong. Your remedy here is not by casting away all care of pleasing God, or fear of sinning, or by debauching conscience, but by a cheerful and quiet obedience to God, so far as you know His will, and an upright willingness and endeavor to understand it better, and a thankful receiving the gospel pardon for your failings and infirmities. Be faithful in your obedience, but live still upon Christ, and think not of reaching to any such obedience as shall set you above the need of his merits, and a daily pardon of your sins. Do the best you can to know the will of God and do it; but when you know the essentials of religion, and obey sincerely, let no

remaining wants deprive you of the comfort of that so great a mercy, as proves your right to life eternal. In your seeking further for more knowledge and obedience, let your care be such as tendeth to your profiting and furthering you to your end, and as doth not hinder your joy and thanks for what you have received: but that which destroyeth your joy and thankfulness, and doth but perplex you, and not further you in your way, is but hurtful scrupulosity, and to be laid by. When you are right in the main, thank God for that, and be further solicitous so far as to help you on, but not to hinder you. If you send your servant on your message, you had rather he went on his way as well as he can, than stand scrupling every step whether he should set the right or left foot forward, and whether he should step so far, or so far at a time, &c. Hindering scruples please not God.

4. Another way to confound you in your religion is by setting you upon overdoing by inventions of your own. When a poor soul is most desirous to please God, the devil will be religious, and set him upon some such task of voluntary humility, or will-worship, as the apostle speaks of (see Colossians 2:18, Colossians 2:20-23), or set him upon some insnaring unnecessary vows or resolutions, or some works of conceited supererogation, which is that which Solomon calleth, being "righteous over-much," (see Ecclesiastes 7:16). Thus many have made duties to themselves, which God never made for them; and taketh that for sin, which God never forbad them. The religion [of some] is very much made up of such commandments of their own, and traditions of men. As if Christ had not made us work enough, men are forward to make much more for themselves. And some that should teach them the laws of Christ, do think that their office is in vain, unless they may also prescribe them laws of their own, and give them new precepts of religion. Yea, some that are the bitterest enemies to the strict observance of the laws of God, as if it were a tedious, needless thing, must yet needs load us with abundance of unnecessary precepts of their own. And thus religion is made both wearisome and uncertain, and a door set open for men to enlarge it, and increase the burden at their pleasure. Indeed [such religion] is fitted to delude and quiet sleepy consciences, and to torment with uncertainties the consciences that are awaked. And there is something in the corrupted nature of man that inclineth him to some additions and voluntary service of his own inventions, as an offering most acceptable unto God. Hence it is that many poor Christians do rashly entangle their consciences with vows of circumstances and things unnecessary, as to give so much, to observe such days or hours in fasting and prayer, not to do such or such a thing that in itself is lawful, with abundance of such things, which perhaps some change of providence may make accidentally their duty afterwards to do, or disable them to perform their vows; and then these snares are fetters on their perplexed consciences, perhaps as long as they live. Yea, some of the antinomians teach the people that things indifferent are the fittest matter of a vow: as to live single, to possess nothing, to live in solitude, and the like. Indeed all things lawful when they are vowed, must be performed, but it is unfit to be vowed if it be not first profitable and best, for ourselves or others, and that which is best is not indifferent, it being every man’s duty to choose what is best. Vows are to bind us to the performance of that which God had bound us to by His laws before. They are our expression of consent and resolution by a self-obligation to obey His will, and not to make new duties of religion to ourselves, which else would never have been our duty. To escape these snares, it is necessary that you take heed of corrupting your religion by burdens and mixtures of your own devising. You are called to obey God’s laws, and not to make laws for yourselves. You may be sure that His laws are just and good, but yours may be bad and foolish. When you obey Him, you may expect your

reward and encouragement from Him; but when you will obey yourselves, you must reward yourselves. You may find it enough for you to keep His laws, without devising more work for yourselves, or feigning duties which He commanded not, or sins which He forbade not. Be not rash in making vows; let them reach but unto necessary duties; and let them have their due exceptions when they are about alterable things. Or if you are entangled by them already, consult with the most judicious, able, impartial men, that you may come clearly off without a wound. There is a great deal of judgment and sincerity necessary in your counsellors, and a great deal of submission and self-denial in yourselves to bring you solely out of such a snare. Avoid sin, whatever you do, for sinning is not the way to your deliverance. And for the time to come, be wiser, and lay no more snares for yourselves, and clog not yourselves with your own inventions, but cheerfully obey what God commandeth you, who hath wisdom and authority sufficient to make you perfect laws. Christ's "yoke is easy, and His burden light" (Matthew 11:30), and "His commandments not grievous," (1 John 5:3). But if your mixtures and self-devised snares are grievous to you, blame not God, but yourselves that made them.

5. Another of Satan's ways to make religion burdensome and grievous to you, is by overwhelming you with fear and sorrow. Partly by persuading that religion consisteth in excess of sorrow, and so causing you to spend your time in striving to trouble and grieve yourselves unprofitably, as if it were the course most acceptable to God; and partly by taking the advantage of a timorous, passionate nature, and so making every of thought of God, or serious exercise of religion, to be a torment to you by raising some overwhelming fears, for "fear hath torment" (1 John 4:18). In some feminine, weak, and melancholy persons, this temptation hath so much advantage in the body that the holiest soul can do but little in resisting it, so that though there be in such a sincere love to God, His ways and servants, yet fear so playeth the tyrant in them, that they perceive almost nothing else. And it is no wonder if religion be grievous and unpleasant to such as these.

But, alas! It is you yourselves that are the causes of this, and bring the matter of your grievance with you. God hath commanded you a sweeter work. It is a life of love, and joy, and cheerful progress to eternal joy that He requireth of you, and no more fear or grief than is necessary to separate you from sin, and teach you to value and use the remedy. The gospel presenteth to you such abundant matter of joy and peace as would make these the very complexion and temperature of your souls, if you received them as they are propounded. Religious fears, when they are inordinate and hurtful, are sinful, and indeed against religion, and must be resisted as other hurtful passions. Be better acquainted with Christ and His promises and you will find enough in Him to pacify the soul, and give you confidence and holy boldness in your access to God (see Hebrews 4:16; Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 10:19). The spirit which He giveth, is not the spirit of bondage, but the spirit of adoption, or love and confidence (see Romans 8:15; Hebrews 2:15).

6. Another thing that maketh religion seem grievous is retaining unmortified sensual desires. If you keep up your lusts they will strive against the gospel, and all the works of the Spirit which strive against them (see Galatians 5:17). And every duty will be so far unpleasant to you as you are carnal, because it is against your carnal inclination and desire. Away, therefore, with your beloved sickness, and then both your food and your physician will be less grievous to you. "Mortify the flesh, and you will less disrelish the things of the Spirit. For the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to His law, nor can be" (Romans 8:7-8).

7. Another cause of confounding and wearying you is the mixture of your actual sins, dealing unfaithfully with God, and wounding your consciences, by renewing guilt, especially of sins against knowledge and consideration. If you thus keep the bone out of joint, and the wound unhealed, no marvel if you are loth to work or travail. But it is your sin and folly that should be grievous to you, and not that which is contrary to it, and would remove the cause of all your troubles. Resolvedly forsake your willful sinning, and come home by "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21), and then you will find, that when the thorn is out, your pain will cease, and that the cause of your trouble was not in God or religion, but in your sin.

8. Lastly, to make religion unpleasant to you, the tempter would keep the substance of the gospel unknown or unobserved to you. He would hide the wonderful love of God revealed in our Redeemer, and all the riches of saving grace, and the great deliverance and privileges of believers, and the certain hopes of life eternal. And the kingdom of God, which consisteth in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, shall be represented to you as consisting in errors only, or in trifles, in shadows and shows, and bodily exercise which profiteth little (see 1 Timothy 4:8). If ever you would know the pleasures of faith and holiness, you must labor above all to know God as revealed in His infinite love in the Mediator, and read the gospel as God’s act of oblivion, and the testament and covenant of Christ, in which He giveth you life eternal. In every duty draw near to God as a reconciled Father, the object of your everlasting love and joy. Know and use religion as it is, without mistaking or corrupting it, and it will not appear to you as a grievous, tedious, or confounding thing.

5.14. Direction XIV - On Sinful Desires

Direction XIV - On Sinful Desires Be very diligent in mortifying the desires and pleasures of the flesh; and keep a continual watch upon your senses, appetite, and lusts; and cast not yourselves upon temptations, occasions or opportunities of sinning, remembering that your salvation lieth on your success. The lusts of the flesh, and the pleasures of the world, are the common enemies of God and souls, and the damnation of those souls that perish. And there is no sort more liable to temptations of this kind, than those that are in the flower of their youth and strength. When all the senses are in their vigor, and lust and appetite are in their strength and fury, how great is the danger! And how great must your diligence be if you will escape! The appetite and lust of the weak and sick are weak and sick as well as they; and therefore they are no great temptation or danger to them. The desire and pleasure of the senses do abate, as natural strength and vigor doth abate: to such there is much less need of watchfulness; and where nature hath mortified the flesh, there is somewhat the less for grace to do. There needs not much grace to keep the aged and weak from fornication, uncleanness, excessive sports and carnal mirth; and gluttony and drunkenness also are sins which youth is much more liable to. Especially some bodies that are not only young and strong, but have in their temperature and complexion a special inclination to some of these, as lust, or sport, or foolish mirth, there needeth a great deal of diligence, resolution, and watchfulness for their preservation. Lust is not like a corrupt opinion that surpriseth us through a defect of reason and vanisheth as soon as truth appeareth; but it is a brutish inclination, which though reason must subdue and govern, yet the perfectest reason will not extirpate, but there it will still dwell. And as it is constantly with you, it will be stirring when objects are presented by the sense or fantasy to allure. And it is like a torrent, or a headstrong horse, that must be kept in at first, and is [to be strongly] restrained if it once break loose and get the head. If you are bred up in temperance and modesty, where there are no great temptations to gluttony, drinking, sports, or wantonness, you may think a while that your natures have little or none of this concupiscence, and so may walk without a guard. But when you come where baits of lust abound, where women, and plays, and feasts, and drunkards are the devil’s snares, and tinder, and bellows to inflame your lusts, you may then find to your sorrow that you had need of watchfulness, and that all is not mortified that is asleep or quiet in you. As a man that goeth with a candle among gunpowder, or near thatch, should never be careless, because he goeth in continual danger; so you that are young, and have naturally eager appetites and lusts, should remember that you carry fire and gunpowder still about you, and are never out of danger while you have such an enemy to watch. And if once you suffer the fire to kindle, alas!, what work may it make, ere you are aware! "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15). Little knoweth the fish, when he is catching or nibbling at the bait, that he is swallowing the hook which will lay him presently on the bank. When you are looking on the cup, or gazing on alluring beauty, or wantonly dallying and pleasing your senses with things unsafe, you little know how far beyond your intentions you may be drawn, and how deep the wound may prove, how great the smart, or how long and difficult the cure. As you love your souls, observe Paul’s counsel: "Flee youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22). Keep

at a full distance: come not near the bait. If you get a wound in your consciences, by any willful, heinous sin, O what a case will you be in! How heartless unto secret duty! afraid of God, that should be your joy; deprived of the comforts of His presence, and all the pleasure of His ways! How miserably will you be tormented, between the tyranny of your own concupiscence, the sting of sin, the gripes of conscience, and the terrors of the Lord! How much of the life of faith, and love, and heavenly zeal, will be quenched in a moment! I am to speak more afterwards of this; and therefore shall only say, at present, to all young converts that care for their salvation, "Mortify the flesh," and "always watch, and avoid temptations."

5.15. Direction XV - Concerning the Company You Keep

Direction XV - Concerning the Company You Keep Be exceeding wary, not only what teachers you commit the guidance of your souls unto, but also with what company you familiarly converse, that they be neither such as would corrupt your minds with error, or your hearts with viciousness, profaneness, lukewarmness, or with a feverish, factious zeal; but choose, if possible, judicious, holy, heavenly, humble, unblamable, self-denying persons, to be your ordinary companions and familiars; especially for your near relations.

It is a matter of very great importance what teachers you choose, in order to your salvation. In this, the free grace of God much differenceth some from others: for, as poor heathens and infidels have none that know more than what the book of nature teacheth (if so much); so in the several nations of Christians, it is hard for the people to have any but such as the sword of the magistrate forceth on them or the stream of their country's custom recommendeth to them. And it is a wonder if pure truth and holiness be countenanced by either of these. But, when and where His mercy pleaseth, God sendeth wise and holy teachers, with compassion and diligence to seek the saving of men's souls; so that none but the malignant and obstinate are deprived of their help.

Ambitious, proud, covetous, licentious, ungodly men are not to be chosen for your teachers, if you have your choice. In a nation where true religion is in credit, and hath the magistrate's countenance, or the major vote, some graceless men may join with better, in preaching and defending the purity of doctrine and holiness of life: and they may be very serviceable to the church herein; especially in expounding and disputing for the truth. But even there, more experienced, spiritual teachers are much more desirable: they will speak most feelingly who feel what they speak; and they are fittest to bring others to faith and love, who believe, and love God and holiness themselves. They that have life, will speak more lively than the dead. And in most places of the world, the ungodliness of such teachers makes them enemies to the truth which is according to godliness: Their natures are at enmity to the life and power of the doctrine which they should preach; and they will do their worst to corrupt the magistrates and make them of their mind; and, if they can but get the sword to favour them, they are, usually, the cruellest persecutors of the sincere... Take heed of proud and worldly guides. And yet it is not everyone that pretendeth piety and zeal, that is to be heard, or taken for a teacher. But, 1. Such as preach, ordinarily, the substantial truths which all Christians are agreed in. 2. Such as make it the drift of their preaching to raise your souls to the love of God, and to a holy, heavenly life, and are zealous against confessed sins. 3. Such as contradict not the essential truths, by errors of their own; nor the doctrine of godliness, by wicked, malicious applications. 4. Such as drive not on any ambitious, tyrannical designs of their own, but deny themselves, and aim at your salvation. 5. Such as are not too hot in proselyting you to any singular opinion of their own: it being the prediction of Paul to the Ephesians: "Of your ownselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). 6. Such as are judicious with holy zeal, and zealous with judgment. 7. Such as are of experience in the things of God, and not young beginners, or novices in religion. 8. Such as bear reference to the judgments of the generality of wise and godly men, and are tender

of the unity of the church; and not such as would draw you into a sect or party, to the contempt of other Christians; no, not to a party that hath the favour of rulers and the people, to promote them. 9. Such as are gentle, peaceable, and charitable; and not such as burn with hellish malice against their brethren, nor with an ungodly, or cruel, consuming zeal. 10. Such as live not sensually and wickedly, contrary to the doctrine which they preach; but show by their lives, that they believe what they say, and feel the power of the truths which they preach. And your familiar companions have great advantage to help or hinder your salvation, as well as your teachers. The matter is not so great, whom you meet by the way, or travel with, or trade and buy and sell with, as whom you make your intimate or familiar friends. For such have both the advantage of their interest in your affections, and also the advantage of their nearness and familiarity; and, if they have but also the advantage of higher abilities than you, they may be powerful instruments of your good or hurt. If you have a familiar friend, that will defend you from error, and help you against temptations, and lovingly reprove your sin, and feelingly speak of God, and the life to come, inditing his discourse from the inward power of faith, and love, and holy experience; the benefit of such a friend may be more to you, than of the learnedest or greatest in the world. How sweetly will their speeches relish of the Spirit, from which they come! How deeply may they pierce a careless heart! How powerfully may they kindle in you a love and zeal to His commandments! How seasonably may they discover a temptation, prevent your fall, reprove an error, and recover your souls! How faithfully will they watch over you! How profitably will they provoke, and put you on; and pray with you fervently when you are cold, and mind you of the truth, and duty, and mercy, which you forget! It is a very great mercy to have a judicious, solid, faithful companion in the way to heaven. But if your ears are daily filled with froth and folly, with ribaldry or idle stories, with oaths and curses, with furious words or scorns and jeers against the godly, or with the sophistry of deceivers, is it likely this should leave a pleasant or wholesome relish on your minds? Is it likely that the effect should not be seen, in your lean or leprous hearts and lives, as well as the effects of an infected or unwholesome air or diet will be seen upon your diseased bodies? He is ungodly, that liketh such company best; and he is proud and presumptuous, that will unnecessarily cast himself upon it, in confidence that he shall receive no hurt; and he is careless of himself, that will not cautiously avoid it; and few that long converse with such, come off without some notable loss, except when we live with such, as Lot did in Sodom, grieving for their sin and misery, or as Christ conversed with publicans and sinners, with a holy zeal and diligence to convert and save them, or as those that have not liberty, who bear that which they have not power to avoid.

Among the rest, your danger is not least from them that are eager to proselyte you to some party or unsound opinion. They think they are in the right, and that they do it in love, and that they think it necessary to your salvation, and that truth or godliness are the things which they profess: all this makes the danger much the greater to you, if it be not truth and godliness indeed, which they propose and plead for. And none are in more danger than the ungrounded and unexperienced, that yet are so wise in their own esteem, as to be confident that they know truth from error when they hear it, and are not afraid of any deceit, nor much suspicious of their own understandings. But of this before. The like danger there is of the familiar company of lukewarm ones, or the profane. At first you may be troubled at their sinful or unsavoury discourse, and make some resistance against the infection, but before you are aware, it may so cool and damp your graces, as will make your decay discernible to others. First, you will bear them with less offense; and then you will grow indifferent what company you are in; and then you will laugh at their sin and folly; and then you will

begin to speak as they; and then you will grow cold and seldomer in prayer and other holy duties; and if God prevent it not, at last your judgments will grow blind, and you will think all this allowable. But of all bad company, the nearest is the worst. If you choose such into your families, or into your nearest conjugal relations, you cast [oil] upon the fire; you imprison yourselves in such fetters as will gall and grieve you, if they do not stop you; you choose a life of constant, close, and great temptations: whereas, your grace, and comfort, and salvation might be much promoted by the society of such as are wise and gracious, and suitable to your state. To have a constant companion to open your heart to, and join with in prayer, and edifying conference, and faithfully help you against your sins, and yet to be patient with you in your frailties, is a mercy which worldlings neither deserve nor value.

5.16. Direction XVI - On What You Let into Your Mind

Direction XVI - On What You Let into Your Mind

Make careful choice of the books which you read. [Editor's note: This study may easily be applied nowadays, not only to books which are read, but also television shows that are watched, and movies that are seen.] Let the holy Scriptures ever have pre-eminence; and next them, the solid, lively, heavenly treatises, which best expound and apply the Scriptures; and next those, the credible histories, especially of the church, and tractates upon inferior sciences and arts: but take heed of the poison of the writings of false teachers, which would corrupt your understandings; and of vain romances, play-books, and false stories, which may bewitch your fantasies, and corrupt your hearts. As there is a more excellent appearance of the Spirit of God in the holy Scriptures than in any other book whatever, so it hath more power and fitness to convey the Spirit, and make us spiritual, by imprinting itself upon our hearts. As there is more of God in it, so it will acquaint us more with God, and bring us nearer Him, and make the reader more reverent, serious, and divine. Let Scripture be first and most in your hearts and hands, and other books be used as subservient to it. The endeavours of the devil to keep it from you, doth show that it is most necessary and desirable to you. And when they tell you that all heretics plead the Scriptures, they do but tell you that it is the common rule or law of Christians, which therefore all are fain to pretend, as all lawyers and wranglers plead the law of the land, be their cause never so bad, and yet the laws must not be therefore concealed or cast aside: and they do but tell you that in their concealment or dishonouring the Scriptures, they are worse than any of those heretics. When they tell you that the Scriptures are misunderstood, and abused, and perverted to maintain men's errors, they might also desire that the sun might be obscured because the purblind do mistake, and murderers and robbers do wickedly by its light; and that the earth might be subverted because it bears all evildoers; and highways stopped up because men travel in them to do evil; and food prohibited because it nourisheth men's diseases. And when they have told you truly of a law or rule which bad men cannot misunderstand, or break, or abuse and misapply, then hearken to them, and prefer that law as that which preventeth the need of any judgment. The writings of divines are nothing else but a preaching of the gospel to the eye, as the voice preacheth it to the ear. Vocal preaching hath the pre-eminence in moving the affections, and being diversified according to the state of the congregations which attend it: this way the milk cometh warmest from the breast. But books have the advantage in many other respects: you may read an able preacher when you have but a mean one to hear. Every congregation cannot hear the most judicious or powerful preachers; but every single person may read the books of the most powerful and judicious. Preachers may be silenced or banished, when books may be at hand. Books may be kept at a smaller charge than preachers. We may choose books which treat of that very subject which we desire to hear of, but we cannot choose what subject the preacher shall treat of. Books we may have at hand everyday and hour; when we can have sermons but seldom, and at set times. If sermons be forgotten, they are gone, but a book we may read over and over till we remember it; and if we forget it, may again peruse it at our pleasure, or at our leisure. So, good books are a very great mercy to the world.

The Holy Ghost chose the way of writing to preserve His doctrine and laws to the church, as knowing how easy and sure a way it is of keeping it safe to all generations, in comparison of mere verbal tradition, which might have made as many controversies about the very terms, as there be memories or persons to be the preservers and reporters.

Books are (if well chosen) domestic, present, constant, judicious, pertinent, yea, and powerful sermons, and always of very great use to your salvation, but especially when vocal preaching faileth, and preachers are ignorant, ungodly, or dull, or when they are persecuted, and forbidden to preach.

You have need of a judicious teacher at hand to direct you what books to use or to refuse. For among good books there are some very good that are sound and lively; and some are good, but mean, and weak, and somewhat dull; and some are very good in part, but have mixtures of error, or else of incautious, injudicious expressions, fitter to puzzle than edify the weak. I am loth to name any of these latter sorts (of which abundance have come forth of late), but to the young beginner in religion, I may be bold to recommend (next to a sound catechism): Mr. Rutherford's Letters, Mr. Robert Bolton's Works, Mr. Perkins's, Mr. Whateley's, Mr. Ball, of Faith, Dr. Preston's, Dr. Sibbes, Mr. Hildersham's, Mr. Pink's Sermons, Mr. Joseph Rogers's, Mr. Rich. Rogers, Mr. Richard Allen's. Mr. Gurnall's, Mr. Swinnock's, Mr. Joseph Simonds's, [etc].[9] I pass by many other excellent ones, that I may not name too many. To a very judicious, able reader, who is fit to censure all he reads, there is no great danger in the reading the books of any seducers: it doth but show him how little and thin a cloak is used to cover a bad cause. But, alas! young soldiers, not used to such wars, are startled at a very sophism, or at a terrible threatening of damnation to dissenters (which every censorious sect can use), or at every confident, triumphant boast, or at every thing that hath a fair pretence of truth or godliness. Injudicious persons can answer almost no deceiver which they hear, and when they cannot answer them, they think they must yield, as if the fault were not in them, but in the case; and as if Christ had no wiser followers, or better defenders of His truth than they. Meddle not therefore with poison, till you better know how to use it, and may do it with less danger, as long as you have no need. As for play-books, and romances, and idle tales, I have already showed in my "Book of Self-Denial" how pernicious they are, especially to youth, and to frothy, empty, idle wits, that know not what a man is, nor what he hath to do in the world. They are powerful baits of the devil to keep more necessary things out of their minds and better books out of their hands, and to poison the mind so much the more dangerously, as they are read with more delight and pleasure; and to fill the minds of sensual people with such idle fumes, and intoxicating fancies, as may divert them from the serious thoughts of their salvation; and (which is no small loss) to rob them of abundance of that precious time, which was given them for more important business and which they will wish and wish again at last that they had spent more wisely. I know the fantastics will say that these things are innocent, and may teach men much good (like him that must go to a whore-house to learn to hate uncleanness, and him that would go out with robbers to learn to hate thievery); but I shall now only ask them as in the presence of God: 1. Whether they could spend that time no better? 2. Whether better books and practices would not edify them more? 3. Whether the greatest lovers of romances and plays be the greatest lovers of the book of God, and of a holy life? 4. Whether they feel in themselves that the love of these vanities doth increase their love to the word of God, and kill their sin, and prepare them for the life to come? or clean contrary? And I would desire men not to prate against their own

experience and reason, nor to dispute themselves into damnable impenitency, nor to befool their souls by a few silly words which any but a sensualist may perceive to be mere deceit and falsehood. If this will not serve, they shall be shortly convinced and answered in another manner.

5.17. Direction XVII - On Obeying God's Law

Direction XVII - On Obeying God’s Law

Take heed that you receive not a doctrine of libertiinism as [if it were] from the gospel; nor conceive of Christ as an encourager of sin; nor pretend free grace for your carnal security or sloth; for this is but to set up another gospel, and another Christ, or rather the doctrine and works of the devil, against Christ and the gospel, and to turn the grace of God into wantonness.

Because the devil knoweth that you will not receive his doctrine in his own name, his usual method is to propound and preach it in the name of Christ, which he knoweth you reverence and regard. For if Satan concealed not his own name and hand in every temptation, it would spoil his game; and the more excellent and splendid is his pretence, the more powerful the temptation is. They that gave heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, no doubt thought better of the spirits and the doctrines, especially seeming strict (for the devil hath his strictnesses), "as forbidding to marry, and abstinence from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving" (1 Timothy 4:1,1 Timothy 4:3). But the strictnesses of the devil are always intended to make men loose. They shall be strict as the pharisees, in traditions and vain ceremonies, and building the tombs of the prophet, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous, that they may hate and murder the living saints that worship God in spirit and in truth. Licentiousness is the proper doctrine of the devil, which all his strictness tendeth to promote. To receive such principles is pernicious; but to father them upon Christ and the gospel is blasphemous. The libertines, antinomians, and autonomians of this age have gathered you too many instances. The libertine saith, "The heart is the man, therefore you may deny the truth with your tongue, you may be present at false worship, you need not suffer to avoid the speaking of a word, or subscribing to an untruth or error, or doing some little thing; but as long as you keep your hearts to God, and mean well, or have an honest mental reservation, and are forced to it by others, rather than suffer, you may say, or subscribe, or swear any thing which you can yourselves put a lawful sense upon in your own minds, or comply with any outward actions or customs to avoid offense and save yourselves." The antinomians tell you that "the moral law is abrogated, and that the gospel is no law; (and if there be no law, there is no governor nor government, no duty, no sin, no judgment, no punishment, no reward); that the elect are justified before they are born, or repent, or believe; that their sin is pardoned before it is committed; that God took them as suffering and fulfilling all the law in Christ, as if it had been they that did it in Him; that we are justified by faith only in our consciences; that justifying faith is but the believing that we are justified; that every man must believe that he is pardoned, that he may be pardoned in his conscience, and this he is to by a divine faith, and that this is the sense of the article, `I believe the forgiveness of sins,’ that is, that my sins are forgiven; and that all are forgiven that believe it; that it is illegal and sinful to work or do anything for salvation; that sin once pardoned need not be confessed and lamented, or at least, we need not ask pardon of sin daily, or of one sin oft; that castigations are no punishments, and yet no other punishment is threatened to believers for their sins, and consequently that Christ hath not procured them a pardon of any sin after believing, but prevented all necessity of pardon, and therefore they must not ask pardon of

them, nor do any thing to obtain it; that fear of hell must have no hand in our obedience, or restraint from sin. And some add, that he that cannot repent or believe, must comfort himself that Christ repented and believed for him (a contradiction)." Many such doctrines of licentiousness the abusers of grace have brought forth. And the sect which imitateth the father of pride in affecting to be from under the government of God, and to be the law-givers and rulers of themselves and all others (which I therefore call the autonomians), are licentious and much more. They equally contend against Christ's government, and their own. They fill the world with wars and bloodshed, oppression and cruelty, and the ears of God with the cries of the martyrs and oppressed ones. They tell all that the spiritual and holy discipline of Christ may be suppressed, and seriousness in religion made odious, or banished from the earth and that they themselves may be taken for the centre, and pillars, and lawgivers of the church. They tell that the consciences of all men may be taught to cast off all scruples or fears of offending God, in comparison of offending them; and may absolutely submit to them; and never stick at any feared disobedience to Christ. They are the scorners and persecutors of strict obedience to the laws of God, and take those that fear His judgments to be men affrighted out of their wits; and that to obey Him exactly (which, alas! who can do, when he hath done his best) is but to be hypocritical or too precise. But to question their domination, or break their laws (imposed on the world, even on kings and states, without any authority), this must be taken for heresy, schism, or a rebellion, like that of Korah and his company. This Luciferian spirit of the proud autonomians hath filled the Christian world with bloodshed, and been the greatest means of the miseries of the earth, and especially of hindering and persecuting the gospel, and setting up a pharisaical religion in the world: it hath fought against the gospel, and filled with blood the countries of France, Savoy, Rhaetia, Bohemia, Belgia, Helvetia, Polonia, Hungary, Germany, and many more; that it may appear how much of the Satanical nature they have, and how punctually they fulfil his will. And natural corruption containeth in it the seeds of all these damnable heresies; nothing more natural to lapsed man, than to shake off the government of God, and to become a lawgiver to himself, and as many others he can; and to turn the grace of God into wantonness. Therefore the profane, that never heard it from any heretics but themselves, do make themselves such a creed as this, that "God is merciful, and therefore we need not fear His threatenings, for He will be better than His word: it belongeth to Him to save us, and not to us, and therefore we may cast our souls upon His care, though we care not for them ourselves. If He hath predestinated us to salvation, we shall be saved; and if He have not, we shall not; whatever we do, or how well soever we live. Christ died for sinners, and therefore though we are sinners, He will save us. God is stronger than the devil, and therefore the devil shall not have the most: That which pleaseth the flesh, and doth God no harm, can never be so great a matter, or so much offend Him, as to procure our damnation. What need of so much ado to be saved, or so much haste to turn to God, when any one that at last doth but repent and cry God mercy, and believe that Christ died for him, shall be saved? Christ is the Saviour of the world, and His grace is very great and free, and therefore God forbid that none should be saved but those few that are of strict and holy lives, sad make so much ado for heaven. No man can know who shall be saved, and who shall not; and therefore it is the wisest way, to do nobody any harm, and to live merrily, and trust God with our souls, and put our salvation upon the venture: nobody is saved for his own works or deservings; and therefore our lives may serve the turn as well as if they were more strict and holy." This is the creed of the ungodly; by which you may see how natural it is to them to abuse the gospel, and plead God's grace to quiet and

strengthen them in their sin, and to embolden themselves on Christ to disobey Him. But this is but to set Christ against Himself, even His merits and mercy against His government and Spirit; and to set His death against the ends of His death; and to set our Saviour against our salvation; and to run from God and rebel against Him, because Christ died to recover us to God, and to give us repentance unto life; and to sin, because He died to save his people from their sins, "and to purify a peculiar people to Himself zealous of good works" (Matthew 1:21; Titus 2:14). "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8; John 8:44).

5.18. Direction XVIII - On Backsliding

Direction XVIII - On Backsliding

Watch diligently both against the more discernible decays of grace, and against the degenerating of it into some carnal affections, or something counterfeit, and of another kind. And so also of religious duties.

We are no sooner warmed with the celestial flames, then natural corruption is inclining us to grow cold, like hot water, which loseth its heat by degrees unless the fire be continually kept under it. Who feeleth not that as soon as in a sermon, or prayer, or holy meditation, his heart hath got a little heat, as soon as it in gone, it is prone to its former earthly temper, and by a little remissness in our duty, or thoughts, or business about the world, we presently grow cold and dull again. Be watchful, therefore, lest it decline too far. Be frequent in the means that must preserve you from declining: when faintness telleth you that your stomach is emptied of the former meat, supply it with another, lest strength abate. You are rowing against the stream of fleshly interest and inclinations; and therefore intermit not too long, lest you go faster down by your ease, than you get up by labour. The degenerating of grace is a way of backsliding, very common, and too little observed. It is when good affections do not directly cool, but turn into some carnal affections somewhat like them, but of another kind: as if the body of a man, instead of dying, should receive the life or soul of a beast, instead of the reasonable, human soul. For instance: 1. Have you believed in God, and in Jesus Christ, and loved him accordingly? You shall seem to do so still as much as formerly when your corrupted minds have received some false representation of Him; and so it is indeed another thing that you thus corruptly believe and love. 2. Have you been fervent in prayer? You shall be fervent still, if Satan can but corrupt your prayers by corrupting your judgment or affections, and get you to think this corruption to be the cause of God; and get you to think those to be the troublers of the church, which are its best and faithfullest members, thus turning your prayers against the cause and people of God by your mistake: and you may pray as fervently against them as you will. The same I may say of preaching, or conference, and zeal: corrupt them once, and turn them against God, and Satan will join with you for zealous and frequent preaching or conference or disputes. 3. Have you a confidence in Christ and His promise for your salvation? Take heed lest it turn into carnal security, and a persuasion of your good estate upon ill grounds. 4. Have you the hope of glory? Take heed lest it turn into a careless venturousness of your soul, or the mere laying aside of fear and cautelous suspicion of yourselves. 5. Have you a love to them that fear the Lord? Watch your hearts, lest it degenerate into a carnal or a partial love. Many unheedful young persons of different sexes at first love each other with an honest, chaste, and pious love; but then imprudently, using too much familiarity, before they were well aware, the love hath turned into a fleshly love, which hath proved their snare and drew them further into sin or trouble. Then also, many have honoured them that fear the Lord, who insensibly have declined to honour only those of them that were eminent in wealth and worldly honour, or that were esteemed for their parts or place by others, and little honoured the humble, poor, obscure Christians who were at least as good as they: forgetting that the "things

that are highly esteemed among men are abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15), and that God valueth men not by their places and dignities in the world, but by their graces and holiness of life. Abundance that at first did seem to love all Christians, as such, as far as any thing of Christ appeared in them, have first fallen into some sect, and over-admiring their party, and have set light by others as good as them, and censured them as unsound, and then withdrawn their special love, and confined it to their party, or to some few; and yet they thought that they loved the godly as much as ever, when it was degenerate into a factious love. 6. Are you zealous for God and truth and holiness, and against the errors and sins of others? Take heed lest you lose it, while you think it doth increase in you. Nothing is more apt to degenerate than zeal: in how many thousands hath it turned from an innocent, charitable, peaceable, tractable, healing, profitable, heavenly zeal, into a partial zeal for some party, or opinions of their own; and into a fierce, censorious, uncharitable, scandalous, turbulent, disobedient, unruly, hurting, and destroying zeal, ready to wish for fire from heaven, and kindling contention, confusion, and every evil work. (Read well James 3:1-18). 7. So if you are meek or patient, take heed lest it degenerate into stupidity or contempt of those you suffer by. To be patient is not to be merely insensible of the affliction; but by the power of faith to bear the sense of it, as overruled by things of greater moment.

How apt men are to corrupt and debase all duties of religion, is too visible in the face of the far greatest part of the Christian world. Throughout both the eastern and the western churches, (though the essentials of religion through God’s mercy are retained, yet) how much is the face of religion altered from what it was in the days of the apostles! The ancient simplicity of doctrine is turned into abundance of new or private articles of religion: and alas! how many of them false! So that Christians, being too proud to accept of the ancient test of Christianity, cannot now agree among themselves what a Christian is, and who is to be esteemed a Christian; and so they deny one another to be Christians, and destroy their charity to each other, and divide the church, and make themselves a scorn by their divisions to the infidel world: and thus the primitive unity, charity, and peace is partly destroyed, and partly degenerate into the unity, charity, and peace of several sects among themselves. The primitive simplicity of worship is turned into such a mask of ceremony, and such a task of formalities and bodily exercise, that if one of the apostolical Christians should come among them, he would scarce think that this is the same employment which formerly the church was exercised in, or scarce know religion in this antic dress, so that the amiable, glorious face of Christianity, is so spotted and defiled, that it is hidden from the unbelieving world, and they laugh at it as irrational, or think it to be but like their own. The principal hinderance of the conversion of heathens, is the corruption and deformity of the churches that are near them, or should be the instruments of their conversion. And the probablest way to the conversion of those nations to the true reformation of the churches, both in east and west, is if they were restored to the ancient spirituality, rationality, and simplicity of doctrine, discipline, and worship, and lived in charity, humility, and holiness. And, as for those whose hearts and conversations are in heaven, with all worldly glory and honour as under their feet, they would then be so illustrious and amiable in the eyes even of heathens and other infidels, that many would flock into the church of Christ, and desire to be such as they. Their light would so shine before these men that they would see their good works, and glorify their heavenly Father, and embrace their faith. The commonest way of the degenerating of all religions duties is into this dead formality, or lifeless image of religion. If the devil can but get you to cast off the spirituality and life of duty, he will give you leave to seem very devout, and make much ado with outward actions,

words, and deeds; and you shall have so much zeal for a dead religion, or the corpse of worship, as will make you think that it is indeed alive. By all means take heed of this turning the worship of God into lip-service. The commonest cause of it is a carnality of mind (fleshly men will think best of the most fleshly religion) or else a slothfulness in duty, which will make you sit down with the easiest part. It is the work of a saint, and a diligent saint, to keep the soul itself both regularly and vigorously employed with God. But to say over certain words by rote, and to lift up the hands and eyes, is easy: and hypocrites, that are conscious that they are void of the life and spirituality of worship, do think to make all up with this formality and quiet their consciences and delude their souls with a handsome image.

Yet run not here into the contrary extreme, as to think that the body must not worship God well as the soul, or that the decent and edifying determination of the outward circumstances of religion, and the right ordering of worship, is a needless thing, or sinful; or that a form of prayer in itself, or when imposed, is unlawful: but let the soul and body of religion go together, and the alterable adjuncts be used, as things alterable, while the life of holiness is still kept up.

5.19. Direction XIX - On the Awareness of Life's Frailty

Direction XIX - On the Awareness of Life’s Frailty

Promise not yourselves long life, or prosperity and great matters in the world, lest it entangle your hearts with transitory things, and engage you in ambitious or covetous designs, and steal away your hearts from God, and destroy all your serious apprehensions of eternity. Our own experience, and the alterations which the approach of death makes upon the most, doth sensibly prove that the expectation of a speedy change, and reckoning upon a short life, doth greatly help us in all our preparation, and in all the work of holiness through our lives. Come to a man that lieth on his death-bed, or a prisoner that is to die tomorrow, and try him with discourse of riches, or honours, temptations to lust, or drunkenness, or excess, and he will think you are mad, or very impertinent to tell him of such things. If he be but a man of common reason, you shall see that he will more easily vilify such temptations than any religion persons will do in their prosperity and health. Oh how serious are we in repenting and perusing our former lives, and casting up our accounts, and asking what we shall do to be saved, when we see that death is indeed at hand and time is at an end, and we must away! Every sentence of Scripture hath then some life and power in it; every word of exhortation is savoury to us; every reproof of our negligence and sin is then well taken; every thought of sin, or Christ, or grace, or eternity, goes then to the quick. Then time seems precious; and if you ask a man whether it be better spent in cards and dice, and plays and feastings, and needless recreations and idleness, or in prayer, and holy conference, and reading and meditating on the word of God and the life to come, and the holy use of our lawful labours: how easily will he be satisfied of the truth, and confute the cavils of voluptuous time-wasters! Then his judgment will more easily be in the right, than learning or arguments before could make it. In a word, the expectation of the speedy approach of the soul into the presence of the eternal God, and of our entering into an unchangeable, endless life of joy or torment, hath so much in it to awaken all the powers of the soul, that if ever we will be serious, it will make us serious in every thought, and speech, and duty. And therefore, as it is a great mercy of God that this life, which is so short, should be as uncertain, and that frequent dangers and sicknesses call to us to look about us and be ready for our change, so usually the sickly, that look for death, are most considerate; and it is a great part of the duty of those that are in youth and health to consider their frailty, and the shortness and uncertainty of their lives, and always live as those that wait for the coming of their Lord. And we have great reason for it when we are certain it will be ere long; and when we have so many perils and weaknesses to warn us, and when we are never sure to see another hour, and when time is so swift, so quickly gone, so unrecoverable, and nothing when it is past. Common reason requireth such to live in a constant readiness to die. But if youth or health do once make you reckon of living long, and make you put away the day of your departure as if it were far off, this will do much to deceive and dull the best, and take away the power of every truth, and the life of every good thought and duty, and all will be apt to dwindle into customariness and form. You will hardly keep the faculties of the soul awake, if you do not still think of death and judgment as near at hand. The greatest certainty of the greatest change, and the greatest joy or misery forever, will

not keep our stupid hearts awake, unless we look at all as near, as well as certain. This is plain in the common difference that we find among all men, between their thoughts of death in health, and when they see indeed that they must presently die. They that in health could think and talk of death with laughter, or lightly, without any awakening of soul, when they come to die are oftentimes as much altered as if they had never heard before that they are mortal. By which it is plain, that to live in the house of mirth is more dangerous than to live in the house of mourning; and that the expectation of long life is a grievous enemy to the operations of grace, and the safety of the soul. And it is one of the greatest strengtheners of your temptations to luxury, ambition, worldliness, and almost every sin. When men think that they shall have many years' leisure to repent, they are apt the more boldly to transgress; when they think that they have yet many years to live, it tempteth them to pass away time in idleness, and to loiter in their race, and trifle in all their work, and to overvalue all the pleasures, and honours, and shadows of felicity that are here below. He that hath his life in his house or land, or hath it for inheritance, will set more by it, and bestow more upon it, than if he thought he must go out of it the next year. To a man that thinks of living many years, the favour of great ones, the raising of his estate, and name, and family, and the accommodations and pleasing of his flesh, will seem great matters to him, and will do much with him, and will make self-denial a very hard work.

Therefore, though health be a wonderful great mercy, as enabling him to duty that hath a heart to use it to that end; yet it is by accident a very great danger and snare to the heart itself, to turn it from the way of duty. The best life for the soul is that which least endangereth it by being over pleasing to the body, and in which the flesh hath the smallest interest to set up and plead against the Spirit. Not but that the largest stock must be accepted and used for God, when He trusteth us with it; for when He setteth us the hardest work, we may expect His greatest help. But a dwelling as in tents, in a constant unsettledness, in a movable condition, having little, and needing little, never feeling any thing in the creature to tempt us to say, "Soul, take thy rest", this is to most the safest life, which giveth us the freest advantages for heaven.

Take heed therefore, as you love your souls, of falling into the snare of worldly hopes, and laying designs for rising, and riches, and pleasing yourselves in the thoughts and prosecution of these things, for then you are in the readiest way to perdition: even to idolatrous worldliness, and apostasy of heart from God, and opening a door to every sin that seems but necessary to your worldly ends, and to odious hypocrisy for a cloak to all this, and to quiet your guilty minds with something that is like religion. When once you are saying, with worldly security, as he: "I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and goods; and I will say to my soul, `Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry'" (Luke 12:17-19), you are then befooling yourselves, and near being called away as fools by death, (see Luke 12:20-21). And when, without a sense of the uncertainty of your lives, you are saying, as those in James 4:13-14 : "Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain, whereas you know not what will be on the morrow," you forget what your lives are, that they are "vapour appearing a little while, and then vanishing away," (James 4:14). "Boast not thyself therefore of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth," (Proverbs 27:1).

5.20. Direction XX - God As All

Direction XX - God As All

See that your religion be purely divine, and animated all by God, as the beginning, the way and the end; and that first upon thy soul, and then upon all that thou hast or dost, there be written "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD;" and that thou corrupt not all with an inordinate hypocritical respect to man. To be holy is to be devoted to God, and appropriated to Him, and His will and use; and that our hearts and lives be not common and unclean. To be godly is to live to God, as those that from their hearts believe that He is God indeed, and that "He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," (Hebrews 11:6, KJV); that He is "our God all-sufficient, our shield and exceeding great reward," (Hebrews 11:6; Genesis 15:1 ; Genesis 17:1, KJV); and that "of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things," that all may give the glory forever unto Him (Romans 11:36, KJV). As God is infinitely above all creatures, so living upon God, and unto God, must needs advance us above the highest sensual life, and therefore religion is transcendently above all sciences or arts. So much of God as is in you and upon you, so much you are more excellent than that highest worldly perfection can advance you to. God should be the First, and Last, and All in the mind, and mouth, and life of a believer. God must be the principal matter of your religion. The understanding and will must be exercised upon Him. When you awake you should be still with Him (see Psalms 139:8). Your meditations of Him should be sweet, and you should be glad in the Lord (see Psalms 104:34). God must be author of your religion; God must institute it, if you expect He should accept it and reward it. God must be the rule of your religion, as revealing His will concerning it in His word. God must be the ultimate end of your religion; it must be intended to please and glorify Him. God must be the continual motive and reason of your religion, and of all you do; you must be able truly to fetch your reason from heaven, and to say, "I do it because it is His will; I do it to please, and glorify, and enjoy Him." God must be taken as the Sovereign Judge of your religion, and of you, and of all you do; and you must wholly look to his justification and approbation, and avoid whatever He condemneth. Can you take God for your Owner, your Sovereign, your Saviour, sufficient Protector, your Portion, your All? If not, you cannot be godly, nor be saved: if His authority have not more power upon you, than the authority of the greatest upon earth, you are atheistical hypocrites, and not truly religious, whatever you pretend. If "holiness to the Lord" be written upon you (see Exodus 39:30), and all that is yours, you are devoted to Him and His own peculiar ones. If your names be set upon your sheep, or plate, or clothes, you will say, if another should take them, "They are mine: do you not see my mark upon them?" Slavery to the flesh, the world, and the devil, is the mark that is written upon the ungodly (upon the foreheads of the profane, and upon the hearts of hypocrites and all); and Satan, the world, and the flesh have their service. If you are consecrated to God, and bear His name and mark upon you, tell every one that would lay claim to you, that you are His, and resolved to live to Him, to love Him, to trust Him, and to stand or fall to Him alone. Let God be the very life, and sense and end of all you do. When once man hath too much of your regard and observation, that you set too much by his favour and esteem, or eye Him too much in your profession and practice;

when man’s approbation too much comforteth you, and man’s displeasure or dispraise doth too much trouble you; when your fear, and love, and care, and obedience are too much taken up for man; you so far withdraw yourselves from God, and are becoming the servants of men, and friends of the world, and turning back to bondage, and forsaking in our Rock and Portion, and your excellency; the soul of religion is departing from you, and it is dying and returning to the dust. And if once man get the pre-eminence of God, and be preferred and set above Him in your hearts or lives, and feared, trusted, and obeyed before Him, you are then dead to God, and alive to the world; and as men are taken for your gods, you must take up with such a salvation as they can give you. If your alms and prayer are done to be seen of men, and to procure their good thoughts and words; if you get them, make your best of them, "for verily," your Judge hath said unto you, "you have your reward," (Matthew 6:1-3, KJV). Not that man is absolutely to be contemned or disregarded. No; under God, your superiors must be obeyed; you must do wrong to none, and do good to all, and as far as in you lieth, you must avoid offence, and give good example, and, under God have so much regard to men, as to become all things to all men for their salvation. But if once you set them above their rank, and turn yourselves to an inordinate dependence on them, and make too great a matter of their opinion or words concerning you, you are losing your godliness or divine disposition, and turning it into man-pleasing and hypocrisy. When man stands in competition with God, for your first and chief regard, or in opposition to Him or as a sharer in co-ordination with Him, and not purely subordination to Him, He is to be numbered with things to be forsaken. Even good men, whom you must love and honour, and whose communion and help you must highly value, yet may be made the object of your sin, and may become your snare. Your honouring of them, or love to them, must not entice you to desire inordinately to be honoured by them, nor cause you to set too much by their approbation. If you do, you will find that while you are too much eyeing you are losing God, and corrupting your religion at the very heart. And you may fall among those that, how holy soever, may have great mistakes in matters of religion, tending to much sin, and may be somewhat censorious against those that are not of their mind; and so the retaining of their esteem, and the avoiding of their censures, may become one of the greatest temptations of your lives. And you will find that man-pleasing is a very difficult and yet unprofitable task. Love Christ as He appeareth in any of His servants, and be followers of them as they are followers of Christ and regard their approbation as it agreeth with Christ’s: but O see that you are able to live upon the favour of God alone, and to be quieted in His acceptance, though man despise you; and to be pleased so far as God is pleased, though man be displeased with you; and to rejoice in His justification, though men condemn you with the odiousest slanders and the greatest infamy, and cast out your names as evil-doers. See that God be taken as enough for you, or else you take Him not as your God; even as enough without man, and enough against man; that you may be able to say, "If God be for us, who can be against us? Who is He that condemneth? It is God that justifieth" (Romans 8:31,Romans 8:33-34, KJV). "Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of Christ," (Galatians 1:10, KJV). "Thus saith the Lord: Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath the desert, and shall not see when good cometh. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:5-8, KJV). "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his

nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (Isaiah 2:22, KJV).

Having given you these directions, I must tell you in the conclusion, that they are like food, that will not nourish you by standing on your table, or like physic, that will not cure you by standing in the box: they must be taken and digested, or you will find none of the benefit. It is not the reading of them that will serve the turn to so great use, as the safe proceeding and confirmation of beginners or novices in religion; it will require humility to perceive the need of them; and labour to learn, digest, and practice them. Those slothful souls, that will refuse the labour, must bear the sad effects of their negligence; there is not one of all these directions, as to the matter of them, which can be spared. Study them, understand them, and remember them, as things that must be done. If either a senselessness of your necessity, or a conceit that the spirit must do it without so much labour and diligence of your own, do prevail with you, to put off all these with a mere approbation, the consequence may be sadder than you can yet foresee. Though I suppose you to have some beginnings of grace, I must tell you, that it will be comparatively a bad kind of life, to be erroneous, and scandalous, and troublesome to the church, or full of trouble, and fears, and passions, and to be burdensome to others and yourselves! Yea, it is reason that you be very auspicious of your sincerity, if you desire not to increase in grace, and be not willing to use the means which are necessary to your increase. He is not sincere, that desireth not to be perfect; and he desireth not sincerely, who is not willing to be at the labour and cost, which is necessary to the obtaining of the thing desired. I beseech you, therefore, as you love the happiness of prudent, strong, and comfortable Christians, and would escape the misery of those grievous diseases, which would turn lives into languishing, unserviceableness, and pain; that you seriously study these directions, and get them into your minds, and memories, and hearts; and let the faithful practice of them be your greatest care, and the constant employment of your lives.

Chapter 70

6.00. The Saints' Everlasting Rest

THE SAINTS’ EVERLASTING REST BY THE REV. RICHARD BAXTER

ABRIDGED BY BENJAMIN FAWCETT, A.M.

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“There remaineth therefore a rest unto the people of God.”- Hebrews 4:9.

Richard Baxter (November 12, 1615 - December 8, 1691) was an English Puritan church leader, divine scholar and controversialist, called by Dean Stanley "the chief of English Protestant Schoolmen".

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6.01. PREFATORY NOTICE

Mr. RICHARD BAXTER, the author of the Saints' Rest; so well known to the world by this and many other excellent and useful writings, was a learned, laborious, and eminently holy divine of the last age. He was born near Shrewsbury in 1615, and died at London in 1691. His ministry, in an unsettled state, was for many years employed with great and extensive success both in London and in several parts of the country; but he was no where fixed so long, or with such entire satisfaction to himself, and apparent advantage to others, as at Kidderminster. His abode there was indeed interrupted, partly by his bad health, but chiefly by the calamities of a civil war; yet in the whole it amounted to sixteen years; nor was it by any means the result of his own choice, or that of the inhabitants of Kidderminster, that he never settled there again, after his going from thence in 1660. Before his coming thither, the place was overrun with ignorance and profaneness; but, by the Divine blessing on his wise and faithful cultivation, the fruits of righteousness sprung up in rich abundance. He at first found but a single instance or two of daily family prayer in a whole street; and on his going away but one family or two could be found in some streets that continued to neglect it. And on Lord's days, instead of the open profanation to which they had been so long accustomed, a person in passing through the town in the intervals of public worship, might overhear hundreds of families engaged in singing psalms, reading the Scriptures and other good books, or such sermons as they had taken down while they heard them from the pulpit. His care of the souls committed to his charge, and the success of his labors among them, were truly remarkable; for the number of his stated communicants rose to six hundred, of whom he himself declared there were not twelve concerning whose sincere piety he had not reason to entertain a good hope. Blessed be God, the religious spirit which was thus happily introduced, is yet to be traced in the town and neighborhood in some degree; (O that it were in a greater!) and in proportion as that spirit remains, the name of Mr. Baxter continues in the most honorable and affectionate remembrance. As a writer, he has the approbation of some of his greatest contemporaries, who best knew him, and were under no temptation to be partial in his favor. Dr. Barrow said, "His practical writings were never mended, and his controversial ones seldom confuted." With a view to his casuistical writings, the honorable Robert Boyle declared, "He was the fittest man of the age for a casuist, because he feared no man's displeasure, nor hoped for any man's preferment." Bishop Wilkins observed of him, "that he had cultivated every subject he had handled; that if he had lived in the primitive times, he would have been one of the fathers of the church; and that it was enough for one age to produce such a person as Mr. Baxter." Archbishop Usher had such high thoughts of him, that by his earnest importunity he put him upon writing several of his practical discourses, particularly that celebrated piece, his Call to the Unconverted. Dr. Manton, as he freely expressed it, "thought Mr. Baxter came nearer the apostolical writings than any man in the age." And it is both as a preacher and a writer that Dr. Bates considers him, when, in his funeral sermon he says, "In his sermons there was a rare union of arguments and motives to convince the mind and gain the heart. All the fountains of reason and persuasion were open to his discerning eye. There was no resisting the force of his discourses, without denying reason and divine revelation. He had a marvellous facility 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; he despised flashy oratory, but his expressions were clear and powerful; so convincing the understanding, so entering into the soul, so engaging the affections, that those were as deaf as adders who were not charmed by so wise a charmer. He was animated with the Holy Spirit, and breathed celestial fire, to inspire heat and life into dead sinners, and to melt the obdurate in their frozen tomb. His books, for their number, (which it seems were more than one hundred and twenty,) and variety of matter in them, make a library. They contain a treasure of controversial, casuistical, and practical divinity. His books of practical divinity have been effectual for more numerous conversions of sinners to God, than any printed in our time; and while the church remains on earth, will be of continual efficacy to recover lost souls. There is a vigorous pulse in them, that keeps the reader awake and attentive." To these testimonies may not improperly be added that of the editors of his practical works in four folio volumes; in the preface to which they say, "Perhaps there are no writings among us that have more of a true Christian sprit, a greater mixture of judgment and affection, or a greater tendency to revive pure and undefiled religion; that have been more esteemed abroad, or more blessed at home, for awakening the secure, instructing the ignorant, confirming the wavering, comforting the dejected, recovering the profane, or improving such as are truly serious, than the practical works of this author." Such were the apprehensions of eminent persons who were well acquainted with Mr. Baxter and his writings. It is therefore the less remarkable that Mr. Addison, from an accidental and very imperfect acquaintance, but with his usual pleasantness and candor, should mention the following incident: "I once met with a page of Mr. Baxter. Upon the perusal of it I conceived so good an idea of the author's piety that I bought the whole book."

Whatever other causes might concur, it must chiefly be ascribed to Mr. Baxter's distinguished reputation as a preacher and a writer, that, presently after the Restoration, he was appointed one of the chaplains in ordinary to King Charles II. and preached once before him in that capacity; as also that he had an offer made him, by Lord Chancellor Clarendon, of the bishopric of Hereford, which, in a respectful letter to his lordship, he saw proper to decline. The Saints' Rest is deservedly esteemed one of the most valuable parts of his practical works. He wrote it when he was far from home, without any book to consult but his Bible, and in such an ill state of health as to be in continual expectation of death for many months; and therefore, merely for his own use, he fixed his thoughts on this heavenly subject, "which," says he, "hath more benefitted me than all the studies of my life." At this time he could be little more than thirty years old. He afterwards preached over the subject in his weekly lecture at Kidderminster, and in 1650 published it; indeed it appears to have been the first that ever he published of all his practical writings. Of this book Dr. Bates says, "It was written by him when languishing in the suspense of life and death, but has the signatures of his holy and vigorous mind. To allure our desires, he unveils the sanctuary above, and discovers the glories and joys of the blessed in the Divine presence, by a light so strong and lively, that all the glittering vanities of this world vanish in the comparison, and a sincere believer will despise them, as one of mature age does the toys and baubles of children. To excite our fear, he removes the screen, and makes the everlasting fire of hell so visible, and represents the tormenting passions of the damned in such dreadful colors, as, if duly considered, would check and control the unbridled, licentious appetites of the most sensual wretches."

Heavenly rest is a subject in its own nature so universally important and interesting, and at the same time so truly engaging and delightful, as sufficiently accounts for the great acceptance which this book has met with; and partly, also, for the uncommon blessing which has attended Mr. Baxter's manner of treating the subject, both from the pulpit and the press. For where are the operations of Divine grace more reasonably to be expected, or where have they, in fact, been more frequently discerned, than in concurrence with the best adapted means? And should it appear that persons of distinguishing judgment and piety have expressly ascribed their first religious impressions to the hearing or reading the important sentiments contained in this book; or, after a long series of years, have found it both the counterpart and the improvement of their own divine life; will not this be thought a considerable recommendation of the book itself?

Among the instances of persons that dated their true conversion from hearing the sermons on the Saints' Rest when Mr. Baxter first preached them, was the Rev. Thomas Doolittle, M. A. who was a native of Kidderminster, and at that time a scholar about seventeen years old, whom Mr. Baxter himself afterward sent to Pembroke Hall, in Cambridge, where he took his degree. Before his going to the university, he was upon trial as an attorney's clerk, and under that character, being ordered by his master to write something on a Lord's day, he obeyed with great reluctance, and the next day returned home, with an earnest desire that he might not apply himself to any thing, as the employment of life, but serving Christ in the ministry of the Gospel. His praise is yet in the churches, for his pious and useful labors as a minister, a tutor and a writer. In the life of the Rev. John Janeway, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, who died in 1657, we are told that his conversion was, in a great measure, occasioned by his reading the Saints' Rest. And in a letter which he afterwards wrote to a near relative, speaking with a more immediate reference to that part of the book which treats of heavenly contemplation, he says, "There is a duty, which, if it were exercised, would dispel all cause of melancholy: I mean heavenly meditation and contemplation of the things to which the true Christian religion tends. If we did but walk closely with God one hour in a day in this duty, O what influence would it have upon the whole day besides, and, duly performed, upon the whole life! This duty, with its usefulness, manner, and directions, I knew in some measure before, but had it more pressed upon me by Mr. Baxter's Saints' Everlasting Rest, a book that can scarce be overvalued, and for which I have cause for ever to bless God." This excellent young minister's life is worth reading, were it only to see how delightfully he was engaged in heavenly contemplation, according to the directions in the Saints' Rest.

It was the example of heavenly contemplation, at the close of this book, which the Rev. Joseph Alleine so frequently quoted in conversation, with this solemn introduction, "Most divinely says that man of God, holy Mr. Baxter."

Dr. Bates, in his funeral sermon, dedicated to Sir Henry Ashurst, says to that religious gentleman and most distinguished friend and executor of Mr. Baxter, "He was most worthy of your highest esteem and love; for the first impressions of heaven upon your soul were in reading his invaluable book of the Saints' Everlasting Rest." In the life of the Rev. Matthew Henry we have the following character given us of Robert Warburton, Esq. of Grange, the son of the eminently religious Judge Warburton, and the father of Mr. Matthew Henry's second wife. "He was a gentlemen that greatly affected retirement and privacy, especially in the latter part of his life; the Bible and Mr. Baxter's Saints' Everlasting Rest used to lie daily before him on the table in his parlor; he spent the greatest part of his time in reading and prayer." In the life of that honorable and most religious knight Sir

Nathaniel Barnardiston, we are told that “he was constant in secret prayer and reading the Scriptures; afterwards he read other choice authors; but not long before his death he took a singular delight in reading Mr. Baxter’s Saints’ Everlasting Rest and preparations thereunto; which was esteemed a gracious event of Divine Providence, sending it as a guide to bring him more speedily and directly to that rest.”

Besides persons of eminence, to whom this book has been precious and profitable, we have an instance, in the Rev. James Janeway’s Token for Children, of a little boy, whose piety was so discovered and promoted by reading it, as the most delightful book to him, next to the Bible, that the thoughts of everlasting rest seemed, even while he continued in health, to swallow up all other thoughts; and he lived in a constant preparation for it, and appeared more like one that was ripe for glory, than an inhabitant of this lower world. And when he was in the sickness of which he died before he was twelve years old, he said, “I pray, let me have Mr. Baxter’s book, that I may read a little more of eternity before I go into it.” Nor is it less observable that Mr. Baxter himself, taking notice, in a paper found in his study after his death, what a number of persons were converted by reading his Call to the Unconverted, accounts of which he had received by letter every week, expressly adds, “This little book, the Call to the Unconverted, God hath blessed with unexpected success, beyond all that I have written, except the Saints’ Rest.” With an evident reference to this book, and even during the life of the author, the pious Mr. Flavel affectionately says, “Mr. Baxter is almost in heaven-living in the daily views and cheerful expectation of the saints’ everlasting rest with God; and is left for a little while among us, as a great example of the life of faith.” And Mr. Baxter himself says, in his preface to his Treatise of Self-Denial, “I must say, that of all the books which I have written, I peruse none so often for the use of my own soul in its daily work, as my Life of Faith, this of Self-Denial, and the last part of the Saints’ Rest.” On the whole, it is not without good reason that Dr. Calamy remarks concerning it, “This is a book for which multitudes will have cause to bless God for ever.” This excellent and useful book now appears in the form of an abridgment and therefore, it is presumed, will be the more likely, under the Divine blessing, to diffuse its salutary influence among those that would otherwise have wanted opportunity or inclination to read over the larger volume. In reducing it to this smaller size, I have been very desirous to do justice to the author, and at the same time promote the pleasure and profit of the serious reader. And I hope these ends are in some measure answered; chiefly by dropping things of a digressive, controversial, or metaphysical nature; together with prefaces, dedications, and various allusions to some peculiar circumstances of the last age; and particularly by throwing several chapters into one, that the number of them may better correspond with the size of the volume; and sometimes by altering the form, but not the sense, of a period, for the sake of brevity; and when an obsolete phrase occurred, changing it for one more common and intelligible. I should never have thought of attempting this work, if it had not been suggested and urged by others; and by some very respectable names, of whose learning, judgment and piety I forbear to avail myself. However defective this performance may appear, the labor of it (if it may be called a labor) has been, I bless God, one of the most delightful labors of my life.

Certainly the thoughts of everlasting rest may be as delightful to souls in the present day, as they have ever been to those of past generations. I am sure such thoughts are as absolutely necessary now; nor are temptations to neglect them either fewer or weaker than formerly. The worth of everlasting rest is not felt, because a thousand trifles are preferred before it. But were the divine

reasonings of this book duly attended to, (and O that the Spirit and grace of the Redeemer may make them so!) then an age of vanity would become serious; minds enervated by sensuality would soon resume the strength of reason, and display the excellence of Christianity; the delusive names of pleasure would be blotted out by the glorious reality of heavenly joy upon earth; every station and relation in life would be filled up with the propriety and dignity of serious religion; every member of society would then effectually contribute to the beauty and happiness of the whole; and every soul would be ready for life or death, for one world or another, in a well-grounded and cheerful persuasion of having secured a title to that rest which remaineth to the people of God.

BENJAMIN FAWCETT KIDDERMINSTER, Dec. 25th, 1758.

6.02. CHAPTER I

THE INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE NATURE OF THE SAINTS' REST. The important design of the apostle in the text, to which the author earnestly bespeaks the attention of the reader. The saints' rest defined, with a general plan of the work. That this rest presupposes. The author's humble sense of his inability fully to show what this rest contains. It contains, 1. A ceasing from means of grace; 2. A perfect freedom from all evils; 3. The highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both in body and soul; 4. The nearest enjoyment of God, the chief good; 5. A sweet and constant action of all the powers of soul and body in this enjoyment of God.

It was not only our interest in God, and actual enjoyment of him, which was lost in Adam's fall, but all spiritual knowledge of him, and true disposition towards such a felicity. When the Son of God comes with recovering grace, and discoveries of a spiritual and eternal happiness and glory, he finds not faith in man to believe it. As the poor man, that would not believe any one had such a sum as a hundred pounds, it was so far above what he himself possessed, so men will hardly now believe there is such a happiness as once they had, much less as Christ hath now procured. When God would give the Israelites his Sabbaths of rest, in a land of rest, it was harder to make them believe it, than to overcome their enemies, and procure it for them. And when they had it, only as a small intimation and earnest of an incomparably more glorious rest through Christ, they yet believe no more than they possess, but say, with the epicure at the feast, Sure there is no other heaven but this! or, if they expect more by the Messiah, it is only the increase of their earthly felicity. The apostle aims most of this Epistle against this obduracy, and clearly and largely proves that the end of all ceremonies and shadows is to direct them to Jesus Christ, the substance; and that the rest of Sabbaths, and Canaan, should teach them to look for a further rest, which indeed is their happiness. My text is his conclusion after divers arguments; a conclusion which contains the ground of all the believer's comfort, the end of all his duty and sufferings, the life and sum of all gospel promises and Christian privileges.

What more welcome to men under personal afflictions, tiring duties, disappointments, or sufferings, than rest? It is not our comfort only, but our stability. Our liveliness in all duties, our enduring of tribulation, our honoring of God, the vigor of our love, thankfulness, and all our graces; yea, the very being of our religion and Christianity depend on the believing, serious thoughts of our rest. And now, reader, whoever thou art, young or old, rich or poor, I entreat thee, and charge thee, in the name of thy Lord, who will shortly call thee to a reckoning, and judge thee to thy everlasting, unchangeable state, that thou give not these things the reading only, and so dismiss them with a bare approbation; but that thou set upon this work, and take God in Christ for thy only rest, and fix thy heart upon him above all. May the living God, who is the portion and rest of his saints, make these our carnal minds so spiritual, and our earthly hearts so heavenly that loving him, and delighting in him, may be the work of our lives; and that neither I that write, nor you that read this book, may ever be turned from this path of life; "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest," we should "come short of it," through our own unbelief or negligence. The saints' rest

is the most happy state of a Christian; or, it is the perfect endless enjoyment of God by the perfected saints, according to the measure of their capacity, to which their souls arrive at death, and both soul and body most fully after the resurrection and final judgment. According to this definition of the saints' rest, a larger account of its nature will be given in this chapter; of its preparatives, chap. 2; its excellencies, chap. 3 and chap. 4, the persons for whom it is designed. Further to illustrate the subject, some description will be given, chap. 5, of their misery who lose this rest; and chap. 6, who also lose the enjoyments of time, and suffer the torments of hell. Next will be shown, chap. 7, the necessity of diligently seeking this rest; chap. 8, how our title to it may he discerned; chap. 9, that they who discern their title to it should help those that cannot; and chap. 10, that this rest is not to be expected on earth. It will then be proper to consider, chap. 11, the importance of a heavenly life upon earth; chap. 12, how to live a heavenly life upon earth; chap. 13, the nature of heavenly contemplation, with the time, place and temper most fit for it; chap. 14, what use heavenly contemplation makes of consideration, affections, soliloquy and prayer: and likewise, chap. 15, how heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, and guarded against a treacherous heart. Heavenly contemplation will be exemplified, chap. 16, and the whole work concluded.

There are some things necessarily presupposed in the nature of this rest: as, That mortal men are the persons seeking it. For angels and glorified spirits have it already, and the devils and damned are past hope: That they choose God only for their end and happiness. He that takes any thing else for his happiness is out of the way the first step: That they are distant from this end. This is the woful case of all mankind since the fall. When Christ comes with regenerating grace, he finds no man sitting still, but all posting to eternal ruin, and making haste toward hell; till, by conviction, he first brings them to a stand, and then, by conversion, turns their hearts and lives sincerely to himself. This end, and its excellency, is supposed to be known, and seriously intended. An unknown good moves not to desire or endeavor. And not only a distance from this rest, but the true knowledge of this distance, is also supposed. They that never yet knew they were without God, and in the way to hell, never yet knew the way to heaven. Can a man find he hath lost his God and his soul, and not cry, I am undone? The reason why so few obtain this rest, is, they will not be convinced that they are, in point of title, distant from it and, in point of practice, Contrary to it. Who ever sought for that which he knew not he had lost? "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:" The influence of a superior moving Cause is also supposed; else we shall all stand still, and not move toward our rest. If God move us not, we cannot move. It is a most necessary part of our Christian wisdom, to keep our subordination to God, and dependence on him. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing."

It is next supposed, that they who seek this rest have an inward principle of spiritual life. God does not move men like stones, but he endows them with life, not to enable them to move without him, but in subordination to himself, the first mover. And further, this rest supposes such an actual tendency of soul toward it as is regular and constant, earnest and laborious. He that hides his talent shall receive the wages of a slothful servant. Christ is the door, the only way to this rest. "But strait is the gate and narrow is the way;" and we must strive, if we will enter; for "many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able; which implies, "that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence." Nor will it bring us to the end of the saints, if we begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. He only "that

endureth to the end shall be saved." And never did a soul obtain rest with God whose desire was not set upon him above all things else in the world. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart he also." The remainder of our old nature will much weaken and interrupt these desires, but never overcome them. And, considering the opposition to our desires, from the contrary principles in our nature, and from the weakness of our graces, together with our continued distance from the end, our tendency to that end must be laborious, and with all our might. All these things are pre-supposed, in order to a Christian's obtaining an interest in heavenly rest.

Now we have ascended these steps into the outward court, may we look within the veil? May we show what this rest contains, as well as what it pre-supposes? Alas! how little know I of that glory! The glimpse which Paul had, contained what could not, or must not, be uttered. Had he spoken the things of heaven in the language of heaven, and none understood that language, what the better? The Lord reveal to me what I may reveal to you! The Lord open some light, and show both you and me our inheritance! Not as to Balaam only, whose eyes were opened to see the goodliness of Jacob's tents, and Israel's tabernacles, where he had no portion, and from whence must come his own destruction; not as to Moses, who had only a discovery instead of possession, and saw the land which he never entered; but as the pearl was revealed to the merchant in the Gospel, who rested not till he had sold all he had, and bought it; and as heaven was opened to blessed Stephen, which he was shortly to enter, and the glory showed him which should be his own possession. The things contained in heavenly rest are such as these: a ceasing from means of grace; a perfect freedom from all evils; the highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both of body and soul; the nearest enjoyment of God, the chief good and a sweet and constant action of all the powers of body and soul in this enjoyment of God.

1. One thing contained in heavenly rest, is, the ceasing from means of grace. When we have obtained the haven, we have done sailing. When the workman receives his wages, it is implied he has done his work. When we are at our journey's end, we have done with the way. Whether prophecies, they shall fail; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge, it also, so far as it had the nature of means, shall vanish away. There shall be no more prayer, because no more necessity, but the full enjoyment of what we prayed for: neither shall we need to fast, and weep, and watch any more, being out of the reach of sin and temptations. Preaching is done; the ministry of man ceases; ordinances become useless; the laborers are called in, because the harvest is gathered, the tares burned, and the work finished; the unregenerate past hope, and the saints past fear, for ever.

2. There is in heavenly rest a perfect freedom from all evils: from all the evils that accompanied us through our course, and which necessarily follow our absence from the chief good, besides our freedom from those eternal flames and restless miseries which the neglecters of Christ and grace must for ever endure; a woful inheritance, which, both by birth and actual merit, was due to us as well as to them! In heaven there is nothing that defileth or is unclean. All that remains without. And doubtless there is not such a thing as grief and sorrow known there; nor is there such a thing as a pale face, a languid body, feeble joints, helpless infancy, decrepid age, peccant humors, painful or pining sickness, griping fears, consuming cares, nor whatsoever deserves the name of evil. We wept and lamented when the world rejoiced but our sorrow is turned to joy, and our joy shall no man take from us.

3. Another ingredient of this rest is, the highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both of body and soul. Were the glory ever so great, and themselves not made capable of it by a personal perfection suitable thereto, it would be little to them. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." For the eye of flesh is not capable of seeing them, nor this ear of hearing them, nor this heart of understanding them: but there, the eye, and ear, and heart are made capable; else, how do they enjoy them? The more perfect the sight is, the more delightful the beautiful object. The more perfect the appetite, the sweeter the food. The more musical the ear, the more pleasant the melody. The more perfect the soul, the more joyous those joys, and the more glorious, to us, is that glory.

4. The principal part of this rest is our nearest enjoyment of God, the chief good. And here, reader, wonder not if I be at a loss, and if my apprehensions receive but little of that which is in my expressions. If it did not appear to the beloved disciple what we shall be, but only, in general, "that when Christ shall appear we shall be like him," no wonder if I know little. When I know so little of God, I cannot much know what it is to enjoy him. If I know so little of spirits, how little of the Father of spirits, or the state of my own soul, when advanced to the enjoyment of him! I stand and look upon a heap of ants, and see them all at one view: they know not me, my being, nature, or thoughts, though I am their fellow-creature: how little then, must we know of the great Creator, though he, with one view, clearly beholds us all! A glimpse, the saints behold as in a glass, which makes us capable of some poor, dark apprehensions of what we shall behold in glory. If I should tell a worldling what the holiness and spiritual joys of the saints on earth are, he cannot know; for grace cannot be clearly known without grace; how much less could he conceive it, should I tell him of this glory! But to the saints I may be somewhat more encouraged to speak, for grace gives them a dark knowledge and slight taste of glory.

If men and angels should study to speak the blessedness of that state in one word, what could they say beyond this, that it is the nearest enjoyment of God? O the full joys offered to a believer in that one sentence of Christ, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me!" Every word is full of life and joy. If the queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom;" then, surely, they that stand continually before God, and see his glory, and the glory of the Lamb, are more than happy. To them will Christ give to eat of the tree of life, and to eat of the hidden manna; yea, he will make them pillars in the temple of God, and they shall go no more out; and he will write upon them the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from his God, and he will write upon them his new name; yea, more, if more may be, he will grant them to sit with him in his throne. "These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. The Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." O blind, deceived world! can you show us such a glory? This is the city of our God, where the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. The glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb is

the light thereof. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. These sayings are faithful and true, and the things which must shortly be done. And now we say, as Mephibosheth, let the world take all, forasmuch as our Lord will come in peace. Rejoice, therefore, in the Lord, O ye righteous! and say, with his servant David, “The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance: the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” What presumption would it have been, once, to have thought or spoken of such a thing, if God had not spoken it before us! I durst not have thought of the saints’ preferment in this life, as Scripture sets it forth, had it not been the express truth of God. How unbecoming to talk of being sons of God-speaking to him-having fellowship with him-dwelling in him and he in us-if this had not been God’s own language! How much less durst we have once thought of shining forth as the sun-of being joint heirs with Christ-of judging the world-of sitting on Christ’s throne-of being one in him and the Father-if we had not all this from the mouth, and under the hand of God! But hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?-Yes, as the Lord God is true, thus shall it be done to the man whom Christ delighteth to honor. Be of good cheer, Christian; the time is at hand when God and thou shalt be near, and as near as thou canst well desire. Thou shalt dwell in his family. Is that enough? It is better to be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Thou shalt ever stand before him, about his throne, in the room with him, in his presence-chamber. Wouldst thou yet be nearer? Thou shalt be his child, and he thy Father; thou shalt be an heir of his kingdom; yea, more, the spouse of his Son. And what more canst thou desire? Thou shalt be a member of the body of his Son; he shall be thy head; thou shalt be one with him, who is one with the Father, as he himself hath desired for thee of his Father: “that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; and the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.”

5. We must add, that this rest contains a sweet and constant action of all the powers of the soul and body in this enjoyment of God. It is not the rest of a stone, which ceaseth from all motion when it attains the centre. This body shall be so changed, that it shall no more be flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God; but a spiritual body. We sow not that body which shall be, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. If grace makes a Christian differ so much from what he was, as to say, I am not the man I was; how much more will glory make us differ! As much as a body spiritual, above the sun in glory, exceeds these frail, noisome, diseased bodies of flesh, so far shall our senses exceed those we now possess. Doubtless, as God advances our senses, and enlarges our capacity, so will he advance the happiness of those senses, and fill up, with himself, all that capacity. Certainly the body would not be raised up and continued, if it were not to share in the glory. As it hath shared in the obedience and sufferings, so shall it also in the blessedness. As Christ bought the whole man, so shall the whole partake of the everlasting benefits of the purchase. O blessed employment of a glorified body! to stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, and to sound forth for ever, “Thou art

worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing; for thou hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests. Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God. Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." O Christians! this is the blessed rest; a rest, as it were, without rest; for "they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." And if the body shall be thus employed, O how shall the soul be taken up! As its powers and capacities are greatest, so its actions are strongest, and its enjoyments sweetest. As the bodily senses have their proper actions, whereby they receive and enjoy their objects, so does the soul in its own actions enjoy its own objects, by knowing, remembering, loving, and delightful joying. This is the soul's enjoyment. By these eyes it sees, and by these arms it embraces.

Knowledge, of itself, is very desirable. As far as the rational soul exceeds the sensitive, so far the delights of a philosopher, in discovering the secrets of nature, and knowing the mystery of sciences, exceed the delights of the drunkard, the voluptuary, or the sensualist. So excellent is all truth. What, then, is their delight who know the God of truth! How noble a faculty of the soul is the understanding! it can compass the earth; it can measure the sun, moon, stars, and heaven; it can foreknow each eclipse to a minute, many years before. But this is the top of all its excellency, that it can know God, who is infinite, who made all these-a little here, and more, much more, hereafter. O the wisdom and goodness of our blessed Lord! He hath created the understanding with a natural bias and inclination to truth, as its object; and to the prime truth, as its prime object. Christian, when, after long gazing heaven-ward, thou hast got a glimpse of Christ, dost thou not sometimes seem to have been with Paul in the third heaven, whether in the body or out, and to have seen what is unutterable? Art thou not, with Peter, ready to say, "Master, it is good to be here?" "O that I might dwell in this mount! O that I might ever see what I now see!" Didst thou never look so long upon the Sun of Righteousness till thine eyes were dazzled with his astonishing glory? And did not the splendor of it make all things below seem dark and drear to thee? Especially in the day of suffering for Christ, when he usually appears most manifestly to his people, didst thou never see one walking in the midst of the fiery furnace with thee, like the Son of God? Believe me, Christians, yea, believe God; you that have known most of God in Christ here, it is as nothing to what you shall know: in comparison of that, it scarce deserves to be called knowledge. For as these bodies, so that knowledge must cease, that a more perfect may succeed. "Knowledge shall vanish away. For we know in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but, when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known." Marvel not, therefore, Christian, how it can be life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ. To enjoy God and Christ is eternal life; and the soul's enjoying is in knowing. They that savor only of earth, and consult with flesh, think it a poor happiness to know God. "But we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness; and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." The memory will not be idle, or useless, in this blessed work. From that height the saint can look behind him and before him. And to compare past with present things must raise in the blessed soul an

inconceivable esteem and sense of its condition. To stand on that mount, whence we can see the Wilderness and Canaan both at once; to stand in heaven and look back on earth, and weigh them together in the balance of a comparing sense and judgment, how must it needs transport the soul, and make it cry out,

“Is this the purchase that cost so dear as the blood of Christ? No wonder. O blessed price and thrice blessed love, that invented and condescended! Is this the end of believing? Is this the end of the Spirit’s workings? Have the gales of grace blown me into such a harbor? Is it hither that Christ hath allured my soul? O blessed way, and thrice blessed end! Is this the glory which the Scriptures spoke of, and ministers preached of so much? I see the Gospel is indeed good tidings, even tidings of peace and good things, tidings of great joy to all nations! Is my mourning, my fasting, my sad humblings, my heavy walking, come to this? Is my praying, watching, fearing to offend, come to this? Are all my afflictions, Satan’s temptations, the world’s scorns and jeers, come to this? O vile nature, that resisted so much, and so long, such a blessing! Unworthy soul! is this the place thou camest to so unwillingly? Was duty wearisome? Was the world too good to lose? Couldst thou not leave all, deny all, and suffer any thing for this? Wast thou loth to die, to come to this? O false heart, thou hadst almost betrayed me to eternal flames, and lost me this glory! Art thou not now ashamed, my soul, that ever thou didst question that love which brought thee hither? that thou wast jealous of the faithfulness of thy Lord? that thou suspectedst his love, when thou shouldst only have suspected thyself? that ever thou didst quench a motion of his Spirit? and that thou shouldst misinterpret those providences, and repine at those ways which have such an end? Now thou art sufficiently convinced that thy blessed Redeemer was saving thee as well when he crossed thy desires, as when he granted them; when he broke thy heart, as when he bound it up. No thanks to thee, unworthy self, for this received crown; but to Jehovah and the Lamb be glory for ever.”

But, O! the full, the near, the sweet enjoyment, is that of love. “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Now the poor soul complains, “O that I could love Christ more!” Then thou canst not but love him. Now, thou knowest little of his amiableness, and therefore lovest little: then, thine eyes will affect thy heart, and the continual viewing of that perfect beauty will keep thee in continual transports of love. Christians, doth it not now stir up your love, to remember all the experiences of his love? Doth not kindness melt you, and the sunshine of Divine goodness warm your frozen hearts? What will it do then, when you shall live in love, and have all in Him, who is all? Surely love is both work and wages. What a high favor, that God will give us leave to love him! that he will be embraced by those who have embraced lust and sin before him! But more than this, he returneth love for love; nay, a thousand times more. Christian, thou wilt be then brim-full of love; yet, love as much as thou canst, thou shalt be ten thousand times more beloved. Were the arms of the Son of God open upon the cross, and an open passage made to his heart by the spear; and will not his arms and heart be open to thee in glory? Did not he begin to love before thou lovedst, and will not he continue now? Did he love thee, an enemy? thee, a sinner? thee, who even loathedst thyself? and own thee, when thou didst disclaim thyself? And will he not now immeasurably love thee, a son? thee, a perfect saint? thee, who returnest some love for love? He that in love wept over the old Jerusalem when near its ruin, with what love will he rejoice over the new Jerusalem in her glory!

Christian, believe this, and think on it: thou shalt be eternally embraced in the arms of that love which was from everlasting, and, will extend to everlasting; of that love which brought the Son of God's love from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory; that love which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, pierced; which did fast, pray, teach, heal, weep, sweat, bleed, die; that love will eternally embrace thee. When perfect created love and most perfect uncreated love meet together, it will not be like Joseph and his brethren, who lay upon one another's necks weeping; it will be loving and rejoicing, not loving and sorrowing. Yes, it will make Satan's court ring with the news that Joseph's brethren are come, that the saints are arrived safe at the bosom of Christ, out of the reach of hell for ever. Nor is there any such love as David's and Jonathan's, breathing out its last into sad lamentations for a forced separation. Know this, believer, to thy everlasting comfort, if those arms have once embraced thee, neither sin nor hell can get thee thence for ever. Thou hast not to deal with an inconstant creature, but with Him with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. His love to thee will not be as thine was on earth to him, seldom, and cold, up, and down. He that would not cease nor abate his love, for all thine enmity, unkind neglects, and churlish resistances, can he cease to love thee, when he hath made thee truly lovely? He that keepeth thee so constant in thy love to him, that thou canst challenge tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, to separate thy love from Christ, how much more will he himself be constant! Indeed thou mayest be "persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And now, are we not left in the apostle's admiration: "What shall we say to these things?" Infinite love must needs be a mystery to a finite capacity. No wonder angels desire to look into this mystery. And if it be the study of saints here "to know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge;" the saints' everlasting rest must consist in the enjoyment of God by love. Nor does joy share least in this fruition. It is this which all we have mentioned lead to, and conclude in; even the inconceivable complacency which the blessed feel in seeing, knowing, loving, and being beloved of God. This is "the white stone which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." Surely this is the joy with which a stranger doth not intermeddle. All Christ's ways of mercy tend to and end in the saints' joys. He wept, sorrowed, suffered, that they might rejoice; he sends the Spirit to be their comforter; he multiplies promises; he discovers their future happiness, that their joy may be full. He opens to them the fountain of living waters, that they may thirst no more, and that it may spring up in them to everlasting life. He chastens them that he may give them rest. He makes it their duty to rejoice in him always, and again commands them to rejoice. He never brings them into so low a condition that he does not leave them more cause of joy than sorrow. And hath the Lord such a care of our comfort here? O what will that joy be, where the soul being perfectly prepared for joy, and joy prepared by Christ for the soul, it shall be our work, our business, eternally to rejoice! It seems the saints' joy shall be greater than the damned's torment; for their torment is the torment of creatures, prepared for the devil and his angels; but our joy is the joy of our Lord. The same glory which the Father gave the Son, the Son hath given them, to sit with him in his throne, even as he is set down with his Father in his throne. Thou, poor soul, who prayest for joy, waitest for joy, complainest for want of joy, longest for joy; thou then shalt have full joy, as much as thou canst hold, and more than ever thou thoughtest on, or thy heart desired. In the meantime walk carefully, watch constantly, and then let

God measure out to thee thy times and degrees of joy. It may be he keeps them until thou hast more need. Thou hadst better lose thy comfort than thy safety. If thou shouldst die full of fears and sorrows, it will be but a moment, and they are all gone and concluded in joy inconceivable. As the joy of the hypocrite, so the fears of the upright are but for a moment. God's "anger endureth but a moment; in his favor is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." O blessed morning! Poor, humble, drooping soul, how would it fill thee with joy now, if a voice from heaven should tell thee of the love of God, the pardon of thy sins, and assure thee of thy part in these joys! What then will thy joy be, when thy actual possession shall convince thee of thy title, and thou shalt be in heaven before thou art well aware! And it is not thy joy only; it is a mutual joy as well as a mutual love. Is there joy in heaven at thy conversion, and will there be none at thy glorification? Will not the angels welcome thee thither, and congratulate thy safe arrival?-yes, it is the joy of Jesus Christ; for now he hath the end of his undertaking, labor, suffering, dying, when we have our joys; when he is "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe;" when he "sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." This is Christ's harvest, when he shall reap the fruit of his labors; and it will not repent him concerning his sufferings, but he will rejoice over his purchased inheritance, and his people will rejoice in him.-Yea, the Father himself puts on joy, too, in our joy. As we grieve his Spirit, and weary him with our iniquities, so he is rejoiced in our good. O how quickly does he now spy a returning prodigal, even afar off! How does he run and meet him! And with what compassion does he fall on his neck and kiss him, and put on him the best robe, and a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and kills the fatted calf, to eat and be merry! This is indeed a happy meeting; but nothing to the embracing and joy of that last and great meeting. Yea, more; as God doth mutually love and joy, so he makes this his rest, as it is our rest. What an eternal Sabbatism, when the work of redemption, sanctification, preservation, glorification, is all finished and perfected for ever! "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Well may we then rejoice in our God with joy, and rest in our love, and joy in him with singing.

Alas! my fearful heart scarce dares proceed. Methinks I hear the Almighty's voice saying to me, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" But pardon thy servant, O Lord. I have not pried into unrevealed things. I bewail that my apprehensions are so dull, my thoughts so mean, my affections so stupid, and my expressions so low and unbecoming such a glory. I have only heard by the hearing of the ear: O let thy servant see thee, and possess these joys; then shall I have more suitable conceptions, and shall give thee fuller glory; I shall abhor my present self, and disclaim and renounce all these imperfections. "I have uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." Yet "I believed, and therefore have I spoken." What, Lord, canst thou expect from dust, but levity? or from corruption but defilement? Though the weakness and irreverence be the fruit of my own corruption, yet the fire is from thine altar, and the work of thy commanding. I looked not into thy ark, nor put forth my hand unto it without thee. Wash away these stains also in the blood of the Lamb. Imperfect, or none must be thy service here. O take thy Son's excuse, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

6.03. CHAPTER II

THE GREAT PREPARATIVES FOR THE SAINTS' REST.

There are four things which principally prepare the way to enter into it; particularly, 1. The glorious appearing of Christ; 2. The general resurrection; 3. The last judgment; and, 4. The saints' coronation. The passage of paradise is not now so blocked up as when the law and curse reigned. Wherefore finding, beloved Christians, a new and living way consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, the flesh of Christ, by which we may with boldness enter into the holiest, I shall draw near with fuller assurance; and, finding the flaming sword removed, shall look again into the paradise of our God. And because I know that this is no forbidden fruit, and withal that it is good for food, and pleasant to the spiritual eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one truly wise and happy; I shall, through the assistance of the Spirit, take and eat thereof myself, and give to you, according to my power, that you may eat. The porch of this temple is exceeding glorious, and the gate of it is called Beautiful. Here are four things as the four corners of this porch.

1. The most glorious coming and appearing of the Son of God may well be reckoned in his people's glory. For their sake he came into the world, suffered, died, rose, ascended; and for their sake it is that he will return. To this end will Christ come again to receive his people unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also. The bridegroom's departure was not upon divorce. He did not leave us with a purpose to return no more. He hath left pledges enough to assure us to the contrary. We have his word, his many promises, his ordinances, which show forth his death till he come; and his Spirit, to direct, sanctify, and comfort till he return. We have frequent tokens of love from him, to show us he forgets not his promise, nor us. We daily behold the forerunners of his coming, foretold by himself. We see the fig-tree putteth forth leaves, and therefore know that summer is nigh. Though the riotous world say, My Lord delayeth his coming; yet let the saints lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh. Alas! fellow-Christians, what should we do if our Lord should not return? What a case are we here left in! What! leave us in the midst of wolves, and among lions, a generation of vipers, and here forget us! Did he buy us so dear, and then leave us sinning, suffering, groaning, dying daily; and will he come no more to us? It cannot be. This is like our unkind dealing with Christ, who, when we feel ourselves warm in the world, care not for coming to him; but this is not like Christ's dealing with us. He that would come to suffer, will surely come to triumph. He that would come to purchase, will surely come to possess. Where else were all our hopes? What were become of our faith, our prayers, our tears and our waiting? What were all the patience of the saints worth to them? Were we not left of all men the most miserable? Christians, hath Christ made us forsake all the world, and to be forsaken of all the world? to hate all, and be hated of all? and all this for him, that we might have him instead of all? And will he, think you, after all this, forget us and forsake us himself? Far be such a thought from our hearts! But why staid he not with his people while he was here? Why? Was not the work on earth done? Must he not take possession of glory in our behalf? Must he not intercede with the Father, plead his sufferings, be filled with the Spirit to send forth, receive authority, and subdue his enemies? Our abode here is short. If he had staid on earth, what would it have been to enjoy him for a few

days and then die? He hath more in heaven to dwell among; even the spirits of many generations. He will have us live by faith, and not by sight.

O fellow-Christians, what a day will that be, when we, who have been kept prisoners by sin, by sinners, by the grave, shall be brought out by the Lord himself! It will not be such a coming as his first was, in poverty and contempt, to be spit upon, and buffeted, and crucified again. He will not come, O careless world! to be slighted and neglected by you any more. Yet that coming wanted not its glory. If the heavenly host, for the celebration of his nativity, must praise God; with what shoutings will angels and saints at that day proclaim glory to God, peace and good-will toward men! If a star must lead men from remote parts, to come to worship the child in the manger; how will the glory of his next appearing constrain all the world to acknowledge his sovereignty! If, riding on an ass, he enter Jerusalem with hosannas; with what peace and glory will he come toward the New Jerusalem! If, when he was in the form of a servant, they cry out, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” what will they say when they shall see him coming in his glory, and the heavens and the earth obey him? “Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.” To think and speak of that day with horror doth well become the impenitent sinner, but ill the believing saint. Shall the wicked behold him, and cry, “Yonder is he whose blood we neglected, whose grace we resisted, whose counsel we refused, whose government we cast off!” and shall not the saints, with inconceivable gladness, cry, “Yonder is he whose blood redeemed us, whose Spirit cleansed us, whose law governed us; in whom we trusted, and he hath not deceived our trust; for whom we long waited, and now we see we have not waited in vain! O cursed corruption! that would have had us turn to the world and present things, and say, Why should we wait for the Lord any longer? Now we see, Blessed are all they that wait for him.” And now, Christians, should we not put up that petition heartily, “Thy kingdom come? The Spirit and the bride say, Come: and let him that heareth,” and readeth, “say, Come.” Our Lord himself says, “Surely I come quickly. Amen: even so, come! Lord Jesus.”

2. Another thing that leads to paradise is that great work of Jesus Christ, in raising the body from the dust and uniting it again unto the soul. A wonderful effect of infinite power and love! “Yea wonderful indeed,” says Unbelief, “if it be true. What, shall all these scattered bones and dust become a man?” Let me with reverence plead for God, for that power whereby I hope to arise. What sustains the massy body of the earth? What limits the vast ocean of the waters? Whence is that constant ebbing and flowing of the tides? How many times larger than all the earth is the sun, that glorious body of light? Is it not as easy to raise the dead as to make heaven and earth, and all of nothing? Look not on the dead bones, and dust, and difficulty, but at the promise. Contentedly commit these bodies to a prison that shall not long contain them. Let us lie down in peace and take our rest; it will not be an everlasting night, nor endless sleep. If unclothing be the thing thou fearest, it is that thou mayest have better clothing. If to be turned out of doors be the thing thou fearest, remember that, when “the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, thou hast a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Lay down cheerfully this lump of corruption; thou shalt undoubtedly receive it again in incorruption. Lay down freely this terrestrial, this natural body; thou shalt receive it again a celestial, a spiritual body. Though thou lay it down with great dishonor, thou shalt receive it in glory. Though thou art separated from it through weakness it shall be raised again in mighty power; “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and

we shall be changed." "The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then they who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." Triumph now, O Christian, in these promises; thou shalt shortly triumph in their performance. This is the day which the Lord will make; we shall rejoice and be glad in it. The grave that could not keep our Lord, cannot keep us. He arose for us, and by the same power will cause us to arise. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Let us never look at the grave, but let us see the resurrection beyond it. Yea, let us be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know our labor is not in vain in the Lord."

3. Part of this prologue to the saints' rest is the public and solemn process at their judgment, where they shall first themselves be acquitted and justified, and then with Christ judge the world. Young and old, of all estates and nations, that ever were from the creation to that day, must here come and receive their doom. O terrible! O joyful day! Terrible to those that have forgotten the coming of their Lord! joyful to the saints, whose waiting and hope was to see this day! Then shall the world behold the goodness and severity of God; on them who perish, severity; but to his chosen, goodness. Every one must give an account of his stewardship. Every talent of time, health, abilities, mercies, afflictions, means, warnings, must be reckoned for. The sins of youth, those which they had forgotten, and their secret sins, shall all be laid open before angels and men. They shall see the Lord Jesus, whom they neglected, whose word they disobeyed, whose ministers they abused, whose servants they hated, now sitting to judge them. Their own consciences shall cry out against them, and call to their remembrance all their misdoings. Which way will the wretched sinner look? Who can conceive the terrible thoughts of his heart? Now the world cannot help him; his old companions cannot; the saints neither can nor will. Only the Lord Jesus can; but there is the misery, he will not. Time was, sinner, when Christ would, and you would not; now, fain would you, and he will not. All in vain is it to "cry to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne;" for thou hast the Lord of mountains and rocks for thine enemy, whose voice they will obey, and not thine. I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, that thou set thyself seriously to ponder these things. But why tremblest thou, O humble, gracious soul? He that would not lose one Noah in a common deluge, nor overlook one Lot in Sodom; nay, that could do nothing till he went forth; will he forget thee at that day? "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment, to be punished." He knoweth how to make the same day the greatest terror to his foes, and yet the greatest joy to his people. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" Shall the law? "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made them free from the law of sin and death." Or shall conscience? "The Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God. It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" If our Judge condemn us not, who shall? He that said to the adulterous woman, Hath no man condemned thee? neither do I; will say to us, more faithfully than Peter to him, Though all men deny thee, or condemn thee, I will not. Having confessed me before men, thee "will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven."

What inexpressible joy, that our dear Lord, who loveth our souls and whom our souls love, shall be our Judge! Will a man fear to be judged by his dearest friend? or a wife by her own husband? Christian, did Christ come down and suffer, and weep, and bleed, and die for thee, and will he now condemn thee? Was he judged, condemned, and executed in thy stead, and now will he himself condemn thee? Hath he done most of the work already, in redeeming, regenerating, sanctifying and preserving thee, and will he now undo all again? Well then, let the terror of that day be never so great, surely our Lord can mean no ill to us in all. Let it make the devils tremble, and the wicked tremble, but it shall make us leap for joy. It must affect us deeply with the sense of our mercy and happiness, to see the most of the world tremble with terror, while we triumph with joy; to hear them doomed to everlasting flames, when we are proclaimed heirs of the kingdom; to see our neighbors, that lived in the same town, came to the same congregation, dwelt in the same houses, and were esteemed more honorable in the world than ourselves, now, by the Searcher of hearts, eternally separated. This, with the great magnificence and dreadfulness of the day, the apostle pathetically expresses: “It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, in that day.”

Yet more: we shall be so far from the dread of that judgment, that ourselves shall become the judges. Christ will take his people, as it were, into commission with himself, and they shall sit and approve his righteous judgment. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” Nay, “know ye not that we shall judge angels?” 1 Corinthians 6:2-3. Were it not for the word of Christ that speaks it, this advancement would seem incredible, and the language arrogant. Even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied this, saying, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodlily committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” Thus shall the saints be honored, and “the upright shall have dominion in the morning.” O that the careless world “were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” that they would be now of the same mind as they will be when they shall see the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works that are therein, burnt up! when all shall be on fire about them, and all earthly glory consumed. “For the heavens and the earth which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”

4. The last preparative for the saints’ rest is their solemn coronation and receiving the kingdom. For as Christ, their head, is anointed both King and Priest, so under him are his people made unto God both kings and priests, to reign, and to offer praises for ever. The crown of righteousness, which was laid up for them, shall by the Lord, the righteous Judge, be given them at that day. They have been faithful unto death, and therefore he will give them a crown of life. And according to the improvement of their talents here, so shall their rule and dignity be enlarged. They are not dignified

with empty titles, but real dominion. Christ will grant them to sit with him on his throne, and will give them power over the nations, even as he received of his Father; and he “will give them the morning star.” The Lord himself will give them possession, with these applauding expressions: “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” And with this solemn and blessed proclamation shall he enthrone them: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matthew 25:34) Every word is full of life and joy. “Come “-this is the holding forth of the golden sceptre, to warrant our approach unto this glory. Come now as near as you will; fear not the Bethshemites’ judgment; for the enmity is utterly abolished. This is not such a “Come” as we were wont to hear, “Come, take up your cross and follow me.” Though that was sweet, yet this is much more. “Ye blessed”-blessed indeed, when that mouth so pronounce us! For though the world hath accounted us accursed, and we have been ready to account ourselves so; yet, certainly, those that he blesseth are blessed; and those only whom he curseth are cursed; and his blessing cannot be reversed. “Of my Father”-blessed in the Father’s love, as well as the Son’s; for they are one. The Father hath testified his love in their election, donation to Christ, and in the sending of Christ, and accepting his ransom, as the Son hath also testified his. “Inherit”-no longer bondsmen, nor servants only, nor children under age, who differ not in possession, but only in title, from servants; but now we are heirs of the kingdom, and joint-heirs with Christ. “The kingdom”-no less than the kingdom! Indeed, to be King of kings and Lord of lords is our Lord’s own proper title; but to be kings, and reign with him, is ours. The enjoyment of this kingdom is as the light of the sun; each has the whole, and the rest none the less. “Prepared for you”-God is the Alpha as well as the Omega of our blessedness. Eternal love hath laid the foundation. He prepared the kingdom for us, and then prepared us for the kingdom. This is the preparation of his counsel and decree, for the execution whereof Christ was yet to make a further preparation. “For you”-not for believers only, in general, who, without individual persons, are nobody; but for you personally. “From the foundation of the world”-not only from the promise after Adam’s fall, but from eternity.

Thus we have seen the Christian safely landed in paradise, and conveyed honorably to his rest. Now let us a little further, in the next chapter, view those mansions, consider their privileges, and see whether there be any glory like unto this glory.

6.04. CHAPTER III

THE EXCELLENCIES OF THE SAINTS' REST.

1. It is the purchased possession; 2. A free gift; 3. Peculiar to saints; 4. An association with saints and angels; 5. It derives its joys immediately from God himself; 6. It will be seasonable; 7. Suitable; 8. Perfect, without sin and suffering; 9. And everlasting.

Let us draw a little nearer, and see what further excellencies this rest affordeth. The Lord hide us in the clefts of the rock, and cover us with the hands of indulgent grace, while we approach to take this view.

1. It is a most singular honor of the saints' rest, to be called the purchased possession; that is, the fruit of the blood of the Son of God; yea, the chief fruit, the end and perfection of all the fruits and efficacy of that blood. Greater love than this there is not, to lay down the life of the lover. And to have this our Redeemer ever before our eyes, and the liveliest sense and freshest remembrance of that dying, bleeding love, still upon our souls! How will it fill our souls with perpetual joy, to think that in the streams of this blood we have swum through the violence of the world, the snares of Satan, the seductions of flesh, the curse of the law, the wrath of an offended God, the accusations of a guilty conscience, and the vexing doubts and fears of an unbelieving heart, and are arrived safely at the presence of God! Now he cries to us, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!" And we scarce regard the mournful voice,-scarce turn aside to view the wounds. But then our perfected souls will feel, and flame in love for love. With what astonishing apprehensions will redeemed saints everlastingly behold their blessed Redeemer! the purchaser, and the price, together with the possession! Neither will the view of his wounds of love renew our wounds of sorrow. He, whose first words after his resurrection were to a great sinner, "Woman, why weepest thou?" knows how to raise love and joy, without any cloud of sorrow or storm of tears. If any thing we enjoy was purchased with the life of our dearest friend, how highly should we value it! If a dying friend deliver us but a token of his love, how carefully do we preserve it, and still remember him when we behold it, as if his own name were written on it! And will not, then, the death and blood of our Lord everlastingly sweeten our possessed glory? As we write down the price our goods cost us; so, on our righteousness and glory write down the price, The precious blood of Christ. His sufferings were to satisfy the justice that required blood, and to bear what was due to sinners, and so to restore them to the life they lost, and the happiness from which they fell. The work of Christ's redemption so well pleased the Father, that he gave him power to advance his chosen, and give them the glory which was given to himself; and all this "according to his good pleasure and the counsel of his own will."

2. Another pearl in the saints' diadem is, that it is a free gift. These two, purchased and free, are the chains of gold which make up the wreaths for the tops of the pillars in the temple of God. It was dear to Christ, but free to us. When Christ was to buy, silver and gold were nothing worth; prayers and tears could not suffice, nor any thing below his blood; but our buying is receiving; we have it freely, without money and without price. A thankful acceptance of a free acquittance is no paying

of the debt. Here is all free; if the Father freely give the Son, and the Son freely pay the debt; and if God freely accept that way of payment, when he might have required it of the principal; and if both Father and Son freely offer us the purchased life on our cordial acceptance; and if they freely send the Spirit to enable us to accept; what is here, then, that is not free? O the everlasting admiration that must surprise the saints to think of this freeness! “What did the Lord see in me, that he should judge me meet for such a state? That I, who was but a poor, diseased, despised wretch, should be clad in the brightness of this glory! That I, a creeping worm, should be advanced to this high dignity! That I, who was but lately groaning, weeping, dying, should now be as full of joy as my heart can hold! yea, should be taken from the grave where I was decaying, and from the dust and darkness where I seemed forgotten, and be here set before his throne! That I should be taken, with Mordecai, from captivity, and be set next unto the king; and with Daniel from the den, to be made ruler of princes and provinces! Who can fathom unmeasurable love?” If worthiness were our condition for admittance, we might sit down and weep, with St. John, because no man was found worthy. But “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” is worthy, and hath prevailed; and by that title we must hold the inheritance. We shall offer there the offering that David refused, even praise for that which cost us nothing. Here our commission runs, “Freely ye have received, freely give;” but Christ has dearly bought, yet freely gives.

If it were only for nothing, and without our merit, the wonder were great; but it is moreover against our merit, and against our long endeavoring our own ruin. What an astonishing thought it will be, to think of the immeasurable difference between our deservings and receivings! between the state we should have been in, and the state we are in! to look down upon hell, and see the vast difference from that to which we are adopted! What pangs of love will it cause within us to think, “Yonder was the place that sin would have brought me to; but this is it that Christ hath brought me to! Yonder death was the wages of my sin, but this eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Who made me to differ? Had I not now been in those flames if I had had my own way, and been let alone to my own will? Should I not have lingered in Sodom till the flames had seized on me, if God had not in mercy brought me out?” Doubtless this will be our everlasting admiration, that so rich a crown should fit the head of so vile a sinner; that such high advancement, and such long unfruitfulness and unkindness, can be the state of the same person, and that such vile rebellions can conclude in such most precious joys! But no thanks to us, nor to any of our duties and labors, much less to our neglects and laziness: we know to whom the praise is due, and must be given for ever. Indeed, to this very end it was that infinite wisdom cast the whole design of man’s salvation into this mould of purchases and freeness, that the love and joy of man might be perfected, and the honor of grace most highly advanced; that the thought of merit might neither cloud the one nor obstruct the other; and that on these two hinges the gate of heaven might turn. So then let DESERVED be written on the door of hell; but on the door of heaven and life, THE FREE GIFT.

3. This rest is peculiar to saints, it belongs to no other of all the sons of men. If all Egypt had been light, the Israelites would not have had the less; but to enjoy that light alone, while their neighbors lived in thick darkness, must make them more sensible of their privilege. Distinguishing mercy affects more than any mercy. If Pharaoh had passed as safely as Israel, the Red Sea would have been less remembered. If the rest of the world had not been drowned, and the rest of Sodom and Gomorrah not burned, the saving of Noah had been no wonder, nor Lot’s deliverance so much

talked of. When one is enlightened, and another left in darkness; one reformed, and another by his lust enslaved; it makes the saints cry out, “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” When the prophet is sent to one widow only of all that were in Israel, and to cleanse one Naaman of all the lepers, the mercy is more observable. That will surely be a day of passionate sense on both sides, when there shall be two in one bed, and two in the field, the one taken and the other left. The saints shall look down upon the burning lake, and in the sense of their own happiness, and in the approbation of God’s just proceedings, they shall rejoice and sing, “Thou art righteous, O Lord! who wast, art, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.”

4. But though this rest be peculiar to the saints, yet it is common to all the saints; for it is an association of blessed spirits, both saints and angels: a corporation of perfected saints, whereof Christ is the head: the communion of saints completed. As we have been together in the labor, duty, danger and distress; so shall we be in the great recompense and deliverance. As we have been scorned and despised, so shall we be owned and honored together. We who have gone through the day of sadness, shall enjoy together that day of gladness. Those who have been with us in persecution and in prison, shall be with us also in that place of consolation. How oft have our groans made, as it were, one sound! our tears one stream and our desires one prayer! But now all our praises shall make up one melody; all our churches, one church; and all ourselves, one body; for we shall be all one in Christ, even as he and the Father are one. It is true, we must be careful not to look for that in the saints which is alone in Christ. But if the forethought of sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, may be our lawful joy; how much more the real sight and actual possession! It cannot but be comfortable to think of that day, when we shall join with Moses in his song, with David in his psalms of praise, and with all the redeemed in the song of the Lamb for ever; when we shall see Enoch walking with God; Noah enjoying the end of his singularity; Joseph of his integrity; Job of his patience; Hezekiah of his uprightness and all the saints the end of their faith. Not only our old acquaintance, but all the saints of all ages, whose faces in the flesh we never saw, we shall there both know and comfortably enjoy. Yea, angels as well as saints will be our blessed acquaintance. Those who now are willingly our ministering spirits, will willingly then be our companions in joy. They who had such joy in heaven for our conversion, will gladly rejoice with us in our glorification. Then we shall truly say, as David, I am a companion of all them that fear thee; when “we are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” It is a singular excellence of heavenly rest, that we are “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”

5. As another property of our rest, we shall derive its joys immediately from God. Now we have nothing at all immediately, but at the second or third hand; or how many, who knows? From the earth, from man, from sun and moon, from the ministration of angels, and from the Spirit, and Christ. Though, in the hand of angels, the stream savors not of the imperfection of sinners, yet it does of the imperfection of creatures; and as it comes from man, it savors of both. How quick and piercing is the word in itself! yet many times it never enters, being managed by a feeble arm. What weight and worth is there in every passage of the blessed Gospel! enough, one would think, to enter and pierce the dullest soul, and wholly possess its thoughts and affections; and yet how oft

does it fall as water upon a stone! The things of God which we handle, are divine; but our manner of handling is human. There is little we touch, but we leave the print of our fingers behind. If God speaks the word himself, it will be a piercing, melting word indeed. The Christian now knows, by experience, that his most immediate joys are his sweetest joys; which have least of man, and are most directly from the Spirit. Christians who are much in secret prayer and contemplation, are men of greatest life and joy; because they have all more immediately from God himself. Not that we should cast off hearing, reading, and conference, or neglect any ordinance of God; but to live above them while we use them, is the way of a Christian. There is joy in these remote receivings; but the fulness of joy is in God's immediate presence. We shall then have light without a candle, and perpetual day without the sun for "the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; and they shall reign for ever and ever." We shall then have enlightened understandings without Scripture, and be governed without a written law; for the Lord will perfect his law in our hearts, and we shall be all perfectly taught of God. We shall have joy, which we drew not from the promises, nor fetched home by faith or hope. We shall have communion without ordinances, without this fruit of the vine, when Christ shall drink it new with us in his Father's kingdom, and refresh us with the comforting wine of immediate enjoyment. To have necessities, but no supply, is the state of them in hell. To have necessity supplied by means of creatures, is the state of us on earth. To have necessity supplied immediately from God, is the state of the saints in heaven. To have no necessity at all, is the prerogative of God himself.

6. A further excellence of this rest is, that it will be seasonable. He that expects the fruit of his vineyard at the season, and makes his people "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season," will also give them the crown in his season. He that will have a word of joy spoken in season to him that is weary, will surely cause the time of joy to appear in the fittest season. They who are not weary in well-doing, shall, if they faint not, reap in due season. If God giveth rain even to his enemies, both the former and the latter in its season, and reserveth the appointed weeks of harvest, and covenants that there shall be day and night in their season; then surely the glorious harvest of the saints shall not miss its season. Doubtless, he who would not stay a day longer than his promise, but brought Israel out of Egypt on the self-same day when the four hundred and thirty years expired, neither will he fail of one day or hour of the fittest season for his people's glory. When we have had in this world a long night of darkness, will not the daybreaking and the rising of the Sun of Righteousness be then seasonable? When we have passed a long and tedious journey through no small dangers, is not home then seasonable? When we have had a long and perilous war, and received many a wound, would not a peace, with victory, be seasonable? Men live in a continual weariness; especially the saints, who are most weary of that which the world cannot feel; some weary of a blind mind; some of a hard heart; some of their daily doubts and fears; some of the want of spiritual joys; and some of the sense of God's wrath. And when a poor Christian hath desired, and prayed, and waited for deliverance many years, is it not then seasonable? We lament that we do not find a Canaan in the wilderness, or the songs of Sion in a strange land; that we have not a harbor in the main ocean, nor our rest in the heat of the day, nor heaven before we leave the earth; and would not all this be very unseasonable?

7. As this rest will be seasonable, so it will be suitable. The new nature of the saints doth suit their spirits to this rest. Indeed, their holiness is nothing else but a spark taken from this element, and by the Spirit of Christ kindled in their hearts: the flame whereof, mindful of its own divine original, ever tends to the place from whence it comes. Temporal crowns and kingdoms could not make a rest for saints. As they were not redeemed with so low a price, neither are they endued with so low a nature. As God will have from them a spiritual worship, suited to his own spiritual being, he will provide them a spiritual rest, suitable to their spiritual nature. The knowledge of God and his Christ, a delightful complacency in that mutual love, an everlasting rejoicing in the enjoyment of our God, with a perpetual singing of his high praises; this is heaven for a saint. Then we shall live in our own element. We are now as the fish in a vessel of water, only so much as will keep them alive; but what is that to the ocean? We have a little air let in to us, to afford us breathing; but what is that to the sweet and fresh gales upon mount Sion? We have a beam of the sun to lighten our darkness, and a warm ray to keep us from freezing; but then we shall live in its light, and be revived by its heat for ever. As are the natures of the saints, such are their desires; and it is the desires of our renewed nature to which this rest is suited. Whilst our desires remain corrupted and misguided, it is a far greater mercy to deny them, yea, to destroy them, than to satisfy them; but those which are spiritual are of his own planting, and he will surely water them, and give the increase. He quickened our hunger and thirst for righteousness, that he might make us happy in a full satisfaction. Christian, this is a rest after thy own heart; it contains all that thy heart can wish; that which thou longest, prayest, laborest for, there thou shalt find it all. Thou hadst rather have God in Christ, than all the world; there thou shalt have him. What wouldst thou not give for assurance of his love? There thou shalt have assurance without suspicion. Desire what thou canst, and ask what thou wilt, as a Christian, and it shall be given thee, not only to half of the kingdom, but to the enjoyment both of kingdom and King. This is a life of desire and prayer, but that is a life of satisfaction and enjoyment. This rest is very suitable to the saints' necessities also, as well as to their natures and desires. It contains whatsoever they truly wanted; not supplying them with gross, created comforts, which, like Saul's armor on David, are more burden than benefit. It was Christ and perfect holiness which they most needed, and with these shall they be supplied.

8. Still more, this rest will be absolutely perfect. We shall then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness. There is no mixture of corruption with our graces, nor of suffering with our comfort. There are none of those waves in that harbor, which now so toss us up and down. Today we are well, tomorrow sick; today in esteem, tomorrow in disgrace; today we have friends, tomorrow none; nay, we have wine and vinegar in the same cup. If revelations raise us to the third heaven, the messenger of Satan must presently buffet us, and the thorn in the flesh fetch us down. But there is none of this inconstancy in heaven. If perfect love casteth out fear, then perfect joy must cast out sorrow, and perfect happiness exclude all the relics of misery. We shall there rest from all the evil of sin and of suffering.

Heaven excludes nothing more directly than sin, whether of nature or of conversation. "There shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." What need Christ at all to have died, if heaven could have contained imperfect souls? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." His blood and Spirit have not done all this, to leave us, after all, defiled. "What communion hath light with

darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" Christian, if thou be once in heaven, thou shalt sin no more. Is not this glad news to thee, who hast prayed and watched against it so long? I know, if it were offered to thy choice, thou wouldst rather choose to be freed from sin, than have all the world. Thou shalt have thy desire. That hard heart, those vile thoughts which accompanied thee to every duty, shall be left behind for ever. Thy understanding shall never more be troubled with darkness. All dark Scriptures shall be made plain; all seeming contradictions reconciled. The poorest Christian is presently there a more perfect divine than any here. O that happy day, when error shall vanish for ever! when our understanding shall be filled with God himself, whose light will leave no darkness in us! His face shall be the Scripture where we shall read the truth. Many a godly man here, in his mistaken zeal, has been the means of deceiving and perverting his brethren, and, when he sees his own error, cannot tell how to undeceive them. But there we shall join in one truth, as being one in Him who is the truth. We shall also rest from all the sin of our will, affections, and conversation. We shall no more retain this rebelling principle, which is still drawing us from God; no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence: no pride, passion, slothfulness, insensibility, shall enter with us; no strangeness to God, and the things of God; no coldness of affections, nor imperfection in our love; no inconstant walking, nor grieving of the Spirit; no scandalous action, nor unholy conversation: we shall rest from all these for ever. Then shall our will correspond to the divine will, as face answers face in a glass, and from which, as our law and rule, we shall never swerve. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." Our sufferings were but the consequences of our sinning, and in heaven they both shall cease together.

We shall rest from all our doubts of God's love. It shall no more be said that "doubts are like the thistle, a bad weed, but growing in good ground." They shall now be weeded out, and trouble the gracious soul no more. We shall hear that kind of language no more, "What shall I do to know my state? How shall I know that God is my Father? that my heart is upright? that my conversion is true? that faith is sincere? I am afraid my sins are unpardoned; that all I do is hypocrisy; that God will reject me; that he does not hear my prayers. All this is there turned into praise.

We shall rest from all sense of God's displeasure. Hell shall not be mixed with heaven. At times the gracious soul remembered God, and was troubled; complained, and was overwhelmed, and refused to be comforted; divine wrath lay hard upon him, and God afflicted him with all his waves. But that blessed day shall convince us, that though God hid his face from us for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on us.

We shall rest from all the temptations of Satan. What a grief is it to a Christian, though he yield not to the temptation, yet to be solicited to deny his Lord! What a torment to have such horrid suggestions made to his soul! such blasphemous ideas presented to his imagination! sometimes cruel thoughts of God, undervaluing thoughts of Christ, unbelieving thoughts of Scripture, or injurious thoughts of Providence! to be tempted sometimes to turn to present things, to play with the baits of sin, and venture on the delights of flesh, and sometimes on atheism itself! especially when we know the treachery of our own hearts, ready as tinder to take fire as soon as one of those sparks shall fall upon them! Satan hath power here to tempt us in the wilderness, but he entereth not the holy city; he may set us on a pinnacle of the temple in the earthly Jerusalem, but the New Jerusalem he may not approach; he may take us up into an exceeding high mountain, but the mount Sion he cannot ascend; and if he could, all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of

them, would be a despised bait to the soul possessed of the kingdom of our Lord. No, it is in vain for Satan to offer a temptation more.

All our temptations from the world and the flesh shall also cease. Oh the hourly dangers that we here walk in! Every sense and member is a snare; every creature, every mercy, and every duty is a snare to us. We can scarce open our eyes but we are in danger of envying those above us, or despising those below us; of coveting the honors and riches of some, or beholding the rags and beggary of others with pride and unmercifulness. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust; if deformity, to loathing and disdain. How soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, wanton speeches, creep into the heart! How constant and strong a watch does our appetite require! Have we comeliness and beauty? What fuel for pride! Are we deformed? What an occasion of repining! Have we strength of reason and gifts of learning? O how prone to be puffed up, hunt after applause, and despise our brethren! Are we unlearned? How apt then to despise what we have not! Are we in places of authority? How strong is the temptation to abuse our trust, make our will our law, and mould all the enjoyments of others by the rules and model of our own interest and policy! Are we inferiors? How prone to envy others' pre-eminence, and bring their actions to the bar of our judgment! Are we rich, and not too much exalted? Are we poor and not discontented? Are we not lazy in our duties, or make a Christ of them? Not that God hath made these things our snares; but through our own corruption they become so to us. Ourselves are the greatest snares to ourselves. This is our comfort: our rest will free us from all these. As Satan hath no entrance there, so he has nothing to serve his malice; but all things there shall join with us in the high praises of our great Deliverer. As we rest from the temptations, so shall we rest from the abuses and persecutions of the world. The prayers of the souls under the altar will then be answered, and God will avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth. This is the time for crowning with thorns; that, for crowning with glory. Now, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;" then, they that suffered with him shall be glorified with him. Now, we must be hated of all men for Christ's sake; then, Christ will be admired in his saints that were thus hated. We are here made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men: as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, men separate us from their company, and reproach us, and cast out our names as evil; but we shall then be as much gazed at for our glory, and they will be shut out of the church of the saints, and separated from us, whether they will or not. We can now scarce pray in our families, or sing praises to God, but our voice is a vexation to them: how must it torment them, then, to see us praising and rejoicing while they are howling and lamenting! You, brethren, who can now attempt no work of God without losing the love of the world, consider, you shall have none in heaven but will further your work, and join heart and voice with you in your everlasting joy and praise. Till then, possess ye your souls in patience. Bind all reproaches as a crown to your heads. Esteem them greater riches than the world's treasures. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with Christ."

We shall then rest from all our sad divisions and unChristian quarrels with one another. How lovingly do thousands live together in heaven, who lived at variance upon earth! There is no contention, because none of this pride, ignorance, or other corruption. There is no plotting to strengthen our party, nor deep designing against our brethren. If there be sorrow or shame in heaven, we shall then be both sorry and ashamed to remember all this conduct on earth; as Joseph's brethren were to behold him, when they remembered their former unkind usage. Is it not

enough that all the world is against us, but we must also be against one another? O happy days of persecution, which drove us together in love, whom the sunshine of liberty and prosperity crumbles into dust by our contentions! O happy day of the saints' rest in glory, when, as there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, so we shall have one heart, one church, one employment for ever.

We shall then rest from our participation of our brethren's sufferings. The church on earth is a mere hospital! Some groaning under a dark understanding, some under an insensible heart, some anguishing under unfruitful weakness, and some bleeding for miscarriages and wilfulness; some crying out of their poverty, some groaning under pains and infirmities, and some bewailing a whole catalogue of calamities. But a far greater grief it is, to see our dearest and most intimate friends turned aside from the truth of Christ, continuing their neglect of Christ and their souls, and nothing will awaken them out of their security: to look on an ungodly father or mother, brother or sister, wife or husband, child or friend, and think how certainly they shall be in hell for ever, if they die in their present unregenerated state; to think of the Gospel departing, the glory taken from our Israel, poor souls left willingly dark and destitute, and blowing out the light that should guide them to salvation! Our day of rest will free us from all this, and the days of mourning shall be ended. Then thy people, O Lord, shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of thy planting, the work of thy hands; that thou mayest be glorified.

Then we shall rest from all our own personal sufferings. This may seem a small thing to those that live in ease and prosperity; but to the daily afflicted soul it makes the thoughts of heaven delightful. O the dying life we now live! as full of sufferings as of days and hours! Our Redeemer leaves this measure of misery upon us, to make us know for what we are beholden, to remind us of what we should else forget, to be serviceable to his wise and gracious designs, and advantageous to our full and final recovery. Grief enters at every sense, seizes every part and power of flesh and spirit. What noble part is there that suffereth its pain or ruin alone? But sin and flesh, dust and pain, will all be left behind together. O the blessed tranquillity of that region, where there is nothing but sweet continued peace! O healthful place, where none are sick! O fortunate land, where all are kings! O holy assembly, where all are priests! How free a state, where none are servants but to their supreme Monarch! The poor man shall no more be tired with his labors: no more hunger or thirst, cold or nakedness: no pinching frosts or scorching heats. Our faces shall no more be pale or sad; no more breaches in friendship, nor parting of friends asunder; no more trouble accompanying our relations, nor voice of lamentation heard in our dwellings: God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. O my soul, bear with the infirmities of thine earthly tabernacle; it will be thus but a little while; the sound of thy Redeemer's feet is even at the door.

We shall also rest from all the toils of duties. The conscientious magistrate, parent and minister cries out, "O the burden that lieth upon me!" Every relation, state, age hath variety of duties; so that every conscientious Christian cries out, "O the burden! O my weakness, that makes it burdensome!" But our remaining rest will ease us of the burdens.

Once more, we shall rest from all these troublesome afflictions which necessarily accompany our absence from God. The trouble that is mixed in our desires and hopes, our longings and waitings, shall then cease. We shall no more look into our cabinet and miss our treasure; into our hearts, and miss our Christ; no more seek him from ordinance to ordinance; but all be concluded in a most blessed and full enjoyment.

9. The last jewel of our crown is, that it will be an everlasting rest. Without this all were comparatively nothing. The very thought of leaving it would embitter all our joys. It would be a hell in heaven, to think of once losing heaven; as it would be a kind of heaven to the damned, had they but hope of once escaping. Mortality is the disgrace of all sublunary delights. How it spoils our pleasure to see it dying in our hands! But, O blessed eternity! where our lives are perplexed with no such thoughts, nor our joys interrupted with any such fears! where “we shall be pillars in the temple of God, and go no more out.” While we were servants, we held by lease, and that but for the term of a transitory life; “but the son abideth in the house for ever.” “O my soul, let go thy dreams of present pleasure, and loose thy hold of earth and flesh. Study frequently, study thoroughly this one word-eternity. What! live and never die! rejoice, and ever rejoice!” O happy souls in hell, should you but escape after millions of ages! O miserable saints in heaven, should you be dispossessed after the age of a million of worlds! This word, everlasting, contains the perfection of their torment and our glory. O that the sinner would study this word; methinks it would startle him out of his dead sleep! O that the gracious soul would study it; methinks it would revive him in his deepest agony! “And must I, Lord, thus live for ever. Then will I also love for ever. Must my joys be immortal; and shall not my thanks be also immortal? Surely, if I shall never lose my glory, I will never cease thy praises. If thou wilt both perfect and perpetuate me and my glory, as I shall be thine, and not my own, so shall my glory be thy glory. And as thy glory was thy ultimate end in my glory, so shall it also be my end, when thou hast crowned me with that glory which hath no end. ‘Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever.’“

Thus I have endeavored to show you a glimpse of approaching glory. But how short are my expressions of its excellency! Reader, if thou be an humble, sincere believer, and waitest with longing and laboring for this rest, thou wilt shortly see and feel the truth of all this. Thou wilt then have so high an impression of this blessed state as will make thee pity the ignorance and distance of mortals, and will tell thee all that is here said falls short of the whole truth a thousandfold. In the mean time, let this much kindle thy desires, and quicken thy endeavors. Up and be doing; run, and strive, and fight, and hold on: for thou hast a certain glorious prize before thee. God will not mock thee; do not mock thyself, nor betray thy soul by delaying, and all is thine own. What kind of men, dost thou think, would Christians be in their lives and duties, if they had still this glory fresh in their thoughts? what frame would their spirits be in, if their thoughts of heaven were lively and believing? Would their hearts be so heavy; their countenances so sad? or would they have need to take up their comforts from below? Would they be so loth to suffer; so afraid to die? or would they not think every day a year till they enjoy it? May the Lord heal our carnal hearts, lest we “enter not into this rest because of unbelief.”

6.05. CHAPTER IV

THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS REST IS DESIGNED. The people of God who shall enjoy this rest are, 1. Chosen from eternity; 2. Given to Christ; 3. Born again; 4. Deeply convinced of the evil of sin, their misery by sin, the vanity of the creature, and the all-sufficiency of Christ. 5. Their will is proportionably changed. 6. They engage in covenant with Christ. 7. They persevere in their engagements. The reader invited to examine himself by these characteristics of God's people. Further testimony from Scripture, that this rest shall be enjoyed by the people of God: also that none but they shall enjoy it; and that it remains for them, and is not to be enjoyed till they come to another world. The chapter concludes with showing, that their souls shall enjoy this rest while separated from their bodies.

While I was in the mount, describing the excellencies of the saints' rest, I felt it was good being there, and therefore tarried the longer; and were there not an extreme disproportion between my conceptions and the subject, much longer had I been. Can a prospect of that happy land be tedious? Having read of such high and unspeakable glory, a stranger would wonder for what rare creatures this mighty preparation should be made, and expect some illustrious sun should break forth: but, behold! only a shellful of dust, animated with an invisible rational soul, and that rectified with as unseen a restoring power of grace; and this is the creature that must possess such glory! You would think it must needs be some deserving piece, or one that brings a valuable price: but, behold! one that hath nothing and can deserve nothing; yea, that deserves the contrary, and would, if he might, proceed in that deserving: but, being apprehended by love, he is brought to him that is all; and most affectionately receiving him, and resting on him, he doth, in and through him, receive all this! More particularly, the persons for whom this rest is designed are chosen of God from eternity; given to Christ as their Redeemer; born again; deeply convinced of the evil and misery of a sinful state, the vanity of the creature, and the all-sufficiency of Christ; their will is renewed; they engage themselves to Christ in covenant; and they persevere in their engagements to the end.

1. The persons for whom this rest is designed, whom the text calls "the people of God," are "chosen of God before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love." That they are but a part of mankind is apparent in Scripture and experience. They are the little flock, to whom "it is their Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom." Fewer they are than the world imagines; yet not so few as some drooping spirits think, who are suspicious that God is unwilling to be their God, when they know themselves willing to be his people.

2. These persons are given of God to his Son, to be by him redeemed from their lost state, and advanced to this glory. God hath given all things to his Son, but not as he hath given his chosen to him. "God hath given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him." The difference is clearly expressed by the apostle; "he hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." And though Christ is, in

some sense, a ransom for all, yet not in that special manner as for his people.

3. One great qualification of these persons is that they are born again. To be the people of God without regeneration, is as impossible as to be the children of men without generation. Seeing we are born God's enemies, we must be new-born his sons, or else remain enemies still. The greatest reformation of life that can be attained, without this new life wrought in the soul, may procure our further delusion, but never our salvation.

4. This new life in the people of God discovers itself by conviction, or a deep sense of divine things.

They are convinced of the evil of sin. The sinner is made to know and feel that the sin which was his delight, is a more loathsome thing than a toad or serpent, and a greater evil than plague or famine; being a breach of the righteous law of the most high God, dishonorable to him, and destructive to the sinner. Now the sinner no more hears the reproofs of sin as words of course; but the mention of his sin speaks to his very heart, and yet he is willing you should show him the worst. He was wont to marvel what made men keep up such a stir against sin; what harm it was for a man to take little forbidden pleasure; he saw no such heinousness in it that Christ must needs die for it, and a christless world be eternally tormented in hell. Now the case is altered; God hath opened his eyes to see the inexpressible vileness of sin.

They are convinced of their own misery by reason of sin. They who before read the threats of God's law as men do the story of foreign wars, now find it their own story, and perceive they read their own doom, as if they found their own names written in the curse, or heard the law say, as Nathan, "Thou art the man." The wrath of God seemed to him before but a storm to a man in a dry house, or as the pains of the sick to the healthful stander-by; but now he finds the disease is his own, and feels himself a condemned man: that he is dead and damned in point of law, and that nothing is wanting but mere execution to make him absolutely and irrecoverably miserable. This is a work of the Spirit wrought in some measure in all the regenerate. How should he come to Christ for pardon who did not first find himself guilty and condemned? or for life, who never found himself spiritually dead? "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." The discovery of the remedy as soon as the misery, must needs prevent a great part of the trouble. And perhaps the joyful apprehensions of mercy may make the sense of misery sooner forgotten.

They are also convinced of the creature's vanity and insufficiency. Every man is naturally an idolater. Our hearts turned from God in our first fall; and, ever since, the creature hath been our god. This is the grand sin of our nature. Every unregenerate man ascribes to the creature divine prerogatives, and allows it the highest room in his soul; or, if he is convinced of misery, he flies to it as his savior. Indeed, God and His Christ shall be called Lord and Savior; but the real expectation is from the creature, and the work of God is laid upon it. Pleasure, profit and honor, are the natural man's trinity and his carnal self is these in unity. It was our first sin to aspire to be as gods and it is the greatest sin that is propagated in our nature from generation to generation. When God should guide us, we guide ourselves; when he should be our Sovereign, we rule ourselves: the laws which he gives us, we find fault with, and would correct and, if we had the making of them, we would have made them otherwise: when he should take care of us, (and must, or we perish,) we will take care for ourselves: when we should depend on him in daily receiving, we had rather have our portion in our own hands: when we should submit to his providence, we usually quarrel with it,

and think we could make a better disposal than God hath made. When we should study and love, trust and honor God, we study and love, trust and honor our carnal selves. Instead of God, we would have all men's eyes and dependence on us, and all men's thanks returned to us, and would gladly be the only men on earth extolled and admired by all. Thus we are naturally our own idols. But down falls this Dagon when God once renews the soul. It is the chief design of that great work, to bring the heart back to God himself. He convinceth the sinner that the creature can neither be his God, to make him happy, nor his Christ, to recover him from his misery and restore him to God, who is his happiness. God does this not only by his word, but also by his providence. This is the reason why affliction so frequently concurs in the work of conversion. Arguments which speak to the quick, will force a hearing when the most powerful words are slighted. If a sinner made his credit his god, and God cast him into the lowest disgrace, or bring him, who idolized his riches, into a condition wherein they cannot help him, or cause them to take wing and fly away, what a help is here to this work of conviction! If a man made pleasure his god, whatsoever a roving eye, a curious ear, a greedy appetite, or a lustful heart could desire, and God take these from him, or turn them into gall and wormwood, what a help is here to conviction! When God casts a man into languishing sickness, and inflicts wounds on his heart, and stirs up against him his own conscience, and then, as it were, says to him, "Try if your credit, riches, or pleasures can help you. Can they heal your wounded conscience? Can they now support your tottering tabernacle? Can they keep your departing soul in your body? or save you from my everlasting wrath? or redeem your soul from eternal flames? Cry aloud to them, and see now whether these will be to you instead of God and Christ." O how this works now with the sinner! Sense acknowledges the truth, and even the flesh is convinced of the creature's vanity, and our very deceiver is undeceived. The people of God are likewise convinced of the absolute necessity, the full sufficiency, and perfect excellency of Jesus Christ: as a man in famine is convinced of the necessity of food; or a man that has heard or read his sentence of condemnation, of the absolute necessity of pardon; or a man that lies in prison for debt, of his need of a surety to discharge it. Now the sinner feels an insupportable burden upon him, and sees there is none but Christ can take it off: he perceives the law proclaims him a rebel, and none but Christ can make his peace: he is as a man pursued by a lion, that must perish if he finds not a present sanctuary: he is now brought to this dilemma; either he must have Christ to justify him, or be eternally condemned; have Christ to save him, or burn in hell for ever; have Christ to bring him to God, or be shut out of his presence everlastingly! And no wonder if he cry as the martyr, "None but Christ! none but Christ!" Not gold, but bread, will satisfy the hungry; nor will any thing but pardon comfort the condemned.

All things are counted but dung now, that he may win Christ; and what was gain, he counts loss for Christ. As the sinner sees his misery, and the inability of himself and all things to relieve him, so he perceives there is no saving mercy out of Christ. He sees that though the creature cannot, and himself cannot, yet Christ can help him. Though the fig leaves of our own unrighteous righteousness are too short to cover our nakedness, yet the righteousness of Christ is large enough: ours is disproportionate to the justice of the law, but Christ's extends to every tittle. If he intercede, there is no denial; such is the dignity of his person and the value of his merits, that the Father grants all he desires. Before, the sinner knew Christ's excellency as a blind man knows the light of the sun; but now, as one that beholds its glory.

5. After this deep conviction, the will manifests also its change. As, for instance, the sin which the understanding pronounces evil, the will turns from with abhorrence. Not that the sensitive appetite is changed, or any way made to abhor its object; but when it would prevail against reason, and carry us to sin against God, instead of Scripture being the rule, and reason the master, and sense the servant, this disorder and evil the will abhors. The misery also, which sin hath procured, is not only discerned, but bewailed. It is impossible that the soul should now look either on its trespass against God, or yet on its own self-procured calamity, without some contrition. He that truly discerns that he hath killed Christ, and killed himself, will surely in some measure be pricked to the heart. If he cannot weep, he can heartily groan and his heart feels what his understanding sees. The creature is renounced as vanity, and turned out of the heart with disdain: not that it is undervalued, or the use of it condemned; but its idolatrous abuse, and its unjust usurpation. Can Christ be the way, where the creature is the end? Can we seek Christ to reconcile us to God, while in our hearts we prefer the creature before him? In the soul of every unregenerate man the creature is both God and Christ. As turning from the creature to God, and not by Christ, is no true turning; so believing in Christ, while the creature hath our hearts, is no true believing. Our aversion from sin, renouncing our idols, and our right receiving Christ, is all but one work, which God ever perfects where he begins. At the same time, the will cleaves to God the Father, and to Christ. Having been convinced that nothing else can be his happiness, the sinner now finds it is in God. Convinced also that Christ alone is able and willing to make peace for him, he most affectionately accepts of Christ as his Savior and Lord. Paul's preaching was "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And life eternal consists, first in "knowing the only true God;" and then "Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent." To take the Lord for our God is the natural part of the covenant; the supernatural part is, to take Christ for our Redeemer. The former is first necessary, and implied in the latter. To accept Christ without affection and love, is not justifying faith: nor does love follow as a fruit, but immediately concurs; for faith is the receiving of Christ with the whole soul. "He that loveth father or mother more than Christ, is not worthy of him," nor is justified by him. Faith accepts him as Savior and Lord: for in both relations will he be received, or not at all. Faith not only acknowledges his sufferings, and accepts of pardon and glory, but acknowledges his sovereignty, and submits to his government and way of salvation.

6. As an essential part of the character of God's people, they now enter into a cordial covenant with Christ. The sinner was never strictly, nor comfortably, in covenant with Christ till now. He is sure, by the free offers, that Christ consents and now he cordially consents himself; and so the agreement is fully made. With this covenant Christ delivers up himself in all comfortable relations to the sinner; and the sinner delivers up himself to be saved and ruled by Christ. Now the soul resolutely concludes, "I have been blindly led by flesh and lust, by the world and the devil, too long, almost to my utter destruction; I will now be wholly at the disposal of my Lord, who hath bought me with his blood, and will bring me to his glory."

7. I add, that the people of God persevere in this covenant to the end. Though the believer may be tempted, yet he never disclaims his Lord, renounces his allegiance, nor repents of his covenant; nor can he properly be said to break that covenant, while that faith continues which is the condition of it. Indeed, those that have verbally covenanted, and not cordially, may tread under foot the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, as an unholy thing, by separation from those without the church; but the elect cannot be so deceived. Though this perseverance be

certain to true believers, yet it is made a condition of their salvation; yea, of their continued life and fruitfulness, and of the continuance of their justification, though not of their first justification itself. But eternally blessed be that hand of love which hath drawn the free promise, and subscribed and sealed to that which ascertains us both of the grace which is the condition, and the kingdom which on that condition is offered!

Such are the essentials of this people of God. Not a full portraiture of them in all their excellencies, nor all the marks whereby they may be discerned. I beseech thee, reader, as thou hast the hope of a Christian, or the reason of a man, judge thyself as one that must shortly be judged by a righteous God, and faithfully answer these questions. I will not inquire whether you remember the time or the order of these workings of the Spirit, there may be much uncertainty and mistake in that. If you are sure they are wrought in you, it is not so great a matter that you should know when or how you came by them. But carefully examine and inquire, Hast thou been thoroughly convinced of a prevailing depravation through thy whole soul? and a prevailing wickedness through thy whole life? and how vile sin is? and that by the covenant thou hast transgressed, the least sin deserves eternal death? Dost thou consent to the law, that it is true and righteous, and perceive thyself sentenced to this death by it? Hast thou seen the utter insufficiency of every creature, either to be itself thy happiness, or the means of removing this thy misery? Hast thou been convinced that thy happiness is only in God, as the end, and in Christ, as the way to him and that thou must be brought to God through Christ, or perish eternally? Hast thou seen an absolute necessity of thy enjoying Christ, and the full sufficiency in him to do for thee whatsoever thy case requires? Hast thou discovered the excellency of this pearl to be worth thy “selling all to buy it?” Have thy convictions been like those of a man that thirsts and not merely a change in opinion, produced by reading or education? Have both thy sin and misery been the abhorrence and burden of thy soul? If thou couldst not weep, yet couldst thou heartily groan under the insupportable weight of both? Hast thou renounced all thy own righteousness? Hast thou turned thy idols out of thy heart, so that the creature hath no more the sovereignty, but is now a servant to God and Christ? Dost thou accept of Christ as thy only Savior, and expect thy justification, recovery and glory from him alone? Are his laws the most powerful commanders of thy life and soul? Do they ordinarily prevail against the commands of the flesh, and against the greatest interest of thy credit, profit, pleasure or life? Has Christ the highest room in thy heart and affections, so that, though thou canst not love him as thou wouldst, yet nothing else is loved so much? Hast thou, to this end, made a hearty covenant with him, and delivered up thyself to him? Is it thy uttermost care and watchful endeavor that thou mayest be found faithful in this covenant and though thou fall into sin, yet wouldst not renounce thy bargain, nor change thy Lord, nor give up thyself to any other government, for all the world? If this be truly thy case, thou art one of “the people of God” in my text and as sure as the promise of God is true, this blessed rest remains for thee. Only see thou “abide in Christ,” and “endure to the end;” for “if any man draw back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him.” But if no such work be found within thee, whatever thy deceived heart may think, or how strong soever thy false hopes may be, thou wilt find to thy cost, except thorough conversion prevent it, that the rest of the saints belongs not to thee. “O that thou wert wise, that thou wouldst understand this, that thou wouldst consider thy latter end!” that yet, while thy soul is in thy body, and “a price is in thy hand,” and opportunity and hope before thee, thine ears may be open, and thy heart yield to the persuasions of God, that so thou mayest rest among his people, and enjoy “the inheritance of the saints in light!” That this rest shall be enjoyed by the people of God, is a truth which the Scripture, if its testimony be further

needed, clearly asserts in a variety of ways; as, for instance, that they are “foreordained to it, and it for them. God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.” They are styled “vessels of mercy, afore prepared unto glory.” “In Christ they have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” And “whom he did predestinate, them he also glorified.” Who can deprive his people of that rest which is designed for them by God’s eternal purpose? Scripture tells us, they are redeemed to this rest. “By the blood of Jesus, we have boldness to enter into the holiest;” whether that entrance means by faith and prayer here, or by full possession hereafter. Therefore the saints in heaven sing a new song unto Him who has “redeemed them to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them kings and priests unto God.” Either Christ, then, must lose his blood and sufferings, and never “see of the travail of his soul,” or else “there remaineth a rest to the people of God.” In Scripture this rest is promised to them. As the firmament with stars, so are the sacred pages bespangled with these divine engagements. Christ says, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.” All the means of grace, the operations of the Spirit upon the soul, and gracious actings of the saints, every command to repent and believe, to fast and pray, to knock and seek, to strive and labor, to run and fight, prove that there remains a rest for the people of God. The Spirit would never kindle in us such strong desires after heaven, such love to Jesus Christ, if we should not receive what we desire and love. He that “guides our feet into the way of peace,” will undoubtedly bring us to the end of peace. How nearly are the means and end conjoined! “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” They that “follow Christ in the regeneration, shall sit upon thrones of glory.” Scripture assures us, that the saints have the “beginnings, foretastes, earnests, and seals” of this rest here. “Though they have not seen Christ, yet loving him, and believing in him, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.” They “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” And does God “seal them with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of their inheritance,” and will he deny the full possession? The Scripture also mentions, by name, those who have entered into this rest; as Enoch, Abraham, Lazarus, and the thief that was crucified with Christ. And if there be a rest for these, surely there is a rest for all believers. But it is in vain to bring together Scripture proofs, seeing it is the very end of Scripture to be a guide to lead us to this blessed state, and to be the charter and grant by which we hold all our title to it.

Scripture not only proves that this rest remains for the people of God, but also that it remains for none but them; so that the rest of the world shall have no part in it. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. They all shall be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. The Lord Jesus shall come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” Had the ungodly returned before their life was expired, and been heartily willing to accept of Christ for their Savior and their King, and to be saved by him in his way, and upon his most reasonable terms, they might have been saved. God freely offered

them life, and they would not accept it. The pleasures of the flesh seemed more desirable to them than the glory of the saints. Satan offered them the one, and God offered them the other; and they had free liberty to choose which they would, and they chose “the pleasures of sin for a season,” before the everlasting rest with Christ. And is it not a righteous thing that they should be denied that which they would not accept? When God pressed them so earnestly, and persuaded them so importunately, to come in, and yet they would not, where should they be but among the dogs without? Though man be so wicked that he will not yield till the mighty power of grace prevail with him, yet still we may truly say that he may be saved, if he will, on God’s terms. His inability being moral, and lying in wilful wickedness, is no more excuse to him than it is to an adulterer that he cannot love his own wife, or to a malicious person that he cannot but hate his own brother: is he not so much the worse, and deserving of so much the sorer punishment? Sinners shall lay all the blame on their own wills in hell for ever. Hell is a rational torment by conscience, according to the nature of the rational subject. If sinners could but then say, It was God’s fault, and not ours, it would quiet their consciences and ease their torments, and make hell, to them, to be no hell. But to remember their wilfulness, will feed the fire, and cause the worm of conscience “never to die.”

It is the will of God that this rest should yet remain for his people, and not be enjoyed till they come to another world. Who should dispose of the creatures but he that made them? You may as well ask why have we not spring and harvest without winter? or, why is the earth below and the heavens above? as why we have not rest on earth? All things must come to their perfection by degrees. The strongest man must first be a child. The greatest scholar must first begin with the alphabet. The tallest oak was once an acorn. This life is our infancy; and would we be perfect in the womb, or born at full stature? If our rest was here, most of God’s providences must be useless. Should God lose the glory of his church’s miraculous deliverances, and of the fall of his enemies, that men may have their happiness here? If we were all happy, innocent, and perfect, what use was there for the glorious work of our sanctification, justification, and future salvation?-If we wanted nothing, we should not depend on God so closely, nor call upon him so earnestly. How little would he hear from us, if we had what we would have! God would never have had such songs of praise from Moses at the Red Sea and in the wilderness, from Deborah and Hannah, from David and Hezekiah, if they had been the choosers of their own condition. Have not thy own highest praises to God, reader, been occasioned by thy dangers or miseries? The greatest glory and praise God has through the world, is for redemption, reconciliation, and salvation by Christ; and was not man’s misery the occasion of that?-And where God loses the opportunity of exercising his mercies, man must needs lose the happiness of enjoying them. Where God loses his praise, man will certainly lose his comforts. O the sweet comforts the saints have had in return for their prayers! How should we know what a tender-hearted Father we have, if we had not, as the prodigal, been denied the husks of earthly pleasure and profit? We should never have felt Christ’s tender heart, if we had not felt ourselves “weary and heavy laden, hungry and thirsty, poor and contrite.” It is a delight to a soldier or traveller, to look back on his escapes when they are over; and for a saint in heaven to look back on his sins and sorrows upon earth; his fears and tears, his enemies and dangers, his wants and calamities must make his joy more joyful. Therefore the blessed, in praising the Lamb, mention his “redeeming them out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue;” and so out of their misery, and wants, and sins, “and making them kings and priests to God.” But if they had had nothing but content and rest on earth, what room would there have been for these rejoicings hereafter?

Besides, we are not capable of rest upon earth. Can a soul that is so weak in grace, so prone to sin, so nearly joined to such a neighbor as this flesh, have full content and rest in such a case? What is soul-rest, but our freedom from sin, and imperfections, and enemies? And can the soul have rest that is molested with all these, and that continually? Why do Christians so often cry out, in the language of Paul, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” What makes them “press toward the mark, and run that they may obtain, and strive to enter in,” if they are capable of rest in their present condition? And our bodies are incapable as well as our souls. They are not now those sun-like bodies which they shall be, when this “corruptible hath put on incorruption, and this mortal hath put on immortality.” They are our prisons and our burdens; so full of infirmities and defects, that we spend most of our time in repairing them and supplying their continual wants. Is it possible that an immortal soul should have rest in such a disordered habitation? Surely these sickly, weary, loathsome bodies must be refined before they can be capable of enjoying rest. The objects which we here enjoy are insufficient to afford us rest. Alas! what is there in all the world to give us rest? They that have most of it have the greatest burden. They that set most by it, and rejoice most in it, do all cry out at last of its vanity and vexation. Men promise themselves a heaven upon earth; but when they come to enjoy it, it flies from them. He that has any regard to the works of the Lord, may easily see that the very end of them is to take down our idols, to make us weary of the world, and seek our rest in him. Where does he cross us most, but where we promise ourselves most content? If you have a child you dote upon, it becomes your sorrow. If you have a friend you trust in, and judge unchangeable, he becomes your scourge. Is this a place, or state of rest? And as the objects we here enjoy are insufficient for our rest, so God, who is sufficient, is here little enjoyed. It is not here that he had prepared the presence-chamber of his glory. He hath drawn the curtain between us and him. We are far from him as creatures, and farther as frail mortals, and farthest as sinners. We hear now and then a word of comfort from him, and receive his love-tokens to keep up our hearts and hopes; but this is not our full enjoyment. And can any soul that hath made God his portion, as every one hath that shall be saved by him, find rest in so vast a distance from him, and so seldom and small enjoyment of him? Nor are we now capable of rest, as there is a worthiness must go before it. Christ will give the crown to none but the worthy. Are we fit for the crown before we have overcome? or for the prize before we have run the race? or to receive our penny before we have wrought in the vineyard? or to be rulers of ten cities before we have improved our ten talents? or to enter into the joy of our Lord before we have well done as good and faithful servants? God will not alter the course of justice, to give you rest before you have labored, nor the crown of glory till you have overcome. There is reason enough why our rest should remain till the life to come. Take heed, then, Christian reader, how thou darest to contrive and care for a rest on earth; or to murmur at God for thy trouble, and toil, and wants in the flesh. Doth thy poverty weary thee? thy sickness, thy bitter enemies and unkind friends? It should be so here. Do the abominations of the times, the sins of professors, the hardening of the wicked, all weary thee? It must be so while thou art absent from thy rest. Do thy sins and thy naughty, distempered heart weary thee? Be thus wearied more and more. But, under all this weariness, art thou willing to go to God, thy rest; and to have thy warfare accomplished, and thy race and labor ended? If not, complain more of thy own heart, and get it more weary, till rest seem more desirable.

I have but one thing more to add, for the close of this chapter-that the souls of believers do enjoy inconceivable blessedness and glory, even while they remain separated from their bodies. What

can be more plain than these words of Paul: “We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home,” or rather sojourning, “in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” Or these: “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” If Paul had not expected to enjoy Christ till the resurrection, why should he be in a strait, or desire to depart? Nay, should he not have been loth to depart upon the very same grounds? for while he was in the flesh he enjoyed something of Christ. Plain enough are the words of Christ to the thief-”Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, it seems unlikely Christ would so evidently intimate and suppose the soul’s happiness or misery presently after death, if there were no such thing. Our Lord’s argument for the resurrection supposes, that, “God being not the God of the dead, but of the living,” therefore Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were then living in the soul. If the “blessedness of the dead that die in the Lord” were only in resting in the grave, then a beast or a stone were as blessed; nay, it were evidently a curse, and not a blessing. For was not life a great mercy? Was it not a greater mercy to serve God and to do good; to enjoy all the comforts of life, the fellowship of saints, the comfort of ordinances, and much of Christ in all, than to lie rotting in the grave? Therefore some further blessedness is there promised. How else is it said, “We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect?” Surely, at the resurrection, the body will be made perfect as well as the spirit. The Scriptures tell us, that Enoch and Elias are taken up already. And shall we think they possess that glory alone? Did not Peter, James, and John see Moses also with Christ on the mount? yet the Scripture saith, Moses died. And is it likely that Christ deluded their senses in showing them Moses, if he should not partake of that glory till the resurrection? And is not that of Stephen as plain as we can desire? “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Surely, if the Lord receive it, it is neither asleep, nor dead, nor annihilated; but it is where he is, and beholds his glory. That of the wise man is of the same import: “The spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” Why are we said to “have eternal life;” and that to “know God is life eternal;” and that a believer “on the Son hath everlasting life?” Or how is “the kingdom of God within us?” If there be as great an interruption of our life as till the resurrection, this is no eternal life, nor “everlasting kingdom.” “The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah” are spoken of as “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire!” And if the wicked already suffer eternal fire, then no doubt but the godly enjoy eternal blessedness. When John saw his glorious relations, he is said to be “in the Spirit,” and to be “carried away in the Spirit.” And when Paul was “caught up to the third heaven,” he knew not “whether in the body or out of the body.” This implies that spirits are capable of these glorious things without the help of their bodies. The same is implied when John says, “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God.” When Christ says, “Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul,” does it not plainly imply, that when wicked men have killed our bodies, that is, have separated the souls from them, yet the souls are still alive? The soul of Christ was alive when his body was dead, and therefore so shall be ours too. This appears by his words to the thief, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise;” and also by his voice on the cross, “Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.” If the spirits of those that “were disobedient in the days of Noah were in prison,” that is, in a living and suffering state; then, certainly, the separate spirits of the just are in an opposite condition of happiness. Therefore, faithful souls will no sooner leave their prisons of flesh but angels shall be their convoy; Christ, and all the perfected spirits of the just, will be their companions; heaven will be their residence, and God their happiness. When such die, they may boldly and believingly say, as Stephen, “Lord

Jesus, receive my spirit;” and commend it, as Christ did, into a Father’s hands.

6.06. CHAPTER V

THE GREAT MISERY OF THOSE WHO LOSE THE SAINTS' REST.

I. The loss of heaven includes, 1. The personal perfection of the saints; 2. God himself; 3. All delightful affections towards God; 4. The blessed society of angels and glorified spirits. II. The aggravations of the loss of heaven; 1. The understanding of the ungodly will then be cleared; 2. Also enlarged. 3. Their consciences will make a true and close application. 4. Their affections will be more lively. 5. Their memories will be large and strong.

If thou, reader, art a stranger to Christ, and to the holy nature and life of his people, who have been described, and shalt live and die in this condition, let me tell thee, thou shalt never partake of the joys of heaven, nor have the least taste of the saints' eternal rest. I may say, as Ehud to Eglon, "I have a message to thee from God;" that, as the word of God is true, thou shalt never see the face of God in peace. This sentence I am commanded to pass upon thee; take it as thou wilt, and escape it if thou canst. I know thy humble and hearty subjection to Christ would procure thy escape; he would then acknowledge thee for one of his people, and give thee a portion in the inheritance of his chosen. If this might be the happy success of my message, I should be so far from repining, like Jonah, that the threatenings of God are not executed upon thee, that I should bless the day that ever God made me so happy a messenger. But if thou end thy days in thy unregenerate state, as sure as the heavens are over thy head, and the earth under thy feet, thou shalt be shut out of the rest of the saints, and receive thy portion in everlasting fire. I expect thou wilt turn upon me and say, When did God show you the book of life, or tell you who they are that shall be saved, and who shut out? I answer, I do not name thee, nor any other; I only conclude it of the unregenerate in general, and of thee, if thou be such a one. Nor do I go about to determine who shall repent, and who shall not; much less, that thou shalt never repent. I had rather show thee what hopes thou hast before thee, if thou wilt not sit still and lose them. I would far rather persuade thee to hearken in time, before the door be shut against thee, than tell thee there is no hope of thy repenting and returning. But, if the foregoing description of the people of God does not agree with the state of thy soul, is it then a hard question whether thou shalt ever be saved? Need I ascend up into heaven to know that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" or, that only "the pure in heart shall see God;" or, that "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God?" Need I go up to heaven to inquire that of Christ which he came down to earth to tell us, and sent his Spirit in his apostles to tell us, and which he and they have left upon record to all the world? And though I know not the secrets of thy heart, and therefore cannot tell thee by name whether it be thy state or not; yet, if thou art but willing and diligent, thou mayest know thyself whether thou art an heir of heaven or not. It is the main thing I desire, that, if thou art yet miserable, thou mayest discern and escape it. But how canst thou escape, if thou neglect Christ and salvation? It is as impossible as for the devils themselves to be saved; nay, God has more plainly and frequently spoken it in Scripture of such sinners as thou art, than he has of the devils. Methinks a sight of thy case should strike thee with amazement and horror. When Belshazzar "saw the fingers of a man's hand that wrote upon the wall, his countenance was changed, and his

thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." What trembling, then, should seize on thee, who hast the hand of God himself against thee, not in a sentence or two, but in the very scope of the Scriptures, threatening the loss of an everlasting kingdom! Because I would fain have thee lay it to heart, I will show thee, first, the nature of thy loss of heaven; secondly, its aggravations.

1. The glorious personal perfection which the saints enjoy in heaven, is the great loss of the ungodly. They lose that shining lustre of the body, surpassing the brightness of the sun at noon-day. Though the bodies of the wicked will be raised more spiritual than they were upon earth, yet that will only make them capable of the more exquisite torments. They would be glad then if every member were a dead member, that it might not feel the punishment inflicted on it; and if the whole body were a rotten carcass, or might lie down again in the dust. Much more do they want that moral perfection which the blessed partake of; those holy dispositions of mind; that cheerful readiness to do the will of God; that perfect rectitude of all their actions: instead of these, they have that perverseness of will, that loathing of good, that love to evil, that violence of passion, which they had on earth. It is true, their understandings will be much cleared by the ceasing of former temptations, and experiencing the falsehood of former delusions but they have the same dispositions still, and fain would they commit the same sins, if they could: they want but opportunity. There will be a greater difference between these wretches and the glorified Christian, than there is betwixt a toad and the sun in the firmament. The rich man's purple and fine linen, and sumptuous fare, did not so exalt him above Lazarus while at his gate, full of sores.

2. They shall have no comfortable relation to God, nor communion with him. "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," but said unto him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" so God will abhor to retain them in his household. He will never admit them to the inheritance of his saints, nor endure them to stand in his presence; but "will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." They are ready now to lay as confident claim to Christ and heaven as if they were sincere, believing saints. The swearer, the drunkard, the whoremonger, the worldling can say, Is not God our Father as well as yours? But when Christ separates his followers from his foes, and his faithful friends from his deceived flatterers, where, then, will be their presumptuous claim? Then they shall find that God is not their Father, because they would not be his people. As they would not consent that God, by his Spirit, should dwell in them, so the tabernacle of wickedness shall have no fellowship with him, nor the wicked inhabit the city of God. Only they that walked with God here shall live and be happy with him in heaven. Little does the world know what is the loss of that soul who loses God! What a dungeon would the earth be if it had lost the sun! what a loathsome carrion the body, if it had lost the soul! yet all these are nothing to the loss of God. As the enjoyment of God is the heaven of the saints, so the loss of God is the hell of the ungodly; and as the enjoying of God is the enjoying of all, so the loss of God is the loss of all.

3. They also lose all delightful affections toward God: that transporting knowledge; those delightful views of his glorious face; the inconceivable pleasure of loving him; the apprehensions of his infinite love to us; the constant joys of his saints, and the rivers ot consolation with which he satisfies them. Is it nothing to lose all this? The employment of a king in ruling a kingdom, does not so far exceed that of the vilest slave, as this heavenly employment exceeds that of an earthly king. God suits men's employment to their natures. Your hearts, sinners, were never set upon God in

your lives, never warmed with his love, never longed after the enjoyment of him; you had no delight in speaking or hearing of him; you had rather have continued on earth, if you had known how, than to be interested in the glorious praises of God. Is it meet, then, that you should be members of the celestial choir?

4. They shall be deprived of the blessed society of angels and glorified saints. Instead of being companions of those happy spirits, and numbered with those triumphant kings, they must be driven down to hell, where they shall have companions of a far different nature and quality. Scorning and abusing the saints, hating them, and rejoicing at their calamities, was not the way to obtain their blessedness. Now you are shut out of that company, from which you first shut out yourselves; and are separated from them with whom you would not be joined. You could not endure them in your houses, or towns, or scarcely in the kingdom. You took them, as Ahab did Elijah, for the “troublers of the land;” and, as the apostles were taken, for “men that turned the world upside down.” If any thing fell out amiss, you thought all was owing to them. When they were dead or banished, you were glad they were gone, and thought the country well rid of them. They molested you by faithfully reproving your sins. Their holy conversation troubled your consciences, to see them so far excel you. It was a vexation to you to hear them pray or sing praises in their families. And is it any wonder if you be separated from them hereafter? The day is near when they will trouble you no more. Betwixt them and you will be a great gulf fixed. Even in this life, while the saints were “mocked, destitute, afflicted, tormented,” and while they had their personal imperfections, yet, in the judgment of the Holy Ghost, they were men “of whom the world was not worthy.” Much more unworthy will the world be of their fellowship in glory.

II. I know many will be ready to think they could spare these things in this world well enough, and why may they not be without them in the world to come? Therefore, to show them that this loss of heaven will then be most tormenting, let them now consider,

1. The understanding of the ungodly will then be cleared to know the worth of that which they have lost. Now they lament not their loss of God, because they never knew his excellence; nor the loss of that holy employment and society, for they were never sensible what they were worth. A man that has lost a jewel, and took it but for a common stone, is never troubled at his loss but when he comes to know what he lost; then he laments it. Though the understandings of the damned will not be sanctified, yet they will be cleared from a multitude of errors. They now think that their honors, estates, pleasures, health, and life are better worth their labor than the things of another world; but when these things have left them in misery, when they experience the things of which they before but read and heard, they will be of an other mind. They would not believe that water would drown, till they were in the sea; nor the fire burn, till they were cast into it: but when they feel, they will easily believe. All that error of mind which made them set light by God, and abhor his worship, and vilify his people, will then be confuted and removed by experience. Their knowledge shall be increased, that their sorrows may be increased. Poor souls! they would be comparatively happy, if their understandings were wholly taken from them, if they had no more knowledge than idiots or brutes; or, if they knew no more in hell than they did upon earth, their loss would less trouble them. How happy would they then think themselves, if they did not know there is such a place as heaven! Now, when their knowledge would help to prevent their misery, they will not know, or will not read or study that they may know; therefore, when their knowledge will but feed their consuming fire, they shall know, whether they will or not. They are now in a dead sleep, and

dream that they are the happiest men in the world; but when death awakes them, how will their judgments be changed in a moment! and they that would not see, shall then see, and be ashamed.

2. As their understanding will be cleared, so it will be more enlarged, and made more capacious to conceive the worth of that glory which they have lost. The strength of their apprehensions, as well as the truth of them, will then be increased. What deep apprehensions of the wrath of God, the madness of sinning, the misery of sinners, have those souls that now endure this misery, in comparison with those on earth that do but hear of it! What sensibility of the worth of life has the condemned man that is going to be executed, compared with what he was wont to have in the time of his prosperity! Much more will the actual loss of eternal blessedness make the damned exceedingly apprehensive of the greatness of their loss; and as a large vessel will hold more water than a shell, so will their more enlarged understandings contain more matter to feed their torment than their shallow capacity can now do.

3. Their consciences also will make a truer and closer application of this doctrine to themselves, which will exceedingly tend to increase their torment. It will then be no hard matter to them to say, “This is my loss! and this is my everlasting remediless misery!” The want of this self-application is the main cause why they are so little troubled now. They are hardly brought to believe that there is such a state of misery; but more hardly to believe that it is like to be their own. This makes so many sermons lost to them, and all threatenings and warnings in vain. Let a minister of Christ show them their misery ever so plainly and faithfully, they will not be persuaded they are so miserable. Let him tell them of the glory they must lose, and the sufferings they must feel, and they think he means not them, but some notorious sinners. It is one of the hardest things in the world to bring a wicked man to know that he is wicked, or to make him see himself in a state of wrath and condemnation. Though they may easily find, by their strangeness to the new birth, and their enmity to holiness, that they never were partakers of them; yet they as verily expect to see God and be saved, as if they were the most sanctified persons in the world. How seldom do men cry out, after the plainest discovery of their state, I am the man! or acknowledge, that, if they die in their present condition, they are undone for ever! But when they suddenly find themselves in the land of darkness, feel themselves in scorching flames, and see they are shut out of the presence of God for ever; then the application of God’s anger to themselves will be the easiest matter in the world; they will then roar out these forced confessions, “O my misery! O my folly! O my inconceivable, irrecoverable loss!”

4. Then will their affections likewise be more lively, and no longer stupified. A hard heart now makes heaven and hell seem but trifles. We have showed them everlasting glory and misery, and they are as men asleep; our words are as stones cast against a wall, which fly back in our faces. We talk of terrible things, but it is to dead men; we search the wounds, but they never feel it; we speak to rocks rather than to men; the earth will as soon tremble as they. But when these dead souls are revived, what passionate sensibility, what working affections, what pangs of horror, what depths of sorrow will there then be! How violently will they denounce and reproach themselves! How will they rage against their former madness! The lamentations of the most affectionate wife for the loss of her husband, or of the tenderest mother for the loss of her children, will be no thing to theirs for the loss of heaven. O the self-accusing and self-tormenting fury of those forlorn creatures! How will they even tear their own hearts, and be God’s executioners upon themselves!

As themselves were the only meritorious cause of their sufferings, so themselves will be the chief executioners. Even Satan, as he was not so great a cause of their sinning as themselves, will not be so great an instrument of their torment. How happy would they think themselves then, if they were turned into rocks, or any thing that had neither passion nor sense! How happy, if they could then feel as lightly as they were wont to hear! if they could sleep out the time of execution as they did the time of the sermons that warned them of it! But their stupidity is gone: it will not be.

5. Their memories will moreover be as large and strong as their understanding and affections. Could they but lose the use of their memory, their loss of heaven, being forgot, would little trouble them. Though they would account annihilation a great mercy, they cannot lay aside any part of their being. Understanding, conscience, affections, memory, must all live to torment them, which should have helped to their happiness. As by these they should have fed upon the love of God, and drawn forth perpetually the joys of his presence, so by these must they feed upon his wrath, and draw forth continually the pains of his absence. Now they have no leisure to consider, nor any room in their memories for the things of another life; but then they shall have nothing else to do; their memories shall have no other employment. God would have had the doctrine of their eternal state “written on the posts of their doors, on their hands and hearts:” he would have them mind it, “and mention it when they lay down and rose up, when they sat in their houses, and when they walked by the way,” and seeing they rejected this counsel of the Lord, therefore it shall be written always before them in the place of their thraldom, that, which way soever they look, they may still behold it. It will torment them to think of the greatness of the glory they have lost. If it had been what they could have spared, or a loss to be repaired with any thing else, it had been a smaller matter. If it had been health, or wealth, or friends, or life, it had been nothing. But, O! to lose that exceeding and eternal weight of glory! It will also torment them to think of the possibility they once had of obtaining it. Then they will remember, “Time was, when I was as fair for the kingdom as others. I was set upon the stage of the world; if I had believed in Christ I might now have had possession of the inheritance. I who am now tormented with these damned fiends, might have been among yonder blessed saints. The Lord did set before me life and death; and having chosen death, I deserve to suffer it. The prize was held out before me if I had run well, I might have obtained it if I had striven, I might have had the victory if I had fought valiantly, I had been crowned.” It will yet more torment them to remember that their obtaining the crown was not only possible, but very probable. It will wound them to think, “I had once the gales of the Spirit ready to have assisted me. I was proposing to be another man, to have cleaved to Christ, and forsake the world. I was almost resolved to have been wholly for God. I was once even turning from my base seducing lusts. I had cast off my old companions, and was associating with the godly. Yet I turned back, lost my hold, and broke my promises. I was almost persuaded to be a real Christian, yet I conquered those persuasions. What workings were in my heart when a faithful minister pressed home the truth! O how fair was I once for heaven! I almost had it, and yet I have lost it. Had I followed on to seek the Lord, I had now been blessed among the saints.”

It will exceedingly torment them to remember their lost opportunities. “How many weeks, and months, and years did I lose, which if I had improved, I might now have been happy! Wretch that I was! could I find no time to study the work for which I had all my time? no time, among all my labors, to labor for eternity? Had I time to eat, and drink, and sleep, and none to save my soul? Had I time for mirth and vain discourse, and none for prayer? Could I take time to secure the

world, and none to try my title to heaven? O precious time! I had once enough, and now I must have no more. I had once so much I knew not what to do with it; and now it is gone, and cannot be recalled. O that I had but one of those years to live over again! how speedily would I repent! How earnestly would I pray! how diligently would I hear! how closely would I examine my state! how strictly would I live! But it is now too late, alas! too late."

It will add to their calamity to remember how often they were persuaded to return. "Fain would the minister have had me escape these torments. With what love and compassion did he beseech me! and yet I did but make a jest of it. How oft did he convince me! and yet I stifled all these convictions. How did he open to me my very heart! and yet I was loth to know the worst of myself. O how glad would he have been if he could have seen me cordially turn to Christ! My godly friends admonished me; they told me what would become of my wilfulness and negligence at last; but I neither believed nor regarded them. How long did God himself condescend to entreat me! How did the Spirit strive with my heart, as if he was loth to take a denial! How did Christ stand knocking, one Sabbath after another, and crying to me. 'Open, sinner, open thy heart to thy Savior, and I will come in and sup with thee, and thou with me! Why dost thou delay? How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? Wilt thou not be pardoned and sanctified, and made happy? When shall it once be?' O how the recollection of such divine pleadings will passionately transport the damned with self-indignation! "Must I tire out the patience of Christ? Must I make the God of heaven follow me in vain, till I have wearied him with crying to me, Repent! return! O how justly is that patience now turned into fury which falls upon me with irresistable violence! When the Lord cried to me, 'Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?' my heart, or at least my practice answered, 'Never.' And now, when I cry, 'How long shall it be till I am freed from this torment? how justly do I receive the same answer, 'Never, never!'"

It will also be most cutting to remember on what easy terms they might have escaped their misery. Their work was not to remove mountains, nor conquer kingdoms, nor fulfil the law to the smallest tittle, nor satisfy justice for all their transgressions. "The yoke was easy and the burden light" which Christ would have laid upon them. It was but to repent and cordially accept him for their Savior; to renounce all other happiness, and take the Lord for their supreme good; to renounce the world and the flesh, and submit to his meek and gracious government and to forsake the ways of their own devising, and walk in his holy, delightful way. "Ah," thinks the poor tormented wretch, "how justly do I suffer all this, who would not be at so small pains to avoid it! Where was my understanding when I neglected that gracious offer; when I called 'the Lord a hard master,' and thought his pleasant service a bondage, and the service of the devil and the flesh the only freedom? Was I not a thousand times worse than mad, when I censured the holy way of God as needless preciseness; when I thought the laws of Christ too strict, and all too much that I did for the life to come? What would all sufferings for Christ and welldoing have been, compared with these sufferings that I must undergo for ever? Would not the heaven, which I have lost, have recompensed all my losses? And would not all my sufferings have been there forgotten? What if Christ had bid me to do some great matter; whether to live in continual fears and sorrows, or to suffer death a hundred times over: should I not have done it? How much more, when he only said, 'Believe and be saved. Seek my face, and thy soul shall live. Take up thy cross and follow me, and I will give thee everlasting life.' O gracious offer! O easy terms! O cursed wretch, that would not be persuaded to accept them!" This also will be a most tormenting consideration, to remember for what they sold their eternal

welfare. When they compare the value of the pleasures of sin with the value of “the recompense of reward,” how will the vast disproportion astonish them! To think of the low delights of the flesh, or the applauding breath of mortals, or the possessing heaps of gold,-and then to think of everlasting glory. “This is all I had for my soul, my God, my hopes of blessedness!” It cannot possibly be expressed how these thoughts will tear his very heart. Then will he exclaim against his folly: “O miserable wretch! Did I set my soul to sale for so base a price? Did I part with my God for a little dirt and dross; and sell my Savior, as Judas, for a little silver? I had but a dream of delight for my hopes of heaven; and, now I am awakened, it is all vanished. My morsels are now turned to gall, and my cups to wormwood. When they were past my taste, the pleasure perished. And is this all that I have had for the inestimable treasure? What a mad exchange did I make! What if I had gained all the world, and lost my soul! But, alas! how small a profit of the world was it for which I gave up heaven!” O that sinners would think of this when they are swimming in the delights of the flesh, and studying how to be rich and honorable in the world! when they are desperately venturing up on known transgression, and sinning against the checks of conscience!

It will add yet more to their torment, when they consider that they most wilfully procured their own destruction. Had they been forced to sin, it would much abate the rage of their consciences; or if they were punished for another man’s transgressions or any other had been the chief author of their ruin. But to think it was the choice of their own will, and that none in the world could have forced them to sin against their wills: this will be a cutting thought. “Had I not enemies enough in the world,” thinks this miserable creature, “but I must be an enemy to myself? God would never give the devil, nor the world, so much power over me as to force me to commit the least transgression. They could but entice: it was myself that yielded and did the evil. And must I lay hands upon my own soul, and imbrue my hands in my own blood? Never had I so great an enemy as myself. Never did God offer any good to my soul but I resisted him. He hath heaped mercy upon me, and renewed one deliverance after another, to draw my heart to him; yea, he hath gently chastised me, and made me groan under the fruit of my disobedience; and though I promised largely in my affliction, yet never was I heartily willing to serve him.” Thus will it gnaw the hearts of these sinners, to remember that they were the cause of their own ruin; and that they wilfully and obstinately persisted in their rebellion and were mere volunteers in the service of the devil. The wound in their consciences will be yet deeper, when they shall not only remember it was their own doing, but that they were at so much cost and pains for their own damnation. What great undertakings did they engage in to effect their ruin; to resist the Spirit of God; to overcome the power of mercies, judgments, and even the word of God; to subdue the power of reason and silence conscience! All this they undertook and performed. Though they walked in continual danger of the wrath of God, and knew he could lay them in the dust, and cast them into hell in a moment; yet would they run upon all this. O the labor it costs sinners to be damned! Sobriety, with health and ease, they might have had at a cheaper rate; yet they will rather have gluttony and drunkenness, with poverty, shame, and sickness. Contentment they might have, with ease and delight; yet they will rather have covetousness and ambition, though it costs them cares and fears, labor of body and distraction of mind. Though their anger be self-torment, and revenge and envy consume their spirits; though uncleanness destroy their bodies, estates, and good names; yet will they do and suffer all this, rather than suffer their souls to be saved. With what rage will they lament their folly, and say, “Was damnation worth all this cost and pains? Might I not have been damned on free cost, but I must purchase it so dearly? I thought I could have been saved without

so much ado, and could I not have been destroyed without so much ado? Must I so laboriously work out my own damnation, when God commanded me to ‘work out my own salvation?’ If I had done as much for heaven as I did for hell, I had surely had it. I cried out of the tedious way of godliness, and the painful course of self-denial; and yet I could be at a great deal more pains for Satan and for death. Had I loved Christ as strongly as I did my pleasures, and profits, and honors; and thought on him as often, and sought him as painfully, O how happy had I now been! How justly do I suffer the flames of hell for buying them so dear, rather than have heaven, when it was purchased to my hands!”

O that God would persuade thee, reader, to take up these thoughts now, for preventing the inconceivable calamity of taking them up in hell as thy own tormentor! Say not that they are only imaginary. Read what Dives thought, being in torments. As the joys of heaven are chiefly enjoyed by the rational soul in its rational actings, so must the pains of hell be suffered. As they will be men still, so will they feel and act as men.

6.07. CHAPTER VI

THE MISERY OF THOSE WHO, BESIDES LOSING THE SAINTS' REST, LOSE THE ENJOYMENTS OF TIME, AND SUFFER THE TORMENTS OF HELL.

1.The enjoyments of time which the damned lose: 1. Their presumptuous belief of their interest in God and Christ: 2. All their hopes; 3. All their peace of conscience; 4. All their carnal mirth; 5. All their sensual delights. II. The torments of the damned are exceedingly great: 1. The principal Author of them is God himself. 2. The place or state of torment. 3. These torments are the effects of divine vengeance. 4. God will take pleasure in executing them. 5. Satan and sinners themselves will be God's executioners. 6. These torments will be universal; 7. Without any mitigation; 8. And eternal. The obstinate sinner convinced of his folly in venturing on these torments; and entreated to fly for safety to Christ. As "godliness hath a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" and if we "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," then all meaner "things shall be added unto us;" so also are the ungodly threatened with the loss both of spiritual and temporal blessings; and because they sought not first God's kingdom and righteousness, therefore shall they lose both it and that which they did seek, and there "shall be taken from them that little which they have." If they could but have kept their present enjoyments, they would not have much cared for the loss of heaven. If they had "lost and forsaken all for Christ," they would have found all again in him; for he would have been all in all to them. But, now they have forsaken Christ for other things, they shall lose Christ, and that also for which they forsook him, even the enjoyments of time, besides suffering the torments of hell.

1. They shall lose their presumptuous belief of their interest in the favor of God and the merits of Christ. This false belief now supports their spirits, and defends them from the terrors that would otherwise seize upon them. But what will ease their trouble when they can believe no longer, nor rejoice any longer? If a man be near to the greatest mischief, and yet strongly conceit that he is in safety, he may be as cheerful as if all were well. If there were no more to make a man happy but to believe that he is so, or shall be so, happiness would be far more common than it is like to be. As true faith is the leading grace in the regenerate, so is false faith the leading vice in the unregenerate. Why do such multitudes sit still when they might have pardon, but that they verily think they are pardoned already? If you could ask thousands in hell, what madness brought them thither? they would most of them answer, "We thought we were sure of being saved till we found ourselves damned. We would have been more earnest seekers of regeneration and the power of godliness, but we verily thought we were Christians already. We have flattered ourselves into these torments, and now there is no remedy." Reader, I must in faithfulness tell thee that the confident belief of their good state, which the careless, unholy, unhumbled multitude so commonly boast of; will prove in the end but a soul-damning delusion. There is none of this believing in hell. It was Satan's stratagem, that being blindfold, they might follow him the more boldly; but then he will uncover their eyes, and they shall see where they are.

2. They shall lose also all their hopes. In this life, though they were threatened with the wrath of God, yet their hope of escaping it bore up their hearts. We can now scarce speak with the vilest drunkard, or swearer, or scoffer, but he hopes to be saved, for all this. O happy world, if salvation were as common as this hope! Nay, so strong are men's hopes, that they will dispute the cause with Christ himself at the judgment, and plead their "having ate and drank in his presence, and prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils;" they will stiffly deny that ever they neglected Christ, in hunger, nakedness, or in prison, till he confutes them with the sentence of their condemnation. O the sad state of those men when they must bid farewell to all their hopes! "When a wicked man dieth his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth. The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." The giving up the ghost is a fit but terrible resemblance of a wicked man giving up his hopes. As the soul departeth not from the body without the greatest pain, so doth the hope of the wicked depart. The soul departs from the body suddenly, in a moment, which hath there delightfully continued so many years; just so doth the hope of the wicked depart. The soul will never more return to live with the body in this world; and the hope of the wicked takes an everlasting farewell of his soul. A miracle of resurrection shall again unite soul and body, but there shall be no such miraculous resurrection of the damned's hope. Methinks it is the most pitiable sight this world affords, to see such an ungodly person dying, and to think of his soul and his hopes departing together. With what a sad change he appears in another world! Then if a man could but ask that hopeless soul, "Are you as confident of salvation as you were wont to be?" what a sad answer would be returned! O that careless sinners would be awakened to think of this in time! Reader, rest not till thou canst give a reason of all thy hopes, grounded upon Scripture promises: that they purify thy heart; that they quicken thy endeavors in godliness; that the more thou hopest the less thou sinnest, and the more exact is thy obedience. If thy hopes be such as these, go on in the strength of the Lord, hold fast thy hope, and "never shall it make thee ashamed." But if thou hast not one sound evidence of a work of grace on thy soul, cast away thy hopes. Despair of ever being saved, "except thou be born again;" or of "seeing God, without holiness;" or of having part in Christ, except thou "love him above father, mother, or thy own life." This kind of despair is one of the first steps to heaven. If a man be quite out of his way, what must be the first means to bring him in again? He must despair of ever coming to his journey's end in the way that he is in. If his home be eastward and he is going westward, as long as he hopes he is right, he will go on and as long as he goes on hoping, he goes further amiss. When he despairs of coming home, except he turn back, then he will return, and then he may hope. Just so it is, sinner, with thy soul: thou art born out of the way to heaven, and hast proceeded many a year; thou goest on and hopest to be saved, because thou art not so bad as many others. Except thou throw away those hopes and see that thou hast all this while been quite out of the way to heaven, thou wilt never return and be saved. There is nothing in the world more likely to keep thy soul out of heaven than thy false hopes of being saved, while thou art out of the way to salvation. See then how it will aggravate the misery of the damned, that, with the loss of heaven, they shall lose all that hope of it which now supports them.

3. They will lose all that false peace of conscience which makes their present life so easy. Who would think, observing how quietly the multitude of the ungodly live, that they must very shortly lie down in everlasting flames? They are as free from the fears of hell as an obedient believer; and for the most part have less disquiet of mind than those who shall be saved. Happy men, if this peace

would prove lasting! “When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” O cruel peace, which ends in such a war! The soul of every man by nature is Satan’s garrison; all is at peace in such a man till Christ comes and gives it terrible alarms of judgment and hell, batters it with the ordnance of his threats and terrors, forces it to yield to his mere mercy, and take him for the governor; then doth he cast out Satan, “overcome him, take from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils,” and then doth he establish a firm and lasting peace. If, therefore, thou art yet in that first peace, never think it will endure. Can thy soul have lasting peace in enmity with Christ? Can he have peace, against whom God proclaims war? I wish thee no greater good than that God break in upon thy careless heart, and shake thee out of thy false peace, and make thee lie down at the feet of Christ, and say, “Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?” and so receive from him a better and surer peace, which will never be quite broken, but be the beginning of thy everlasting peace, and not perish in thy perishing, as the groundless peace of the world will do.

4. They shall lose all their carnal mirth. They will themselves say of their “laughter; it is mad; and of their mirth, what doeth it?” It was but “as the crackling of thorns under a pot.” It made a blaze for a while, but it was presently gone, and returned no more. The talk of death and judgment was irksome to them, because it damped their mirth. They could not endure to think of their sin and danger, because these thoughts sunk their spirits. They knew not what it was to weep for sin, or to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. They could laugh away sorrow, and sing away cares, and drive away those melancholy thoughts. To meditate and pray, they fancied, would be enough to make them miserable, or run mad. Poor souls, what a misery will that life be, where you shall have nothing but sorrow-intense, heart piercing, multiplied sorrow; when you shall neither have the joys of saints nor your own former joys! Do you think there is one merry heart in hell? or one joyful countenance or jesting tongue? You now cry, “a little mirth is worth a great deal of sorrow.” But surely a little godly sorrow, which would have ended in eternal joy, had been worth much more than all your foolish mirth; for the end of such mirth is sorrow.

5. They shall also lose all their sensual delights. That which they esteemed their chief good, their heaven, their god, must they lose, as well as God himself. What a fall will the proud ambitious man have from the height of his honors! As his dust and bones will not be known from the dust and bones of the poorest beggar, so neither will his soul be honored or favored more than theirs. What a number of the great, noble, and learned will be shut out from the presence of Christ! They shall not find their magnificent buildings, soft beds, and easy couches. They shall not view their curious gardens, their pleasant meadows, and plenteous harvests. Their tables will not be so furnished nor attended. The rich man is there no more “clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day.” There is no expecting the admiration of beholders. They shall spend their time in sadness, and not in sports and pastimes. What an alteration will they then find! The heat of their lust will be then abated. How will it even cut them to the heart to look each other in the face! What an interview will there then be, cursing the day that ever they saw one another! O that sinners would now remember and say, “Will these delights accompany us into the other world? Will not the remembrance of them be then our torment? Shall we then take this partnership in vice for true friendship? Why should we sell such lasting incomprehensible joys for a taste of seeming pleasure? Come, as we have sinned together, let us pray together that God would pardon us; and let us help one another toward heaven, instead of helping to deceive and destroy each other.” O

that men but knew what they desire, when they would so earnestly have all things suited to the desires of the flesh! It is but to desire their temptations to be increased and their snares strengthened.

II. As the loss of the saints' rest will be aggravated by losing the enjoyments of time, it will be much more so by suffering the torments of hell. The exceeding greatness of such torments may appear, by considering,

1. The principal author of hell-torments is God himself. As it was no less than God whom sinners had offended, so it is no less than God who will punish them for their offences. He hath prepared those torments for his enemies. His continued anger will still be devouring them. His breath of indignation will kindle the flames. His wrath will be an intolerable burden to their souls. If it were but a creature they had to do with, they might better bear it. Woe to him that falls under the strokes of the Almighty! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It were nothing in comparison to this, if all the world were against them, or if the strength of all creatures were united in one to inflict their penalty. They had now rather venture to displease God than displease a landlord, a customer, a master, a friend, a neighbor, or their own flesh; but then they will wish a thousand times, in vain, that they had been hated of all the world, rather than have lost the favor of God. What a consuming fire is his wrath! If it be kindled here but a little, how do we "wither like grass!" How soon doth our strength decay and turn to weakness, and our beauty to deformity! The flames do not so easily run through the dry stubble, as the wrath of God will consume these wretches. They that could not bear a prison, or a gibbet, or a fire for Christ, or scarcely a few scoffs, how will they now bear the devouring flames of Divine wrath?

2. The place or state of torment is purposely ordained to glorify the justice of God. When God would glorify his power, he made the worlds. The comely order of all his creatures declareth his wisdom. His providence is shown in sustaining all things. When a spark of his wrath kindles upon the earth, the whole world, except only eight persons, are drowned; Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim are burnt with fire from heaven, the sea shuts her mouth upon some, the earth opens and swallows up others; the pestilence destroys by thousands. What a standing witness of the wrath of God is the present deplorable state of the Jews! Yet the glorifying of the mercy and justice of God is intended most eminently for the life to come. As God will then glorify his mercy in a way that is now beyond the comprehension of the saints who must enjoy it, so also will he manifest his justice to be indeed the justice of God. The everlasting flames of hell will not be thought too hot for the rebellious; and, when they have there burned through millions of ages, he will not repent him of the evil which has befallen them. Woe to the soul that is thus the object of the wrath of the Almighty, as a bush that must burn in the flames of his jealousy and never be consumed! The torments of the damned must be extreme, because they are the effect of divine vengeance. Wrath is terrible, but vengeance is implacable. When the great God shall say, "My rebellious creature shall now pay for all the abuse of my patience; remember how I waited your leisure in vain, how I stooped to persuade and entreat you: did you think I would always be so slighted?" Then will he be avenged for every abused mercy, and for all their neglects of Christ and grace. O that men would foresee this, and please God better in preventing their wo!

4. Consider also, that though God had rather men would accept of Christ and mercy, yet, when they persist in rebellion, he will take pleasure in their execution. He tells us, "Fury is not in me;" yet

he adds, “Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.” Wretched creatures, when “he that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favor. As the Lord rejoiced over them to do them good; so the Lord will rejoice over them to destroy them, and bring them to nought.” Woe to the souls whom God rejoiceth to punish: “He will laugh at their calamity, he will mock when their fear cometh; when their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon them.” Terrible thing, when none in heaven or earth can help them but God, and he shall rejoice in their calamity! Though Scripture speaks of God’s laughing and mocking, not literally, but after the manner of men; yet it is an act of God in tormenting the sinner, which cannot otherwise be more fitly expressed.

5. Consider that Satan and themselves shall be God’s executioners. He that was here so successful in drawing them from Christ, will then be the instrument of their punishment for yielding to his temptations. That is the reward he will give them for all their service; for their rejecting the commands of God, forsaking Christ, and neglecting their souls at his persuasion. If they had served Christ as faithfully as they did Satan, he would have given them a better reward. It is also most just that they should be their own tormentors; that they may see their whole destruction is of themselves and then, whom can they complain of but themselves?

6. Consider also that their torment will be universal. As all parts have joined in sin, so must they all partake in the torment. The soul, as it was the chief in sinning, shall be the chief in suffering; and as it is of a more excellent nature than the body, so will its torments far exceed bodily torments; and as its joys far surpass all sensual pleasures, so the pains of the soul exceed corporeal pains. It is not only a soul, but a sinful soul that must suffer. Fire will not burn except the fuel be combustible; but if the wood be dry, how fiercely will it burn! The guilt of their sins will be to damned souls like tinder to gunpowder, to make the flames of hell take hold upon them with fury. The body must also bear its part. The body which was so carefully looked to, so tenderly cherished, so curiously dressed, what must it now endure! How are its haughty looks now brought down! How little will those flames regard its comeliness and beauty! Those eyes which were wont to be delighted with curious sights, must then see nothing but what shall terrify them! an angry God above them, with those saints whom they scorned enjoying the glory which they have lost; and about them will be only devils and damned souls. How will they look back and say, “Are all our feasts, and games, and revels come to this?” Those ears, which were accustomed to music and songs, shall hear the shrieks and cries of their damned companions; children crying out against their parents, who gave them encouragement and example in evil; husbands and wives, masters and servants, ministers and people, magistrates and subjects, charging their misery upon one another, for discouraging in duty, conniving at sin, and being silent when they should have plainly foretold the danger. Thus will soul and body be companions in wo.

7. Far greater will these torments be, because without mitigation. In this life, when told of hell, or if conscience troubled their peace, they had comforters at hand; their carnal friends, their business, their company, their mirth. They could drink, play, or sleep away their sorrows. But now all these remedies are vanished. Their hard, presumptuous, unbelieving heart was a wall to defend them against trouble of mind. Satan was himself their comforter, as he was to our first mother. “Hath God said, ye shall not eat? Ye shall not surely die. Doth God tell you that you shall die in hell? There is no such matter; God is more merciful. Or, if there be a hell, what need you fear it? Are not

you Christians? Was not the blood of Christ shed for you?" Thus as the Spirit of Christ is the Comforter of the saints, so Satan is the comforter of the wicked. Never was a thief more careful lest he should awake the people when he is robbing a house, than Satan is not to awaken a sinner. But when the sinner is dead, then Satan hath done flattering and comforting. Which way, then, will the forlorn sinner look for comfort? They that drew him into the snare, and promised him safety, now forsake him, and are forsaken themselves. His comforts are gone, and the righteous God, whose forewarnings he made light of; will now make good his word against him to the last tittle.

8. But the greatest aggravation of these torments will be their eternity. When a thousand millions of ages are past, they are as fresh to begin as the first day. If there were any hope of an end, it would ease the damned to foresee it; but For ever is an intolerable thought! They were never weary of sinning, nor will God be weary of punishing. They never heartily repented of sin, nor will God repent of their suffering. They broke the laws of the eternal God, and therefore shall suffer eternal punishment. They knew it was an everlasting kingdom which they refused, and what wonder if they are everlastingly shut out of it? Their immortal souls were guilty of the trespass, and therefore must immortally suffer the pains. What happy men would they think themselves, if they might have lain still in their graves, or might but there lie down again! How will they call and cry, "O death, whither art thou now gone? Now come and cut off this doleful life. O that these pains would break my heart, and end my being! O that I might once at last die! O that I had never had a being!" These groans will the thoughts of eternity wring from their hearts. They were wont to think sermons and prayers long; how long then will they think these endless torments! What difference is there betwixt the length of their pleasures and their pains! The one continued but a moment, the other endure through all eternity. Sinner, remember how time is almost gone. Thou art standing at the door of eternity; and death is waiting to open the door, and put thee i., Go, sleep out a few more nights, and stir about a few more days on earth, and then thy nights and days shall end: thy thoughts, and cares, and pleasures shall all be devoured by eternity; thou must enter upon the state which shall never be changed. As the joys of heaven are beyond our conception, so are the pains of hell. Everlasting torment is inconceivable torment. But methinks I see the obstinate sinner desperately resolving, "If I must be damned, there is no remedy. Rather than I will live as the Scripture requires, I will put it to the venture; I shall escape as well as others, and we will even bear it as well as we can." Alas poor creature, let me beg this of thee, before thou dost so resolve, that thou wouldst lend me thy attention to a few questions, and weigh them with the reason of a man. Who art thou, that thou shouldst bear the wrath of God? What is thy strength? Is it not as the strength of wax or stubble to resist the fire or as chaff to the wind or as dust before the fierce whirlwind? If thy strength were as iron, and thy bones as brass; if thy foundation were as the earth, and thy power as the heavens, yet shouldst thou perish at the breath of his indignation. How much more, when thou art but a piece of breathing clay, kept a few days from being eaten with worms, by the mere support and favor of Him whom thou art thus resisting! Why dost thou tremble at the signs of almighty power and wrath? at peals of thunder or flashes of lightning or that unseen power which rends in pieces the mighty oaks, and tears down the strongest buildings; or at the plague, when it rageth around thee? If thou hadst seen the plagues of Egypt, or the earth swallow up Dathan and Abiram, or Elijah bring fire from heaven to destroy the captains and their companies, would not any of these sights have daunted thy spirit? How then canst thou bear the plagues of hell? Why art thou dismayed with such small sufferings as befall thee here: a tooth-ache, a fit of the gout or

stone, the loss of a limb, or falling into beggary and disgrace? And yet all these laid together will be one day accounted a happy state, in comparison of that which is suffered in hell. Why does the approach of death so much affright thee? O how cold it strikes to thy heart! And would not the grave be accounted a paradise, compared with that place of torment which thou slightest? Is it an intolerable thing to burn part of thy body by holding it in the fire? What, then, will it be to suffer ten thousand times more for ever in hell! The thought or mention of hell occasions disquiet in thy spirit; and canst thou endure the torments themselves? Why doth the rich man complain to Abraham of his torments in hell? or thy dying companions lose their courage, and change their haughty language? Why cannot these make as light of hell as thyself? Didst thou never see or speak with a man in despair? How uncomfortable was his talk! how burdensome his life! Nothing he possessed did him good: he had no sweetness in meat or drink; the sight of friends troubled him; he was weary of life, and fearful of death. If the misery of the damned can be endured, why cannot a man more easily endure these foretastes of hell? What if thou shouldst see the devil appear to thee in some terrible shape! Would not thy heart fail thee, and thy hair stand on an end? And how wilt thou endure to live for ever where thou shalt have no other company but devils and the damned, and shalt not only see them, but be tormented with them and by them? Let me once more ask, if the wrath of God be so light, why did the Son of God himself make so great a matter of it? It caused “his sweat to be, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground.” The Lord of life cried, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” And on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Surely if any one could have borne these sufferings easily, it would have been Jesus Christ. He had another measure of strength to bear it than thou hast. Woe to thee, sinner, for thy mad security! Dost thou think to find that tolerable to thee, which was so heavy to Christ? Nay, the Son of God is cast into a bitter agony and bloody sweat, only under the curse of the law and yet thou, feeble, foolish creature, fearest not to bear also the curse of the Gospel, which requires a “much sorer punishment.” The good Lord bring thee to thy right mind by repentance, lest thou buy thy wit at too dear a rate! And now, reader, I demand thy resolution. What use wilt thou make of all this? Shall it be lost to thee? or wilt thou consider it in good earnest? Thou hast cast away many a warning of God; wilt thou do so by this also? Take heed; God will not always stand warning and threatening. The hand of vengeance is lifted up, the blow is coming, and woe to him on whom it lighteth! Dost thou throw away the book, and say it speaks of nothing but hell and damnation? Thus thou usedst also to complain of the preacher. But wouldst thou not have us tell thee of these things? Should we be guilty of the blood of thy soul, by keeping silent that which God hath charged us to make known? Wouldst thou perish in ease and silence, and have us perish with thee, rather than displease thee by speaking the truth? If thou wilt be guilty of such inhuman cruelty, God forbid we should be guilty of such sottish folly! This kind of preaching or writing is the ready way to be hated; and the desire of applause is so natural, that few delight in such a displeasing way. But consider, are these things true, or are they not? If they were not true, I would heartily join with thee against any that fright people without a cause. But if these threatenings be the word of God, what a wretch art thou, that wilt not hear it and consider it! If thou art one of the people of God, this doctrine will be a comfort to thee, and not a terror. If thou art yet unregenerate, methinks thou shouldst be as fearful to hear of heaven as hell, except the bare name of heaven or salvation be sufficient. Preaching heaven and mercy to thee, is entreating thee to seek them, and not reject them; and preaching hell, is but to persuade thee to avoid it. If thou wert quite past hope of escaping it, then it were in vain to tell thee of hell; but as long as thou art alive there is hope of

thy recovery, and therefore all means must be used to awake thee from thy lethargy. Alas! what heart can now possibly conceive, or what tongue express, the pains of those souls that are under the wrath of God! Then, sinners, you will be crying to Jesus Christ, “O mercy! O pity, pity on a poor soul!” Why, I do now, in the name of The Lord Jesus, cry to thee. “O have mercy, have pity, man, upon thy own soul!” Shall God pity thee, who wilt not be entreated to pity thyself? If thy horse see but a pit before him, thou canst scarcely force him in; and wilt thou so obstinately cast thyself into hell, when the danger is foretold thee? “Who can stand before the indignation of the Lord? and who can abide the fierceness of his anger?” Methinks thou shouldst need no more words, but presently cast away thy soul-damning sins, and wholly deliver up thyself to Christ. Resolve on it immediately, and let it be done, that I may see thy face in rest among the saints. May the Lord persuade thy heart to strike this covenant without any longer delay! But if thou be hardened unto death, and there be no remedy, yet say not another day but that thou wast faithfully warned, and hadst a friend that would fain have prevented thy damnation.

6.08. CHAPTER VII

THE NECESSITY OF DILIGENTLY SEEKING THE SAINTS' REST. The saints' rest surprisingly neglected. The author mourns the neglect, and excites the reader to diligence, by considering, 1. The ends we aim at, the work we have to do, the shortness and uncertainty of our time, and the diligence of our enemies; 2. Our talents, mercies, relations to God, and our afflictions; 3. What assistance we have, what principles we profess, and our certainty never to do enough; 4. That every grace tends to diligence, and to trifle is lost labor; that much time is misspent and that our recompense and labor will be proportionable; 5. That striving is the divine appointment; all men do or will approve it; the best Christians, at death, lament their want of it; heaven is often lost for want of it, but never obtained without it; 6. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are in earnest; God is so in hearing and answering prayer; ministers in their instructions and exhortations; all the creatures in serving us; sinners in serving the devil, as we were once, and now are, in worldly things, and in heaven and hell all are in earnest.

If there be so certain and glorious a rest for the saints, why is there no more earnest seeking after it? One would think, if a man did but once hear of such unspeakable glory to be obtained, and believed what he heard, he would be transported with the vehemency of his desire after it, and would almost forget to eat and drink, and would care for nothing else, and speak of and inquire after nothing else, but how to get this treasure. And yet people who hear of it daily, and profess to believe it as a fundamental article of their faith, as little mind it, or labor for it, as if they had never heard of any such thing, or did not believe one word they hear. This reproof is applicable to the worldly-minded, to the profane multitude, to formal professors, and even to the godly themselves. The worldly-minded are so taken up in seeking the things below, that they have neither heart nor time to seek this rest. O foolish sinners, "who hath bewitched you?" The world bewitches men into brute beasts, and draws them even to madness. See what riding and running, what scrambling and catching for a thing of nought, while eternal rest lies neglected! What contriving and caring to get a step higher in the world than their brethren, while they neglect the kingly dignity of the saints! What insatiable pursuit of fleshly pleasures, while they regard the praises of God, the joy of angels, as a tiresome burden! What unwearied diligence in raising their posterity, enlarging their possessions, (perhaps for a poor living from hand to mouth,) while judgment is drawing near! but how it shall go with them then, never brings them to one hour's consideration! What rising early and sitting up late, and laboring from year to year, to maintain themselves and children in credit till they die! but what shall follow after they never think! Yet these men cry, "May we not be saved without so much ado?" How early do they rouse up their servants to their labor! but how seldom do they call them to prayer, or reading the Scriptures! What hath this world done for its lovers and friends, that it is so eagerly followed and painfully sought after, while Christ and heaven are neglected? or what will the world do for them for the time to come? The common entrance into it is through anguish and sorrow. The passage through it is with continual care and labor. The passage out of it is the sharpest of all. O unreasonable, deluded men! will mirth and pleasure stay by you? will gold and worldly glory prove fast friends to you in the time of your greatest need? Will they

hear your cries in the day of your calamity? At the hour of your death will they either answer or relieve you? Will they go along with you to the other world, and bribe the Judge and bring you off clear, or purchase you a place among the blessed? Why then did the rich man want “a drop of water to cool his tongue?” Or are the sweet morsels of present delight and honor of more worth than eternal rest? And will they recompense the loss of that enduring treasure? Can there be the least hope of any of these? Ah, vile, deceitful world! how oft have we heard thy most faithful servants at last complaining, “O, the world hath deceived me, and undone me! It flattered me in my prosperity, but now it turns me off in my necessity. If I had as faithfully served Christ as I have served it, he would not have left me thus comfortless and hopeless.” Thus they complain; and yet succeeding sinners will take no warning. As for the profane multitude, they will not be persuaded to be at so much pains for salvation as to perform the common outward duties of religion. If they have the Gospel preached in the town where they dwell, it may be they will give the hearing to it one part of the day, and stay at home the other; or if the master come to the congregation, yet part of his family must stay at home. If they have not the plain and powerful preaching of the Gospel, how few are there in a whole town who will travel a mile or two to hear abroad though they will go many miles to the market for provisions for their bodies! They know the Scripture is the law of God, by which they must be acquitted or condemned in the judgment; and that “the man is blessed who delights in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth meditate day and night;” yet will they not be at the pains to read a chapter once a day. If they carry a Bible to church, and neglect it all the week, this is the most use they make of it. Though they are commanded to pray without ceasing, and to pray always, yet they will neither pray constantly in their families nor in secret. Though Daniel would rather be cast to the lions than forbear praying three times a day in his house, where his enemies might hear him; yet these men will rather venture to be an eternal prey to Satan, the roaring lion, than thus seek their own safety. Or their cold and heartless prayers invite God to a denial: for among men it is taken for granted, that he who asks but slightly and seldom, cares not much for what he asks. They judge themselves unworthy of heaven, who think it not worth their more constant and earnest requests. If every door was marked where families do not, morning and evening, earnestly seek the Lord in prayer, and his wrath were poured out upon such prayerless families, our towns would be as places overthrown by the plague, the people being dead within, and the mark of judgment without: I fear, where one house would escape, ten would be marked out for death; and the very doors, as it were, cry, “Lord, have mercy upon us,” because the people would not pray themselves. But especially if we could see what men do in their secret chambers, how few would you find in a whole town that spend one quarter of an hour, morning and night, in earnest supplication to God for their souls! O how little do these men value eternal rest! Thus do they slothfully neglect all endeavors for their own welfare, except some public duty in the congregation, to which custom or credit engages them. Persuade them to read good books, learn the grounds of religion in their catechism, and sanctify the Lord’s day in prayer, and meditation, and hearing the word, forbearing all worldly thoughts and speeches, and what a tedious life do they take this to be! as if they thought heaven were not worth doing so much for.

Another class are formal professors, who will be brought to any outward duty, but to the inward work of religion they will never be persuaded. They will preach, or hear, or read, or talk of heaven, or pray in their families, and take part with the persons or causes that are good, and desire to be esteemed among the godly; but you can never bring them to the more spiritual duties,-as to be constant and fervent in secret prayer and meditation; conscientious in self-examination;

heavenly-minded; to watch over their hearts, words and ways; to mortify the flesh, and not make provision to fulfil its lusts; to love and heartily forgive an enemy, and prefer their brethren before themselves; to lay all they have, or do, at the feet of Christ, and prize his service and favor before all, to prepare to die and willingly leave all to go to Christ. Hypocrites will never be persuaded to any of these. If any hypocrite entertains the Gospel with joy, it is only in the surface of his soul; he never gives the seed any depth of earth: it changes his opinions, but never melts and new moulds his heart, nor sets up Christ there in full power and authority. As his religion lies most in opinion, so does his chief business and conversation. He is usually an ignorant, bold, conceited dealer in controversies, rather than an humble embracer of known truth with love and obedience. By his slighting the judgments and persons of others, and seldom talking with seriousness and humility of the great things of Christ, he shows his religion dwells in his brain, and not in his heart. The wind of temptation carries him away as a feather, because his heart is not established with Christ and grace. He never, in private conversation, humbly bewails his soul's imperfections, or tenderly acknowledges his unkindness to Christ; but gathers his greatest comfort from his being of such a persuasion or party. The like may be said of the worldly hypocrite, who chokes the Gospel with the thorns of worldly cares and desires. He is convinced that he must be religious, or he cannot be saved; and therefore he reads, and hears, and prays, and forsakes his former company and courses but he resolves to keep his hold of present things. His judgment may say, God is the chief good; but his heart and affections never said so. The world has more of his affections than God, and therefore it is his god. Though he does not run after opinions and novelties, like the world, yet he will be of that opinion which will best serve his worldly advantage. And as one whose spirits are enfeebled by some pestilential disease, so this man's spirits being possessed by the plague of a worldly disposition, how feeble is he in secret prayer! how superficial in examination and meditation! how poor in heart-watchings! how nothing at all in loving and walking with God, rejoicing in him, or desiring him! So that both these and many other sorts of hypocrites, though they will go with you in the easy outside of religion, yet will never be at the pains of inward and spiritual duties. And even the godly themselves are too lazy seekers of their everlasting rest. Alas! what a disproportion is there between our light and heat, our profession and prosecution! Who makes such haste as if it were for heaven? How still we stand! how idly we work! how we talk, and jest, and trifle away our time! how deceitfully we perform the work of God! how we hear, as if we heard not! and pray, as if we prayed not! and examine, and meditate, and reprove sin, as if we did it not! and enjoy Christ, as if we enjoyed him not! as if we had learned to use the things of heaven as the apostle teacheth us to "use the things of the world!" What a frozen stupidity has benumbed us! We are dying, and we know it, and yet we stir not; we are at the door of eternal happiness or misery, and yet we perceive it not; death knocks, and we hear it not; God and Christ call and cry to us, "Today, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts; work while it is day, for the night cometh, when none can work." Now ply your business, labor for your lives, lay out all your strength and time now or never! and yet we stir no more than if we were half asleep. What haste do death and judgment make! how fast do they come on! they are almost upon us, and yet what little haste we make! Lord, what a senseless, earthly, hellish thing is a hard head! Where is the man that is in earnest a Christian? Methinks men every where make but a trifle of their eternal state. They look after it but a little by the by; they do not make it the business of their lives. If I were not sick myself of the same disease, with what tears should I mix this ink! with what groans should I express these complaints! and with what heart-grief should I mourn over this universal deadness! Do magistrates

among us seriously perform their work? Are they zealous for God? Do they build up his house? Are they tender of his honor? Do they second the word and oppose sin and sinners, as the disturbers of our peace and the only cause of all our miseries? Do they improve all their power, wealth, and honor, and all their influence, for the greatest advantage to the kingdom of Christ, as men that must shortly give an account of their stewardship?

How few are the ministers who are serious in their work! Nay, how grievously do the very best fail in this! Do we cry out of men's disobedience to the Gospel "in the demonstration of the Spirit," and deal with sin as the destroying fire in our towns, and by force pull men out of it? Do we persuade our people as those should that "know the terrors of the Lord?" Do we press Christ, and regeneration, and faith, and holiness upon men, believing that, without these, they can never have life? Do our bowels yearn over the ignorant, careless, obstinate multitude? When we look them in the face, do our hearts melt over them, lest we should never see their faces in rest? Do we, as Paul, "tell them, weeping," of their fleshly and earthly disposition; "and teach them publicly, and from house to house, at all seasons, and with many tears?" And do we entreat them, as for their soul's salvation? Or rather, do we not study to gain the approbation of critical hearers; as if a minister's business were of no more weight but to tell a smooth tale for an hour, and look no more after the people till the next sermon? Does not carnal prudence control our fervor, and make our discourses lifeless on subjects the most piercing? How gently do we handle those sins which will so cruelly handle our people's souls! In a word, our want of seriousness about the things of heaven, charms the souls of men into formality, and brings them to this customary careless hearing, which undoes them. May the Lord pardon the great sin of the ministry in this thing and, in particular, my own! And are the people more serious than magistrates or ministers? How can it be expected? Reader, look but to thyself and resolve the question. Ask conscience, and suffer it to tell thee truly. Hast thou set thy eternal rest before thine eyes, as the great business thou hast to do in this world? Hast thou watched and labored with all thy might, "that no man take thy crown?" Hast thou made haste, lest thou shouldst come too late, and die before thy work be done? Hast thou pressed on, through crowds of opposition, "toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," till "reaching forth unto those things which are before?" Can conscience witness your secret cries, and groans, and tears? Can your family witness that you taught them the fear of the Lord, and warned them not to "go to that place of torment?" Can your minister witness that he has heard you cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" and that you have followed him with complaints against your corruptions, and with earnest inquiries after the Lord? Can your neighbors about you witness that you reprove the ungodly, and take pains to save the souls of your brethren? Let all these witnesses judge this day between God and you, whether you are in earnest about eternal rest. You can tell by his work whether your servant has loitered, though you did not see him; so you may, by looking at your own work. Are your love to Christ, your faith, your zeal, and other graces, strong or weak? What are your joys? What is your assurance? Is all in order with you? Are you ready to die, if this should be the day? Do the souls among whom you have conversed bless you? Judge by this, and it will quickly appear whether you have been laborers or loiterers.

O blessed rest, how unworthily art thou neglected! O glorious kingdom, how art thou undervalued! Little know the careless sons of men what a state they so neglect. If they once knew it, they would surely be of another mind. I hope thou, reader, art sensible what a desperate thing it is to trifle

about eternal rest, and how deeply thou hast been guilty of this thyself. And I hope, also, thou wilt not suffer this conviction to die. Should the physician tell thee, “If you will observe but one thing, I doubt not to cure your disease,” wouldst thou not observe it? So I tell thee, if thou wilt observe but this one thing for thy soul, I make no doubt of thy salvation; shake off thy sloth, and put to all thy strength, and be a Christian indeed: I know not then what can hinder thy happiness. As far as thou art gone from God, seek him with all thy heart, and no doubt thou shalt find him. As unkind as thou hast been to Jesus Christ, seek him heartily, obey him unreservedly, and thy salvation is as sure as if thou hadst it already. But, full as Christ’s satisfaction is, free as the promise is, large as the mercy of God is, if thou only talk of these when thou shouldst eagerly entertain them, thou wilt be never the better for them: and if thou loiter when thou shouldst labor, thou wilt lose the crown. Fall to work, then, speedily and seriously, and bless God that thou hast yet time to do it. To show that I urge thee not without cause, I will here add a variety of animating considerations. Rouse up thy spirit, and, as Moses said to Israel, “set thy heart unto all the words which I testify unto thee this day; for it is not a vain thing, because it is your life.” May the Lord open thy heart, and fasten his counsel effectually upon thee!

1. Consider how reasonable it is that our diligence should be answerable to the ends we aim at, to the work we have to do, to the shortness and uncertainty of our time, and to the contrary diligence of our enemies. The ends of a Christian’s desire and endeavors are so great that no human understanding can comprehend them. What is so excellent, so important, or so necessary as the glorifying of God, the salvation of our own and other men’s souls, by escaping the torments of hell, and possessing the glory of heaven? And can a man be too much affected with things of such moment? Can he desire them too earnestly, or love them too strongly, or labor for them too diligently? Do not we know, that if our prayers prevail not, and our labor succeeds not, we are undone for ever? The work of a Christian here is very great and various. The soul must be renewed; corruptions must be mortified; customs, temptations, and worldly interests must be conquered; flesh must be subdued; life, friends, and credit must be slighted; conscience, on good grounds, be quieted and assurance of pardon and salvation attained. Though God must give us these without our merit, yet he will not give them without our earnest seeking and labor. Besides, there is much knowledge to be acquired, many ordinances to be used and duties to be performed; every age, year and day, every place we come to, every person we deal with, every change of our condition, still require the renewing of our labor; wives, children, servants, neighbors, friends, enemies, all of them call for duty from us. Judge, then, whether men that have so much business lying upon their hands, should not exert themselves; and whether it be their wisdom either to delay or loiter.

Time passeth on. Yet a few days, and we shall be here no more. Many diseases are ready to assault us. We, that are now preaching, and hearing, and talking, and walking, must very shortly be carried and laid in the dust, and there left to the worms, in darkness and corruption; we are almost there already; we know not whether we shall have another sermon, or Sabbath, or hour. How active should they be who know they have so short a space for so great a work! And we have enemies that are always plotting and laboring for our destruction. How diligent is Satan in all kinds of temptations! Therefore “be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith.” How diligent are all the “ministers of Satan! false teachers, scoffers, persecutors,” and our inbred corruptions,

the most busy and diligent of all! Will a feeble resistance serve our turn? Should not we be more active for our own preservation than our enemies are for our ruin?

2. It should excite us to diligence, when we consider our talents and our mercies, our relation to God, and the afflictions he lays upon us. The talents which we have received are many and great. What people breathing on earth have had plainer instructions, or more forcible persuasions, or more constant admonitions, in season and out of season? sermons, till we have been weary of them, and Sabbaths, till we have profaned them; excellent books in such plenty that we knew not which to read? What people have had God so near them? or have seen so much of Christ crucified before their eyes? or have had heaven and hell so open unto them? What speed should such a people make for heaven! how should they fly that are thus winged! and how swiftly should they sail that have wind and tide to help them! A small measure of grace becomes not such a people, nor will an ordinary diligence in the work of God excuse them.

All our lives have been filled with mercies. God hath mercifully poured out upon us the riches of sea and land, of heaven and earth. We are fed and clothed with mercy. We have mercies within and without. To number them, is to count the stars or the sands of the sea-shore. If there be any difference betwixt hell and earth, yea, or heaven and earth, then certainly we have received mercy. If the blood of the Son of God be mercy, then we are engaged to God by mercy. Shall God think nothing too much nor to good for us; and shall we think all too much that we do for him? When I compare my slow and unprofitable life with the frequent and wonderful mercies received, it shames me, it silences me, and leaves me inexcusable.

Besides our talents and mercies, our relations to God are most endearing. Are we his children, and do we not owe him our most tender affections and dutiful obedience? Are we “the spouse of Christ,” and should we not obey and love him? “If he be a Father, where is his honor? and if he be a Master where is his fear? We call him Master, and Lord, and we say well;” but if our industry be not answerable to our relations, we condemn ourselves in saying we are his children or his servants. How will the hard labor and daily toil which servants undergo to please their masters, judge and condemn those who will not labor so hard for their great Master? Surely there is no master like him; nor can any servants expect such fruit of their labors as his servants. And if we wander out of God’s way, or loiter in it, how is every creature ready to be his rod to bring us back or urge us on! Our sweetest mercies will become our sorrows. Rather than want a rod, the Lord will make us a scourge to ourselves; our diseased bodies shall make us groan; our perplexed minds shall make us restless; our conscience shall be as a scorpion in our bosom. And is it not easier to endure the labor than the spur? Had we rather be still afflicted, than be up and doing? And though they that do most, meet also with afflictions; yet surely, according to their peace of conscience and faithfulness to Christ, the bitterness of their cup is abated.

3. To quicken our diligence in our work, we should also consider what assistance we have, what principles we profess, and our certainty that we can never do too much. For our assistance in the service of God, all the world are our servants. The sun, moon, and stars attend us with their light and influence. The earth, with all its furniture of plants and flowers, fruits, birds, and beasts; the sea, with its inhabitants; the air, the wind, the frost and snow, the heat and fire, the clouds and rain, all wait upon us while we do our work. Yea, “the angels are all our ministering spirits.” Nay more, the patience of God doth wait upon us; the Lord Jesus Christ waiteth in the offers of his

blood; the Holy Spirit waiteth, by striving with our backward hearts; besides the ministers of the Gospel, who study and wait, preach and wait, pray and wait upon careless sinners. And is it not an intolerable crime for us to trifle, while angels and men, yea, the Lord himself, stand by and look on, and, as it were, hold us the candle while we do nothing? I beseech you, Christians, whenever you are praying, or reproving transgressors, or upon any duty, remember what assistance you have for your work, and then judge how you ought to perform it. The principles we profess are, that God is the chief good; that all our happiness consists in his love, and therefore it should be valued and sought above all things; that he is our only Lord, and therefore chiefly to be served; that we must love him with all our heart, and soul, and strength; that our great business in the world is to glorify God and obtain salvation. Are these doctrines seen in our practice? or rather, do not our works deny what our words confess?

But, however our assistance and principles excite us to our work, we are sure we can never do too much. Could we “do all, we are unprofitable servants;” much more when we are sure to fail in all. No man can obey or serve God too much. Though all superstition, or service of our own devising, may be called a “being righteous over much;” yet, as long as we keep to the rule of the world, we can never be righteous too much. The world are mad with malice when they think that faithful diligence in the service of Christ is foolish singularity. The time is near, when they will easily confess that God could not be loved or served too much, and that no man can be too earnest to save his soul. We may easily do too much for the world, but we cannot for God.

4. Let us further consider that it is the nature of every grace to promote diligence, that trifling in the way to heaven is lost labor, that much precious time is already misspent, and that in proportion to our labor will be our recompense.

See the nature and tendency of every grace. If you loved God, you would think nothing too much that you could possibly do to serve him and please him. Love is quick and impatient, active and observant. If you loved Christ, you would keep his commandments, nor accuse them of too much strictness. If you had faith, it would quicken and encourage you. If you had the hope of glory, it would, as the spring in the watch, set all the wheels of your souls a-going. If you had the fear of God, it would rouse you out of your slothfulness. If you had zeal, it would inflame, and “eat you up.” In what degree soever thou art sanctified, in the same degree thou wilt be serious and laborious in the work of God.

They that trifle lose their labor. Many, who, like Agrippa, are but almost Christians, will find, in the end, they shall be but almost saved. If two be running in a race, he that runs slowest loses both prize and labor. A man that is lifting at a weight, if he put not sufficient strength to it, had as good put none at all. How many duties have Christians lost for want of doing them thoroughly! “Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able,” who, if they had striven, might have been able. Therefore, put to a little more diligence and strength, that all you have done already be not in vain.

Besides, is not much precious time already lost? With some of us, childhood and youth are gone; with some, their middle age also; and the time before us is very uncertain. What time have we slept, talked, and played away, or spent in worldly thoughts and cares! How little of our work is done! The time we have lost cannot be recalled; should we not, then, redeem and improve the little which remains? If a traveller sleep or trifle most of the day, he must travel so much faster in the evening, or fall short of his journey’s end.

Doubt not but the recompense will be according to your labor. The seed which is buried and dead will bring forth a plentiful harvest. Whatever you do or suffer, everlasting rest will pay for all. There is no relenting of labors or sufferings in heaven. There no one says, “Would I had spared my pains, and prayed less, or been less strict, and done as the rest of my neighbors!” On the contrary, it will be their joy to look back upon their labors and tribulations, and to consider how the mighty power of God brought them through all. We may all say, as Paul, “I reckon that the sufferings” and labors “of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” We labor but for a moment; we shall rest for ever. Who would not put forth all his strength for one hour, when, for that hour’s work, he may be a prince while he lives? “God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labor of love.” Will not “all our tears be wiped away,” and all the sorrow of our duties be then forgotten?

5. Nor does it less deserve to be considered, that striving is the divinely appointed way of salvation; that all men either do, or will approve it; that the best Christians, at death, lament their negligence; and that heaven itself is often lost for want of striving, but is never had on easier terms. The sovereign wisdom of God has made striving necessary to salvation. Who knows the way to heaven better than the God of heaven? When men tell us we are too strict, whom do they accuse, God or us? If it were a fault, it would lie in him that commands, and not in us who obey. These are the men that ask us, whether we are wiser than all the world beside and yet they will pretend to be wiser than God. How can they reconcile their language with the laws of God? “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” Let them bring all the seeming reasons they can against the holy violence of the saints; this sufficeth me to confute them all, that God is of another mind, and he hath commanded me to do much more than I do; and though I could see no other reason for it, his will is reason enough. Who should make laws for us, but he that made us? and who should point out the way to heaven, but he that must bring us thither? and who should fix the terms of salvation, but he that bestows the gift of salvation? So that, let the world, the flesh, or the devil speak against a holy, laborious life, this is my answer, God hath commanded it. Nay, there never was, nor ever will be, a man but will approve such a life, and will one day justify the diligence of the saints. And who would not go that way which every man shall finally applaud? True, it is now “a way every where spoken against.” But let me tell you, most that speak against it, in their judgments approve of it; and those that are now against it, will shortly be of another mind. If they come to heaven, their mind must be changed before they come there. If they go to hell, their judgment will then be altered whether they will or not. Remember this, you that love the opinion and way of the multitude. Why, then, will you not be of the opinion that all will be of? Why will you be of a judgment which you are sure, all of you, shortly to change? O that you were but as wise in this as those in hell!

Even the best of Christians, when they come to die, exceedingly lament their negligence. They then wish, “O that I had been a thousand times more holy, more heavenly, more laborious for my soul! The world accuses me for doing too much, but my own conscience accuses me for doing too little. It is far easier bearing the scoffs of the world than the lashes of conscience. I had rather be

reproached by the devil for seeking salvation, than reproved of God for neglecting it." How do their failings thus wound and disquiet those who have been the wonder of the world for their heavenly conversation!

It is for want of diligence that heaven itself is lost. When they that have "heard the word, and anon with joy received it, and have done many things, and heard" the ministers of Christ gladly, shall yet perish, should not this rouse us out of our security? How far hath many a man followed Christ, and yet forsaken him when all worldly interests and hopes were to be renounced! God hath resolve that heaven shall not be had on easier terms. Rest must always follow labor. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Seriousness is the very thing wherein consists our sincerity. If thou art not serious, thou art not a Christian. It is not only a high degree in Christianity, but the very life and essence of it. As fencers upon a stage differ from soldiers fighting for their lives, so hypocrites differ from serious Christians. If men could be saved without this serious diligence, they would never regard it; all the excellencies of God's ways would never entice them. But when God hath resolved, that, without serious diligence here, we shall not rest hereafter, is it not wisdom to exert ourselves to the uttermost?

6. But to persuade thee, if possible, reader, to be serious in thy endeavors for heaven, let me add more considerations: as, for instance, consider-

God is in earnest with you; and why should you not be so with him? In his commands, his threatenings, his promises, he means as he speaks. In his judgments he is serious. Was he not so when he drowned the world, when he consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, and when he scattered the Jews? Is it time, then, to trifle with God? Jesus Christ was serious in purchasing our redemption. In teaching, he neglected his meat and drink: in prayer, he continued all night: in doing good, his friends thought him beside himself: in suffering, he fasted forty days, was tempted, betrayed, spit upon, buffeted, crowned with thorns, sweat drops of blood, was crucified, pierced, died. There was no jesting in all this. And should we not be serious in seeking our own salvation? The Holy Spirit is serious in soliciting us to be happy. His motions are frequent, pressing, and importunate. "He striveth with us." He is grieved when we resist him; and should we not be serious then, in obeying and yielding to his motions? God is serious in hearing our prayers, and bestowing his mercies. He is afflicted with us. He "regardeth every groan and sigh, and puts every tear into his bottle." The next time thou art in trouble thou wilt beg for a serious regard of thy prayers. And shall we expect real mercies when we are slight and superficial in the work of God? The ministers of Christ are serious in exhorting and instructing you. They beg of God, and of you; and long more for the salvation of your souls than for any worldly good. If they kill themselves by their labor, or suffer martyrdom for preaching the Gospel, they think their lives are well bestowed, so that they prevail for the saving of your souls. And shall other men be so careful and self-denying for your salvation, and you be so careless and negligent of your own?

How diligent and serious are all the creatures in serving you! What haste makes the sun to compass the world! The fountains are always flowing for thy use; the rivers still running; spring and harvest keep their times. How hard does thy ox labor for thee from day to day! How speedily does thy horse travel with thee! And shalt thou only be negligent? Shall all these be so serious in serving thee, and thou so careless in thy service to God? The servants of the world and the devil are serious and diligent. They work as if they could never do enough: they make haste, as if afraid

of coming to hell too late: they bear down ministers, sermons, and all before them. And shall they be more diligent for damnation than thou for salvation? Hast thou not a better Master, sweeter employment, greater encouragements, and a better reward? Time was when thou wast serious thyself in serving Satan and the flesh, if it be not so yet. How eagerly didst thou follow thy sports, thy evil company, and sinful delights! And wilt thou not now be as earnest and violent for God? You are to this day in earnest about the things of this life. If you are sick or in pain, what serious complaints do you utter! If you are poor, how hard do you labor for a livelihood! And is not the business of your salvation of far greater moment?

There is no jesting in heaven or hell. The saints have a real happiness, and the damned a real misery. There are no remiss or sleepy praises in heaven, nor such lamentations in hell. All there are in earnest. When thou, reader, shalt come to death and judgment, O what deep, heart-piercing thoughts wilt thou have of eternity! Methinks I foresee thee already astonished to think how thou couldst possibly make so light of these things. Methinks I even hear thee crying out of thy stupidity and madness. And now, reader, having laid down these undeniable arguments, I do, in the name of God, demand thy resolution: wilt thou yield obedience or not? I am confident thy conscience is convinced of thy duty. Darest thou now go on in thy common, careless course, against the plain evidence of reason and commands of God, and against the light of thy own conscience? Darest thou live as loosely, sin as boldly, and pray as seldom as before? Darest thou profane the Sabbath, slight the service of God, and think of thine everlasting state as carelessly as before? Or dost thou not rather resolve to “gird up the loins of thy mind,” and set thyself wholly to the work of thy salvation, and break through the oppositions, and slight the scoffs and persecutions of the world, and “lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset thee, and run with patience the race that is before thee?” I hope these are thy full resolutions. Yet, because I know the obstinacy of the heart of man, and because I am solicitous that thy soul should live, I once more entreat thy attention to the following questions and I command thee from God, that thou stifle not thy conscience, nor resist conviction but answer them faithfully, and obey accordingly.

If; by being diligent in godliness, you could grow rich, get honor, or preferment in the world, be recovered from sickness, or live for ever in prosperity on earth, what lives would you lead, and what pains would you take in the service of God? And is not the saints’ rest a more excellent happiness than all this? If it were felony to break the Sabbath, neglect secret or family worship, or be loose in your lives, what manner of persons would you then be? And is not eternal death more terrible than temporal? If God usually punished with some present judgment every act of sin, as he did the lie of Ananias and Sapphira, what kind of lives would you lead? And is not eternal wrath far more terrible? If one of your acquaintance should come from the dead and tell you that he suffered the torments of hell for those sins you are guilty of, what manner of persons would you be afterwards? How much more should the warnings of God affright you? If you knew that this were the last day you had to live in the world, how would you spend it? And you know not but it may be your last, and are sure your last is near. If you had seen the general dissolution of the world, and all the pomp and glory of it consumed to ashes, what would such a sight persuade you to do? Such a sight you shall certainly see. If you had seen the judgment-seat, and the books opened, and the wicked stand trembling on the left hand of the Judge, and the godly rejoicing on the right hand, and their different sentences pronounced, what persons would you have been after such a sight! This sight you shall one day surely see. If you had seen hell open, and all the damned there

in their endless torments; also heaven opened, as Stephen did, and all the saints there triumphing in glory; what a life would you lead after such sights! These you will see before it be long. If you had lain in hell but one year, or one day, or hour, and there felt the torments you now hear of; how seriously would you then speak of hell, and pray against it! And will you not take God's word for the truth of this, except you feel it? Or, if you had possessed the glory of heaven but one year, what pains would you take rather than be deprived of such incomparable glory!

Thus I have said enough, if not to stir up the sinner to a serious working out his salvation, yet at least to silence him, and leave him inexcusable at the judgment of God. Only as we do by our friends when they are dead, and our words and actions can do them no good, yet to testify our affection for them we weep and mourn, so will I also do for these unhappy souls. It makes my heart tremble to think how they will stand before the Lord, confounded and speechless! When he shall say, "Was the world, or Satan, a better friend to you than I? or had they done for you more than I had done? Try now whether they will save you, or recompense you for the loss of heaven, or be as good to you as I would have been "-what will the wretched sinner answer to any of this? But though man will not hear, we may hope in speaking to God:

"O thou that didst weep and groan in spirit over a dead Lazarus, pity these dead and senseless souls, till they are able to weep and groan in pity to themselves! As thou hast bid thy servants speak, so speak now thyself. They will hear thy voice speaking to their hearts, who will not hear mine speaking to their ears. Lord, thou hast long knocked at these hearts in vain; now break the doors and enter in." To show the godly why they, above all men, should be laborious for heaven, I desire to ask them, What manner of persons should those be whom God hath chosen to be vessels of mercy? who have felt the smart of their negligence in their new birth, in their troubles of conscience, in their doubts and fears, and in other sharp afflictions? who have often confessed their sins of negligence to God in prayer? who have bound themselves to God by so many covenants? What manner of persons should they be who are near to God, as the children of his family; who have tasted such sweetness in diligent obedience; who are many of them so uncertain what shall everlastingly become of their souls? What manner of persons should they be in holiness, whose sanctification is so imperfect; whose lives and duties are so important to the saving or destroying a multitude of souls; and on whom the glory of the great God so much depends? Since these things are so, I charge thee, Christian, in thy Master's name, to consider and resolve the question, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" And let thy life answer the question as well as thy tongue.

6.09. CHAPTER VIII

HOW TO DISCERN OUR TITLE TO THE SAINTS' REST.

Self-examination urged, 1. From the possibility of arriving at a certainty; 2. From the hindrances which will be thrown in our way by Satan, sinners, our own hearts, and many other causes; 3. From considering how easy, common and dangerous it is to be mistaken; that trying will not be so painful as the neglect; that God will soon try us, and that to try ourselves will be profitable. 4. Directions how to try ourselves. 5. Marks for trial, particularly, Do we make God our chief good? Do we heartily accept of Christ for our Lord and Savior? Is there such a glorious rest so near at hand and shall none enjoy it but the people of God? What mean most of the world, then, to live so contentedly without assurance of their interest in this rest, and neglect the trying of their title to it? When the Lord has so fully opened the blessedness of that kingdom which none but obedient believers shall possess; and so fully expressed those torments which the rest of the world must eternally suffer; methinks they that believe this to be certainly true, should never be at any quiet in themselves, till they are fully assured of their being heirs of the kingdom. Lord, what a strange madness is this, that men, who know they must presently enter upon unchangeable joy or pain, should yet live as uncertain what shall be their doom as if they had never heard of any such state; yea, and live as quietly and merrily in this uncertainty as if all were made sure, and there were no danger! Are these men alive, or dead? Are they awake, or asleep? What do they think on? Where are their hearts? If they have but a weighty suit at law, how careful are they to know whether it will go for or against them! If they were to be tried for their lives at an earthly bar, how careful would they be to know whether they should he saved or condemned, especially if their care might surely save them! If they be dangerously sick they will inquire of the physician, "What think you, sir; shall I escape, or not?" But in the business of their salvation they are content to be uncertain.

If you ask of most men "a reason of the hope that is in them," they will say, "Because God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners," and the like general reasons, which any man in the world may give as well as they, but put them to prove their interest in Christ and in the saving mercy of God, and they can say nothing to the purpose. If God or man should say to one of them, "Friend, what is the state of thy soul? Is it regenerate, sanctified and pardoned, or not?" He would say, as Cain of Abel, "I know not; am I my soul's keeper? I hope well; I trust God with my soul; I shall speed as well as other men do; I thank God I never made any doubt of my salvation." Thou hast cause to doubt, because thou didst never doubt; and yet more, because thou hast been so careless in thy confidence. What do thy expressions discover but a wilful neglect of thy own salvation? as a ship-master that should let his vessel alone, and say, "I will venture it among the rocks, and waves, and winds; I will trust God with it; it will speed as well as other vessels." What horrible abuse of God is this, to pretend to trust God, to cloak their own wilful negligence! If thou didst really trust God, thou wouldst also be ruled by him, and trust him in his own appointed way. He requires thee to give "diligence to make thy calling and election sure," and so trust him. He hath marked out a way in scripture by which thou art charged to search and try thyself, and mayest arrive at certainty. Were he not a foolish traveller that would hold on his way when he does not

know whether he be right or wrong; and say, “I hope I am right; I will go on, and trust in God?” Art thou not guilty of this folly in thy travel to eternity? not considering that a little serious inquiry whether thy way be right, might save thee a great deal of labor, which thou bestowest in vain, and must undo again, or else thou wilt miss of salvation and undo thyself.

How canst thou think or speak of the great God without terror, as long as thou art uncertain whether he be thy father or thy enemy, and knowest not but all his perfections may be employed against thee? or of Jesus Christ, when thou knowest not whether his blood hath purged thy soul; whether he will condemn or acquit thee in judgment; or whether he be the foundation of thy happiness, or stone of stumbling to break thee and grind thee to powder? How canst thou open the Bible and read a chapter, but it should terrify thee? Methinks every leaf should be to thee as Belshazzar’s writing on the wall, except only that which draws thee to try and reform. If thou readest the promises, thou knowest not whether they shall be fulfilled to thee. If thou readest the threatenings, for any thing thou knowest, thou readest thy own sentence. No wonder thou art an enemy to plain preaching, and sayest of the minister, as Ahab of the prophet, “I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” How canst thou without terror join in prayer? When thou receivest the Lord’s supper, thou knowest not whether it be thy bane or bliss. What comfort canst thou find in thy friends, and honors, and houses, and lands, till thou knowest thou hast the love of God with them, and shalt have rest with him when thou leavest them? Offer a prisoner, before he knows his sentence, either music, or clothes, or preferment; what are they to him, till he knows he shall escape with his life? for if he knows he must die the next day, it will be small comfort to die rich or honorable. Methinks it should be so with thee till thou knowest thy eternal state. When thou liest down to take thy rest, methinks the uncertainty of thy salvation should keep thee waking, or amaze thee in thy dreams and trouble thy sleep. Doth it not grieve thee to see the people of God so comfortable in their way to glory, when thou hast no good hope of ever enjoying it thyself? How canst thou think of thy dying hour? Thou knowest it is near, and there is no avoiding it, nor any remedy found out that can prevent it. If thou shouldst die this day, (and who knows “what a day may bring forth?”) thou art not certain whether thou shalt go to heaven or hell. And canst thou be merry till thou hast escaped from this dangerous state? What shift dost thou make to preserve thy heart from horror, when thou rememberest the great judgment-day, and everlasting flames? When thou hearest of it dost thou not tremble as Felix? If the “keepers shook, and became as dead men, when they saw the angel come and roll back the stone from Christ’s sepulchre,” how canst thou think of living in hell with devils, till thou hast some well-grounded assurance that thou shalt escape it? Thy bed is very soft, or thy heart is very hard, if thou canst sleep soundly in this uncertain case.

If this general uncertainty of the world about their salvation were remediless, then must it be borne as other unavoidable miseries. But alas! the common cause is wilful negligence. Men will not be persuaded to use the remedy. The great means to conquer this uncertainty is self-examination, or the serious and diligent trying of a man’s heart and state by the rule of Scripture. Either men understand not the nature and use of this duty, or else they will not be at the pains to try. Go through a congregation of a thousand men, and how few of them will you find that ever bestowed one hour in all their lives in a close examination of their title to heaven! Ask your own conscience, reader, when was the time, and where was the place, that ever you solemnly took your heart to task, as in he sight of God, and examined it by Scripture, whether it be renewed or not; whether it

be holy or not; whether it be set most on God or the creatures, on heaven or earth? And when did you follow on this examination till you had discovered your condition, and pass sentence on yourself accordingly? But since this is a work of so high importance, and so commonly neglected, I will show that it is possible, by trying, to come to a certainty; then show what hinders men from trying and knowing their state and then offer motives to examine, and directions, together with some marks out of Scripture, by which men may try, and certainly know, whether they are the people of God or not.

1. Scripture shows that the certainty of salvation may be attained, and ought to be labored for, when it tells us so frequently that the saints before us have known their justification and future salvation: when it declares, that “whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life;” which it would be vain to declare, if we cannot know ourselves to be believers or not; when it makes such a wide difference between the children of God and the children of the devil; when it bids us “give diligence to make our calling and election sure;” and earnestly urges us to “examine, prove, know our own selves, whether we be in the faith, and whether Jesus Christ be in us, or we be reprobates;” also, when its precepts require us to rejoice alway, to call God our Father, to live in his praises, to love Christ’s appearing, to wish that he may come quickly, and to comfort ourselves with the mention of it. But who can do any of these heartily, that is not, in some measure, sure that he is the child of God?

2. Among the many hinderances which keep men from self-examination, we cannot doubt but Satan will do his part. If all the power he hath, or all the means and instruments he can employ, can do it, he will be sure, above all duties, to keep you from this. He is loth that the godly should have the joy, assurance, and advantage against corruption, which the faithful performance of self-examination would procure them. As for the ungodly, he knows, if they should once earnestly examine, they would find out his deceits and their own danger, and so be very likely to escape him. How could he get so many millions to hell willingly, if they knew they were going thither? And how could they avoid knowing it, if they did but thoroughly examine; having such a clear light and sure rule in the Scripture to discover it? If the snare be not hid, the bird will escape it. Satan knows how to angle for souls better than to show them the hook and line or fright them away with a noise, or with his own appearance. Therefore he labors to keep them from a searching ministry or to keep the minister from helping them to search or to take off the edge of the word, that it may not pierce and divide; or to turn away their thoughts; or to possess them with prejudice. Satan knows when the minister has provided a searching sermon, fitted to the state and necessity of a hearer; and therefore he will keep him away that day, if it be possible or cast him into a sleep or steal away the word by the cares and talk of the world, or some way prevent its operation.

Another great hinderance to self-examination arises from wicked men. Their example; their merry company and discourse; their continually insisting on worldly concerns; their raillery and scoffs at godly persons: also their persuasions, allurements, and threats, are all of them exceedingly great temptations to security. God doth scarcely ever open the eyes of a poor sinner to see that his way is wrong, but presently there is a multitude of Satan’s apostles ready to deceive and settle him again in the quiet possession of his former master.

“What!” say they, “do you make a doubt of your salvation, who have lived so well, and done nobody any harm? God is merciful and if such as you shall not be saved, God help a great many!

What do you think of all your forefathers? And what will become of all your friends and neighbors that live as you do? Will they all be damned? Come, come, if you hearken to these preachers, they will drive you out of your senses. Are not all men sinners? and did not Christ die to save sinners? Never trouble your head with these thoughts, and you shall do well."

O, how many thousands have such charms kept asleep in deceit and security till death and hell have awakened them! The Lord calls to the sinner, and tells him, "The gate is strait, the way is narrow, and few find it; try and examine yourself; give diligence to make sure." The world cries, "Never doubt, never trouble yourself with these thoughts." In this strait, sinner, consider, it is Christ, and not your forefathers, or neighbors, or friends, that must judge you at last: and, if Christ condemn you, these cannot save you; therefore common reason may tell you that it is not from the words of ignorant men, but from the word of God you must gain your hope of salvation. When Ahab would inquire among the multitude of flattering prophets, it was his death. They can flatter men into the snare, but they cannot tell how to bring them out. "Let no man deceive you with vain words for, because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience; be not ye therefore partakers with them." But the greatest hinderances are in men's own hearts. Some are so ignorant that they know not what self-examination is, nor what a minister means when he persuades them to try themselves; or they know not that there is any necessity for it, but think every man is bound to believe that his sins are pardoned, whether it be true or false, and that it is a great fault to make any question of it; or they do not think that assurance can be attained; or that there is any great difference between one man and another, but that we are all Christians, and therefore need not trouble ourselves any further; or at least they know not wherein the difference lies. They have as gross an idea of regeneration as Nicodemus had. Some will not believe that God will ever make such a difference betwixt men in the life to come, and therefore will not search themselves whether they differ here. Some are so stupefied, say what we can to them, that they lay it not to heart, but give us the hearing, and there is the end. Some are so possessed with self-love and pride, that they will not so much as suspect they are in danger; like a proud tradesman, who scorns the prudent advice of casting up his books; or like fond parents who will not believe or hear any evil of their children. Some are so guilty that they dare not try themselves, and yet they dare venture on a more dreadful trial. Some are so in love with sin, and so dislike the way of God, that they dare not try their ways, lest they be forced from the course they love to that which they loathe. Some are so resolved never to change their present state, that they neglect examination as a useless thing. Before they will seek a new way, when they have lived so long and gone so far, they will put their eternal state to hazard, come of it what will. Many men are so busy in the world that they cannot set themselves to the trying of their title to heaven. Others are so clogged with slothfulness of spirit that they will not be at the pains of an hour's examination of their own hearts. But the most common and dangerous impediment is that false faith and hope, commonly called presumption, which bears up the hearts of the greatest part of the world, and so keeps them from suspecting their danger. And if a man should break through all these hinderances, and set upon the duty of self-examination, yet assurance is not presently attained. Too many deceive themselves in their inquiries after it, through one or other of the following causes: there is such confusion and darkness in the soul of man, especially of an unregenerate man, that he can scarcely tell what he does, or what is in him. As in a house where nothing is in its proper place, it will be difficult to find what is wanted, so it is in the heart where all things are in disorder. Most men accustom themselves to be strangers at home, and too little observe the

temper and motions of their own hearts. Many are resolved what to judge before they try; like a bribed judge, who examines as if he would judge uprightly, when he is previously resolved which way the cause shall go. Men are partial in their own cause; ready to think their great sins small, and their small sins none; their gifts of nature to be the work of grace, and to say, “All these have I kept from my youth;” “I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.” Most men search but by the halves. If it will not easily and quickly be done, they are discouraged, and leave off. They try themselves by false marks and rules, not knowing wherein the truth of Christianity consists; some looking beyond, and some short of the Scripture standard. And frequently they fail in this work by attempting it in their own strength. As some expect the Spirit should do it without them, so others attempt it themselves, without seeking or expecting the help of the Spirit. Both these will certainly fail of assurance.

Some other hinderances keep even true Christians from comfortable certainty. As, for instance, the weakness of grace. Small things are hardly discerned. Most Christians content themselves with a small measure of grace, and do not follow on to spiritual strength and manhood. The chief remedy for such would be to follow on in duty till their graces be increased. Wait upon God in the use of his prescribed means, and he will undoubtedly bless you with increase. O that Christians would bestow most of that time in getting more grace, which they bestow in anxious doubtings whether they have any or none; and lay out those serious affections in praying for more grace, which they bestow in fruitless complaints! I beseech thee, Christian, take this advice as from God; and then, when thou believest strongly, and lovest fervently, thou canst no more doubt of thy faith and love, than a man that is very hot can doubt of his warmth, or a man that is strong and vigorous can doubt of his being alive.

Christians hinder their own comfort by looking more at signs which tell them what they are, than at precepts which tell them what they should do; as if their present must needs be their everlasting state; and if they be now unpardoned, there were no remedy. Were he not mad that would lie weeping because he is not pardoned, when his prince stands by all the while, offering him a pardon, and persuading him to accept of it? Justifying faith, Christian, is not thy persuasion of God’s special love to thee, but thy accepting Christ to make thee lovely. It is far better to accept Christ as offered, than spend so much time in doubting whether we have Christ or not.

Another cause of distress to Christians is their mistaking assurance for the joy that sometimes accompanies it; as if a child should think himself a son no longer than while he sees the smiles of his father’s face, or hears the comfortable expressions of his mouth; and as if the father ceased to be a father whenever he ceased those smiles and speeches. The trouble of souls is also increased by their not knowing the ordinary way of God’s conveying comfort. They think they have nothing to do but to wait when God will bestow it. But they must know that the matter of their comfort is in the promises, and thence they must draw it as often as they expect it, by daily and diligently meditating upon the promises; and in this way they may expect the Spirit will communicate comfort to their souls. The joy of the promises and the joy of the Holy Ghost are one: add to this, their expecting a greater measure of assurance than God usually bestows. As long as they have any doubting, they think they have no assurance. They consider not that there are many degrees of certainty. While they are here, they shall “know but in part.” Add also their deriving their comfort at first from insufficient grounds. This may be the case of a gracious soul, who hath better grounds but doth not see them. As an infant hath life before he knoweth it, and many

misapprehensions of himself and other things, yet it will not follow that he hath no life. So when Christians find a flaw in their first comforts, they are not to judge it a flaw in their safety.

Many continue doubting, through the exceeding weakness of their natural powers. Many honest hearts have weak heads, and know not how to perform the work of self-trial. They will acknowledge the promises, and yet deny the apparent conclusion. If God do not some other way supply the defect of their reason, I see not how they should have clear and settled peace.

One great and too common cause of distress is the secret maintaining of some known sin. This abates the degree of our graces, and so makes them more undiscernible. It obscures that which it destroys not; for it bears such sway that grace is not in action, nor seems to stir, nor is scarce heard speak, for the noise of this corruption. It puts out or dims the eye of the soul, and stupifies it, that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially it provokes God to withdraw himself, his comforts, and the assistance of his Spirit, without which we may search long enough before we have assurance. God hath made a separation between sin and peace. As long as thou dost cherish thy pride, thy love of the world, the desires of the flesh, or any unChristian practice, thou expectest comfort in vain. If a man “setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh” to a minister, or to God, “to inquire” for comfort,-instead of comforting him, God “will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols.”

Another very great and common cause of the want of comfort is, that grace is not kept in constant and lively exercise. The way of painful duty is the way of fullest comfort. Peace and comfort are Christ’s great encouragements to faithfulness and obedience; and therefore, though our obedience does not merit them, yet they usually rise and fall with our diligence in duty. As prayer must have faith and fervency to procure it success, besides the blood and intercession of Christ, so must all other parts of our obedience. If thou growest seldom, and formal, and cold in duty, especially in thy secret prayers to God, and yet findest no abatement in thy joys, I cannot but fear thy joys are either carnal or diabolical. Besides, grace is never apparent and sensible to the soul but while it is in action; therefore want of action must cause want of assurance. And the action of the soul upon such excellent objects naturally bringeth consolation with it. The very act of loving God, in Christ, is inexpressibly sweet. The soul that is best furnished with grace, when it is not in action, is like a lute well stringed and tuned, which, while it lieth still, maketh no more music than a common piece of wood; but when it is handled by a skilful musician the melody is delightful. Some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influence issue from the sun. A man that is cold should labor till heat be excited; so he that wants assurance must not stand still, but exercise his graces till his doubts vanish. The want of consolation in the soul is also very commonly owing to bodily melancholy. It is no more strange for a conscientious man, under melancholy, to doubt, and fear, and despair, than for a sick man to groan, or a child to cry when it is chastised. Without the physician in this case, the labors of the divine are usually in vain. You may silence, but you cannot comfort such persons. You may make them confess they have some grace, and yet cannot bring them to the comfortable conclusion. All the good thoughts of their state, which you can possibly help them to, are seldom above a day or two old. They cry out of sin and the wrath of God, when the chief cause is in their bodily disease.

3. As motives to the duty of self-examination, I entreat you to consider the following: To be deceived about your title to heaven is very easy. Many are now in hell that never suspected any falsehood in their hearts, that excelled in worldly wisdom, that lived in the clear light of the Gospel, and even preached against the negligence of others. To be mistaken in this great point is also very common. It is the case of most in the world. In the old world, and in Sodom, we find none that were in any fear of judgment. Almost all men among us verily expect to be saved; yet Christ tells us, “there be few that find the strait gate and narrow way which leadeth unto life.” And if such multitudes are deceived, should we not search the more diligently, lest we should be deceived as well as they? Nothing is more dangerous than to be thus mistaken. If the godly judge their state worse than it is, the consequences of this mistake will be sorrowful; but the mischief flowing from the mistake of the ungodly is unspeakable. It will exceedingly confirm them in the service of Satan. It will render ineffectual the means that should do them good. It will keep a man from compassionating his own soul. It is a case of the greatest moment, where everlasting salvation or damnation is to be determined. And if you mistake till death, you are undone for ever. Seeing, then, the danger is so great, what wise man would not follow the search of his heart both day and night till he were assured of his safety? Consider how small the labor of this duty in comparison of that sorrow which follows its neglect. You can endure to toil and sweat from year to year, to prevent poverty and why not spend a little time in self-examination, to prevent eternal misery? By neglecting this duty you can scarce do Satan a greater pleasure, or yourself a greater injury. It is the grand design of the devil, in all his temptations, to deceive you, and keep you ignorant of your danger till you feel the everlasting flames; and will you join with him to deceive yourself? If you do this for him, you do the greatest part of his work. And hath he deserved so well of you, that you should assist him in such a design as your damnation? The time is nigh when God will search you. If it be but in this life by affliction, it will make you wish that you had tried and judged yourself, that you might have escaped the judgment of God. It was a terrible voice to Adam, “Where art thou? Hast thou eaten of the tree?” And to Cain, “Where is thy brother?” Men “consider not in their hearts that,” saith the Lord, “remember all their wickedness; now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.”

Consider also what would be the sweet effects of this self-examination. If thou be upright and godly, it will lead thee straight toward assurance of God’s love; if thou be not, though it will trouble thee at the present, yet it will tend to thy happiness, and at length lead thee to the assurance of that happiness. Is it not a desirable thing to know what shall befall us hereafter; especially what shall befall our souls and what place and state we must be in for ever? And as the very knowledge itself is desirable, how much greater will the comfort be of that certainty of salvation! What sweet thoughts wilt thou have of God! All that greatness and justice which is the terror of others, will be thy joy. How sweet may be thy thoughts of Christ, and the blood he hath shed, and the benefits he hath procured! How welcome will the word of God be to thee, and “how beautiful the very feet of those that bring it!” How sweet will be the promises when thou art sure they are thine own! The very threatenings will occasion thy comfort, to remember that thou hast escaped them. What boldness and comfort mayest thou then have in prayer, when thou canst say “Our Father” in full assurance? It will make the Lord’s supper a refreshing feast to thy soul. It will multiply the sweetness of every common mercy. How comfortably mayest thou then undergo all afflictions! How will it sweeten thy forethoughts of death and judgment, of heaven and hell! How lively will it make thee in the work of the Lord, and how profitable to all around thee! What vigor will it infuse

into all thy graces and affections! How will it kindle thy repentance, inflame thy love, quicken thy desires, and confirm thy faith; be a fountain of continual rejoicing, overflow thy heart with thankfulness, raise thee high in the delightful work of praise, help thee to be heavenly-minded, and render thee persevering in all! All these sweet effects of assurance would make thy life a heaven upon earth.

Though I am certain these motives have weight of reason in them, yet I am jealous, reader, lest you lay aside the book as if you had no more to do, and never set yourself to the practice of the duty. The case in hand is of the greatest moment-whether thou shalt everlastingly live in heaven or hell. I here request thee, in behalf of thy soul; nay, I charge thee, in the name of the Lord, that thou defer no longer, but take thy heart to task in good earnest, and think with thyself, “Is it so easy, so common and so dangerous to be mistaken? Are there so many wrong ways? Is the heart so deceitful? Why then do I not search into every corner till I know my state? Must I shortly undergo the trial at the bar of Christ and do I not now try myself? What a case were I in, should I then fail of salvation? May I know by a little diligent inquiry now; and do I refuse the labor?” But perhaps you will say, “I know not how to do it.” In that I am now to give thee directions; but, alas! it will be in vain, if thou art not resolved to practice them. Wilt thou, therefore, before thou goest any further, here promise, before the Lord, to set thyself upon the speedy performance of the duty, according to the directions I shall lay down from the word of God? I demand nothing unreasonable or impossible: it is but to bestow a few hours to know what shall become of thee for ever. If a neighbor, or a friend, desired but an hour’s time of thee, in conversation, or business, or any thing in which thou mayest be of service, surely thou wouldst not deny it; how much less shouldst thou deny this to thyself in so great a matter! I pray thee to take from me this request, as if; in the name of Christ, I presented it to thee on my knees; and I will betake me on my knees to Christ again, to beg that he will persuade thy heart to the duty.

4. The directions how to examine thyself are such as these: Empty thy mind of all other cares and thoughts, that they may not distract or divide thy mind. This work itself will be enough without joining others with it. Then fall down before God in hearty prayer, desiring the assistance of his Spirit to discover to thee the plain truth of thy condition, and to enlighten thee in the whole progress of this work. Make choice of the most convenient time and place. Let the place be the most private, and the time when you have nothing to interrupt you; and, if possible, let it be the present time. Have in readiness, either in memory or writing, some scriptures, containing the descriptions of the saints and the Gospel terms of salvation and convince thyself thoroughly of their infallible truth. Proceed then to put the question to thyself. Let it not be, whether there be any good in thee at all; nor whether thou hast such or such a degree and measure of grace; but whether such or such a saving grace be in thee in sincerity or not. If thy heart draw back from the work, force it on. Lay thy command upon it. Let reason interpose, and use its authority. Yea, lay the command of God upon it, and charge it to obey upon the pain of his displeasure. Let conscience also do its office, till thy heart be excited to the work. Nor let thy heart trifle away the time, when it should be diligently at the work. Do as the psalmist; “My spirit made diligent search.” He that can prevail with his own heart shall also prevail with God. If, after all thy pains, thou art still in doubt, then seek out for help. Go to one that is godly, experienced, able, and faithful, and tell him thy case, and desire his best advice. Use the judgment of such a one as that of a physician for thy body: though this can afford thee no full certainty, yet it may be a great help to stay and direct

thee. But do not make it a pretence to put off thy own self-examination. Only use it as one of the last remedies, when thy own endeavors will not serve. When thou hast discovered thy true state, pass sentence on thyself accordingly; either that thou art a true Christian, or that thou art not. Pass not this sentence rashly, nor with self-flattery nor with melancholy terrors; but deliberately, truly, and according to thy conscience, convinced by Scripture and reason. Labor to get thy heart affected with its condition, according to the sentence passed on it. If graceless, think of thy misery; if renewed and sanctified, think what a blessed state the Lord hath brought thee into. Pursue these thoughts till they have left their impression on thy heart. Write this sentence at least in thy memory: “At such a time, upon thorough examination, I found my state to be thus, or thus.” Such a record will be very useful to thee hereafter. Trust not to this one discovery, so as to try no more; nor let it hinder thee in the daily search of thy ways; neither be discouraged if the trial must be often repeated. Especially take heed, if unregenerate, not to conclude of thy future state by the present. Do not say, “Because I am ungodly, I shall die so; because I am a hypocrite, I shall continue so.” Do not despair. Nothing but thy unwillingness can keep thee from Christ, though thou hast hitherto abused him and dissembled with him.

5. Now let me add some marks by which thou may try your title to the saints’ rest. I will only mention these two: taking God for thy chief good, and heartily accepting Christ for thy only Savior and Lord.

Every soul that hath a title to this rest places his chief happiness in God. This rest consists in the full and glorious enjoyment of God. He that makes not God his chief good and ultimate end, is in heart a pagan and a vile idolater. Let me ask, then, dost thou truly account it thy chief happiness to enjoy the Lord in glory, or dost thou not? Canst thou say, “The Lord is my portion? Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?” If thou be an heir of rest, it is thus with thee. Though the flesh will be pleading for its own delights, and the world will be creeping into thine affections, yet in thy ordinary, settled, prevailing judgment and affections, thou preferrest God before all things in the world. Thou makest him the very end of thy desires and endeavors. The very reason why thou hearest, and prayest, and desirest to live on earth, is chiefly this, that thou mayest seek the Lord, and make sure of thy rest. Though thou dost not seek it so zealously as thou shouldst, yet it hath the chief of thy desires and endeavors, so that nothing else is desired or preferred before it. Thou wilt think no labor or suffering too great to obtain it. And though the flesh may sometimes shrink, yet thou art resolved and ready to go through all. Thy esteem for it will also be so high, and thy affection to it so great, that thou wouldst not exchange thy title to it, and hopes of it, for any worldly good whatsoever. If God should set before thee an eternity of earthly pleasure on the one hand, and the saints’ rest on the other, and bid thee take thy choice, thou wouldst refuse the world and choose this rest. But if thou art yet unsanctified, then thou dost in thy heart prefer thy worldly happiness before God; and though thy tongue may say that God is thy chief good, yet thy heart doth not so esteem him. For the world is the chief end of thy desires and endeavors. Thy very heart is set upon it. Thy greatest care and labor is to maintain thy credit or fleshly delights. But the life to come hath little of thy care or labor. Thou didst never perceive so much excellency in the unseen glory of another world, as to draw thy heart after it, and bring thee to labor heartily for it. The little pains thou bestowest for it is but a secondary effort. God hath but the world’s leavings: only that time and labor which thou canst spare from the world, or those few cold and careless thoughts which follow thy constant, earnest, and delightful thoughts of

earthly things. Neither wouldst thou do any thing at all for heaven, if thou knewest how to keep the world. But lest thou shouldst be turned into hell when thou canst keep the world no longer, therefore thou wilt do something. For the same reason thou thinkest the way of God too strict, and wilt not be persuaded to the constant labor of walking according to the Gospel rule; and when it comes to the trial, that thou must forsake Christ or thy worldly happiness, then thou wilt venture heaven rather than earth, and so wilfully deny thy obedience to God. And certainly, if God would but give thee leave to live in health and wealth for ever on earth, thou wouldst think it a better state than the rest of heaven-let them seek for heaven that would, thou wouldst think this thy chief happiness. This is thy case, if thou art yet an unregenerate person, and hast no title to the saints' rest. And as thou takest God for thy chief good, so thou dost heartily accept of Christ for thy only Savior and Lord, to bring thee to this rest. The former mark was the sum of the first and great command of the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The second mark is the sum of the command of the Gospel, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And the performance of these two is the whole of godliness and Christianity. This mark is but the definition of faith. Dost thou heartily consent that Christ alone shall be thy Savior, and no further trust to thy duties and works than as means appointed in subordination to him; not looking at them as in the least measure able to satisfy the curse of the law, or as a legal righteousness, or any part of it but consent to trust thy salvation on the redemption made by Christ? Art thou also content to take him for thy only Lord and King, to govern and guide thee by his laws and Spirit, and to obey him even when he commandeth the hardest duties, and those which most cross the desires of the flesh? Is it thy sorrow when thou breakest thy resolution herein; and thy joy when thou keepest closest in obedience to him? Wouldst thou not change thy Lord and Master for all the world? Thus is it with every true Christian. But if thou be a hypocrite, it is far otherwise. Thou mayest call Christ thy Lord and thy Savior, but thou never foundest thyself so lost without him as to drive thee to seek him, and trust him, and lay thy salvation on him alone; at least, thou didst never heartily consent that he should govern thee as thy Lord, nor resign thy soul and life to be ruled by him, nor take his word for the law of thy thoughts and actions. Doubtless thou art willing to be saved from hell by Christ when thou diest; but, in the meantime, he must command thee no further than will consist with thy credit, or pleasure, or other worldly ends! And if he would give thee leave, thou hadst far rather live after the world and the flesh, than after the Word and the Spirit. And though thou mayest now and then have a motion or purpose to the contrary, yet this that I have mentioned is the ordinary desire and choice of thy heart. Thou art therefore no true believer in Christ; for though thou confess him in words, yet in works thou dost deny him, "being abominable and disobedient, an unto every good work reprobate." This is the case of those that shall be shut out of the saints' rest.

Observe, it is the consent of the heart, or will, which I especially lay down to be inquired after. I do not ask whether thou be assured of salvation, nor whether thou canst believe that thy sins ar pardoned, and that thou art beloved of God in Christ. These are no parts of justifying faith, but excellent fruits of it, and they that receive them are comforted by them; but perhaps thou mayst never receive them while thou livest, and mayst yet be a true heir of rest. Do not say then, "I cannot believe that my sins are pardoned, or that I am in God's favor; and therefore I am no true believer." This is a most mistaken conclusion. The question is, whether thou dost heartily accept of Christ, that thou mayst be pardoned, reconciled to God, and so saved. Dost thou consent that He shall be thy Lord who hath bought thee, and that he shall bring thee to heaven in his own way?

This is justifying, saving faith, and the mark by which thou must try thyself. Yet still observe that all this consent must be hearty and real, not feigned or with reservations. It is not like that of the dissembling son, who said, “I go, sir; and went not.” If any have more of the government of thee than Christ, thou art not his disciple. I am sure these two marks are such as every Christian hath, and none but sincere Christians. O that the Lord would now persuade thee to the close performance of this self-trial! that thou mayst not tremble with horror of soul when the Judge of the world shall try thee; but be able so to prove thy title to rest, that the prospect and approach of death and judgment may raise thy spirits and fill thee with joy. On the whole, if Christians would have comforts that will not deceive them, let them make it the great labor of their lives to grow in grace, to strengthen and advance the interest of Christ in their souls, and to weaken and subdue the interest of the flesh. Deceive not yourselves with a persuasion that Christ hath done all, and left you nothing to do. To overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and, in order to that, to stand always armed upon our watch, and valiantly and patiently to fight it out, is of great importance to our assurance and salvation. Indeed, it is so great a part of our baptismal obligations, that he who performeth it not is no more than a nominal Christian. Not to every one that presumptuously believeth, but “to him that overcometh, will Christ give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it; he shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and shall not be hurt of the second death. Christ will confess his name before his Father, and before his angels, and make him a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out; and will write upon him the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from his God, and will write upon him his new name.” Yea, “He will grant to him to sit with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and is set down with his Father on his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

6.10. CHAPTER IX

THE DUTY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO EXCITE OTHERS TO SEEK THIS REST. The author laments that Christians do so little to help others to obtain the saints' rest: I. Shows the nature of this duty; particularly, 1, In having our hearts affected with the misery of our brethren's souls; 2. In taking all opportunities to instruct them in the way of salvation; 3. In promoting their profit by public ordinances. II. Assigns various reasons why this duty is so much neglected, and answers some objections against it. III. Urges to the discharge of it, by several considerations: 1. Addressed to such as have knowledge, learning, and utterance; 2. Those that are acquainted with sinners; 3. Physicians that attend dying men; 4. Persons of wealth and power; 5. Ministers; 6. And those that are intrusted with the care of children or servants. The chapter concludes with an earnest request to Christian parents to be faithful to their trust.

Hath God set before us such a glorious prize as the saints' rest, and made us capable of such inconceivable happiness? Why, then, do not all the children of this kingdom exert themselves more to help others to the enjoyment of it? Alas! how little are poor souls about us beholden to most of us! We see the glory of the kingdom, and they do not; we see the misery of those that are out of it, and they do not; we see some wandering quite out of the way, and know, if they hold on, they can never come there; and they themselves discern it not. And yet we will not seriously show them their danger and error, and help to bring them into the way, that they may live. Alas! how few Christians are there to be found who set themselves with all their might to save souls! No thanks to us if heaven be not empty, and if the souls of our brethren perish not for ever. Considering how important this duty is to the glory of God and the happiness of men, I will show-how it is to be performed;-why it is so much neglected;-and then offer some considerations to persuade to it.

First. THE DUTY of exciting and helping others to discern their title to the saints' rest. This does not mean that every man should turn a public preacher, or that any should go beyond the bounds of their particular calling; much less does it consist in promoting a party spirit and, least of all, in speaking against men's faults behind their backs, and being silent before their faces. This duty is of another nature, and consists of the following things: in having our hearts affected with the misery of our brethren's souls, in taking all opportunities to instruct them in the way of salvation, and in promoting their profit by public ordinances.

1. Our hearts must be affected with the misery of our brethren's souls. We must be compassionate toward them, and yearn after their recovery and salvation. If we earnestly longed for their conversion, and our hearts were solicitous to do them good, it would set us at work, and God would usually bless it.

2. We must take every opportunity that we possibly can to instruct them how to attain salvation. If the person be ignorant, labor to make him understand the chief happiness of man; how far he was once possessed of it; the covenant God then made with him; how he broke it; and what penalty he incurred; and into what misery he brought himself. Teach him his need of a Redeemer; how Christ mercifully interposed, and bore the penalty; what the new covenant is; how men are drawn to

Christ; and what are the riches and privileges which believers have in him. If he is not moved by these things, then show him the excellency of the glory he neglects; the extremity and eternity of the torments of the damned; the justice of enduring them for wilfully refusing grace; the certainty, nearness, and terrors of death and judgment; the vanity of all things below; the sinfulness of sin; the preciousness of Christ; the necessity of regeneration, faith, and holiness, and their true nature. If; after all, you find him entertaining false hopes, then urge him to examine his state; show him the necessity of doing so; help him in it; nor leave him till you have convinced him of his misery and remedy. Show him how vain and destructive it is to join Christ and his duties to compose his justifying righteousness. Yet be sure to draw him to the use of all means; such as hearing and reading the word, calling upon God, and associating with the godly: persuade him to forsake sin, avoid all temptations to sin, especially evil companions, and to wait patiently on God in the use of means, as the way in which God will be found.

But, because the manner of performing this work is of great moment, observe therefore these rules: Enter upon it with right intentions. Aim at the glory of God in the person's salvation. Do it not to get a name or esteem to thyself; or to bring men to depend upon thee, or to get thee followers; but in obedience to Christ, in imitation of him, and tender love to men's souls. Do not as those who labor to reform their children or servants from such things as are against their own profit or humor, but never seek to save their souls in the way which God has appointed. Do it speedily. As you would not have them delay their return, do not you delay to seek their return. While you are purposing to teach and help him, the man goes deeper in debt; wrath is heaping up; sin taking root; custom fastens him; temptations to sin multiply; conscience grows seared; the heart hardened; the devil rules; Christ is shut out; the Spirit is resisted; God is daily dishonored; his law violated; he is robbed of that service which he should have; time runs on; death and judgment are at the door; and what if the man die, and drop into hell, while you are purposing to prevent it! If, in the case of his bodily distress, you "must not say to him, go and come again, and tomorrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee;" how much less may you delay the succor of his soul! That physician is no better than a murderer, who negligently delays till his patient be dead or past cure. Lay by excuses, then, and all lesser business, and "exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Let your exhortation proceed from compassion and love. To jeer and scoff, to rail and vilify, is not a likely way to reform men, or convert them to God. Go to poor sinners with tears in your eyes, that they may see you believe them to be miserable, and that you unfeignedly pity their case. Deal with them with earnest, humble entreaties. Let them perceive it is the desire of your heart to do them good; that you have no other end but their everlasting happiness; and that it is your sense of their danger, and your love to their souls, that forces you to speak; even because you "know the terrors of the Lord," and for fear you should see them in eternal torments. Say to them, "Friend, you know I seek no advantage of my own: the method to please you, and keep your friendship, were to soothe you in your way, or let you alone; but love will not suffer me to see you perish, and be silent. I seek nothing at your hands but that which is necessary to your own happiness. It is yourself that will have the gain and comfort if you come to Christ." If we were thus to go to every ignorant and wicked neighbor, what blessed fruit should we quickly see! Do it with all possible plainness and faithfulness. Do not make their sins less than they are, nor encourage them in a false hope. If you see the case dangerous, speak plainly: "Neighbor, I am afraid God has not yet renewed your soul; I fear you are not yet recovered 'from the power of Satan to God;' I fear you have not chosen

Christ above all, nor unfeignedly taken him for your sovereign Lord. If you had, surely you durst not so easily disobey him, nor neglect his worship in your family and in public; you could not so eagerly follow the world, and talk of nothing but the things of the world. If you were ‘in Christ,’ you would be ‘a new creature; old things’ would be ‘passed away, and all things’ would ‘become new.’ You would have new thoughts, new conversation, new company, new endeavors, and a new life. Certainly without these you can never be saved; you may think otherwise, and hope otherwise as long as you will, but your hopes will all deceive you, and perish with you Thus must you deal faithfully with men, if ever you intend to do them good. It is not in curing men’s souls, as in curing their bodies, where they must not know their danger, lest it hinder the cure. They are here agents in their own cure; and if they know not their misery, they will never bewail it, nor know their need of a Savior. Do it also seriously, zealously, and effectually. Labor to make men know that heaven and hell are not matters to be played with, or passed over with a few careless thoughts. “It is most certain that, one of these days, thou shalt be in everlasting joy or torment; and doth it not awaken thee? Are there so few that find the way of life? so many that go the way of death? Is it so hard to escape? so easy to miscarry? and yet you sit still and trifle? What do you mean? The world is passing away; its pleasures, honors, and profits are fading and leaving you; eternity is a little before you; God is just and jealous; his threatenings are true; the great day will be terrible; time runs on; your life is uncertain; you are far behindhand; your case is dangerous; if you die tomorrow, how unready are you! With what terror will your soul leave the body! And do you yet loiter? Consider, God is all this while waiting your leisure: his patience beareth: his long-suffering forbeareth: his mercy entreateth you: Christ offereth you his blood and merits: the Spirit is persuading: conscience is accusing: Satan waits to have you. This is your time now or never. Had you rather burn in hell than repent on earth? have devils your tormentors, than Christ your governor? Will you renounce your part in God and glory, rather than renounce your sins? O friends, what do you think of these things? God hath made you men; do not renounce your reason where you should chiefly use it.” Alas! it is not a few dull words between jest and earnest, between sleeping and waking, that will rouse a dead-hearted sinner. If a house be on fire you will not make a cold oration on the nature and danger of fire, but will run and cry, Fire! fire! To tell a man of his sins as softly as Eli did his sons; or to reprove him as gently as Jehoshaphat did Ahab; “Let not the king say so;” usually does as much harm as good. Loathness to displease men makes us undo them.

Yet, lest you run into extremes, I advise you to do it with prudence and discretion. Choose the fittest season. Deal not with men when they are in a passion, or where they will take it for a disgrace. When the earth is soft the plough will enter. Take a man when he is under affliction, or newly impressed under a sermon. Christian faithfulness requires us not only to do good when it falls in our way, but to watch for opportunities. Suit yourself also to the quality and temper of the person. You must deal with the ingenious more by argument than persuasion. There is need of both to the ignorant. The affections of the convinced should be chiefly excited. The obstinate must be sharply reproved. The timorous must be dealt with tenderly. Love, and plainness, and seriousness take with all; but words of terror some can hardly bear. Use also the aptest expressions. Unseemly language makes the hearers loathe the food they should live by, especially if they be men of curious ears and carnal hearts.

Let all your reproofs and exhortations be backed with the authority of God. Let sinners be convinced that you speak not merely your own thoughts. Turn them to the very chapter and verse where their sin is condemned, and their duty commanded. The voice of man is contemptible, but the voice of God is awful and terrible. They may reject your words who dare not reject the words of the Almighty. Be frequent with men in this duty of exhortation. If we are “always to pray, and not to faint,” because God will have us importunate with himself; the same course, no doubt, will be most prevailing with men. Therefore we are commanded “to exhort one another daily,” and “with all long-suffering.” The fire is not always brought out of the flint at one stroke; nor men’s affections kindled at the first exhortation: and if they were, yet if they be not followed they will soon grow cold again. Follow sinners with your loving and earnest entreaties, and give them no rest in their sin. This is true charity, the way to save men’s souls, and will afford you comfort upon review.

Strive to bring all your exhortations to an issue. If we speak the most convincing words, and all our care is over with our speech, we shall seldom prosper in our labors; but God usually blesses their labors whose very heart is set upon the conversion of their hearers, and who are therefore inquiring after the success of their work. If you reprove a sin, cease not till the sinner promises you to leave it, and avoid the occasions of it. If you are exhorting to a duty, urge for a promise to enter upon it without delay. If you would draw men to Christ, leave them not till they are brought to confess the misery of their present unregenerate state, and the necessity of Christ, and of a change, and have promised you to be faithful in the use of means. O that all Christians would take this course with all their neighbors that are enslaved to sin, and strangers to Christ!

Once more, be sure your example exhort as well as your words. Let them see you constant in all the duties to which you persuade them. Let them see in your life that superiority to the world which your lips recommend. Let them see, by your constant labors for heaven, that you indeed believe what you would have them believe. A holy and heavenly life is a continual sting to the consciences of sinners around you, and continually solicits them to change their course.

3. Besides the duty of private admonition, you must endeavor to help men to profit by public ordinances. In order to that, endeavor to procure for them faithful ministers where they are wanting. “How shall they hear without a preacher?” Improve your interest and diligence to this end, till you prevail. Extend your purposes to the utmost. How many souls may be saved by the ministry you have procured! It is a higher and nobler charity than relieving their bodies. What abundance of good might great men do, if they would support, in academical education, such youth as they have first carefully chosen for their talents and piety, till they should be fit for the ministry!-and when a faithful ministry is obtained, help poor souls to receive the fruit of it-draw them constantly to attend it-remind them often what they have heard; and, if it be possible, let them hear it repeated in their families or elsewhere-promote their frequent meeting together, besides publicly in the congregation; not as a separate church, but as a part of the church, more diligent than the rest in redeeming time and helping the souls of each other heaven-ward. Labor also to keep the ordinances and ministry in esteem: no man will be much wrought on by that which be despised. An apostle says, “We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love, for their work’s sake.”

Secondly. Let us inquire what may be the CAUSES OF THE GROSS NEGLECT of this duty; that the hinderances, being discovered, may the more easily be overcome.

One hinderance is, men's own sin and guilt. They have not themselves been ravished with heavenly delights; how then should they draw others so earnestly to seek them? They have not felt their own lost condition, nor their need of Christ, nor the renewing work of the Spirit; how then can they discover these to others? They are guilty of the sins they should reprove, and this makes them ashamed to reprove.

Another is, a secret infidelity prevailing in men's hearts. Did we verily believe that all the unregenerate and unholy shall be eternally tormented, how could you refrain from speaking, or avoid bursting into tears, when we look them in the face, especially when they are our near and dear friends? Thus doth secret unbelief consume the vigor of each grace and duty. O Christian, if you did verily believe that your ungodly neighbors, wife, husband, or child, should certainly lie for ever in hell, except they be thoroughly changed before death shall snatch them away, would not this make you address them day and night till they were persuaded? Were it not for this cursed unbelief, our own and our neighbors' souls would gain more by us than they do.

These attempts are also much hindered by our want of charity and compassion for men's souls. We look on miserable souls, and pass by, as the priest and Levite by the wounded man. What though the sinner, wounded by sin and captivated by Satan, do not desire thy help himself; yet his misery cries aloud. If God had not heard the cry of our miseries before he heard the cry of our prayers, and been moved by his own pity before he was moved by our importunity, we might long have continued the slaves of Satan. You will pray to God for them, to open their eyes and turn their hearts; and why not endeavor their conversion, if you desire it? And if you do not desire it, why do you ask it? Why do you not pray them to consider and return, as well as pray to God to convert and turn them? If you should see your neighbor fallen into a pit, and should pray God to help him out, but neither put forth your hand to help him, nor once direct him to help himself, would not any man censure you for your cruelty and hypocrisy? It is as true of the soul as of the body. If any man "seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" or what love hath he to his brother's soul?

We are also hindered by a base, manpleasing disposition. We are so desirous to keep in credit and favor with men, that it makes us most unreasonably neglect our own duty. He is a foolish and unfaithful physician that will let a sick man die for fear of troubling him. If our friends are deranged, we please them in nothing that tends to their hurt. And yet when they are beside themselves in point of salvation, and in their madness posting on to damnation, we will not stop them for fear of displeasing them. How can we be Christians, that "love the praise of men more than the praise of God?" For, if we "seek to please men, we shall not be the servants of Christ."

It is common to be hindered by sinful bashfulness. When we should shame men out of their sins, we are ourselves ashamed of our duties. May not these sinners condemn us, when they blush not to swear, be drunk, or neglect the worship of God; and we blush to tell them of it, and persuade them from it? Bashfulness is unseemly in cases of necessity. It is not a work to be ashamed of; to obey God in persuading men from their sins to Christ. Reader, hath not thy conscience told thee of thy duty many a time, and urged thee to speak to poor sinners and yet thou hast been ashamed to open thy mouth, and so let them alone to sink or swim? O read and tremble, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." An idle

and impatient spirit hindereth us. It is an ungrateful work, and sometimes makes men our enemies. Besides, it seldom succeeds at the first, except it be followed on. You must be long in teaching the ignorant, and persuading the obstinate. We consider not what patience God used toward us when we were in our sins. Wo to us, if God had been as impatient with us as we are with others.

Another hinderance is, self-seeking. “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s,” and their brethren’s. With many pride is a great impediment. If it were to speak to a great man, and it would not displease him, they would do it: but to go among the poor, and take pains with them in their cottages, where is the person that will do it? Many will rejoice in being instrumental to convert a gentleman, and they have good reason; but overlook the multitude, as if the souls of all were not alike to God. Alas these men little consider how low Christ stooped to us! Few rich, and noble, and wise are called. It is the poor that receive the glad tidings of the Gospel. And with some, their ignorance of the duty hindereth them from performing it: either they know it not to be a duty, or at least not to be their duty. If this be thy case, reader, I am in hope thou art now acquainted with thy duty, and wilt enter upon it. Do not object to this duty, that you are unable to manage an exhortation; but either set those at the work who are more able, or faithfully and humbly use the small ability you have, and tell them, as a weak man may do, what God says in his word. Decline not the duty because it is your superior who needs advice and exhortation, Order must be dispensed with in cases of necessity. Though it be a husband, a parent, a minister, you must teach him in such a case. If parents are in want, children must relieve them. If a husband be sick, the wife must fill up his place in family affairs. If the rich are reduced to beggary, they must receive charity. If the physician be sick, somebody must look to him. Thus the meanest servant must admonish his master, and the child his parent, and the wife her husband, and the people their minister; so that it be done when there is real need, and with all possible humility, modesty, and meekness. Do not say, this will make us all preachers; for every good Christian is a teacher, and has a charge of his neighbor’s soul. Every man is a physician, when a regular physician cannot be had, and when the hurt is so small that any man may relieve it; and in the same cases every man must be a teacher. Do not despair of success. Cannot God give it? And must it not be by means? Do not plead, it will only be casting pearls before swine. When you are in danger to be torn in pieces, Christ would have you forbear; but what is that to you who are in no such danger? As long as they will hear, you will have encouragement to speak, and may not cast them off as contemptible swine. Say not, “It is a friend on whom I much depend; and by telling him his sin and misery, I may lose his love, and be undone.” Is his love more to be valued than his safety? or thy own benefit by him, than the salvation of his soul? or wilt thou connive at his damnation because he is thy friend? Is that thy best requital of his friendship? Hadst thou rather he should burn in hell for ever, than thou shouldst lose his favor, or the maintenance thou hast from him?

Thirdly. But that all who fear God may be excited to do their utmost to help others to this blessed rest, let me entreat you to consider the following MOTIVES: As, for instance, not only nature, but especially grace, disposes the soul to be communicative of good; therefore, to neglect this work, is a sin both against nature and grace. Would you not think him unnatural who would suffer his children or neighbors to starve in the streets, while he has provision at hand? And is not he more unnatural, who will let them eternally perish, and not open his mouth to save them? An unmerciful, cruel man, is a monster to be abhorred of all. If God had bid you give them all your estate, or lay down your life to save them, you would surely have refused, when you will not bestow a little

breath to save them. Is not the soul of a husband, or wife, or child, or neighbor, worth a few words? Cruelty to men's bodies is a most damnable sin; but to their souls much more, as the soul is of greater worth than the body, and eternity than time. Little know you what many a soul may now be feeling in hell, who died in their sins for want of your faithful admonition.

Consider what Christ did toward the saving of souls. He thought them worth his blood; and shall we not think them worth our breath? Will you not do a little where Christ hath done so much? Consider what fit objects of pity ungodly people are. They are dead in trespasses and sins, have not hearts to feel their miseries, nor to pity themselves. If others do not pity them, they will have no pity; for it is the nature of their disease to make them pitiless to themselves, yea, their own most cruel destroyers. Consider, it was once thy own case. It was God's argument to the Israelites, to be kind to strangers, because they themselves had been "strangers in the land of Egypt." So should you pity them that are strangers to Christ, and to the hopes and comforts of the saints, because you were once strangers to them yourselves Consider your relation to them. It is thy neighbor, thy brother, whom thou art bound to love as thyself. He that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth daily, doth not love God, whom he never saw. And doth he love his brother that will see him go to hell, and never hinder him?

Consider what a load of guilt this neglect lays upon thy own soul. Thou art guilty of the murder and damnation of all those souls whom thou dost thus neglect and of every sin they now commit, and of all the dishonor done to God thereby; and of all these judgments which their sins bring upon the town or country where they live. Consider what it will be to look upon your poor friends in eternal flames, and to think that your neglect was a great cause of it. If you should there perish with them, it would be no small aggravation of your torment. If you be in heaven, it would surely be a sad thought, were it possible that any sorrow could dwell there, to hear a multitude of poor souls cry out, for ever,"O, if you would but have told me plainly of my sin and danger, and set it home, I might have escaped all this torment, and be now in rest!" What a sad voice will this be! Consider what a joy it will be in heaven, to meet those there whom you have been the means to bring thither; to see their faces, and join with them for ever in the praises of God, whom you were the happy instruments of bringing to the knowledge and obedience of Jesus Christ! Consider how many souls you may have drawn into the way of damnation, or hardened in it. We have had, in the days of our ignorance, our companions in sin, whom we enticed or encouraged. And doth it not become us to do as much to save men as we have done to destroy them? Consider how diligent are all the enemies of these poor souls to draw them to hell. The devil is tempting them day and night; their inward lusts are still working for their ruin; the flesh is still pleading for its delights; their old companions are increasing their dislike of holiness. And if nobody be diligent in helping them to heaven, what is like to become of them?

Consider how deep the neglect of this duty will wound when conscience is awakened. When a man comes to die, conscience will ask him, "What good hast thou done in thy lifetime? The saving of souls is the greatest good work; what hast thou done toward it? How many hast thou dealt faithfully with?" I have often observed that the consciences of dying men very much wounded them for this omission. For my own part, when I have been near death, my conscience hath accused me more for this than for any sin: it would bring every ignorant, profane neighbor to my remembrance, to whom I never made known their danger; it would tell me, "Thou shouldst have gone to them in private, and told them plainly of their desperate danger, though it had been when thou shouldst

have eaten or slept, if thou hadst no other time." Conscience would remind me how, at such or such a time, I was in company with the ignorant, or riding by the way with a wilful sinner, and had a fit opportunity to have dealt with him, but did not; or at least did it to little purpose. The Lord grant I may better obey conscience while I have time, that it may have less to accuse me of at death! Consider what a seasonable time you now have for this work. There are times in which it is not safe to speak; it may cost you your liberty or your life. Besides, your neighbors will shortly die, and so will you. Speak to them, therefore, while you may. Consider, though this is a work of the greatest charity, yet every one of you may perform it; the poorest as well as the rich: every one hath a tongue to speak to a sinner.

Once more, consider the happy consequences of this work where it is faithfully done. You may be instrumental in saving souls, for whom Christ came down and died, and in whom the angels of God rejoice. Such souls will bless you here and hereafter; God will have much glory by it; the church will be multiplied and edified by it; your own soul will enjoy more improvement and vigor in the divine life, more peace of conscience, more rejoicing in spirit. Of all the personal mercies that I ever received, next to the love of God in Christ to my own soul, I must most joyfully bless him for the plentiful success of my endeavors upon others. O what fruits, then, might I have seen, if I had been more faithful! I know we need be very jealous of our deceitful hearts on this point, lest our rejoicing should come from our pride. Naturally we would have the praise of every good work ascribed to ourselves; yet to imitate our Father in goodness and mercy, and to rejoice in the degree of them we attain to, is the duty of every child of God. I therefore tell you my own experience, to persuade you, that if you did but know what a joyful thing it is, you would follow it night and day through the greatest discouragements.

Up, then, every man that hath a tongue, and is a servant of Christ, and do something of your Master's work. Why hath he given you a tongue, but to speak in his service? And how can you serve him more eminently than in laboring for the salvation of souls? He that will pronounce you blessed at the last day, and invite you to "the kingdom prepared for you," because you "fed him, and clothed him, and visited him," in his poor members, will surely pronounce you blessed for so great a work as bringing souls to his kingdom. He that saith, "the poor you have always with you," hath left the ungodly always with you, that you might still have matter to exercise your charity upon. If you have the heart of a Christian or of a man, let it yearn towards your ignorant, ungodly neighbors. Say, as the lepers of Samaria, "We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." Hath God had so much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbors? But as this duty belongs to all Christians, so especially to some, according as God hath called them to it, or qualified them for it to them, therefore, I will more particularly address the exhortation:

1. God especially expects this duty at your hands, to whom he has given more learning and knowledge, and endued with better utterance, than your neighbors. The strong are made to help the weak, and those that see must direct the blind. God looketh for this faithful improvement of your powers and gifts, which, if you neglect, it were better you had never received them; for they will but aggravate your condemnation, and be as useless to your own salvation as they were to others.

2. All those who are particularly acquainted with some ungodly men, and who have peculiar interest in them, God looks for this duty at your hands. Christ himself did eat and drink with publicans and sinners; hut it was only to be their physician, and not their companion. Who knows but God gave you interest in them to this end, that you might be the means of their recovery? They that will not regard the words of a stranger, may regard a brother, or sister, or husband, or wife, or near friend; besides that the bond of friendship engages you to special kindness and compassion.

3. Physicians that are much about dying men, should, in a special manner, take conscience of this duty. It is their peculiar advantage, that they are at hand; that they are with men in sickness and danger, when the ear is more open and the heart less stubborn than in time of health; and that men look upon their physician as a person in whose hands is their life or, at least, who may do much to save them; and therefore they will the more regard his advice. You that are of this honorable profession, do not think this a work beside your calling, as if it belonged to none but ministers; except you think it beside your calling to be compassionate, or to be Christians. O help, therefore, to fit your patients for heaven! and, whether you see they are for life or death, teach them both how to live and die, and point them to a remedy for their souls, as you do for their bodies. Blessed be God that very many of the chief physicians of this age have, by their eminent piety, vindicated their profession from the common imputation of atheism and profaneness.

4. Men of wealth and authority, and that have many dependants, have excellent advantages for this duty. O what a world of good might gentlemen do if they had but hearts to improve their influence over others! Have you not all your honor and riches from God? Doth not Christ say, “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required’?” If you speak to your dependants for God and their souls, you may be regarded, when even a minister would be despised. As you value the honor of God, your own comfort, and the salvation of souls, improve your influence over your tenants and neighbors; visit their houses; see whether they worship God in their families; and take all opportunities to press them to their duty. Despise them not. Remember, God is no respecter of persons. Let men see that you excel others in piety, compassion, and diligence in God’s work, as you do in the riches and honors of the world. I confess you will, by this means, be singular, but then you will be singular in glory; for few of the mighty and noble are called.”

5. As for the ministers of the Gospel, it is the very work of their calling to help others to heaven. Be sure to make it the main end of your studies and preaching. He is the able, skilful minister, that is best skilled in the art of instructing, convincing, persuading, and consequently, of winning souls; and that is the best sermon that is best in these. When you seek not God, but yourselves, God will make you the most contemptible of men. It is true of your reputation, as Christ says of your life, “He that loveth it shall lose it.” Let the vigor of your persuasions show that you are sensible on how weighty a business you are sent. Preach with seriousness and fervor, as men who believe their own doctrine, and know their hearers must be prevailed with, or be damned. Think not that all your work is in your studies and pulpit. You are shepherds, and must know every sheep, and what is their disease, and mark their strayings, and help to cure them, and fetch them home. Learn of Paul, not only to teach your people “publicly,” but “from house to house.” Inquire how they grow in knowledge and holiness, and on what grounds they build their hopes of salvation, and whether they walk uprightly, and perform the duties of their several relations. See whether they worship God in their families, and teach them how to do it. Be familiar with them, that you may maintain

your interest in them, and improve it all for God. Know of them how they profit by public teaching. If any too little “savor the things of the Spirit,” let them be pitied, but not neglected. If any walk disorderly; recover them with diligence and patience. If they be ignorant, it may be your fault as much as theirs. Be not asleep while the wolf is waking. Deal not slightly with any. Some will not tell their people plainly of their sins, because they are great men and some, because they are godly; as if none but the poor and the wicked should be dealt plainly with. Yet labor to be skilful and discreet, that the manner may answer to the excellency of the matter. Every reasonable soul hath both judgment and affection; and every rational, spiritual sermon must have both. Study and pray, and pray and study, till you are become “workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,” that your people may not be ashamed, nor weary in hearing you. Let your conversation teach men as well as your doctrine. Be as forward in a holy and heavenly life as you are in pressing others to it. Let your discourse be edifying and spiritual. Suffer any thing, rather than the Gospel and men’s souls should suffer. Let men see that you use not the ministry only for a trade to live by; but that your hearts are set upon the welfare of souls. Whatsoever meekness, humility, condescension, or self-denial you teach them from the Gospel, teach it them also by your undissembled example. Study and strive after unity and peace. If ever you would promote the kingdom of Christ and your people’s salvation, do it in a way of peace and love. It is as hard a thing to maintain in your people a sound understanding, a tender conscience, a lively, gracious, heavenly frame of spirit, and an upright life, amidst contention, as to keep your candle lighted in the greatest storms. “Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.”

6. All you whom God has intrusted with the care of children and servants, I would also persuade to this great work of helping others to the heavenly rest. Consider what plain and pressing commands of God require this at your hands. “These words thou shalt teach diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Joshua resolved that “he and his house would serve the Lord.” And God himself says of Abraham, “I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.”

Consider, it is a duty you owe your children in point of justice. From you they received the defilement and misery of their nature; and therefore you owe them all possible help for their recovery. Consider how near your children are to you: they are parts of yourselves. If they prosper when you are dead, you view it as if you lived and prospered in them; and should you not be of the same mind for their everlasting rest? Otherwise you will be witnesses against your own souls. Your care, and pains, and cost for their bodies, will condemn you for your neglect of their precious souls. Yea, all the brute creation may condemn you. Which of them is not tender of its young?

Consider, God hath made your children your charge, and your servants too. Every one will confess they are the minister’s charge. And have not you a greater charge of your own families than any minister can have of them? Doubtless at your hands God will require the blood of their souls. It is the greatest charge you ever were intrusted with, and wo to you, if you suffer them to be ignorant or wicked for want of your instruction or correction. Consider what work there is for you in their dispositions and lives. Theirs is not one sin, but thousands. They have hereditary diseases bred in their nature. The things you must teach them are contrary to the interests and desires of their

flesh. May the Lord make you sensible what a work and charge lie upon you!

Consider what sorrows you prepare for yourselves by the neglect of your children. If they prove thorns in your eyes, they are of your own planting. If you should repent and be saved, is it nothing to think of their damnation; and yourselves the occasion of it? But if you die in your sins, how will they cry out against you in hell! “All this was wrong of you; you should have taught us better, and did not; you should have restrained us from sin and corrected us, but did not.” What an addition will such outcries be to your misery! On the other hand, think what a comfort you may have if you be faithful in this duty! If you should not succeed, you have freed your own souls, and may have peace in your own consciences. If you succeed, the comfort is inexpressible, in their love and obedience, their supplying your wants, and delighting you in all your remaining path to glory. Yea, all your family may fare the better for one pious child or servant. But the greatest joy will be, when you shall say, “Lord, here am I, and the children thou hast given me;” and shall joyfully live with them for ever. Consider how much the welfare of the church and the state depends on this duty. Good laws will not reform us, if reformation begin not at home. This is the cause of all our miseries in the church and the state, even the want of a holy education of children.

I also entreat parents to consider what excellent advantages they have for promoting the salvation of their children. They are with you while they are tender and flexible: you have a twig to bend, not an oak. None in the world have such an interest in their affections as you have: you have also the greatest authority over them. Their whole dependence is upon you for a maintenance. You best know their temper and inclinations. And you are ever with them, and can never want opportunities: especially you, mothers, remember this, who are more with your children, while young, than their fathers. What pains do you take for their bodies! What do you suffer to bring them into the world! And will you not be at as much pains for the saving of their souls? Your affections are tender, and will it not move you to think of their perishing for ever? I beseech you, for the sake of the children of your own flesh, teach them, admonish them, watch over them, and give them no rest till you have brought them to Christ.

I shall conclude with this earnest request to all Christian parents that read these lines, that they would have compassion on the souls of their poor children, and be faithful to the great trust that God hath put on them. If you cannot do what you would for them, yet do what you can. Both the church and the state, the city and the country, groan under the neglect of this weighty duty. Your children know not God nor his laws, but “take his name in vain,” and slight his worship, and you neither instruct them nor correct them; and therefore God corrects both them and you. You are so tender of them, that God is the less tender of both them and you. Wonder not if God makes you smart for your children’s sins; for you are guilty of all they commit by your neglect of your duty to reform them. Will you resolve, therefore to enter upon this duty, and neglect it no longer? Remember Eli. Your children are like Moses in the bulrushes, ready to perish if they have not help. If you would not be charged before God as murderers of their souls, nor have them cry out against you in everlasting fire, see that you teach them how to escape it, and bring them up in holiness and the fear of God. I charge every one of you, upon your allegiance to God, as you will very shortly answer the contrary at your peril, that you neither refuse nor neglect this most necessary duty. If you are not willing to do it, now you know it to be so great a duty, you are rebels, and no true subjects of Jesus Christ. If you are willing, but know not how, I will add a few words of direction to help you. Lead them, by your own example, to prayer, reading, and other religious

duties; inform their understandings; store their memories; rectify their wills; quicken their affections; keep tender their consciences; restrain their tongues, and teach them gracious speech; reform and watch over their outward conversation. To these ends, get them Bibles and pious books, and see that they read them. Examine them often as to what they learn; especially spend the Lord’s day in this work; and suffer them not to spend it in sports or idleness. Show them the meaning of what they read or learn. Instruct them out of the holy Scriptures. Keep them out of evil company, and acquaint them with the godly. Especially show them the necessity, excellency, and pleasure of serving God, and labor to fix all upon their hearts.

6.11. CHAPTER X

THE SAINTS' REST IS NOT TO BE EXPECTED ON EARTH. In order to show the sin and folly of expecting rest here, 1.The reasonableness of present afflictions is considered; 1. That they are the way to rest; 2. Keep us from mistaking our rest; 3. From losing our way to it; 4. Quicken our pace toward it; 5. Chiefly incommode our flesh; 6. Under them the sweetest foretastes of rest are often enjoyed. II. How unreasonable to rest in present enjoyments; 1. That it is idolatry; 2. That it contradicts God's end in giving them; 3. Is the way to have them refused, withdrawn, or imbittered; 4. That to be suffered to take up our rest here is the greatest curse; 5. That it is seeking rest where it is not; 6. That the creatures, without God, would aggravate our misery; 7. And all this is confirmed by experience. III.The unreasonableness of our unwillingness to die, and possess the saints' rest, is largely considered.

We are not yet come to our resting place. Doth it remain? How great, then, is our sin and folly to seek and expect it here! Where shall we find the Christian that deserves not this reproof? We would all have continual prosperity, because it is easy and pleasing to the flesh but we consider not the unreasonableness of such desires. And when we enjoy convenient houses, goods, lands, and revenues, or the necessary means God hath appointed for our spiritual good, we seek rest in these enjoyments. Whether we are in an afflicted or prosperous state, it is apparent we exceedingly make the creature our rest. Do we not desire earthly enjoyments more violently, when we want them, than we desire God himself? Do we not delight more in the possession of them, than in the enjoyment of God? And if we lose them, doth it not trouble us more than our loss of God? Is it not enough that they are refreshing helps in our way to heaven, but they must also be made our heaven itself? Christian reader, I would as willingly make thee sensible of this sin, as of any sin in the world, if I knew how to do it; for the Lord's great controversy with us is in this point. In order to this, I most earnestly beseech thee to consider the reasonableness of present afflictions, and the unreasonableness of resting in present enjoyments, as also of our unwillingness to die that we may possess eternal rest.

First. To show the reasonableness of present afflictions, consider-they are the way to rest; they keep us from mistaking our rest, and from losing the way to it; they quicken our pace toward it; they chiefly incommode our flesh; and under them God's people have often the sweetest foretastes of their rest.

1. Consider that labor and trouble are the common way to rest, both in the course of nature and grace. Can there possibly be rest without weariness? Do you not travail and toil first, and rest afterwards? The day for labor is first, and then follows the night for rest. Why should we desire the course of grace to be perverted, any more than the course of nature? It is an established decree, "that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God;" and that, "if we suffer, we shall also reign with Christ." And what are we that God's statutes should be reversed for our pleasure?

2. Afflictions are exceedingly useful to us, to keep us from mistaking our rest. A Christian's motion toward heaven is voluntary, and not constrained. Those means, therefore, are most profitable, which help his understanding and will. The most dangerous mistake of our souls is, to take the creature for God, and earth for heaven. What warm, affectionate, eager thoughts have we of the world, till afflictions cool and moderate them! Afflictions speak convincingly, and will be heard when preachers cannot. Many a poor Christian is sometimes bending his thoughts to wealth, or flesh-pleasing, or applause, and so loses his relish of Christ and the joy above, till God breaks in upon his riches, or children, or conscience, or health, and breaks down his mountain which he thought so strong. And then when he lieth in Manasseh's fetters, or is fastened to his bed with pining sickness, the world is nothing, and heaven is something. If our dear Lord did not put these thorns under our head, we should sleep out our lives and lose our glory.

3. Afflictions are also God's most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our rest. Without this hedge of thorns on the right hand and left, we should hardly keep the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready are we to find it, and turn out at it! When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, how much doth sickness or other affliction reduce us! Every Christian, as well as Luther, may call affliction one of the best schoolmasters; and, with David, may say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Many thousand recovered sinners may cry, "O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted!" Not only the "green pastures and still waters, but the rod and staff, they comfort us." Though the word and Spirit do the main work, yet suffering so unbolts the door of the heart, that the word hath easier entrance.

4. Afflictions likewise serve to quicken our pace in the way to our rest. It were well if mere love would prevail with us, and that we were rather drawn to heaven than driven. But, seeing our hearts are so bad that mercy will not do it, it is better to be urged onward with the sharpest scourge, than loiter, like the foolish virgins, till the door is shut. O what a difference is there betwixt our prayers in health and in sickness! betwixt our repentings in prosperity and adversity! Alas! if we did not sometimes feel the spur, what a slow pace would most of us hold toward heaven! Since our vile natures require it, why should we be unwilling that God should do us good by sharp means? Judge, Christian, whether thou dost not go more watchfully and speedily in the way to heaven in thy sufferings, than in thy more pleasing and prosperous state.

5. Consider, further, it is but the flesh that is chiefly troubled and grieved by afflictions. In most of our sufferings the soul is free, unless we ourselves wilfully afflict it. "Why then, O my soul, dost thou side with this flesh, and complain as it complaineth? It should be thy work to keep it under, and bring it into subjection; and if God do it for thee, shouldst thou be discontented? Hath not the pleasing of it been the cause of almost all thy spiritual sorrows? Why, then, may not the displeasing of it further thy joy? Must not Paul and Silas sing because their feet are in the stocks? Their spirits were not imprisoned. Ah, Unworthy soul! is this thy thanks to God for preferring thee so far before thy body? When it is rotting in the grave thou shalt be a companion of the perfected spirits of the just. In the meantime, hast thou not consolation which the flesh knows not of? Murmur not, then, at God's dealings with thy body: if it were for want of love to thee, he would not have dealt so by all his saints. Never expect thy flesh should truly expound the meaning of the rod. It will call love hatred, and say, God is destroying, when he is saving. It is the suffering part, and therefore not fit to be the judge." Could we once believe God, and judge of his dealings by his

word, and by their usefulness to our souls and reference to our rest, and could we stop our ears against all the clamors of the flesh, then we should have a truer judgment of our afflictions.

6. Once more, consider, God seldom gives his people so sweet a foretaste of their future rest as in their deep afflictions. He keeps his most precious cordials for the time of our greatest faintings and dangers. He gives them when he knows they are needed and will be valued, and when he is sure to be thanked for them, and that his people will be rejoiced by them. Especially when our sufferings are more directly for his cause, then he seldom fails to sweeten the bitter cup. The martyrs have possessed the highest joys. When did Christ preach such comfort to his disciples as when “their hearts were sorrowful” at his departure? When did he appear among them and say, “Peace be unto you,” but when they were shut up for fear of the Jews? When did Stephen see heaven opened, but when he was giving up his life for the testimony of Jesus? Is not that our best state, wherein we have most of God? Why else do we desire to come to heaven? If we look for a heaven of fleshly delights, we shall find ourselves mistaken. Conclude, then, that affliction is not so bad a state for a saint in his way to rest. Are we wiser than God? Doth he not know what is good for us, as well as we? or is he not as careful of our good as we are of our own? Wo to us if he were not much more so, and if he did not love us better than we love either him or ourselves!

Say not, “I could bear any other affliction but this.” If God had afflicted thee where thou canst bear it, thy idol would neither have been discovered nor removed. Neither say, “If God would ere long deliver me, I could be content to bear it.” Is it nothing, that he hath promised it “shall work for thy good?” Is it not enough that thou art sure to be delivered at death? Nor let it be said, “If my affliction did not disable me from my duty, I could bear it.” It doth not disable thee for that duty which tendeth to thy own personal benefit, but is the greatest quickening help thou canst expect. As for thy duty to others, it is not thy duty when God disables thee. Perhaps thou wilt say, “The godly are my afflicters; if it were ungodly men, I could easily bear it.” Whoever is the instrument, the affliction is from God, and the deserving cause thyself; and is it not better to look more to God than to thyself? Didst thou not know that the best men are still sinful in part? Do not plead, “If I had but that consolation which God reserveth for suffering times, I should suffer more contentedly; but I do not perceive any such thing.” The more you suffer for righteousness’ sake, the more of this blessing you may expect; and the more you suffer for your own evil doing, the longer it will be before that sweetness comes. Are not the comforts you desire neglected or resisted? Have your afflictions wrought kindly with you, and fitted you for comfort? It is not suffering that prepares you for comfort, but the success and fruit of suffering upon your heart.

Secondly. To show the unreasonableness of resting in present enjoyments, consider-it is idolizing them; it contradicts God’s end in giving them; it is the way to have them refused, withdrawn, or imbittered to be suffered to take up our rest here, is the greatest curse; it is seeking rest where it is not to be found; the creatures, without God, would aggravate our misery; and to confirm all this, we may consult our own and others’ experience.

1. It is gross idolatry to make any creature, or means, our rest. To be the rest of the soul is God’s own prerogative. As it is evident idolatry to place our rest in riches or honor, so it is but a more refined idolatry to take up our rest in excellent means of grace. How must we offend our dear Lord when we give him cause to complain, as he did of our fellow idolaters: “My people have been lost sheep; they have forgotten their resting-place. My people can find rest in any thing rather than in

me. They can delight in one another, but not in me. They can rejoice in my creatures and ordinances, but not in me. Yea, in their very labors and duties they seek for rest, but not in me. They had rather be any where than be with me. Are these their gods? Have these redeemed them? Will these be better to them than I have been, or than I would be?" If you yourselves had a wife, a husband, a son, who had rather be any where than in your company, and was never so merry as when farthest from you, would you not take it ill? So our God must needs do.

2. You contradict the end of God in giving these enjoyments. He gave them to help thee to him, and dost thou take up with them in his stead? He gave them to be refreshments in thy journey, and wouldst thou dwell in thy inn and go no farther? It may be said of all our comforts and ordinances, as is said of the Israelites, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them, to search out a resting-place for them." So do all God's mercies here. They are not that rest; as John professed he was not the Christ; but they are "voices crying in this wilderness," to bid us prepare, "for the kingdom of God," our true rest, "is at hand." Therefore, to rest here, were to turn all mercies contrary to their own ends and to our own advantage, and to destroy ourselves with that which should help us.

3. It is the way to cause God either to deny the mercies we ask, or to take from us those we enjoy, or at least imbitter them to us. God is nowhere so jealous as here. If you had a servant whom your wife loved better than yourself, would you not take it ill of such a wife, and rid your house of such a servant? So, if the Lord see you begin to settle in the world, and say, "Here I will rest," no wonder if he soon, in his jealousy, unsettle you. If he love you, no wonder if he take that from you with which he sees you are destroying yourself. It hath long been my observation of many, that when they have attempted great works, and have just finished them or have aimed at great things in the world, and have just obtained them; or have lived in much trouble, and have just overcome it; and begin to look on their condition with content, and rest in it; they are then usually near to death or ruin. When a man is once at this language, "Soul, take thy ease," the next news usually is, "Thou fool, this night," or this month, or this year, "thy soul shall be required, and then whose shall these things be?" What house is there where this fool dwelleth not? Let you and I consider whether it be not our own case. Many a servant of God has been destroyed from the earth by being overvalued and overloved. I am persuaded, our discontents and murmurings are not so provoking to God, nor so destructive to the sinner, as our too sweet enjoying and resting in a pleasing state. If God hath crossed you in wife, children, goods, friends, either by taking them away, or the comfort of them, try whether this be not the cause; for wheresoever your desires stop, and you say, "Now I am well," that condition you make your god, and engage the jealousy of God against it. Whether you be a friend to God or an enemy, you can never expect that God should suffer you quietly to enjoy your idols.

4. Should God suffer you to take up your rest here, it is one of the greatest curses that could befall you. It were better never to have a day of ease in the world; for then weariness might make you seek after true rest. But if you are suffered to sit down and rest here, a restless wretch you will be through all eternity. To "have their portion in this life," is the lot of the most miserable, perishing sinners. Does it become Christians, then, to expect so much here? Our rest is our heaven; and where we take our rest, there we make our heaven. And wouldst thou have but such a heaven as this?

5. It is seeking rest where it is not to be found. Your labor will be lost; and if you proceed, your soul's eternal rest too. Our rest is only in the full obtaining of our ultimate end. But that is not to be expected in this life; neither is rest, therefore, to be expected here. Is God to be enjoyed in the best church here as he is in heaven? How little of God the saints enjoy under the best means let their own complainings testify. Poor comforters are the best ordinances without God. Should a traveller take up his rest in the way? No; because his home is his journey's end. When you have all that creatures and means can afford, have you that you believed, prayed, suffered for? I think you dare not say so. We are like little children strayed from home, and God is now bringing us home, and we are ready to turn into any house, stay and play with every thing in our way, and sit down on every green bank, and much ado there is to get us home. We are also in the midst of our labors and dangers; and is there any resting here? What painful duties lie upon our hands! to our brethren, to our own souls, and to God; and what an arduous work, in respect to each of these, doth lie before us! And can we rest in the midst of all our labors? Indeed, we may rest on earth, as the ark is said to have "rested in the midst of Jordan "-a short and small rest; or as Abraham desired the "angels to turn in and rest themselves" in his tent, where they would have been loth to have taken up their dwelling. Should Israel have fixed their rest in the wilderness, among serpents, and enemies, and weariness and famine? Should Noah have made the ark his home, and have been loth to come forth when the waters were assuaged? Should the mariner choose his dwelling on the sea, and settle his rest in the midst of rocks, and sands, and raging tempests? Should a soldier rest in the thickest of his enemies? And are not Christians such travellers, such mariners, such soldiers? Have you not fears within and troubles without? Are we not in continual dangers? We cannot eat, drink, sleep, labor, pray, hear, converse, but in the midst of snares; and shall we sit down and rest here?

O Christian, follow thy work, look to thy dangers, hold on to the end, win the field, and come off the ground before thou think of a settled rest. Whenever thou talkest of a rest on earth, it is like Peter on the mount, "thou knowest not what thou sayest." If, instead of telling the converted thief "this day shalt thou be with me in paradise," Christ had said he should rest there upon the cross, would he not have taken it for derision? Methinks it would be ill resting in the midst of sickness and pain, persecutions and distresses. But if nothing else will convince us, yet sure the remains of sin, which so easily besets us, should quickly satisfy a believer that here is not his rest. I say, therefore, to every one that thinketh of rest on earth, "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted." These things cannot, in their nature, be a true Christian's rest. They are too poor to make us rich; too low to raise us to happiness; too empty to fill our souls; and of too short a continuance to be our eternal content. If prosperity, and whatsoever we here desire, be too base to make gods of; they are too base to be our rest. The soul's rest must be sufficient to afford it perpetual satisfaction. But the content which creatures afford waxes old, and abates after a short enjoyment. If God should rain down angel's food, we should soon loathe the manna. If novelty support not, our delights on earth grow dull. All creatures are to us as flowers to the bee; there is but little honey on any one, and therefore there must be but a superficial taste, and so to the next. The more the world is known, the less it satisfieth. Those only are taken with it, who see no farther than its outward beauty, without discerning its inward vanity. When we thoroughly know the condition of other men, and have discovered the evil as well as the good, and the defects as well as the perfections; we then cease our admiration.

6. To have creatures and means without God, is an aggravation of our misery. If God should say, “Take my creatures, my word, my servants, my ordinances, but not myself;” would you take this for happiness? If you had the word of God, and not “the Word,” who is God; or the bread of the Lord, and not the Lord, who “is the true bread;” or could cry with the Jews, “The temple of the Lord,” and had not the Lord of the temple; this were a poor happiness. Was Capernaum the more happy, or the more miserable, for seeing the mighty works which they had seen, and hearing the words of Christ which they did hear? Surely that which aggravates our sin and misery cannot be our rest.

7. To confirm all this, let us consult our own and others’ experience. Millions have made the trial, but did any ever find a sufficient rest for his soul on earth? Delights I deny not but they have found, but rest and satisfaction they never found. And shall we think to find that which never man could find before us? Ahab’s kingdom is nothing to him without Naboth’s vineyard; and did that satisfy him when he obtained it? Were you, like Noah’s dove, to look through the earth for a resting-place, you would return confessing that you could find none. Go ask honor, Is there rest here? You may as well rest on the top of tempestuous mountains, or in Aetna’s flames. Ask riches, Is there rest here? Even such as is in a bed of thorns. If you inquire for the rest of worldly pleasure, it is such as the fish hath in swallowing the bait; when the pleasure is sweetest, death is nearest. Go to learning, and even to divine ordinances, and inquire whether there your soul may rest. You might indeed receive from these an olive branch of hope, as they are means to your rest, and have relation to eternity; but, in regard of any satisfaction in themselves, you would remain as restless as ever. How well might all these answer us, as Jacob did Rachel, “Am I in God’s stead,” that you come to me for soul-rest? Not all the states of men in the world; neither court nor country, towns nor cities, shops nor fields, treasures, libraries, solitude, society, studies, nor pulpits, can afford any such thing as this rest. If you could inquire of the dead of all generations, or of the living through all dominions, they would all tell you, “there is no rest.” Or, if other men’s experience move you not, take a view of your own. Can you remember the state that did fully satisfy you? or, if you could, will it prove lasting? I believe we may all say of our earthly rest, as Paul of our hope, “If it were in this life only, we are of all men the most miserable.”

If, then, either Scripture or reason, or the experience of ourselves and all the world, will convince us, we may see there is no resting here. And yet how guilty are the generality of us of this sin! How many halts and stops do we make before we will make the Lord our rest! How must God even drive us, and fire us out of every condition, lest we should sit down and rest there! If he gives us prosperity, riches, or honor, we do in our hearts dance before them, as the Israelites before their calf, and say, “These are thy gods,” and conclude “it is good to be here.” If he imbitter all these to us, how restless are we till our condition be sweetened, that we may sit down again and rest where we were! If he proceed in the cure, and take the creature quite away, then we labor, and cry, and pray that God would restore it, that we may make it our rest again! And while we are deprived of our former idol, yet, rather than come to God, we delight ourselves in the hope of recovering it, and make that very hope our rest, or search about from creature to creature to find out something to supply the room; yea, if we can find no supply, yet we will rather settle in this misery, and make a rest of a wretched being, than leave all and come to God.

O the cursed aversion of our souls from God! If any place in hell were tolerable, the soul would rather take up its rest there than come to God. Yea, when he is bringing us over to him, and hath convinced us of the worth of his ways and service, the last deceit of all is here; we will rather settle

upon those ways that lead to him, and those ordinances that speak of him, and those gifts which flow from him, than come entirely over to himself. Christian, marvel not that I speak so much of resting in these; beware, lest it prove thy own case. I suppose thou art so far convinced of the vanity of riches, honor and pleasure, that thou canst more easily disclaim these; and it is well if it be so; but the means of grace thou lookest on with less suspicion, and thinkest thou canst not delight in them too much, especially seeing most of the world despise them, or delight in them too little. I know they must be loved and valued and he that delighteth in any worldly thing more than in them, is not a Christian. But when we are content with ordinances without God, and had rather be at public worship than in heaven, and a member of the church here than of the perfect church above, this is a sad mistake. So far let thy soul take comfort in ordinances as God doth accompany them; remembering, this is not heaven, but the first-fruits. “while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord;” and while we are absent from him, we are absent from our rest. If God were as willing to be absent from us as we from him, and as loth to be our rest as we to rest in him, we should be left to an eternal restless separation. In a word, as you are sensible of the sinfulness of your earthly discontents, so be you also of your irregular satisfaction, and pray God to pardon them much more. And, above all the plagues on this side hell, see that you watch and pray against settling any where short of heaven, or reposing your soul on any thing below God.

Thirdly. The next thing to be considered is our unreasonable unwillingness to die, that we may possess the saints’ rest. We linger, like Lot in Sodom, till “the Lord, being merciful unto us, doth pluck us away against our will. I confess that death, of itself, is not desirable; but the soul’s rest with God is, to which death is the common passage. Because we are apt to make light of this sin, let me set before you its nature and remedy, in a variety of considerations.

It has in it much infidelity. If we did verily believe that the promise of this glory is the word of God, and that God truly means as he speaks, and is fully resolved to make it good; if we did verily believe that there is indeed such blessedness prepared for believers, surely we should be as impatient of living as we are now fearful of dying, and should think every day a year till our last day should come. Is it possible that we can truly believe that death will remove us from misery to such glory, and yet be loth to die? If the doubts of our own interest in that glory make us fear, yet a true belief of the certainty and excellency of this rest would make us restless till our title to it be cleared. Though there is much faith and Christianity in our mouths, yet there is much infidelity and paganism in our hearts, which is the chief cause that we are so loth to die.

It is also much owing to the coldness of our love. If we love our friend, we love his company; his presence is comfortable, his absence is painful; when he comes to us, we entertain him with gladness; when he dies, we mourn, and usually over-mourn. To be separated from a faithful friend, is like the rending of a member from our body. And would not our desires after God be such, if we really loved him? Nay, should it not be much more than such, as he is, above all friends, most lovely? May the Lord teach us to look closely to our hearts, and take heed of self-deceit in this point! Whatever we pretend, if we love either father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, wealth, or life itself, more than Christ, we are yet “none of his” sincere “disciples.” When it comes to the trial, the question will not be, Who hath preached most, or heard most, or talked most? but, who hath loved most? Christ will not take sermons, prayers, fastings; no, nor the “giving our goods,” nor the”burning our bodies,” instead of love. And do we love him, and yet care not how long we are

from him? Was it such a joy to Jacob to see the face of Joseph in Egypt? and shall we be contented without the sight of Christ in glory, and yet say we love him? I dare not conclude that we have no love at all, when we are so loth to die; but I dare say, were our love more, we should die more willingly. If this holy flame were thoroughly kindled in our breasts, we should cry out with David, “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?” By our unwillingness to die, it appears we are little weary of sin. Did we feel sin to be the greatest evil, we should not be willing to have its company so long. “O foolish, sinful heart! hast thou been so long a cage of all unclean lusts, a fountain incessantly pouring forth the bitter waters of transgression, and art thou not yet weary? Wretched soul! hast thou been so long wounded in all thy faculties, so grievously languishing in all thy performances, so fruitful a soil of all iniquities, and art thou not yet more weary? Wouldst thou still lie under thy imperfections? Hath thy sin proved so profitable a commodity, so necessary a companion, such a delightful employment, that thou dost so much dread the parting day? May not God justly grant thee thy wishes, and seal thee a lease of thy desired distance from him, and nail thy ears to these doors of misery, and exclude thee eternally from his glory?”

It shows that we are insensible of the vanity of earth, when we are so loth to hear or think of a removal. “Ah, foolish, wretched soul! doth every prisoner groan for freedom? and every slave desire his jubilee? and every sick man long for health? and every hungry man for food? and dost thou alone abhor deliverance? Doth the sailor wish to see land? Doth the husbandman desire the harvest, and the laborer to receive his pay? Doth the traveller long to be at home, and the racer to win the prize, and the soldier to win the field? and art thou loth to see thy labors finished, and to receive the end of thy faith and sufferings? Have thy griefs been only dreams? If they were, yet methinks thou shouldst not be afraid of waking. Or is it not rather the world’s delights that are all mere dreams and shadows? Or is the world become of late more kind? We may at our peril reconcile ourselves to the world, but it will never reconcile itself to us. O unworthy soul! who hadst rather dwell in this land of darkness, and wander in this barren wilderness, than be at rest with Jesus Christ! who hadst rather stay among the wolves, and daily suffer the scorpion’s stings, than praise the Lord with the host of heaven.” This unwillingness to die doth actually impeach us of high treason against the Lord. Is it not choosing earth before him, and taking present things for our happiness, and consequently making them our very god? If we did indeed make God our end, our rest, our portion, our treasure, how is it possible but we should desire to enjoy him? It, moreover, discovers some dissimulation. Would you have any man believe you when you call the Lord your only hope, and speak of Christ as all in all, and of the joy that is in his presence, and yet would endure the hardest life, rather than die and enter into his presence? What self-contradiction is this, to talk so hardly of the world and the flesh, to groan and complain of sin and suffering, and yet fear no day more than that we expect should bring our final freedom! What hypocrisy is this to profess to strive and fight for heaven, which we are loth to come to! and spend one hour after another in prayer for that which we would not have! Hereby we wrong the Lord and his promises, and disgrace his ways in the eyes of the world; as if we would persuade them to question whether God be true to his word or not; whether there be any such glory as the Scripture mentions. When they see those so loth to leave their hold of present things, who have professed to live by faith, and have boasted of their hopes in another world, and spoken disgracefully of all things below, in comparison of things above, how doth this confirm the world in their unbelief and sensuality!

“Surely,” say they, “if these professors did expect so much glory, and make so light of the world as they seem, they would not themselves be so loth to change.” O how are we ever able to repair the wrong which we do to God and souls by this scandal? And what an honor to God, what a strengthening to believers, what a conviction to unbelievers would it be, if Christians in this did answer their profession. and cheerfully welcome the news of rest!

It also evidently shows that we have spent much time to little purpose. Have we not had all our life-time to prepare to die; so many years to make ready for one hour; and are we so unready and unwilling yet? What have we done? Why have we lived? Had we any greater matters to mind? Would we have wished for more frequent warnings? How oft hath death entered the habitations of our neighbors! How often hath it knocked at our own door! How many diseases have vexed our bodies, that we have been forced to receive the sentence of death! And are we unready and unwilling after all this? O careless, dead-hearted sinners! unworthy neglecters of God’s warnings! faithless betrayers of our own souls!

Consider, not to die is never to be happy. To escape death is to miss of blessedness, except God should translate us, as Enoch and Elijah, which he never did before or since. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” If you would not die and go to heaven, what would you have more than an epicure or a beast? Why do we pray, and fast, and mourn; why do we suffer the contempt of the world; why are we Christians, and not pagans and infidels, if we do not desire a life to come? Wouldst thou lose thy faith and labor, Christian; all thy duties and sufferings, all the end of thy life, and all the blood of Christ, and be contented with the portion of a worldling or a brute? Rather say, as one did on his deathbed, when he was asked whether he was willing to die or not, “Let him be loth to die who is loth to be with Christ.” Is God willing by death to glorify us, and are we unwilling to die, that we may be glorified? Methinks, if a prince were willing to make you his heir, you would scarce be unwilling to accept it; the refusing such a kindness would discover ingratitude and unworthiness. As God hath resolved against them who make excuses when they should come to Christ, “None of those men, who were bidden, shall taste of my supper;” so it is just with him to resolve against us, who frame excuses when we should come to glory. The Lord Jesus Christ was willing to come from heaven to earth for us, and shall we be unwilling to remove from earth to heaven for ourselves and him! He might have said, “What is it to me if these sinners suffer? If they value their flesh above their spirits, and their lusts above my Father’s love; if they will sell their souls for naught, who is it fit should be the loser? Should I, whom they have wronged? Must they wilfully transgress my law, and I undergo their deserved pain? Must I come down from heaven to earth, and clothe myself with human flesh, be spit upon, and scorned by man, and fast, and weep, and sweat, and suffer, and bleed, and die a cursed death; and all this for wretched worms who would rather hazard their souls than forbear one forbidden morsel? Do they cast away themselves so slightly, and must I redeem them so dearly?” Thus we see Christ had reason enough to have made him unwilling; and yet did he voluntarily condescend. But we have no reason against our coming to him; except we will reason against our hopes, and plead for a perpetuity of our own calamities. Christ came down to raise us up; and would we have him lose his blood and labor and go again without us? Hath he bought our rest at so dear a rate? Is our inheritance “purchased with his blood?” And are we, after all this, loth to enter? Ah, sirs! it was Christ, and not we, that had cause to be loth. May the Lord forgive and heal this foolish ingratitude! Do we not combine with our most cruel foes in their most malicious designs, while we

are loth to die and go to heaven? What is the devil's daily business? Is it not to keep our souls from God? And shall we be content with this? Is it not the one half of hell which we wish to ourselves, while we desire to be absent from heaven? What sport is this to Satan, that his desires and thine, Christian, should so concur! that, when he sees he can not get thee to hell, he can so long keep thee out of heaven, and make thee the earnest petitioner for it thyself! O gratify not the devil so much to thy own injury! Do not our daily fears of death make our lives a continual torment? Those lives which might be full of joy, in the daily contemplation of the life to come, and the sweet, delightful thoughts of bliss; how do we fill them up with causeless terrors! Thus we consume our own comforts, and prey upon our truest pleasures. When we might lie down, and rise up, and walk abroad, with our hearts full of the joys of God, we continually fill them with perplexing fears. For he that fears dying, must be always fearing because he hath always reason to expect it. And how can that man's life be comfortable who lives in continual fear of losing his comforts? Are not these fears of death self-created sufferings? as if God had not inflicted enough upon us, but we must inflict more upon ourselves. Is not death bitter enough to the flesh of itself, but we must double and treble its bitterness? The sufferings laid upon us by God do all lead to happy issues; the progress is from tribulation to patience, from thence to experience, and so to hope, and at last to glory. But the sufferings we make for ourselves are circular and endless, from sin to suffering, from suffering to sin, and so to suffering again; and not only so, but they multiply in their course; every sin is greater than the former, and so every suffering also: so that, except we think God hath made us to be our own tormentors, we have small reason to nourish our fears of death. And are they not useless, unprofitable fears? As all our care "cannot make one hair white or black, nor add one cubit to our stature," so neither can our fear prevent our sufferings, nor delay our death one hour: willing or unwilling, we must away. Many a man's fears have hastened his end, but no man's did ever avert it. It is true, a cautious fear concerning the danger after death hath profited many, and is very useful to the preventing of that danger; but for a member of Christ, and an heir of heaven, to be afraid of entering his own inheritance, is a sinful, useless fear. And do not our fears of dying ensnare our souls, and add strength to many temptations? What made Peter deny his Lord? What makes apostates in suffering times forsake the truth? Why does the green blade of unrooted faith wither before the beat of persecution? Fear of imprisonment and poverty may do much, but fear of death will do much more. So much fear as we have of death, so much cowardice we usually have in the cause of God; besides the multitude of unbelieving contrivances, and discontents at the wise disposal of God, and hard thoughts of most of his providences, of which this sin makes us guilty.

Let us further consider what sufficient time most of us have had. Why should not a man, that would die at all, be as willing at thirty or forty, if God see fit, as at seventy or eighty? Length of time does not conquer corruption; it never withers nor decays through age. Except we receive an addition of grace as well as time, we naturally grow worse. "O my soul, depart in peace! As thou wouldst not desire an unlimited state in wealth and honor, so desire it not in point of time. If thou wast sensible how little thou deservest an hour of that patience which thou hast enjoyed, thou wouldst think thou hadst had a large part. Is it not divine wisdom that sets the bounds? God will honor himself by various persons and ages, and not by one person or age. Seeing thou hast acted thy own part, and finished thy appointed course, come down contentedly, that others may succeed, who must have their turns as well as thyself. Much time hath much duty; beg therefore for grace to improve it better; but be content with thy share of time.

“Thou hast also had a competency of the comforts of life. God might have made thy life a burden, till thou hadst been as weary of possessing it as thou art now afraid of losing it. He might have suffered thee to have consumed thy days in ignorance, without the true knowledge of Christ: but he hath opened thy eyes in the morning of thy days, and acquainted thee betimes with the business of thy life. Hath thy heavenly Father caused thy lot to fall in Europe, not in Asia or Africa; in England, not in Spain or Italy? Hath he filled up all thy life with mercies, and dost thou now think thy share too small? What a multitude of hours of consolation, of delightful Sabbaths, of pleasant studies; of precious companions, of wonderful deliverances, of excellent opportunities, of fruitful labors, of joyful tidings, of sweet experiences, of astonishing providences, hath thy life partaken of! Hath thy life been so sweet that thou art loth to leave it? Is this thy thanks to Him who is thus drawing thee to his own sweetness? O foolish soul! would thou wast as covetous after eternity as thou art for a fading, perishing life! and after the presence of God in glory, as thou art for continuance on earth! Then thou wouldst cry, ‘Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?’ How long, Lord? how long? What if God should let thee live many years, but deny thee the mercies which thou hast hitherto enjoyed? Might he not give thee life, as he gave the murmuring Israelites quails? He might give thee life till thou art weary of living, and as glad to be rid of it as Judas or Ahithophel; and make thee like many miserable creatures in the world, who can hardly forbear laying violent hands on themselves. Be not therefore so importunate for life, which may prove a judgment instead of a blessing. How many of the precious servants of God, of all ages and places, have gone before thee! Thou art not to enter an untrodden path, nor appointed first to break the ice. Except Enoch and Elijah, which of the saints have escaped death? And art thou better than they? There are many millions of saints dead, more than now remain on earth. What a number of thine own bosom friends and companions in duty are now gone, and why shouldst thou be so loth to follow? Nay, hath not Jesus Christ himself gone this way? Hath he not sanctified the grave to us, and perfumed the dust with his own body, and art thou loth to follow him too? Rather say as Thomas, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him.’ If what has been said will not persuade, Scripture and reason have little force. And I have said the more on this subject, finding it so needful to myself and others; finding among so many Christians, who could do and suffer much for Christ, so few that can willingly die; and of many, who have somewhat subdued other corruptions, so few that have gotten the conquest of this. I persuade not the ungodly from fearing death; it is a wonder that they fear it no more, and spend not their days in continual horror.

6.12. CHAPTER XI

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADING A HEAVENLY LIFE UPON EARTH. The reasonableness of delighting in the thoughts of the saints' rest. Christians exhorted to it, by considering, 1. It will evidence their sincere piety; 2. It is the highest excellence of the Christian temper; 3. It leads to the most comfortable life; 4. It will be the best preservative from temptations to sin; 5. It will invigorate their graces and duties; 6. It will be their best cordial in afflictions; 7. It will render them most profitable to others; 8. It will honor God; 9. Without it we disobey the commands, and lose the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God; 10. It is the more reasonable to have our hearts with God, as his is much on us; and, 11. in heaven, where we have so much interest and relation; 12. Besides, there is nothing but heaven worth setting our hearts upon. Is there such a rest remaining for us? Why, then, are not our thoughts more upon if? Why are not our hearts continually there? Why dwell we not there in constant contemplation? What is the cause of this neglect? Are we reasonable in this, or are we not? Hath the eternal God provided us such a glory, and promised to take us up to dwell with himself? and is not this worth thinking on? Should not the strongest desires of our hearts be after it? Do we believe this, and yet forget and neglect it? If God will not give us leave to approach this light, what mean all his earnest invitations? Why doth he so condemn our earthly-mindedness, and command us to set our affections on things above? Ah, vile hearts! Were God against it, we were likelier to be for it; but when he commands our hearts to heaven, then they will not stir one inch: like our predecessors, the sinful Israelites, when God would have them march for Canaan, then they mutiny, and will not stir; but when God bids them not go, then will they be presently marching. If God say, "Love not the world, nor the things of the world," we dote upon it. How freely, how frequently can we think of our pleasures, our friends, our labors, our flesh and its lusts! yea, our wrongs and miseries, our fears and sufferings! But where is the Christian whose heart is on his rest? What is the matter? Are we so full of joy that we need no more? Or is there nothing in heaven for our joyous thoughts? Or rather, are not our hearts carnal and stupid? Let us humble these sensual hearts, that have in them no more of Christ and glory. If this world was the only subject of our discourse, all would call us ungodly; why, then, may we not call our hearts ungodly, that have so little delight in Christ and heaven? But I am speaking only to those whose portion is in heaven, whose hopes are there, and who have forsaken all to enjoy this glory; and shall I be discouraged from persuading such to be heavenly-minded? Fellow-Christians, if you will not hear and obey, who will? Well may we be discouraged to exhort the blind, ungodly world, and may say, as Moses did, "Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me?" I require thee, reader, as ever thou hopest for a part in this glory, that thou presently take thy heart to task, chide it for its wilful strangeness to God, turn thy thoughts from the pursuit of vanity, bend thy soul to study eternity, busy it about the life to come, habituate thyself to such contemplations, and let not those thoughts be seldom and cursory, but bathe thy soul in heaven's delights; and if thy backward soul begin to flag and thy thoughts to scatter, call them back, hold them to their work, bear not with their laziness, nor connive at one neglect. And when thou hast, in obedience to God, tried this work, got acquainted with it, and kept a guard on thy thoughts till they are accustomed to obey, thou wilt then find thyself in the suburbs

of heaven, and that there is indeed a sweetness in the work and way of God, and that the life of Christianity is a life of joy. Thou wilt meet with those abundant consolations which thou hast prayed, panted, and groaned after, and which so few Christians do ever here obtain, because they know not this way to them, or else make not conscience of walking in it.

Say not, “We are unable to set our own hearts on heaven; this must be the work of God only.” Though God be the chief disposer of your hearts, yet, next under him, you have the greatest command of them yourselves. Though without Christ you can do nothing, yet under him you may do much, and must, or else it will be undone, and yourselves undone through your neglect. Christians, if your souls were healthful and vigorous, they would perceive incomparably more delight and sweetness in the believing, joyful thoughts of your future blessedness, than the soundest stomach finds in its food, or the strongest senses in the enjoyment of their objects; so little painful would this work be to you. But because I know, while we have flesh about us and any remains of that “carnal mind which is enmity against God” and this noble work, that all motives are little enough, I will here lay down some considerations, which, if you will deliberately weigh with an impartial judgment, I doubt not will prove effectual with your hearts, and make you resolve on this excellent duty. More particularly consider, it will evidence your sincere piety; it is the highest excellence of the Christian temper; it is the way to live most comfortably; it will be the best preservative from temptations to sin; it will enliven your graces and duties; it will be your best cordial in all afflictions; it will render you most profitable to others; it will honor God; without it you will disobey the commands and lose the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God: it is also the more reasonable to have your hearts with God, as his is so much on you; and in heaven, where you have so much interest and relation; besides, there is nothing but heaven worth setting your hearts upon.

1. Consider that a heart set upon heaven will be one of the most unquestionable evidences of your sincerity, and a clear discovery of a true work of saving grace upon your souls. You are often asking, “How shall we know that we are truly sanctified?” Here you have a sign infallible from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself: “where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.” God is the saints’ treasure and happiness; heaven is the place where they must fully enjoy him. A heart, therefore, set upon heaven, is a heart set upon God; and surely a heart set upon God, through Christ, is the truest evidence of saving grace. When learning will be no proof of grace; when knowledge, duties, gifts will fail; when arguments from thy tongue or hand may be confuted; yet then will this, from the bent of thy heart, prove thee sincere. Take a poor Christian, of a weak understanding, a feeble memory, a stammering tongue; yet his heart is set on God, he hath chosen him for his portion, his thoughts are on eternity, his desires are there; he cries out, “O that I were there!” He takes that day for a time of imprisonment, in which he hath not had one refreshing view of eternity. I had rather die in this man’s condition, than in the case of him who hath the most eminent gifts, and is most admired for his performances, while his heart is not thus taken up with God. The man that Christ will find out at the last day, and condemn for want of a “wedding garment,” will be one that wants this frame of heart. The question will not then be, How much have you known, or professed, or talked? but, How much have you loved, and where was your heart? Christians, as you would have a proof of your title to glory, labor to get your hearts above. If sin and Satan keep not your affections from thence, they will never be able to keep away your persons.

2. A heart in heaven is the highest excellence of Christian temper. As there is a common excellence by which Christians differ from the world, so there is this peculiar dignity of spirit, by which the more excellent differ from the rest. As the noblest of creatures, so the noblest of Christians are they whose faces are set most direct for heaven. Such a heavenly saint, who hath been rapt up to God in his contemplations, and is newly come down from the views of Christ, what discoveries will he make of those superior regions! how high and sacred is his discourse! enough to convince an understanding hearer that he hath seen the Lord, and that no man could speak such words, except he had been with God. This, this is the noble Christian. The most famous mountains and trees are those that reach nearest to heaven; and he is the choicest Christian whose heart is most frequently and most delightfully there. If a man have lived near the king, or hath seen the sultan of Persia, or the grand Turk, he will be thought a step higher than his neighbors. What, then, shall we judge of him that daily travels as far as heaven, and there hath seen the King of kings, hath frequent admittance into the divine presence, and feasteth his soul upon the tree of life? For my part, I value this man before the noblest, the richest, the most learned in the world.

3. A heavenly mind is the nearest and truest way to a life of comfort. The countries far north are cold and frozen, because they are distant from the sun. What makes such frozen, uncomfortable Christians, but their living so far from heaven? And what makes others so warm in comforts, but their living higher, and having nearer access to God? When the sun in the spring draws nearer to our part of the earth, how do all things congratulate its approach! The earth looks green, the trees shoot forth, the plants revive, the birds sing. and all things smile upon us. If we would but try this life with God, and keep these hearts above, what a spring of joy would be within us! How should we forget our winter sorrows! How early should we rise to sing the praise of our great Creator! O Christian, get above! Those that have been there have found it warmer; and I doubt not but thou hast sometimes tried it thyself. When hast thou largest comforts? Is it not when thou hast conversed with God, and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world, and viewed their mansions, and filled thy soul with the forethoughts of glory? If thou knowest by experience what this practice is, I dare say thou knowest what spiritual joy is. If; as David professes, “the light of God’s countenance more gladdens the heart than corn and wine,” then, surely, they that draw nearest, and most behold it, must be fullest of these joys. Whom should we blame, then, that we are so void of consolation, but our own negligent hearts? God hath provided us a crown of glory, and promised to set it shortly on our heads, and we will not so much as think of it. He bids us behold and rejoice, and we will not so much as look at it: and yet we complain for want of comfort. It is by believing that we are filled with joy and peace,” and no longer than we continue believing. It is in hope the saints rejoice, and no longer than they continue hoping. God’s Spirit worketh our comforts, by setting our own spirits at work upon the promises, and raising our thoughts to the place of our comforts. As you would delight a covetous man by showing him gold, so God delights his people by leading them, as it were, into heaven, and showing them himself and their rest with him. He does not kindle our joys while we are idle, or taken up with other things. He gives the fruits of the earth, while we plough, and sow, and weed, and water, and dress, and with patience expect his blessing; so doth he give the joys of the soul. I entreat thee, reader, in the name of the Lord, and as thou valuest the life of constant joy, and that good conscience which is a continual feast, to enter upon this work seriously, and learn the art of heavenly-mindedness, and thou shalt find the increase a hundred fold, and the benefit abundantly exceed thy labor. But this is the misery of

man’s nature: though every man naturally hates sorrow and loves the most merry and joyful life, yet few love the way to joy, or will endure the pains by which it is obtained; they will take the first that comes to hand, and content themselves with earthly pleasures, rather than ascend to heaven to seek it; and yet, when all is done, they must have it there, or be without it.

4. A heart in heaven will be a most excellent preservative against temptations to sin. It will keep the heart well employed. When we are idle, we tempt the devil to tempt us; as careless persons make thieves. A heart in heaven can reply to the tempter, as Nehemiah did: “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come. It hath no leisure to be lustful or wanton, ambitious or worldly. If you were but busy in your lawful callings, you would not be so ready to hearken to temptations; much less if you were also busy above with God. Would a judge be persuaded to rise from the bench, when he is sitting upon a case of life and death, to go and play with children in the streets? No more will a Christian, when he is taking a survey of his eternal rest, give ear to the alluring charms of Satan. The children of that kingdom should never have time for trifles, especially when they are employed in the affairs of the kingdom; and this employment is one of the saints’ chief preservatives from temptations. A heavenly mind is the freest from sin, because it has truer and livelier apprehensions of spiritual things. He hath so deep an insight into the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the brutishness of fleshly, sensual delights, that temptations have little power over him. “In vain the net is spread,’ says Solomon, “in the sight of any bird.” And usually in vain doth Satan lay his snares to entrap the soul that plainly sees them. Earth is the place for his temptations, and the ordinary bait: and how shall these ensnare the Christian who hath left the earth and walks with God? Is converse with wise and learned men the way to make one wise? Much more is converse with God. If travellers return home with wisdom and experience, how much more he that travels to heaven! If our bodies are suited to the air and climate we most live in, his understanding must be fuller of light who lives with the Father of lights. The men of the world that dwell below, and know no other conversation but earthly, no wonder if their “understanding be darkened,” and Satan “take them captive at his will.” How can worms and moles see, whose dwelling is always in the earth? While this dust is in their eyes, no wonder they mistake gain for godliness, sin for grace, the world for God, their own wills for the law of Christ, and, in the issue, hell for heaven. But when a Christian withdraws himself from his worldly thoughts, and begins to converse with God in heaven, methinks he is, as Nebuchadnezzar, taken from the beasts of the field to the throne, and “his reason returneth unto him.” When he has had a glimpse of eternity, and looks down on the world again, how doth he charge with folly his neglects of Christ, his fleshly pleasures, his earthly cares! How doth he say of his laughter, It is mad; and of his vain mirth, What doeth it? How doth he verily think there is no man in Bedlam so truly mad as wilful sinners, and unworthy slighters of Christ and glory! This makes a dying man usually wiser than others, because he looks on eternity as near, and hath more heart-piercing thoughts of it than he ever had in health and prosperity. Then many of the most bitter enemies of the saints have their eyes opened, and like Balaam, cry out, “O that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his!” Yet let the same men recover, and lose their apprehensions of the life to come, and how quickly do they lose their understanding with it! Tell a dying sinner of the riches, honors or pleasures of the world, and would he not answer, “What is all this to me, who must presently appear before God, and give an account of all my life?” Christian, if the apprehended nearness of eternity will work such strange effects upon the ungodly, and make them so much wiser than before, O what rare effects would it produce in thee, couldst thou always dwell in the views of God,

and in lively thoughts of thy everlasting state! Surely a believer, if he improve his faith, may ordinarily have more quickening apprehensions of the life to come, in the time of his health, than an unbeliever hath at the hour of his death. A heavenly mind is also fortified against temptations, because the affections are thoroughly prepossessed with the high delights of another world. He that loves most, and not he that only knows most, will most easily resist the motions of sin. The will doth as sweetly relish goodness as the understanding doth truth; and here lies much of a Christian's strength. When thou hast had a fresh, delightful taste of heaven, thou wilt not be so easily persuaded from it. You cannot persuade a child to part with his sweetmeats while the taste is in his mouth. O that you would be much in feeding on the hidden manna, and frequently tasting the delights of heaven! How would this confirm thy resolutions, and make thee despise the fooleries of the world, and scorn to be cheated with such childish toys. If the devil had set upon Peter in the mount of transfiguration, when he saw Moses and Elias talking with Christ, would he so easily have been drawn to deny his Lord? What! with all that glory in his eye? No. So if he should set upon a believing soul, when he is taken up into the mount with Christ, what should such a soul say? "Get thee behind me, Satan; wouldst thou persuade me hence with trifling pleasures, and steal my heart from this my rest? Wouldst thou have me sell these joys for nothing? Is any honor or delight like this? or can that be profit, for which I must lose this?" But Satan stays till we are come down, and the taste of heaven is out of our mouths, and the glory we saw is even forgotten, and then he easily deceives our hearts. Though the Israelites below eat and drink, and rise up to play before their idol, Moses in the mount will not do so. O, if we could keep the taste of our souls continually delighted with the sweetness above, with what disdain should we spit out the baits of sin!

Besides, whilst the heart is set on heaven, a man is under God's protection. If Satan then assault us, God is more engaged for our defence, and will doubtless stand by us and say, "My grace is sufficient for thee." When a man is in the way of God's blessing, he is in the less danger of sin's enticing. Amidst thy temptations, Christian reader, use much this powerful remedy; keep close with God by a heavenly mind; follow your business above with Christ, and you will find this a surer help than any other. "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." Remember that "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation;" for he "walked with God;" and that God said to Abraham, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect."

5. The diligent keeping your hearts in heaven will maintain the vigor of all your graces, and put life into all your duties. The heavenly Christian is the lively Christian. It is our strangeness to heaven that makes us so dull. How will the soldier hazard his life, and the mariner pass through storms and waves, and no difficulty keep them back, when they think of an uncertain, perishing treasure! What life, then, would it put into a Christian's endeavors, if he would frequently think of his everlasting treasure! We run so slowly, and strive so lazily, because we so little mind the prize. Observe but the man who is much in heaven, and you shall see he is not like other Christians; something of what he hath seen above appeareth in all his duty and conversation. If a preacher, how heavenly are his sermons! If a private Christian, what heavenly converse, prayers, and deportment! Set yourself upon this employment, and others will see the face of your conversation shine, and say, Surely he hath been "with God on the mount." But if you lie, complaining of deadness and dullness; that you cannot love Christ, nor rejoice in his love; that you have no life in prayer, or any other duty, and yet neglect this quickening employment; you are the cause of your

own complaints. Is not thy life “hid with Christ in God?” Where must thou go but to Christ for it? And where is that, but to heaven, “where Christ is?” “Thou wilt not come to Christ, that thou mayest have life.” If thou wouldst have light and heat, why art thou no more in the sunshine? For want of this recourse to heaven, thy soul is as a lamp not lighted, and thy duties as a sacrifice without fire. Fetch one coal daily from this altar, and see if thy offering will not burn. Light thy lamp at this flame, and feed it daily with oil from hence, and see if it will not gloriously shine. Keep close to this reviving fire, and see if thy affections will not be warm. In thy want of love to God, lift up thy eye of faith to heaven, behold his beauty, contemplate his excellencies, and see whether his amiableness and perfect goodness will not ravish thy heart. As exercise gives appetite, strength, and vigor to the body, so these heavenly exercises will quickly cause the increase of grace and spiritual life.

Besides, it is not false or strange fire which you fetch from heaven for your sacrifices: the zeal which is kindled by your meditations on heaven, is most likely to be a heavenly zeal. Some men’s fervency is only drawn from their books, some from the sharpness of affliction, some from the mouth of a moving minister, and some from the attention of an auditory; but he that knows this way to heaven, and derives it daily from the true fountain, shall have his soul revived with the water of life, and enjoy that quickening which is peculiar to the saints. By this faith thou mayst offer Abel’s sacrifice, more excellent than that of common men, and “by it obtain witness that thou art righteous, God testifying of thy gifts” that they are sincere. When others are ready, like Baal’s priests, to “cut themselves,” because their sacrifice will not burn, thou mayst breathe the spirit of Elijah, and in the chariot of contemplation soar aloft, till thy soul and sacrifice gloriously flame, though the flesh and the world should cast upon them all the water of their opposing enmity. Say not, How can mortals ascend to heaven? Faith hath wings, and meditation is its chariot. Faith is as a burning glass to thy sacrifice, and meditation sets it to the face of the sun; only take it not away too soon, but hold it there awhile, and thy soul will feel the happy effect. Reader, art thou not thinking, when thou seest a lively Christian, and hearest his fervent prayers and edifying discourse, “O how happy a man is this! O that my soul were in this blessed condition!” Why, I here advise thee, from God, set thy soul conscientiously to this work, wash thee frequently in this Jordan, and thy leprous, dead soul will revive, “and thou shalt know that there is a God in Israel,” and that thou mayst live a vigorous and joyful life, if thou dost not wilfully neglect thy own mercies.

6. Frequent believing views of glory are the most precious cordials in all afflictions. these cordials, by cheering our spirits, render our sufferings far more easy, enable us to bear them with patience and joy, and so strengthen our resolutions, that we forsake not Christ for fear of trouble. If the way be ever so rough, can it be tedious, if it lead to heaven? O sweet sickness, reproaches, imprisonments, or death, accompanied with these tastes of our future rest! This keeps the suffering from the soul, so that it can only touch the flesh. Had it not been for that little (alas! too little) taste which I had of rest, my sufferings would have been grievous, and death more terrible. I may say. “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” Unless this promised rest “had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round

about me. Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord." All sufferings are nothing to us, so far as we have these supporting joys. When persecution and fear have shut the doors, Christ can come in, and stand in the midst, and say to his disciples, "Peace be unto you." Paul and Silas can be in heaven, even when they are thrust into the inner prison, their bodies scourged with "many stripes, and their feet fast in the stocks." The martyrs find more rest in their flames than their persecutors in their pomp and tyranny; because they foresee the flames they escape, and the rest to which their fiery chariot is conveying them. If the Son of God wilt walk with us, we are safe in the midst of those flames which shall devour them that cast us in. Abraham went out of his country, "not knowing whither he went;" because "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; because he had respect unto the recompense of reward. He forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; because he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Even Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." This is the noble advantage of faith: it can look on the means and end together. The great reason of our impatience and censuring of God, is that we gaze on the evil itself, but fix not our thoughts on what is beyond it. They that saw Christ only on the cross, or in the grave, shook their heads and thought him lost; but God saw him dying, buried, rising, glorified; and all this at one view. Faith will, in this, imitate God, so far as it hath the glass of a promise to help it. We see God burying us under ground, but we foresee not the spring, when we shall all revive. Could we but clearly see heaven, as the end of all God's dealings with us, surely none of his dealings could be grievous. If God would once raise us to this life, we should find, that though heaven and sin are at a great distance; yet, heaven and a prison, or banishment; heaven and the belly of a whale, or a den of lions; heaven and consuming sickness, or invading death, are at no such distance. But as "Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced," so we, in our most forlorn state, might see that day when Christ shall give us rest, and therein rejoice. I beseech thee, Christian, for the honor of the Gospel, and for thy soul's comfort, leave not this heavenly art to be learned when, in thy greatest extremity, thou hast most need to use it. He that, with Stephen, "sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," will comfortably bear the shower of stones. "The joy of the Lord is our strength," and that joy must be drawn from the place of our joy; and if we walk without our strength, how long are we likely to endure?

7. He whose conversation is in heaven, is the profitable Christian to all about him. When a man is in a strange country, how glad is he of the company of one of his own nation! how delightful is it to talk of their own country, their acquaintance, and affairs at home! With what pleasure did Joseph talk with his brethren, and inquire after his father and his brother Benjamin! Is it not so to a Christian, to talk with his brethren that have been above, and inquire after his Father, and Christ his Lord? When a worldly man will talk of nothing but the world, and a politician of state affairs, and a mere scholar of human learning, and a common professor of his duties; the heavenly man will be speaking of heaven, and the strange glory his faith hath seen, and our speedy and blessed meeting there. O how refreshing and useful are his expressions! How his words pierce and melt the heart, and transform the hearers into other men! How doth his "doctrine drop as the rain, and his speech distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass," while his lips publish the name of the Lord, and ascribe greatness unto his God! His sweet

discourse of heaven is like the “box of precious ointment,” which, being “poured upon the head of Christ, filled the house with the odor.” All that are near may be refreshed by it.

Happy the people that have a heavenly minister! Happy the children and servants that have a heavenly father or master! Happy the man that hath a heavenly companion, who will watch over thy ways, strengthen thee when thou art weak, cheer thee when thou art drooping, and “comfort thee with the comfort wherewith he himself” hath been so often comforted of God! This is he that will always be blowing at the spark of thy spiritual life and drawing thy soul to God, and will say to thee, as the Samaritan woman, “Come and see one that hath told me all that ever I did;” one that hath loved our souls to the death. “Is not this the Christ?” Is not “the knowledge of God and him eternal life?” Is it not the glory of the saints to see his glory? Come to this man’s house and sit at his table, and he will feast thy soul with the dainties of heaven; travel with him by the way, and he will direct and quicken thee in thy journey to heaven; trade with him in the world, and he will counsel thee to buy “the pearl of great price.” If thou wrong him, he can pardon thee, remembering that Christ hath pardoned his greater offences. If thou be angry, he is meek, considering the meekness of his heavenly Pattern; or, if he fall out with you, he is soon reconciled, when he recollects that in heaven you must be everlasting friends. This is the Christian of the right stamp, and all about him are better for him. How unprofitable is the society of all other sorts of Christians, in comparison with this! If a man should come from heaven, how would men long to hear what reports he would make of the other world, and what he had seen, and what the blessed there enjoy! Would they not think this man the best companion, and his discourses the most profitable? Why, then, do you value the company of saints no more, and inquire no more of them, and relish their discourse no better? For every saint shall go to heaven in person, and is frequently there in spirit, and hath often viewed it in the glass of the Gospel. For my part, I had rather have the company of a heavenly-minded Christian than that of the most learned disputants or princely commanders.

8. No man so highly honoreth God, as he whose conversation is in heaven. Is not a parent dishonored when his children feed on husks, are clothed with rags, and keep company with none but rogues and beggars? And is not our heavenly Father, when we, who call ourselves his children, feed on earth, and the garb of our souls is like that of the world; and our hearts familiarly converse with and “cleave to the dust,” rather than stand continually in our Father’s presence? Surely we live below the children of the King, not according to the height of our hopes, nor the provision of our Father’s house, and the great preparations made for his saints. It is well we have a Father of tender compassion, who will own his children in rags. If he did not first challenge his interest in us, neither ourselves nor others could know us to be his people. But when a Christian can live above, and rejoice his soul with the things that are unseen, how is God honored by such a one! The Lord will testify for him: This man believes me, and takes me at my word, he rejoices in my promise before he has possession; he can be thankful for what his bodily eyes never saw: his rejoicing is not in the flesh; his heart is with me; he loves my presence, and he shall surely enjoy it in my kingdom for ever. “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. Them that honor me, I will honor.” How did God esteem himself honored by Caleb and Joshua, when they went into the promised land and brought back to their brethren a taste of the fruits, and spake well of the good land, and encouraged the people! What a promise and recompense did they receive!

9. A soul that does not set its affections an things above, disobeys the commands, and loses the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God. The same God that hath commanded thee to believe, and to be a Christian, hath commanded to “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God: and to set our affections on things above, not on things of the earth.” The same God that has forbidden thee to murder, steal, or commit adultery, has forbidden thee the neglect of this great duty; and darest thou wilfully disobey him? Why not make conscience of one as well as the other? He hath made it thy duty, as well as the means of thy comfort, that a double bond may engage thee not to forsake thy own mercies. Besides, what are all the most glorious descriptions of heaven, all those discoveries of our future blessedness and precious promises of our rest, but lost to thee? Are not these the stars in the firmament of Scripture, and the golden lines in that book of God? Methinks thou shouldst not part with one of these promises, no, not for a world. As heaven is the perfection of all our mercies, so the promises of it in the Gospel are the very soul of the Gospel. Is a comfortable word from the mouth of God of such worth, that all the comforts in the world are nothing to it? And dost thou neglect and overlook so many of them? Why should God reveal so much of his counsel, and tell us beforehand of the joys we shall possess, but to make us know it for our joy? If it had not been to fill us with the delights of our foreknown blessedness, he might have kept his purpose to himself, and never have let us know it till we came to enjoy it. Yea, when we had got possession of our rest, he might still have concealed its eternity from us, and then the fears of losing it would have diminished the sweetness of our joys. But it hath pleased our Father to open his counsel, and let us know the very intent of his heart, that our joy might be full, and that we might live as the heirs of such a kingdom. And shall we now overlook all? Shall we live in earthly cares and sorrows, and rejoice no more in these discoveries than if the Lord had never written them? If thy prince had but sealed thee a patent of some lordship, how oft wouldst thou cast thy eyes upon it, and made it thy delightful study, till thou shouldst come to possess the dignity itself! And hath God sealed thee a patent of heaven, and dost thou let it lie by thee, as if thou hadst forgot it? O that our hearts were as high as our hopes, and our hopes as high as these infallible promises!

10. It is but equal that our hearts should be on God, when the heart of God is so much on us. If the Lord of glory can stoop so low as to set his heart on sinful dust, methinks we should easily be persuaded to set our hearts on Christ and glory, and ascend to him in our daily affections, who so much condescends to us. Christian, dost thou not perceive that the heart of God is set upon thee, and that he is still minding thee with tender love, even when thou forgettest both thyself and him? Is he not following thee with daily mercies, moving upon thy soul, providing for thy body, preserving both? Doth he not bear thee continually in the arms of love, and promise that “all shall work together for thy good,” and suit all his dealings to thy greatest advantage, and “give his angels charge over thee?” And canst thou be taken up with the joys below, and forget thy Lord, who forgets not thee? Unkind ingratitude! When he speaks of his own kindness for us, hear what he says: “Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of hands; thy walls are continually before me.” But when he speaks of our regards to him, the case is otherwise. “Can a maid forget his ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number.” As if he should say, “You will not rise one morning, but you will remember to cover your nakedness, nor forget your vanity of dress; and are these of more worth than your God? of more

importance than your eternal life? And yet you can forget these, day after day." Give not God cause thus to expostulate with us. Rather let our souls get up to God, and visit him every morning, and our hearts be towards him every moment.

11. Our interest in heaven, and our relation to it, should continually keep our hearts upon it. There our Father keeps his court. We call him "Our Father, who art in heaven." Unworthy children, that can be so taken up in their play as to be mindless of such a Father. There also is Christ, our head, our husband, our life; and shall we not look towards him, and send to him as oft as we can, till we come to see him face to face? Since "the heavens must receive him until the times of the restitution of all things," let them also receive our hearts with him. There also is the "New Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all." And there are multitudes of our elder brethren. There are our friends and old acquaintance, whose society in the flesh we so much delighted in, and whose departure hence we so much lamented; and is this not attractive to thy thoughts? If they were within thy reach on earth, thou wouldst go and visit them; and why not oftener visit them in spirit, and rejoice beforehand to think of meeting them there? "Socrates rejoiced that he should die, because he believed he should see Homer, Hesiod, and other eminent persons. How much more do I rejoice," said a pious old minister, "who am sure to see Christ my Savior, the eternal Son of God, in his assumed flesh; besides so many wise, holy and renowned patriarchs, prophets, and apostles." A believer should look to heaven, and contemplate the blessed state of the saints, and think with himself, "Though I am not yet so happy as to be with you, yet this is my daily comfort,-you are my brethren and fellow-members in Christ, and therefore your joys are my joys, and your glory, by this near relation, is my glory; especially while I believe in the same Christ, and hold fast the same faith and obedience by which you were thus dignified, and rejoice in spirit with you, and congratulate your happiness in my daily meditations."

Moreover, our house and home is above, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Why do we then look no oftener towards it, and "groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven?" If our home were far meaner, surely we should remember it, because it is our home. If you were but banished into a strange land, how frequently would your thoughts be at home! And why is it not thus with us in respect to heaven? Is not that more truly and properly our home, where we must take up our everlasting abode, than this, which we are every hour expecting to be separated from, and to see no more? We are strangers, and that is our country. We are heirs, and that is our inheritance; even "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled; and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." We are here in continual distress and want, and there lies our substance; even "a better and an enduring substance." Yea, the very hope of our souls is there; all our hope of relief from our distresses; all our hope of happiness, when here we are miserable; all this "hope is laid up for us in heaven." Why, beloved Christians, have we so much interest, and so few thoughts there? so near relation, and so little affection? Doth it become us to be delighted in the company of strangers, so as to forget our Father and our Lord? or to be so well pleased with those that hate and grieve us, as to forget our best and dearest friends; or to be so fond of borrowed trifles, as to forget our eternal joy and rest? God usually pleads his property in us; and thence concludes he will do us good, even because we are his people, whom he hath chosen out of all the world. Why then do we not plead our interest in him, and so raise our hearts above; even because he is our God, and because the place is our own possession? Men

commonly overlove and overvalue their own things, and mind them too much. O that we could mind our own inheritance, and value it half as much as it deserves.

12. Once more consider, there is nothing but heaven worth setting our hearts upon. If God have them not, who shall? If thou mind not thy rest, what wilt thou mind? Hast thou found out some other god; or something that will serve thee instead of rest? Hast thou found on earth an eternal happiness? Where is it? What is it made of? Who was the man that found it out? Who was he that last enjoyed it? Where dwelt he? What was his name? Or art thou the first that ever discovered heaven on earth? Ah, wretch! trust not to thy discoveries; boast not of thy gain till experience bid thee boast. Disquiet not thyself in looking for that which is not on earth, lest thou learn thy experience with the loss of thy soul, which thou mightest have learned on easier terms; even by the warnings of God in his word, and the loss of thousands of souls before thee. If Satan should take thee up to the mountain of temptation, and “show thee all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,” he could show thee nothing that is worthy thy thoughts, much less to be preferred before thy rest. Indeed, so far as duty and necessity require it, we must be content to mind the things below; but who is he that contains himself within the compass of those limits? and yet, if we ever so diligently contract our cares and thoughts, we shall find the least to be bitter and burdensome. Christian, see the emptiness of all these things, and the preciousness of the things above. If thy thoughts should, like the laborious bee, go over the world from flower to flower, from creature to creature, they would bring no honey or sweetness home, save what they gathered from their relations to eternity. Though every truth of God is precious, and ought to be defended; yet even all our study of truth should be still in reference to our rest; for the observation is too true, “that the lovers of controversies in religion have never been warmed with one spark of the love of God.” And as for minding the “affairs of the church and the state;” so far as they illustrate the providence of God, and tend to the settling of the Gospel and the government of Christ, and consequently to the saving of our own souls and those of our posterity, they are well worth our diligent observation; but these are only their relations to eternity. Even all our dealings in the world, our buying and selling, our eating and drinking, our building and marrying, our peace and war, so far as they relate not to the life to come, but tend only to the pleasing of the flesh, are not worthy the frequent thoughts of a Christian. And now, doth not thy conscience say that there is nothing but heaven, and the way to it, that is worth thy minding?

Now, reader, are these considerations weighty or not? Have I proved it to be thy duty to keep thy heart on things above, or have I not? If thou say, Not, I am confident thou contradictest thy own conscience. If thou acknowledge thyself convinced of the duty, that very tongue of thine shall condemn thee, and that confession be pleaded against thee, if thou wilfully neglect such a confessed duty. Be thoroughly willing, and the work is more than half done. I have now a few plain directions to give you for your help in this great work; but, alas! it is in vain to mention them, except you be willing to put them into practice. However, I will propose them to thee, and may the Lord persuade thy heart to the work!

6.13. CHAPTER XII

DIRECTIONS HOW TO LEAD A HEAVENLY LIFE UPON EARTH.

I. The hinderances to a heavenly life; 1. Living in any known sin; 2. An earthly mind; 3. Ungodly companions; 4. A notional religion; 5. A haughty spirit; 6. A slothful spirit; 7; Resting in preparatives for a heavenly life, without the thing itself. II. The duties which will promote a heavenly life: 1. Be convinced that heaven is the only treasure and happiness; 2. Labor to know your interest in it; 3. And how near it Isaiah 4:1-6. Frequently and seriously talk of it; 5. Endeavor, in every duty, to raise your affections nearer to it; 6. To the same purpose improve every object and event; 7. Be much in the angelical work of praise; 8. Possess your souls with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God; 9. Carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God; 10. Nor ever neglect the due care of your bodily health. As thou valuest the comforts of a heavenly conversation, I must here charge thee, from God, to avoid carefully some dangerous hinderances; and then faithfully and diligently to practice such duties as will especially assist thee in attaining to a heavenly life.

First. Let us consider those HINDERANCES which are to he avoided with all possible care.

1. Living in any known sin is a grand impediment to a heavenly life. What havoc will this make in thy soul! O the joys that this hath destroyed! the ruin it hath made amongst men’s graces! the soul-strengthening duties it hath hindered! Christian reader, art thou one that hast used violence with thy conscience? Art thou a wilful neglecter of known duty, either public, private, or secret? Art thou a slave to thine appetite, or to any other commanding sense? Art thou a proud seeker of thine own esteem? Art thou a peevish and passionate person, ready to take fire at every word, or look, or supposed slight? Art thou a deceiver of others in thy dealings, or one that will be rich, right or wrong? If this be thy case, I dare say heaven and thy soul are very great strangers. These “beams in thine eye” will not suffer thee to look to heaven; they will be “a cloud between thee and thy God.” When thou dost but attempt to study eternity and gather refreshment from the life to come, thy sin will presently look thee in the face, and say, “These things belong not to thee. How shouldst thou take comfort from heaven, who takest so much pleasure in the lusts of the flesh?” How will this damp thy joys, and make the thoughts of that day and state become thy trouble and not thy delight! Every wilful sin will be to thy joys as water to the fire; when thou thinkest to quicken them, this will quench them. It will utterly indispose and disable thee, that thou canst no more ascend in divine meditation than a bird can fly when its wings are clipped. Sin cuts the very sinews of this heavenly life. O man! what a life dost thou lose! What daily delights dost thou sell for vile lusts! If heaven and hell can meet together, and God become a lover of sin, then mayst thou live in thy sin, and in the foretastes of glory and have a conversation in heaven, though thou cherish thy corruption. And take heed lest it banish thee from heaven, as it does thy heart. And though thou be not guilty, and knowest no reigning sin in thy soul, think what a sad thing it would be, if ever this should prove thy case. Watch, therefore especially resolve to keep from the occasions of sin, and out of the way of temptations. What need have we daily to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!”

2. An earthly mind is another hinderance carefully to be avoided. God and mammon, earth and heaven cannot both have the delight of thy heart. When the heavenly believer is blessing himself in his God, and rejoicing in hope of the glory to come; perhaps thou art blessing thyself in thy worldly prosperity, and rejoicing in hope of thy thriving here. When he is comforting his soul in the views of Christ, of angels and saints, whom he shall live with for ever; then thou art comforting thyself with thy wealth, in looking over thy bills and bonds, thy goods, thy cattle, or thy buildings; and in thinking of the favor of the great, of the pleasure of a plentiful estate, of larger provisions for thy children after thee, of the advancement of thy family, or the increase of thy dependants. If Christ pronounced him a fool that said, “Soul, take thy ease; thou hast much goods laid up for many years;” how much more so art thou, who, knowingly, speakest in thy heart the same words! Tell, what difference between this fool’s expressions and thy affections? Remember, thou hast to do with the Searcher of hearts. Certainly, so much as thou delightest and takest up thy rest on earth, so much of thy delight in God is abated. Thine earthly mind may consist with thy outward profession and common duties, but it cannot consist with this heavenly duty. Thou thyself knowest how seldom and cold, how cursory and reserved thy thoughts have been of the joys above, ever since thou didst trade so eagerly for the world.

O the cursed madness of many that seem to be religious! They thrust themselves into a multitude of employments, till they are so loaded with labors and clogged with cares, that their souls are as unfit to converse with God, as a man to walk with a mountain on his back; and as unapt to soar in meditation, as their bodies to leap above the sun! And when they have lost that heaven upon earth which they might have had, they take up with a few rotten arguments to prove it lawful; though, indeed, they cannot. I advise thee, Christian, who hast tasted the pleasures of a heavenly life, if ever thou wouldst taste them more, avoid this devouring gulf of an earthly mind. If once thou come to this, that thou “wilt be rich,” thou fallest into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts. Keep these things loose about thee like thy upper garments, that thou mayest lay them by whenever there is need; but let God and glory be to next thy heart. Ever remember that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.” “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” This is plain dealing, and happy he that faithfully receives it!

3. Beware of the company of the ungodly. Not that I would dissuade thee from necessary converse, or from doing them any office of love; especially not from endeavoring the good of their souls, as long as thou hast any opportunity or hope; nor would I have thee to conclude them to be dogs and swine, in order to evade the duty of reproof; nor even to judge them such at all, as long as there is any hope for the better; much less can I approve of their practice, who conclude men to be dogs or swine before ever they faithfully and lovingly admonish them, or perhaps before they have known them, or spoken with them. But it is the unnecessary society of ungodly men, and too much familiarity with unprofitable companions, from which I would dissuade you. Not only the profane, the swearer, the drunkard, and the enemies of godliness will prove hurtful companions to us-though these indeed are chiefly to be avoided; but too frequent society with persons merely civil and moral, whose conversation is empty and unedifying, may much divert our thoughts from heaven. Our backwardness is such, that we need the most constant and powerful helps. A stone or a clod is as fit to rise and fly in the air, as our hearts are naturally to move toward heaven. You

need not hinder the rocks from flying up to the sky; it is sufficient that you do not help them; and surely, if our spirits have not great assistance, they may easily be kept from soaring upward, though they should never meet with the least impediment. O think of this in the choice of your company! When your spirits are so disposed for heaven that you need no help to lift them up, but, as flames, you are always mounting, and carrying with you all that is in your way, then, indeed, you may be less careful of your company; but, till then, as you love the delights of a heavenly life, be careful herein. What will it advantage thee in a divine life, to hear how the market goes, or what the weather is, or is likely to be, or what news is stirring? This is the discourse of earthly men. What will it conduce to the raising of thy heart to God, to hear that this is an able minister, or that an eminent Christian, or this an excellent sermon, or that an excellent book; or to hear some difficult but unimportant controversy? Yet this, for the most part, is the sweetest discourse thou art like to have from a formal, speculative, dead-hearted professor. Nay, if thou hadst been newly warming thy heart in the contemplation of the blessed joys above, would not this discourse benumb thy affections and quickly freeze thy heart again? I appeal to the judgment of any man that hath tried it, and maketh observations on the frame of his spirit. Men cannot well talk of one thing and mind another, especially things of such different natures. You, young men, who are most liable to this temptation, think seriously of what I say; can you have your hearts in heaven while among your roaring companions in an alehouse or tavern? or when you work in your shops with those whose common language is oaths, “filthiness, or foolish talking or jesting?” Nay, let me tell you, if you choose such company when you might have better, and find most delight in such, you are far from a heavenly conversation that, as yet, you have no title to heaven at all, and in that state shall never come there. If your treasure was there, your heart could not be on things so distant. In a word, our company will be a part of our happiness in heaven, and it is a singular part of our furtherance to it, or hinderance from it.

4. Avoid frequent disputes about lesser truths, and a religion that lies only in opinions. They are usually least acquainted with a heavenly life, who are violent disputers about the circumstantials of religion. He whose religion is all in his opinions, will be most frequently and zealously speaking his opinions; and he whose religion lies in the knowledge and love of God in Christ, will be most delightfully speaking of that happy time when he shall enjoy them. He is a rare and precious Christian, who is skilful to improve well-known truths. Therefore let me advise you who aspire after a heavenly life, not to spend too much of your thoughts, your time, your zeal, or your speech, upon disputes that less concern your souls; but when hypocrites are feeding on husks or shells, do you feed on the joys above. I wish you were able to defend every truth of God, and to this end would read and study; but still I would have the chief truths to be chiefly studied, and none to cast out your thoughts of eternity. The least controverted points are usually most weighty, and of most necessary, frequent use to our souls. Therefore study well such Scripture precepts as these: “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive.” “Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.” “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself.”

5. Take heed of a proud and lofty spirit. There is such an antipathy between this sin and God, that thou wilt never get thy heart near him, nor get him near thy heart, as long as this prevaileth in it. If it cast the angels out of heaven, it must needs keep thy heart from heaven. If it cast our first parents out of paradise, and separated between the Lord and us, and brought his curse on all the creatures here below, it will certainly keep our hearts from paradise, and increase the cursed separation from our God. Intercourse with God will keep men lowly, and that lowliness will promote their intercourse. When a man is used to be much with God, and taken up in the study of his glorious attributes, he abhors himself in dust and ashes; and that self-abhorrence is his best preparative to obtain admittance to God again. Therefore, after a soul-humbling day, or in times of trouble, when the soul is lowest, it useth to have freest access to God, and savor most of the life above. The delight of God is in “him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word;” and the delight of such a soul is in God; and where there is mutual delight, there will be freest admittance, heartiest welcome, and most frequent converse. But God is so far from dwelling in the soul that is proud, that he will not admit it to any near access. “The proud he knoweth afar off;” “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” A proud mind is high in conceit, self-esteem, and carnal aspiring; a humble mind is high indeed in God’s esteem, and in holy aspiring. These two sorts of high-mindedness are most of all opposite to each other, as we see most wars are between princes and princes, and not between a prince and a ploughman.

Well, then, art thou a man of worth in thy own eyes? Art thou delighted when thou hearest of thy esteem with men, and much dejected when thou hearest that they slight thee? Dost thou love those best that honor thee, and think meanly of them that do not, though they be otherwise men of godliness and honesty? Must thou have thy humors fulfilled, and thy judgment be a rule, and thy word a law to all about thee? Are thy passions kindled if thy word or will be crossed? Art thou ready to judge humility to be sordid baseness, and knowest not how to submit to humble confession, when thou has sinned against God or injured thy brother? Art thou one that lookest strange at the godly poor, and art most ashamed to be their companion? Canst thou not serve God in a low place as well as a high? Are thy boastings restrained more by prudence or artifice than humility? Dost thou desire to have all men’s eyes upon thee, and to hear them say, “This is he?” Art thou unacquainted with the deceitfulness and wickedness of thy heart? Art thou more ready to defend thy innocence, than accuse thyself, or confess thy fault? Canst thou hardly bear a close reproof, or digest plain dealing? If these symptoms be undeniably in thy heart, thou art a proud person. There is too much of hell abiding in thee, to have any acquaintance with heaven; thy soul is too like the devil, to have any familiarity with God. A proud man makes himself his god, and sets up himself as his idol; how, then, can his affections be set on God? how can he possibly have his heart in heaven? Invention and memory may possibly furnish his tongue with humble and heavenly expressions, but in his spirit there is no more heaven than there is humility. I speak the more of it, because it is the most common and dangerous sin in morality, and most promotes the great sin of infidelity.

O Christian! if thou wouldst live continually in the presence of thy Lord, lie in the dust, and he will thence take thee up. “Learn of him to be meek and lowly; and thou shalt find rest unto thy soul.” Otherwise thy soul will be “like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;” and instead of these sweet delights in God, thy pride will fill thee with perpetual disquiet. As he that humbleth himself as a little child shall hereafter be greatest in the kingdom of heaven,

so shall he now be greatest in the foretastes of that kingdom. God “dwells with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Therefore, “humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” And when “others are cast down, then thou shalt say, there is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person.”

6. A slothful spirit is another impediment to this heavenly life. And I verily think there is nothing hinders it more than this in men of a good understanding. If it were only the exercise of the body, the moving of the lips, the bending of the knee, men would as commonly step to heaven as they go to visit a friend. But to separate our thoughts and affections from the world, to draw forth all our graces, and increase each in its proper object, and hold them to it till the work prospers in our hands; this, this is the difficulty. Reader, heaven is above thee, and dost thou think to travel this steep ascent without labor and resolution? Canst thou get that earthly heart to heaven, and bring that backward mind to God, while thou liest still and takest thine ease? If lying down at the foot of the hill, and looking toward the top, and wishing we were there, would serve the turn, then we should have daily travellers for heaven. But “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” There must be violence used to get these first-fruits, as well as to get the full possession. Dost thou not feel it so, though I should not tell thee? Will thy heart get upward, except thou drive it? Thou knowest that heaven is all thy hope; that nothing below can yield thee rest; that a heart, seldom thinking of heaven, can draw but little comfort thence; and yet dost thou not lose thy opportunities and lie below, when thou shouldst walk above and live with God? Dost thou not commend the sweetness of a heavenly life, and judge those the best Christians that use it, and yet never try thyself? As the sluggard that stretches himself on his bed and cries, O that this were working! so dost thou talk, and trifle, and live at thy ease, and say, O that I could get my heart to heaven! How many read books and hear sermons, expecting to hear of some easier way, or to meet with a shorter course to comfort than they are ever like to find in Scripture! Or they ask for directions for a heavenly life, and if the hearing them will serve, they will be heavenly Christians; but if we show them their work, and tell them they cannot have these delights on easier terms, then they leave us, as the young man left Christ, sorrowful.

If thou art convinced, reader, that this work is necessary to thy comfort, set upon it resolutely: if thy heart draw back, force it on with the command of reason; if thy reason begin to dispute, produce the command of God, and urge thy own necessity, with the other considerations suggested in the former chapter. Let not such an incomparable treasure lie before thee, with thy hand in thy bosom; nor thy life be a continual vexation, when it might be a continual feast, only because thou wilt not exert thyself. Sit not still with a disconsolate spirit while comforts grow before thine eyes, like a man in the midst of a garden of flowers, that will not rise to get them and partake of their sweetness. This I know, Christ is the fountain; but the well is deep, and thou must get forth this water before thou canst be refreshed with it. I know, so far as you are spiritual, you need not all this striving and violence; but in part you are carnal, and as long as it is so, there is need of labor. It was the custom of the Parthians not to give their children any meat in the morning before they saw the sweat on their faces with some labor. And you shall find this to be God’s usual course, not to give his children the tastes of his delights till they begin to sweat in seeking after them. Judge, therefore, whether a heavenly life or thy carnal ease be better; and, as a wise man, make thy choice accordingly. Yet, let me add for thy encouragement, thou needest not employ thy thoughts more than thou now dost; it is only to fix them upon better and more pleasant objects. Employ but

as many serious thoughts every day upon the excellent glory of the life to come, as thou now doest upon worldly affairs, yea, on vanities and impertinences, and thy heart will soon be in heaven. On the whole, it is “the field of the slothful that is all grown over with thorns and nettles; and the desire of the slothful killeth his joy, for his hands refuse to labor; and it is the slothful man that saith, There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets. As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth,” though it be to feed himself with the food of life. What is this but throwing away our consolations, and consequently the precious blood that bought them? For “he that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster.” Apply this to thy spiritual work, and study well the meaning of it.

7. Contentment with the mere preparatives to the heavenly life, while we are utter strangers to the life itself, is also a dangerous and secret hinderance; when we take up with the mere study of heavenly things, and the notions of them, or the talking with one another about them; as if this were enough to make us heavenly. None are in more danger of the snare, than those that are employed in leading the devotions of others, especially preachers of the Gospel. O how easily may such be deceived! while they do nothing so much as read and study of heaven; preach, and pray, and talk of heaven: is not this the heavenly life? Alas! all this is but mere preparation; this is but collecting the materials, not erecting the building itself; it is but gathering the manna for others, and not eating and digesting it ourselves. As he that sits at home may draw exact maps of countries, and yet never see them nor travel toward them; so may you describe to others the joys of heaven, and yet never come near it in your own hearts. A blind man, by learning, may dispute of light and colors; so may you set forth to others that heavenly light which never enlightened your own souls, and bring that fire from the hearts of your people which never warmed your own hearts. What heavenly passages had Balaam in his prophecies, yet how little of it in his spirit! Nay, we are under a more subtle temptation than any other men to draw us from this heavenly life. Studying and preaching of heaven more resembles a heavenly life than thinking and talking of the world does; and the resemblance is apt to deceive us. This is to die the most miserable death, even to famish ourselves because we have bread on our tables; and to die for thirst while we draw water for others; thinking it enough that we have daily to do with it, though we never drink for the refreshment of our own souls.

Secondly, Having thus showed what hinderances will resist the work, I expect that thou resolve against them, consider them seriously, and avoid them faithfully, or else thy labor will be vain. I must also tell thee that I here expect thy promise, as thou valuest the delights of these foretastes of heaven, to make conscience of performing the following DUTIES; particularly,

1. Be convinced that heaven is the only treasure and happiness, and labor to know what a treasure and happiness it is. If thou do not believe it to be the chief good, thou wilt never set thy heart upon it; and this conviction must sink into thy affections; for if it be only a notion, it will have little efficacy. If Eve once supposes she sees more worth in the forbidden fruit than in the love and enjoyment of God, no wonder if it have more of her heart than God. If your judgment once prefer the delights of the flesh before the delights of the presence of God, it is impossible your heart should be in heaven. As it is ignorance of the emptiness of things below that makes men so overvalue them; so it is ignorance of the high delights above which is the cause that men so little mind them. If you see a purse of gold, and believe it to be but counters, it will not entice your

affections to it. It is not the real excellence of a thing itself, but its known excellence, that excites desire. If an ignorant man see a book containing the secrets of arts or sciences, he values it no more than a common scroll, because he knows not what is in it; but he that knows it, highly values it, and can even forbear his meat, drink and sleep, to read it. As the Jews killed the Messiah while they waited for him, because they did not know him; so the world cries out for rest, and busily seeks for delight and happiness, because they know it not; for did they thoroughly know what it is, they could not so slight the everlasting treasure.

2. Labor also to know that heaven is thy own happiness. We may confess heaven to be the best condition, though we despair of enjoying it; and we may desire and seek it, if we see the attainment but probable; but we can never delightfully rejoice in it till we are in some measure persuaded of our title to it. What comfort is it to a man that is naked, to see the rich attire of others? What delight is it for a man that hath not a house to put his head in, to see the sumptuous buildings of others? Would not all this rather increase his anguish, and make him more sensible of his own misery? So, for a man to know the excellencies of heaven, and not know whether he shall ever enjoy them, may raise desire and urge pursuit, but he will have little joy. Who will set his heart on another man's possessions? If your houses, your goods, your cattle, your children were not your own, you would less mind them, and less delight in them. O Christian! rest not till you can call this rest your own: bring thy heart to the bar of trial; set the qualifications of the saints on one side, and of thy soul on the other, and then judge how nearly they resemble. Thou hast the same word to judge thyself by now, as thou must be judged by at the great day. Mistake not the Scripture's description of a saint, that thou neither acquit nor condemn thyself upon mistakes. For as groundless hopes tend to confusion, and are the greatest cause of most men's damnation; so groundless doubts tend to and are the great cause of the saints' perplexity and distress. Therefore, lay thy foundation for trial safely, and proceed in the work deliberately and resolutely, nor give over till thou canst say either thou hast or hast not yet a title to this rest. O if men did truly know that God is their own Father, and Christ their only Redeemer and Head, and that those are their own everlasting habitations, and that there they must abide and be happy for ever; how could they but be transported with the forethoughts thereof! If a Christian could but look upon sun, moon and stars, and reckon all his own in Christ, and say, "These are the blessings that my Lord hath procured me, and things incomparably greater than these;" what holy raptures would his spirit feel! The more do they sin against their own comforts, as well as against the grace of the Gospel, who plead for their unbelief, and cherish distrustful thoughts of God, and injurious thoughts of their Redeemer; who represent the covenant as if it were of works, and not of grace; and Christ as an enemy rather than a Savior; as if he were willing they should die in their unbelief, when he hath invited them so often and so affectionately, and suffered the agonies that they should suffer. Wretches that we are! to be keeping up jealousies of our Lord when we should be rejoicing in his love. As if any man could choose Christ before Christ hath chosen him; or any man were more willing to be happy than Christ is to make him happy. Away with these injurious if not blasphemous thoughts! If ever thou hast harbored such thoughts in thy breast, cast them from thee, and take heed how thou ever entertainest them more. God hath written the names of his people in heaven, as you use to write your names or marks on your goods; and shall we be attempting to raze them out, and to write our names on the doors of hell? But blessed be "God, whose foundation standeth sure;" and who "keepeth us by his power, through faith, unto salvation."

3. Labor to apprehend how near thy rest is. What we think near at hand, we are more sensible of than that which we behold at a distance. When judgments or mercies are afar off, we talk of them with little concern; but when they draw close to us, we tremble at, or rejoice in them. This makes men think on heaven so insensibly, because they conceive it at too great a distance; they look on it as twenty, thirty, or forty years off. How much better were it to receive “the sentence of death in ourselves,” and to look on eternity as near at hand! While I am thinking and writing of it, it hasteneth near, and I am even entering into it before I am aware. While thou are reading this, whoever thou art, time posteth on, and thy life will be gone, “as a tale that is told.” If you verily believed you should die tomorrow, how seriously would you think of heaven to-night! When Samuel had told Saul, “Tomorrow shalt thou be with me,” this struck him to the heart. And if Christ should say to a believing soul, “Tomorrow shalt thou be with me,” this would bring him in spirit to heaven beforehand. Do but suppose that you are still entering into heaven, and it will greatly help you more seriously to mind it.

4. Let thy eternal rest be the subject of thy frequent serious discourse, especially with those that can speak from their hearts, and are seasoned themselves with a heavenly nature. It is pity Christians should ever meet together without some talk of their meeting in heaven, or of the way to it, before they part. It is a pity so much time is spent in vain conversation and useless disputes, and not a serious word of heaven among them. Methinks we should meet together on purpose to warm our spirits with discoursing of our rest. To hear a Christian set forth that blessed, glorious state, with life and power, from the promises of the Gospel, methinks should make us say, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the Scriptures?” If a Felix will tremble when he hears his judgment powerfully represented, why should not the believer be revived when he hears his eternal rest described? Wicked men can be delighted in talking together of their wickedness; and should not Christians then be delighted in talking of Christ, and the heirs of heaven in talking of their inheritance? This may make our hearts revive, as did Jacob’s to hear the message that called him to Goshen, and to see the chariots that should bring him to Joseph. O that we were furnished with skill and resolution to turn the stream of men’s common discourse to these more sublime and precious things! and, when men begin to talk of things unprofitable, that we could tell how to put in a word for heaven, and say, as Peter of his bodily food, “Not so, for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean!” O the good that we might both do and receive by this course! Had it not been to deter us from unprofitable conversation, Christ would not have talked of our “giving an account of every idle word in the day of judgment.” Say, then, as the Psalmist, when you are in company, “Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” then you shall find it true, that a “wholesome tongue is a tree of life.”

5. Endeavor, in every duty, to raise thy affections nearer to heaven. God’s end in the institution of his ordinances was that they should be as so many steps to advance us to our rest, and by which, in subordination to Christ, we might daily ascend in our affections. Let this be thy end in using them, and doubtless they will not be unsuccessful. How have you been rejoiced by a few lines from a friend, when you could not see him face to face! And may we not have intercourse with God in his ordinances, though our persons be yet so far remote? May not our spirits rejoice in reading those lines which contain our legacy and charter for heaven? With what gladness and triumph may we read the expressions of divine love, and hear of our celestial country, though we have not yet the happiness to behold it! Men that are separated by sea and land can by letters carry on great

and gainful trades; and may not a Christian, in the wise improvement of duties, drive on this happy trade for rest? Come, then, renounce formality, custom and applause, and kneel down in secret or public prayer, with hope to get thy heart nearer to God before thou risest up. When thou openest thy Bible, or other book, hope to meet with some passage of divine truth, and such a blessing of the Spirit with it as will give thee a fuller taste of heaven. When thou are going to the house of God, say, “I hope to meet with somewhat from God to raise my affections before I return; I hope the Spirit will give me his presence and sweeten my heart with those celestial delights; I hope Christ will ‘appear to me in that way, and shine about me with light from heaven;’ let me hear his instructing and reviving voice, and cause the scales to fall from my eyes, that I may see more of that glory than I ever yet saw. I hope, before I return, my Lord will bring my heart within the view of rest, and set it before his Father’s presence, that I may return as ‘the shepherds’ from the heavenly vision, ‘glorifying and praising God for all the things I have heard and seen.’“ When the Indians first saw that the English could converse together by letters, they thought there was some spirit enclosed in them. So would by-standers admire, when Christians have communion with God in duties, what there is in those Scriptures, in that sermon, in this prayer, that fills their hearts so full of joy, and so transports them above themselves. Remember, therefore, always to pray for your minister, that God would put some divine message into his mouth, which may leave a heavenly relish upon your spirit.

6. Improve every object and every event to remind thy soul of its approaching rest. As all providences and creatures are means to our rest, so they point us to that as their end. God’s sweetest dealings with us at present would not be half so sweet as they are, if they did not intimate some further sweetness. Thou takest but the bare earnest and overlookest the main sum, when thou receivest thy mercies and forgettest thy crown. O that Christians were skilful in this art! You can open your Bible; learn to open the volumes of creation and providence, to read there also of God and glory. Thus we might have a fuller taste of Christ and heaven in every common meal than most men have in a sacrament. If thou prosper in the world, let it make thee more sensible of thine eternal prosperity. If thou art weary with labor, let it make the thoughts of thy eternal rest more sweet. If things go cross, let thy desires be more earnest to have sorrows and sufferings for ever cease. Is thy body refreshed with food or sleep? remember the inconceivable refreshment with Christ. Dost thou hear any good news? remember what glad tidings it will be to hear the trump of God and the applauding sentence of Christ. Art thou delighted with the society of the saints? remember what the perfect society in heaven will be. Is God communicating himself to thy spirit? remember the time of thy highest advancement, when both thy communion and joy shall be full. Dost thou hear the raging noise of the wicked and the confusions of the world? think of the blessed harmony in heaven. Dost thou hear the tempest of war? remember the day when thou shalt be in perfect peace, under the wings of the Prince of Peace for ever. Thus, every condition and creature affords us advantages for a heavenly life, if we had but hearts to improve them.

7. Be much in the angelic work of praise. The more heavenly the employment, the more it will make the spirit heavenly. Praising God is the work of angels and saints in heaven, and will be our own everlasting work; and if we were more in it now, we should be more like what we shall be then. As desire, faith and hope are of shorter continuance than love and joy, so also preaching, prayer, and ordinances, and all means for expressing and confirming our faith and hope, shall cease, when our triumphant expressions of love and joy shall abide for ever. The liveliest emblem

of heaven that I know upon earth, is when the people of God, in the deep sense of his excellency and bounty, from hearts abounding with love and joy, join together, both in heart and voice, in the cheerful and melodious singing of his praises. These delights, like the testimony of the Spirit, witness themselves to be of God, and bring the evidences of their heavenly parentage along with them.

Little do we know how we wrong ourselves by shutting out of our prayers the praises of God, or allowing them so narrow a room as we usually do, while we are copious enough in our confessions and petitions. Reader, I entreat thee, remember this: let praises have a larger room in thy duties; keep matter ready at hand to feed thy praise, as well as matter for confession and petition. To this end study the excellencies and goodness of the Lord as frequently as thy own wants and unworthiness; the mercies thou has received, and those which are promised, as often as the sins thou hast committed. “Praise is comely for the upright. Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth God. Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant. Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.” Had not David a most heavenly spirit, who was so much in this heavenly work? Doth it not sometimes raise our hearts when we only read the song of Moses and the psalms of David? How much more would it raise and refresh us to be skilful and frequent in the work ourselves! O the madness of youth, that lay out that vigor of body and mind upon vain delights and fleshly lusts, which is so fit for the noblest work of man! And O the sinful folly of many of the saints, who drench their spirits in continual sadness, and waste their days in complaints and groans, and so make themselves, both in body and mind, unfit for this sweet and heavenly work! Instead of joining with the people of God in his praises, they are questioning their worthiness and studying their miseries; and so rob God of his glory and themselves of their consolation. But the greatest destroyer of our comfort in this duty, is our taking up with the tune and melody, and suffering the heart to be idle which ought to perform the principal part of the work, and use the melody to revive and exhilarate itself.

8. Ever keep thy soul possessed with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God. Love is the attractive of love. Few so vile, but will love those that love them. No doubt it is the death of our heavenly life to have hard thoughts of God, to conceive of him as one that would rather damn than save us. This is to put the blessed God into the similitude of Satan. When our ignorance and unbelief have drawn the most deformed picture of God in our imaginations, then we complain that we cannot love him, nor delight in him. This is the case of many thousand Christians. Alas, that we should thus blaspheme God and blast our own joys! Scripture assures us that “God is love; that fury is not in him; that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” Much more hath he testified his love to his chosen, and his full resolution to save them. O that we could always think of God as we do of a friend; as of one that unfeignedly loves us, even more than we do ourselves; whose very heart is set upon us to do us good, and hath therefore provided for us an everlasting dwelling with himself! it would not then be so hard to have our hearts ever with him. Where we love most heartily, we shall think most sweetly and most freely. I fear most Christians think higher of the love of a hearty friend than of the love of God; and what wonder, then, if they love their friends better than God, and trust them more confidently than God and had rather live with them than with God?

9. Carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God. If ever thy soul get above this earth, and get acquainted with this heavenly life, the Spirit of God must be to thee as the chariot to Elijah; yea, the very living principle by which thou must move and ascend. O, then, grieve not thy guide, quench not thy life, knock not off thy chariot wheel! You little think how much the life of all your graces and the happiness of your souls depend upon your ready and cordial obedience to the Spirit. When the Spirit urges thee to secret prayer; or forbids thee thy transgressions; or points to thee the way in which thou shouldst go; and thou wilt not regard; no wonder if heaven and thy soul be strange. If thou wilt not follow the Spirit while he would draw thee to Christ and thy duty; how should he lead thee to heaven, and bring thy heart into the presence of God? What supernatural help, what bold access shall the soul find in its approaches to the Almighty, that constantly obeys the Spirit? And how backward, how dull, how ashamed will he be in these addresses, who hath often broke away from the Spirit that would have guided him? Christian reader, dost thou not feel sometimes a strong impression to retire from the world and draw near to God? Do not disobey, but take the offer, and hoist up thy sails while this blessed gale may be had. The more of the Spirit we resist, the deeper will it wound; and the more we obey, the speedier will be our pace.

10. I advise thee, as a further help to this heavenly life, neglect not the due care of thy bodily health. Thy body is a useful servant if thou give it its due, and no more than its due; but it is a most devouring tyrant if thou suffer it to have what it unreasonably desires; and it is as a blunted knife if thou unjustly deny what is necessary to its support. When we consider how frequently men offend on both extremes, and how few use their bodies aright, we cannot wonder if they be much hindered in their converse with heaven. Most men are slaves to their appetite, and can scarcely deny any thing to their flesh, and are therefore willingly carried by it to their sports, or profits, or vain companions, when they should raise their minds to God and heaven. As you love your souls, “make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof,” but remember, “to be carnally minded is death; because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” There are a few who much hinder their heavenly joy by denying the body its necessaries, and so making it unable to serve them: if such wronged their flesh only, it would be no great matter; but they wrong their souls also; as he that spoils the house injures the inhabitants. When the body is sick and the spirits languish, how heavily do we move in the thoughts and joys of heaven.

6.14. CHAPTER XIII

THE NATURE OF HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION; WITH THE TIME, PLACE, AND TEMPER FITTEST FOR IT. The duty of heavenly contemplation is recommended and defined. The definition is illustrated. I. The times fittest for it are represented as, 1. Stated; 2. Frequent; 3. Seasonable every day, particularly every Lord's day, but more especially when our hearts are warmed with a sense of divine things; or when we are afflicted or tempted; or when we are near death. II. The fittest place for it. III. The fittest temper for it, 1. When our minds are most clear of the world, 2. And most solemn and serious.

Once more I entreat thee, reader, as thou makest conscience of a revealed duty, and darest not wilfully resist the Spirit; as thou valuest the high delights of a saint, and the soul-ravishing exercise of heavenly contemplation; that thou diligently study, and speedily and faithfully practice the following directions. If, by this means, thou dost not find an increase of all thy graces, and dost not grow beyond the stature of a common Christian, and art not made more serviceable in thy place, and more precious in the eyes of all discerning persons; if thy soul enjoy not more communion with God, and thy life be not fuller of comfort, and thou has not more support in a dying hour; then cast away these directions, and exclaim against me for ever as a deceiver. The duty which I press upon thee so earnestly, and in the practice of which I am now to direct thee, is, "The set and solemn acting of all the powers of thy soul in meditation upon thy everlasting rest." More fully to explain the nature of this duty, I will here illustrate a little the description itself; and then point out the fittest time, place, and temper of mind for it.

It is not improper to illustrate a little the manner in which we have described this duty of meditation, or the considering and contemplating of spiritual things. It is confessed to be a duty by all, but practically denied by most. Many, that make conscience of other duties, easily neglect this. They are troubled if they omit a sermon, a fast, or a prayer, in public or private; yet were never troubled that they have omitted meditation perhaps all their lifetime to this very day; though it be that duty by which all other duties are improved, and by which the soul digests truth for its nourishment and comfort. it was God's command to Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein." As digestion turns food into chyle and blood for vigorous health, so meditation turns the truths received and remembered into warm affection, firm resolution, and holy conversation. This meditation is the acting of all the powers of the soul. It is the work of the living, and not of the dead. It is a work the most spiritual and sublime, and therefore not to be well performed by a heart that is merely carnal and earthly. Men must necessarily have some relation to heaven before they can familiarly converse there. I suppose them to be such as have a title to rest, when I persuade them to rejoice in the meditations of rest. And supposing thee to be a Christian, I am now exhorting thee to be an active Christian. And it is the work of the soul I am setting thee to, for bodily exercise here profiteth little. And it must have all the powers of the soul to distinguish it from the common meditation of students; for the understanding is not the whole soul, and therefore cannot do the whole work. As in the body, the stomach must turn the food into chyle

and prepare for the liver, the liver and spleen turn it into blood and prepare for the heart and brain; so in the soul, the understanding must take in truths, and prepare them for the will, and that for the affections. Christ and heaven have various excellencies, and therefore God hath formed the soul with different powers for apprehending these excellencies. What the better had we been for odoriferous flowers, if we had no smell? or what good would language or music have done us, if we could not hear? or what pleasure should we have found in meats and drinks, without the sense of taste? So what good could all the glory of heaven have done us, or what pleasure should we have had in the perfection of God himself, if we had been without the affections of love and joy? And what strength or sweetness canst thou possibly receive by thy meditations on eternity, while thou dost not exercise those affections of the soul by which thou must be sensible of this sweetness and strength? It is the mistake of Christians to think that meditation is only the work of the understanding and memory; when every school-boy can do this, or persons that hate the things which they think on. So that you see there is more to be done than barely to remember and think of heaven. As some labors not only stir a hand or a foot, but exercise the whole body; so doth meditation the whole soul. As the affections of sinners are set on the world, are turned to idols and fallen from God as well as their understanding; so must their affections be reduced to God as well as the understanding; and as their whole soul was filled with sin before, so the whole must be filled with God now. See David's description of the blessed man: "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." This meditation is set and solemn. As there is solemn prayer, when we set ourselves wholly to that duty; and ejaculatory prayer, when, in the midst of other business, we send up some short request to God; so also there is solemn meditation, when we apply ourselves wholly to that work; and transient meditation, when, in the midst of other business, we have some good thoughts of God in our minds. And as solemn prayer is either set in a constant course of duty, or occasional, at an extraordinary season; so also is meditation. Now, though I would persuade you to that meditation which is mixed with your common labors, and also that to which special occasions direct you; yet I would have you likewise make it a constant standing duty, as you do hearing, praying, and reading the Scriptures; and no more intermix other matters with it, than you would with prayer, or other stated solemnities. This meditation is upon thy everlasting rest. I would not have you cast off your other meditations; but surely, as heaven hath the preeminence in perfection, it should have it also in our meditation. That which will make us most happy when we possess it, will make us most joyful when we meditate upon it. Other meditations are as numerous as there are lines in the scripture, or creatures in the universe, or particular providences in the government of the world. But this is a walk to Mount Sion; from the kingdoms of the world to the kingdom of saints; from earth to heaven; from time to eternity: it is walking upon sun, moon and stars, in the garden and paradise of God. It may seem far off; but spirits are quick: whether in the body or out of the body, their motion is swift. You need not fear, like the men of the world, lest these thoughts should make you mad. It is in heaven, and not hell, that I persuade you to walk. It is joy, and not sorrow, that I persuade you to exercise. I urge you to look on no deformed objects, but only upon the ravishing glory of saints, and the unspeakable excellencies of the God of glory, and the beams that stream from the face of his Son. Will it distract a man to think of his only happiness? Will it distract the miserable to think of mercy, or the prisoner to foresee deliverance, or the poor to think of approaching riches and honor? Methinks it should rather make a man mad to think of living in a world of woe, and abiding in poverty and sickness, among the rage of wicked men, than to think of living with Christ in bliss.

“But wisdom is justified of all her children.” Knowledge hath no enemy but the ignorant. This heavenly course was never spoken against by any but those that never knew it, or never used it. I fear more the neglect of men that approve it, than the opposition or arguments of any against it.

First. As to THE FITTEST TIME for this heavenly contemplation, let me only advise that it be stated-frequent-and seasonable.

1. Give it a stated time. If thou suit thy time to the advantage of the work, without placing any religion in the time itself, thou hast no need to fear superstition. Stated time is a hedge to duty, and defends it against many temptations to omissions. Some have not their time at command, and therefore cannot set their hours; and many are so poor, that the necessities of their families deny them this freedom; such persons should be watchful to redeem time as much as they can, and take their vacant opportunities as they fall, and especially join meditation and prayer as much as they can with the labors of their calling. Yet those who have more time to spare from their worldly necessities, and are masters of their time, I still advise to keep this duty to a stated time. And indeed, if every work of the day had its appointed time, we should be better skilled both in redeeming time and performing duty.

2. Let it be frequent as well as stated. How oft it should be I cannot determine, because men’s circumstances differ; but in general, Scripture requires it to be frequent, when it mentions meditating day and night. For those, therefore, who can conveniently omit other business, I advise that it be once a day at least.

Frequency in heavenly contemplation is particularly important, to prevent a shyness between God and thy soul. Frequent society breeds familiarity, and familiarity increases love and delight, and makes us bold in our addresses. The chief end of this duty is, to have acquaintance and fellowship with God; and therefore, if thou come but seldom to it, thou wilt still keep thyself a stranger. When a man feels his need of God, and must seek his help in a time of necessity, then it is great encouragement to go to a God we know and are acquainted with. “O,” saith the heavenly Christian, “I know both wither I go, and to whom. I have gone this way many a time before now. It is the same God that I daily converse with, and the way has been my daily walk. God knows me well enough, and I have some knowledge of him.” On the other hand, what a horror and discouragement will it be to the soul, when it is forced to fly to God in straits, to think, “Alas! I know not whither to go. I never went the way before. I have no acquaintance at the court of heaven. My soul knows not that God that I must speak to, and I fear he will not know my soul.” But especially when we come to die, and must immediately appear before this God, and expect to enter into his eternal rest, then the difference will plainly appear; then what a joy will it be to think, “I am going to the place from whence I tasted such frequent delights; to that God whom I have met in my meditation so often! My heart hath been in heaven before now, and hath often tasted its reviving sweetness; and if my eyes were so enlightened and my spirits so refreshed when I had but a taste, what will it be when I shall feed on it freely?” On the contrary, what a terror will it be to think, “I must die and go I know not whither; from a place where I am acquainted, to a place where I have no familiarity or knowledge!” It is an inexpressible horror to a dying man to have strange thoughts of God and heaven. I am persuaded that it is the neglect of this duty which so commonly makes death, even to godly men, unwelcome and uncomfortable. Therefore I persuade to frequency in this duty. And as it will prevent shyness between thee and God, so also it will prevent unskilfulness

in the duty itself. How awkwardly do men set their hands to a work in which they are seldom employed! Whereas frequency will habituate thy heart to the work, and make it more easy and delightful. The hill which made thee pant and blow at first going up, thou may easily run up when thou are once accustomed to it.

Thou wilt also prevent the loss of the heat and life thou hast obtained. If thou eat but once in two or three days, thou wilt lose thy strength as fast as it comes. If in holy meditation thou get near to Christ and warm thy heart with the fire of love, and then come but seldom, thy former coldness will soon return; especially as the work is so spiritual and against the bent of depraved nature. It is true, the intermixing of other duties, especially secret prayer, may do much to the keeping of thy heart above; but meditation is the life of most other duties, and the view of heaven is the life of meditation.

3. Choose also the most seasonable time. All things are beautiful and excellent in their season. Unseasonableness may lose the fruit of thy labor, may raise difficulties in the work, and may turn a duty to a sin. The same hour may be seasonable to one and unseasonable to another. Servants and laborers must take that season which their business can best afford; either while at work, or in travelling, or when they lie awake in the night. Such as can choose what time of the day they will, should observe when they find their spirits most active and fit for contemplation, and fix upon that as the stated time. I have always found that the fittest time for myself is the evening, from sun-setting to the twilight. I the rather mention this, because it was the experience of a better and wiser man; for it is expressly said, “Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide.” The Lord’s day is exceedingly seasonable for this exercise. When should we more seasonably contemplate our rest than on that day of rest which typifies it to us? It being a day appropriated to spiritual duties, methinks we should never exclude this duty, which is so eminently spiritual. I verily think this is the chief work of a Christian Sabbath, and most agreeable to the design of its positive institution. What fitter time to converse with our Lord than on the Lord’s day? What fitter day to ascend to heaven than that on which he arose from earth, and fully triumphed over death and hell? The fittest temper for a true Christian is, like John, to “be in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” And what can bring us to this joy in the Spirit, but the spiritual beholding of our approaching glory? Take notice of this, you that spend the Lord’s day only in public worship; your allowing no time to private duty, and therefore neglecting this spiritual duty of meditation, is very hurtful to your souls. You, also, that have time on the Lord’s day for idleness and vain discourse, were you but acquainted with this duty of contemplation, you would need no other pastime; you would think the longest day short enough, and be sorry that the night had shortened your pleasure. Christians, let heaven have more share in your Sabbaths, where you must shortly keep your everlasting Sabbaths. Use your Sabbaths as steps to glory, till you have passed them all, and are there arrived. Especially you that are poor, and cannot take time in the week as you desire, see that you well improve this day; as your bodies rest from their labors, let your spirits seek after rest from God.

Besides the constant seasonableness of every day, and particularly every Lord’s day, there are also more peculiar seasons for heavenly contemplation. As for instance: When God hath more abundantly warmed thy spirit with fire from above, then thou mayst soar with greater freedom. A little labor will set thy heart a going at such a time as this; whereas at another time thou mayst take pains to little purpose. Observe the gales of the Spirit, and how the Spirit of Christ doth move thy spirit. “Without Christ we can do nothing;” and therefore let us be doing while he is doing! and be

sure not to be out of the way, nor asleep, when he comes. When the Spirit finds thy heart, like Peter, in prison and in irons, and smites thee, and says, “Arise up quickly, and follow me!” be sure thou then arise and follow; and thou shalt find thy chains fall off, and all doors will open, and thou wilt be at heaven before thou art aware.

Another peculiar season for this duty is, when thou art in a suffering, distressed, or tempted state. When should we take our cordials but in time of fainting? When is it more seasonable to walk to heaven than when we know not in what corner of earth to live with comfort? Or when should our thoughts converse more above than when we have nothing but grief below? Where should Noah’s dove be but in the ark, when the waters cover all the earth, and she cannot find rest for the sole of her foot? what should we think on but our Father’s house, when we have not even the husks of the world to feed upon? Surely God sends thy afflictions for this very purpose. Happy art thou, poor man, if thou make this use of thy poverty! and thou that art sick, if thou so improve thy sickness! It is seasonable to go to the promised land, when our burdens are increased in Egypt and our straits in the wilderness! Reader, if thou knewest what a cordial to thy griefs the serious views of glory are, thou wouldst less fear these harmless troubles, and more use that preserving, reviving remedy. “In the multitude of my” troubled “thoughts within me,” saith David, “thy comforts delight my soul.” “I reckon,” saith Paul, “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” “For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” And another season peculiarly fit for this heavenly duty is when the messengers of God summon us to die. When should we more frequently sweeten our souls with the believing thoughts of another life, than when we find that this is almost ended? No men have greater need of supporting joys than dying men; and these joys must be drawn from our eternal joy. As heavenly delights are sweetest when nothing earthly is joined with them, so the delights of dying Christians are oftentimes the sweetest they ever had. What a prophetic blessing had dying Isaac and Jacob for their sons! With what a heavenly song and divine benediction did Moses conclude his life? What heavenly advice and prayer had the disciples from their Lord, when he was about to leave them! When Paul was “ready to be offered,” what heavenly exhortation and advice did he give the Philippians, Timothy, and the elders of Ephesus! How near to heaven was John in Patmos, but a little before his translation thither! It is the general temper of the saints to be then most heavenly when they are nearest heaven. If it by thy case, reader, to perceive the dying time draw on, O where should thy heart now be but with Christ? Methinks thou shouldst even behold him standing by thee, and shouldst bespeak him as thy father, thy husband, thy physician, thy friend. Methinks thou shouldst, as it were, see the angels about thee, waiting to perform their last office to thy soul; even those angels which disdained not to carry into Abraham’s bosom the soul of Lazarus, nor will think much to conduct thee thither. Look upon thy pain and sickness as Jacob did on Joseph’s chariots, and let thy spirit revive within thee, and say, “It is enough. Christ is yet alive; because he liveth, I shall live also.” Dost thou need the choicest cordials? Here are choicer than the world can afford; here are all the joys of heaven, even the vision of God and Christ, and whatsoever the blessed here possess. These dainties are offered thee by the hand of Christ; he hath written the receipt in the promises of the Gospel; he hath prepared the ingredients in heaven; only put forth the hand of faith and feed

upon them, and rejoice, and live. The Lord saith to thee, as to Elijah, “Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee.” Though it be not long, yet the way is miry; therefore obey this voice, arise and eat, “and in the strength of that meat thou mayst go to the mount of God;” and, like Moses, “die in the mount whither thou goest up;” and say, as Simeon, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eye” of faith “hath seen thy salvation.”

Secondly. Concerning the FITTEST PLACE for heavenly contemplation, it is sufficient that the most convenient is some private retirement. Our spirits need every help, and to be freed from every hinderance in the work. If, in private prayer, Christ directs us to “enter into our closet and shut the door, that our Father may see us in secret,” so should we do this in meditation. How often did Christ himself retire to some mountain, or wilderness, or other solitary place! I give not this advice for occasional meditation, but for that which is set and solemn. Therefore withdraw thyself from all society, even that of godly men, that thou mayst awhile enjoy the society of thy Lord. If a student cannot study in a crowd, who exerciseth only his invention and memory, much less shouldst thou be in a crowd, who art to exercise all the powers of thy soul, and upon an object so far above nature. We are fled so far from superstitious solitude, that we have even cast off the solitude of contemplative devotion. We seldom read of God’s appearing by himself, or by his angels, to any of his prophets or saints, in a crowd: but frequently when they were alone. But observe for thyself what place best agrees with thy spirit, within doors or without. Isaac’s example, in “going out to meditate in the field,” will, I am persuaded, best suit with most. Our Lord so much used a solitary garden, that even Judas, when he came to betray him, knew where to find him: and though he took his disciples thither with him, yet he “was withdrawn from them” for more secret devotions; and though his meditation be not directly named, but only his praying, yet it is very clearly implied; for his soul is first made sorrowful with bitter meditations on his sufferings and death, and then he poureth it out in prayer. So that Christ had his accustomed place, and consequently accustomed duty; and so must we: he hath a place that is solitary, whither he retireth, even from his own disciples; and so must we: his meditations go further than his thoughts; they affect and pierce his heart and soul; and so must ours. Only there is a wide difference in the object: Christ meditates on the sufferings that our sins had deserved, so that the wrath of his Father passed through all his soul; but we are to meditate on the glory he hath purchased, that the love of the Father and the joy of the Spirit may enter our thoughts, and revive our affections, and overflow our souls.

Thirdly. I am next to advise thee concerning the PREPARATION OF THY HEART for this heavenly contemplation. The success of the work much depends on the frame of thy heart. When man’s heart had nothing in it to grieve the Spirit, it was then the delightful habitation of his Maker. God did not quit his residence there till man expelled him by unworthy provocations. There was no shyness or reserve till the heart grew sinful, and too loathsome a dungeon for God to delight in. And were this soul reduced to its former innocency, God would quickly return to his former habitation; yea, so far as it is renewed and repaired by the Spirit, and purged from its lusts, and beautified with his image, the Lord will yet acknowledge it as his own: Christ will manifest himself unto it, and the Spirit will take it for his temple and residence. So far as the heart is qualified for conversing with God, so far it usually enjoys him. Therefore, “with all diligence keep thy heart, for out of it are the issues of life.” More particularly,

1. Get thy heart as clear from the world as thou canst. Wholly lay by the thoughts of thy business, troubles, enjoyments, and every thing that may take up any room in thy soul. Get it as empty as thou possibly canst, that it may be the more capable of being filled with God. If thou couldst perform some outward duty with a part of thy heart while the remainder is absent, yet this duty, above all, I am sure thou canst not. When thou shalt go into the mount of contemplation, thou wilt be like the covetous man at the heap of gold, who, when he might take as much as he could, lamented that he was able to carry no more: thou wilt find as much of God and glory as thy narrow heart is able to contain, and almost nothing to hinder thy full possession but the incapacity of thy own spirit. Then thou wilt think, “O that this understanding and these affections could contain more! It is more my unfitness than any thing else that even this place is not my heaven. ‘God is in this place, and I know it not.’ This ‘mount is full of chariots and fire;’ but mine eyes are shut, and I cannot see them. O the words of love Christ hath to speak, and wonders of love he hath to show, but I cannot hear them yet! Heaven is ready for me, but my heart is unready for heaven.” Therefore, reader, seeing thy enjoyment of God in this contemplation much depends on the capacity and disposition of thy heart, seek him here, if ever, with all thy soul. Thrust not Christ into the stable and the manger, as if thou hadst better guests for the chief rooms. Say to all thy worldly business and thoughts, as Christ to his disciples, “Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder;” or as Abraham to his servants, when he went to offer Isaac, “Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” Even as “the priests thrust king Uzziah out of the temple,” where he presumed to burn incense, when they saw the leprosy upon him; so do thou thrust those thoughts from the temple of thy heart, which have the badge of God’s prohibition upon them.

2. Be sure to enter upon this work with the greatest solemnity of heart and mind. There is no trifling in holy things. “God will be sanctified in them that come nigh him.” These spiritual, excellent, soul-raising duties, are, if well used, most profitable; but, when used unfaithfully, most dangerous. Labor, therefore, to have the deepest apprehensions of the presence of God and his incomprehensible greatness. If queen Esther must not draw near “till the king hold out the sceptre,” think, then with what reverence thou shouldst approach Him who made the worlds with the word of his mouth, who upholds the earth as in the palm of his hand, who keeps the sun, moon and stars in their courses, and who sets bounds to the raging sea! Thou art going to converse with Him, before whom the earth will quake and devils do tremble, and at whose bar thou and all the world must shortly stand and be finally judged. O think! “I shall then have lively apprehensions of his majesty. My drowsy spirits will then be awakened, and my irreverence be laid aside: and why should I now now be roused with the sense of his greatness, and the dread of his name possess my soul?” Labor also to apprehend the greatness of the work which thou attemptest, and to be deeply sensible both of its importance and excellency. If thou wast pleading for thy life at the bar of an earthly judge, thou wouldst be serious, and yet that would be a trifle to this. If thou wast engaged in such a work as David against Goliath, on which the welfare of a kingdom depended; in itself considered, it were as nothing to this. Suppose thou wast going to such a wrestling as Jacob’s, or to see the sign which the three disciples saw in the mount, how seriously, how reverently wouldst thou both approach and behold! If but an angel from heaven should appoint to meet thee at the same time and place of thy contemplations, with what dread wouldst thou be filled! Consider, then, with what a spirit thou shouldst meet the Lord, and with what seriousness and awe thou shouldst daily converse with him. Consider, also, the blessed issue of the work, if it succeed; it will be thy admission to the presence of God, and the beginning of thy eternal glory on

earth; a means to make thee live above the rate of other men, and fix thee in the next room to the angels themselves, that thou mayest both live and die joyfully. The prize being so great, thy preparations should be answerable. None on earth live such a life of joy and blessedness as those who are acquainted with this heavenly conversation. The joys of all other men are but like a child's plaything, a fool's laughter, or a sick man's dream of health. He that trades for heaven is the only gainer, and he that neglects it is the only loser. How seriously, therefore, should this work be done!

6.15. CHAPTER XIV

WHAT USE HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION MAKES OF CONSIDERATION, THE AFFECTIONS, SOLILOQUY, AND PRAYER.

I. The use of consideration, and its great influence over the heart. II. Contemplation is promoted by the affections; particularly, 1. By love; 2. Desire; 3. Hope; 4. Courage, or boldness; 5. Joy. III. The usefulness of soliloquy and prayer in heavenly contemplation.

Having set thy heart in tune, we now come to the music itself. Having got an appetite, now approach to the feast, and delight thy soul as with marrow and fatness. Come, for all things are now ready. Heaven and Christ, and the exceeding weight of glory, are before you. Do not make light of this invitation, nor begin to make excuses; whosoever thou art, rich or poor, though in an alms-house or hospital, though in the high-ways or hedges, my commission is, if possible, to compel you to come in; and blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! The manna lieth about your tents; walk out, gather it up, take it home, and feed upon it. In order to this, I am only to direct you-how to use your consideration-and affections-your soliloquy and prayer.

First. CONSIDERATION is the great instrument by which this heavenly work is carried on. This must be voluntary, and not forced. Some men consider unwillingly; so God will make the wicked consider their sins when he shall “set them in order before their eyes;” so shall the damned consider the excellency of Christ, whom they once despised, and the eternal joys which they have foolishly lost. Great is the power which consideration hath for moving the affections and impressing things on the heart; as will appear by the following particulars:

1. Consideration, as it were, opens the door between the head and the heart. The understanding having received truths, lays them up in the memory, and consideration conveys them from thence to the affections. What excellency would there be in much learning and knowledge, if the obstructions between the head and the heart were but opened, and the affections did but correspond to the understanding! He is usually the best scholar, whose apprehension is quick, clear and tenacious; but he is usually the best Christian, whose apprehension is the deepest and most affectionate, and who has the readiest passages, not so much from the ear to the brain, as from that to the heart. And though the Spirit be the principal cause, yet, on our part, this passage must be opened by consideration.

2. Consideration presents to the affections those things which are most important. The most delightful object does not entertain where it is not seen, nor the most joyful news affect him who does not hear it; but consideration presents to our view those things which were as absent, and brings them to the eye and ear of the soul. Are not Christ and glory affecting objects? Would they not work wonders upon the soul, if they were but clearly discovered, and our apprehensions of them in some measure corresponded to their worth? It is consideration that presents them to us: this is the Christian’s perspective by which he can see from earth to heaven.

3. Consideration, also, presents the most important things in the most affecting way. It reasons the case with a man's own heart. When a believer would reason his heart to heavenly contemplation, how many arguments offer themselves from God and Christ, from each of the divine perfections, from our former and present state, from promises, from present sufferings and enjoyments, from hell and heaven! Every thing offers itself to promote our joy, and consideration is the hand to draw them all out; it adds one reason to another, till the scales turn: this it does when persuading to joy, till it has silenced all our distrusts and sorrows, and our cause for rejoicing lies plain before us. If another's reasoning is powerful with us, though we are not certain whether he intends to inform or deceive us, how much more should our own reasoning prevail with us, when we are so well acquainted with our own intentions! Nay, how much more should God's reasoning prevail with us, which we are sure cannot deceive, or be deceived! Now, consideration is but the reading over and repeating God's reasons to plead with himself why he should return to his father's house, so have we to plead with our affections, to persuade them to our Father's everlasting mansions.

4. Consideration exalts reason to its just authority. It helps to deliver it from its captivity to the senses, and sets it again on the throne of the soul. When reason is silent, it is usually subject; for when it is asleep, the senses domineer. But consideration awakens our reason, till, like Samson, it rouses up itself, and breaks the bonds of sensuality, and bears down the delusions of the flesh. What strength can the lion exert while asleep? What is a king, when dethroned, more than another man? Spiritual reason, excited by meditation, and not fancy or fleshly sense, must judge of heavenly joys. Consideration exalts the objects of faith, and comparatively disgraces the objects of sense. The most inconsiderate men are most sensual. It is too easy and common to sin against knowledge; but against sober, strong, persevering consideration, men seldom offend.

5. Consideration makes reason strong and active. Before, it was a standing water, but now as a stream, which violently bears down all before it. Before, it was as the stones in the brook, but now like that out of David's sling, which smites the Goliath of our unbelief in the forehead. As wicked men continue wicked, because they bring not reason into action and exercise; so godly men are uncomfortable, because they let their reason and faith lie asleep, and do not stir them up to action by this work of meditation. What fears, sorrows and joys will our very dreams excite! How much more, then, would serious meditation affect us!

6. Consideration can continue and persevere in this rational employment. Meditation holds reason and faith to their work, and blows the fire till it thoroughly burns. To run a few steps will not get a man heat, but walking an hour may; and though a sudden occasional thought of heaven will not raise our affections to any spiritual heat, yet meditation can continue our thoughts till our hearts grow warm. Thus you see the powerful tendency of consideration to produce this great elevation of the soul in heavenly contemplation.

Secondly. Let us next see how this heavenly work is promoted by the particular exercise of THE AFFECTIONS. It is by consideration that we first have recourse to the memory, and from thence take those heavenly doctrines which we intend to make the subject of our meditation; such as promises of eternal life, descriptions of the saints' glory, the resurrection, &c. We then present them to our judgment, that it may deliberately view them and take an exact survey, and determine uprightly concerning the perfection of our celestial happiness, against all the dictates of flesh and sense, and so as to magnify the Lord in our hearts, till we are filled with a holy admiration. But the

principal thing is to exercise, not merely our judgment, but our faith in the truth of the promises, and of our own personal interest in them, and title to them. If we did really and firmly believe that there is such a glory, and that within a few days our eyes shall behold it, O what passion would it raise within us! What astonishing apprehensions of that life would it produce! What love, what longing would it excite within us! O how it would actuate every affection! how it would transport us with joy, upon the least assurance of our title! Never expect to have love and joy move, when faith stands still, which must lead the way. Therefore daily exercise faith, and set before it the freeness of the promise, God's urging all to accept it, Christ's gracious disposition, all the evidences of the love of Christ, his faithfulness to his engagement, and the evidences of his love in ourselves; lay all these together, and think whether they do not testify the good will of the Lord concerning our salvation, and may not properly be pleaded against our unbelief. Thus, when the judgment has determined, and faith has apprehended the truth of our happiness, then may our meditation proceed to raise our affections; and particularly love, desire, hope, courage or boldness, and joy.

1. Love is the first affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation; the object of it is goodness. Here, Christian, is the soul-reviving part of thy work. Go to thy memory, thy judgment and thy faith, and from them produce the excellencies of thy rest; present these to thy affection of love, and thou wilt find thyself, as it were, in another world. Speak out, and love can hear. Do but reveal these things, and love can see. It is the brutish love of the world that is blind; divine love is exceedingly quicksighted. Let thy faith take hold of thy heart, and show it the sumptuous buildings of thy eternal habitation, and the glorious ornaments of thy father's house, even the mansions Christ is preparing, and the honors of his kingdom; let thy faith lead thy heart into the presence of God, and as near as thou possibly canst, and say to it, "Behold the Ancient of Days, the Lord Jehovah, whose name is, I AM: this is he who made all the worlds with his word, who upholds the earth, who rules the nations, who disposes of all events, who subdues his foes, who controls the swelling waves of the sea, who governs the winds, and causes the sun to run its race, and the stars to know their courses. This is he who loved thee from everlasting, formed thee in the womb, gave thee this soul, brought thee forth, showed thee the light, and ranked thee with the chief of his earthly creatures; who endued thee with thy understanding, and beautified thee with his gifts; who maintains thy life and all its comforts, and distinguishes thee from the most miserable and vilest of men. O here is an object worthy of thy love! Here shouldst thou even pour out thy soul in love! Here it is impossible for thee to love too much! This is the Lord who hath blessed thee with his benefits, 'spread thy table in the sight of thine enemies, and made thy cup overflow!' This is he whom angels and saints praise, and the heavenly host for ever magnify!" Thus do thou expatiate on the praises of God, and open his excellencies to thine heart, till the holy fire of love begins to kindle in thy breast.

If thou dost not yet feel thy love burn, lead thy heart farther, and show it the Son of the living God, whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace:" show it the King of saints on the throne of his glory, "the First and the Last; who is, and was, and is to come: who liveth, and was dead, and behold, he liveth for evermore; who hath made thy peace by the blood of his cross," and hath prepared thee with himself a habitation of peace: his office is that of the great peace-maker; his kingdom is the kingdom of peace; his Gospel is the tidings of peace; his voice to thee now is the voice of peace! Draw near, and behold him. Dost thou not hear his voice? He that bade Thomas come near, and see the print of the nails, and

put his finger into his wounds; he it is that calls to thee, “Come near, and view the Lord thy Savior, and be not faithless, but believing; peace be unto thee, fear not, it is I.” Look well upon him. Dost thou not know him? It is he that brought thee up from the pit of hell, reversed the sentence of thy damnation, bore the curse which thou shouldst have borne, restored thee to the blessing thou hadst forfeited, and purchased the advancement which thou must inherit for ever. And dost thou not yet know him? His hands were pierced, his head, his side, his heart were pierced, that by these marks thou mightest always know him. Dost thou not remember when he “found thee lying in thy blood and took pity on thee, and dressed thy wounds, and brought thee home, and said unto thee, Live!” Hast thou forgotten, since he wounded himself to cure thy wounds, and let out his own blood to stop thy bleeding? If thou knowest him not by the face, the voice, the hands, thou mayst know him by that heart: that soul-pitying heart is his; it can be none but his; love and compassion are its certain signatures: this is he who chose thy life before his own; who pleads his blood before his father, and makes continual intercession for thee. If he had not suffered, what hadst thou suffered? There was but a step between thee and hell when he interposed and bore the stroke. And is not here fuel enough for thy love to feed on? Doth not thy throbbing heart stop here to ease itself, and, like Joseph, “seek for a place to weep in?” or do not the tears of thy love bedew these lines? Go on, then, for the field of love is large; it will be thy eternal work to behold and love; nor needest thou want work for thy present meditation.

How often hath thy Lord found thee, like Hagar, sitting, and weeping, and giving up thy soul for lost, and he opened to thee a well of consolation, and also opened thine eyes to see it! How often, in the posture of Elijah, desiring to die out of thy misery, hath he spread thee a table of unexpected relief, and sent thee on his work refreshed and encouraged! How often, in the case of the prophet’s servant, crying out, “Alas, what shall we do, for a host doth encompass us,” hath he “opened thine eyes to see more for thee than against thee!” How often, like Jonah, peevish and weary of thy life, hath he mildly said, “Doest thou well to be angry” with me, or murmur against me? How often hath he set thee on “watching and praying,” repenting and believing, “and, when he hath returned, hath found thee asleep;” and yet he hath covered thy neglect with a mantle of love, and gently pleaded for thee, that “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak!” Can thy heart be cold when thou thinkest of this? Can it contain, when thou rememberest these boundless compassions? Thus, reader, hold forth the goodness of Christ to thy heart; plead thus with thy frozen soul, till, with David, thou canst say, “My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned.” If this will not rouse up thy love, thou has all Christ’s personal excellencies to add, all his particular mercies to thyself, all his sweet and near relations to thee, and the happiness of thy everlasting abode with him. Only follow them close to thy heart. Deal with it as Christ did with Peter, when he thrice asked him, “Lovest thou me?” till he was grieved, and answered, “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!” So grieve and shame thy heart out of its stupidity, till thou canst truly say, “I know, and my Lord knows, that I love him.”

2. The next affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation, is desire. The object of it is goodness, considered as absent, or not yet attained. If love be warm, desire will not be cold. think with thyself, “What have I seen! O the incomprehensible glory! O the transcendent beauty! O blessed souls that now enjoy it! who see a thousand times more clearly what I have seen at a distance, and through dark, interposing clouds. What a difference between my state and theirs! I am sighing, and they are singing; I am offending, and they are pleasing God. I am a spectacle of

pity, like a Job or Lazarus; but they are perfect, and without blemish. I am here entangled in the love of the world, while they are swallowed up in the love of God. They have none of my cares and fears; they weep not in secret; they languish not in sorrows; these ‘tears are wiped away from their eyes.’ O happy, a thousand times happy souls! Alas, that I must dwell in sinful flesh, when my brethren and companions dwell with God! How far out of sight and reach of their high enjoyment do I here live! What poor feeble thoughts have I of God! What cold affections toward him! How little have I of that life, that love, that joy, in which they continually live! How soon doth that little depart, and leave me in thicker darkness! Now and then a spark falls upon my heart, and, while I gaze upon it, it dies, or rather, my cold heart quenches it. But they have their ‘light in his light,’ and drink continually at the spring of joy. Here we are vexing each other with quarrels, when they are of one heart and voice, and daily sound forth the hallelujahs of heaven with perfect harmony. O what a feast hath my faith beheld, and what a famine is yet in my spirit! O blessed souls! I may not, I dare not envy your happiness; I rather rejoice in my brethren’s prosperity, and am glad to think of the day when I shall be admitted into your fellowship. I wish not to displace you, but to be so happy as to be with you. Why must I stay, and weep, and wait? My Lord is gone; He hath left this earth, and is entered into his glory: my brethren are gone; my friends are there; my house, my hope, my all is there. When I am so far distant from my God, wonder not what aileth me if I now complain: an ignorant Micah will do so for his idol, and shall not my soul do so for the living God? Had I no hope of enjoyment, I would go and hide myself in the deserts, and lie and howl in some obscure wilderness, and spend my days in fruitless wishes; but since it is the land of my promised rest, and the state I must myself be advanced to, and my soul draws near, and is almost there, I will love and long, I will look and desire, I will be breathing, ‘How long, Lord! how long wilt thou suffer this soul to pant and groan, and not open to him who waits, and longs to be with thee!’“ Thus, Christian reader, let thy thoughts aspire, till thy soul longs, as David, “O that one would give me to drink of the wells of salvation!” And till thou canst say, as he did, “I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord!” And as the mother and brethren of Christ, when they could not come at him because of the multitude, sent to him, saying, “Thy mother and brethren stand without, desiring to see thee;” so let thy message to him be, and he will own thee; for he hath said, “They that hear my word, and do it, are my mother and my brethren.”

3. Another affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation, is hope. This helps to support the soul under sufferings, animates it in the greatest difficulties, gives it firmness in the severest trials, enlivens it in duties, and is the very spring that sets all the wheels in motion. Who would believe or strive for heaven, if it were not for the hope he hath of obtaining it? Who would pray, but for the hope of prevailing with God? If your hope dies, your duties die, your endeavors die, your joys die, and your soul dies. And if your hope be not in exercise, but asleep, it is next to dead. Therefore, Christian reader, when thou art raising thy affections to heaven, forget not to give one lift to thy hope. Think thus, and reason thus with thy own heart:

“Why should I not confidently and comfortably hope, when my soul is in the hands of so compassionate a Savior, and when the kingdom is at the disposal of so bountiful a God? Did he ever discover the least backwardness to my good, or inclination to my ruin? Hath he not sworn, that “he delights not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should repent and live?” Have not all his dealings witnessed the same? Did he not warn me of my danger when I never feared it, because he would have me escape it? Did he not tell me of my happiness when I had no thoughts

of it, because he would have me enjoy it? How often hath he drawn me to himself and his Christ, when I have drawn backward! How hath his Spirit incessantly solicited my heart! And would he have done all this, if he had been willing that I should perish? Should I not hope, if an honest man had promised me something in his power? And shall I not hope when I have the covenant and oath of God? It is true, the glory is out of sight; we have not beheld the mansions of the saints; but is not the promise of God more certain than our sight? We must not be saved by sight, but 'by hope; and hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' I have been ashamed of my hope in an arm of flesh, but hope in the promise of God 'maketh not ashamed.' In my greatest sufferings I will say, 'the Lord is my portion; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord; for the Lord will not cast off for ever; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies.' Though I languish and die, yet will I hope; for 'the righteous hath hope in his death.' Though I must lie down in dust and darkness, yet there 'my flesh shall rest in hope.' And when my flesh hath nothing to rejoice in, yet will I 'hold fast the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end;' for 'the hope of the righteous shall be gladness.' Indeed, if I must myself satisfy divine justice, then there had been no hope; but Christ hath 'brought in a better hope, by the which we draw nigh to God.' Or, if I had to do with a feeble creature, there were small hope; for how could he raise this body from the dust and lift me above the sun? But what is this to the Almighty Power which made the heavens and the earth out of nothing? Cannot that power which raised Christ from the dead, raise me? and that which hath glorified the Head, glorify also the members? 'Doubtless, by the blood of his covenant, God will send forth his prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water:' therefore will I 'turn to the strong hold, as a prisoner of hope.'"

4. Courage, or boldness, is another affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation; it leads to resolution, and concludes in action. When you have raised your love, desire and hope, go on, and think thus with yourself: "Will God indeed dwell with men? And is there such a glory within the reach of hope? Why then do I not lay hold upon it? Where is the cheerful vigor of my spirit? Why do I not 'gird up the loins of my mind?' Why do I not set upon my enemies on every side, and valiantly break through all resistance? What should stop me, or intimidate me? Is God with me, or against me, in the work? Will Christ stand by me, or will he not? 'If God and Christ be for me, who can be against me?' In the work of sin, almost all things are ready to help us, and only God and his servants are against us; yet how ill does that work prosper in our hands! But in my course to heaven, almost all things are against me, but God is for me; and therefore how happily does the work succeed! Do I enter upon this work in my own strength, or rather in the strength of Christ my Lord? And 'cannot I do all things through him that strengthens me?' Was he ever foiled by an enemy? He has indeed been assaulted, but was he ever conquered? Why, then, does my flesh urge me with the difficulties of the work? Is any thing too hard for Omnipotence? May not Peter boldly walk on the sea if Christ give the word of command? If he begin to sink, is it from the weakness of Christ, or from the smallness of his faith? Do I not well deserve to be turned into hell, if mortal threats can drive me thither? Do I not well deserve to be shut out of heaven, if I will be frightened from thence with the reproach of tongues? What if it were father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or the nearest friend I have in the world, if they may be called friends who would draw me to damnation, should I not forsake all that would keep me from Christ? Will their friendship

countervail the enmity of God, or be any comfort to my condemned soul? Shall I be yielding to the desires of men, and only harden myself against the Lord? Let them beseech me upon their knees, I will scorn to stop my course to behold them, I will shut my ears to their cries: let them flatter or frown, let them draw out tongues and swords against me; I am resolved, in the strength of Christ, to break through and look upon them as dust. If they would entice me with preferment, even with the kingdoms of the world, I will no more regard them than the dung of the earth. O blessed rest! O glorious state! Who would sell thee for dreams and shadows? Who would be enticed or affrighted from thee? Who would not strive, and fight, and watch, and run, and that with violence, even to the last breath, in order to obtain thee? Surely none but those that know thee not, and believe not thy glory."

5. The last affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation, is joy. Love, desire, hope and courage, all tend to raise our joy. This is so desirable to every man by nature, and so essentially necessary to constitute our happiness, that I hope I need not say much to persuade you to any thing that would make your life delightful. Supposing you, therefore, already convinced that the pleasures of the flesh are brutish and perishing, that your solid and lasting joy must be from heaven, instead of persuading, I shall proceed in directing. Reader, if thou hast managed well the former work, thou art got within sight of thy rest; thou believest the truth of it; thou art convinced of its excellencies; thou hast fallen in love with it; thou longest after it; thou hopest for it; and thou art resolved to venture courageously for obtaining it. But is here any work for joy in this? We delight in the good we possess; it is present good that is the object of joy; and thou wilt say, "Alas, I am yet without it!" But think a little further with thyself. Is it nothing to have a deed of gift from God? Are his infallible promises no ground of joy? Is it nothing to live in daily expectation of entering into the kingdom of God? Is not my assurance of being hereafter glorified, a sufficient ground for inexpressible joy? Is it not a delight to the heir of a kingdom to think of what he must soon possess, though at present he little differs from a servant? Have we not both command and example for "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God?"

Here then, reader, take thy heart once more and carry it to the top of the highest mount; show it the kingdom of Christ, and the glory of it; and say to it, "All this will thy Lord give thee, who hast believed in him, and been a worshipper of him. 'It is the Father's good pleasure to give thee this kingdom.' Seest thou this astonishing glory which is above thee? All this is thy own inheritance. This crown is thine, these pleasures are thine; this company, this beautiful place, all are thine; because thou art Christ's, and Christ is thine; when thou wast united to him, thou hadst all these with him." Thus take thy heart into the land of promise; show it the pleasant hills and fruitful valleys; show it the clusters of grapes which thou hast gathered, to convince it that it is a blessed land, flowing with better than milk and honey. Enter the gates of the holy city, walk through the streets of the "New Jerusalem, walk about Sion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof; mark well her bulwarks; consider her palaces; that thou mayst tell it to" thy soul. Has it not "the glory of God," and is not "her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal?" See the "twelve foundations of her walls, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The walls of it are of jasper; and the city is pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones; and the twelve gates are twelve pearls, every several gate is of one pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass; there is no temple in it, for the Lord Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it.

It hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it. These sayings are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angels," and his own Son, "to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." Say now to all this, "This is thy rest, O my soul! and this must be the place of thy everlasting habitation." Let all the sons of "Sion rejoice; let the daughters of Jerusalem be glad; for great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Sion. God is known in her palaces for a refuge."

Yet proceed on; the soul that loves, ascends frequently, and runs familiarly through the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, visiting the patriarchs and prophets, saluting the apostles, and admiring the armies of martyrs; so do thou lead on thy heart as from street to street; bring it into the palace of the Great King; lead it, as it were, from chamber to chamber. Say to it, "Here must I lodge; here must I live; here must I praise, here must I love, and be beloved. I must shortly be one of this heavenly choir, and be better skilled in the music. Among this blessed company must I take up my place; my voice must join to make up the melody. My tears will then be wiped away; my groans be turned to another tune; my cottage of clay be changed to this palace; my prison rags to these splendid robes; and my sordid flesh shall be put off, and such a sunlike, spiritual body be put on; 'for the former things are here passed away.' 'Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!' When I look upon this glorious place, what a dunghill and dungeon methinks is earth! O what difference betwixt a man, feeble, pained, groaning, dying, rotting in the grave, and one of these triumphant, shining saints! Here shall I 'drink of the river of pleasures, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.' Must Israel, under the bondage of the law, 'serve the Lord with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things?' Surely I shall serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart for the abundance of glory. Did persecuted saints 'take joyfully the spoiling of their goods?' and shall not I take joyfully such a full reparation of all my losses? Was it a celebrated 'day wherein the Jews rested from their enemies,' because it 'was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day? What a day, then, will that be to my soul, whose rest and change will be inconceivably greater? 'When the wise men saw the star' that led to Christ, 'they rejoiced with exceeding great joy;' but I shall shortly see him, who is himself 'the bright and morning Star.' If the disciples 'departed from the sepulchre with great joy,' when they had but heard that their Lord 'was risen from the dead;' what will be my joy, when I shall see him reigning in glory, and myself raised to a blessed communion with him! Then shall I indeed have 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and Sion shall be made an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.' Why, then do I not arise from the dust, and cease my complaints? Why do I not trample on vain delights, and feed on the foreseen delights of glory? Why is not my life a continual joy, and the savor of heaven perpetually upon my spirit?"

Let me here observe, that there is no necessity to exercise these affections, either exactly in this order, or all at one time. Sometimes one of thy affections may need more exciting, or may be more lively than the rest; or, if thy time be short, one may be exercised one day and another the next; all which must be left to thy prudence to determine. Thou hast also an opportunity, if inclined to make use of it, to exercise opposite and more mixed affections, such as hatred of sin, which would deprive thy soul of these immortal joys; godly fear, lest thou shouldst abuse thy mercy; godly

shame and grief, for having abused it; unfeigned repentance; self-indignation; jealously over thy heart; and pity for those who are in danger of losing these immortal joys.

Thirdly. We are also to take notice how heavenly contemplation is promoted by SOLILOQUY and PRAYER. Though consideration be the chief instrument in this work, yet, by itself, it is not so likely to affect the heart. In this respect contemplation is like preaching, where the mere explaining of truths and duties is seldom attended with much success as the lively application of them to the conscience; and especially when a divine blessing is earnestly sought to accompany such application.

1. By soliloquy, or a pleading the case with thyself, thou must in thy meditation quicken thy own heart. Enter into a serious debate with it. Plead with it in the most moving and affecting language, and urge it with the most powerful and weighty arguments. It is what holy men of God have practiced in all ages. Thus David: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” And again; “Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits!” This soliloquy is to be made use of according to the several affections of the soul, and according to its several necessities. It is a preaching to one’s self; for as every good master or father of a family is a good preacher to his own family, so every good Christian is a good preacher to his own soul. Therefore the very same method which a minister should use in his preaching to others, every Christian should endeavor after in speaking to himself. Observe the matter and manner of the most heart-affecting minister; let him be a pattern for your imitation; and the same way that he takes with the hearts of his people, do thou also take with thy own heart. Do this in thy heavenly contemplation; explain to thyself the things on which thou dost meditate; confirm thy faith in them by Scripture; and then apply them to thyself according to their nature and thy own necessity. There is no need to object against this, from a sense of thy own inability. Doth not God command thee to “teach the Scriptures diligently unto thy children, and talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up?” And if thou must have some ability to teach thy children, much more to teach thyself; and if thou canst talk of divine things to others, why not also to thy own heart?

2. Heavenly contemplation is also promoted by speaking to God in prayer, as well as by speaking to ourselves in soliloquy. Ejaculatory prayer may very properly be mixed with meditation, as a part of the duty. How often do we find David, in the same psalm, sometimes pleading with his soul and sometimes with God! The apostle bids us “speak to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs;” and no doubt we may also speak to God in them. This keeps the soul sensible of the divine presence, and tends greatly to quicken and raise it. As God is the highest object of our thoughts, so our viewing him, speaking to him and pleading with him, more elevates the soul and excites the affections than any other part of meditation. Though we remain unaffected while we plead the case with ourselves; yet, when we turn our speech to God, it may strike us with awe; and the holiness and majesty of him whom we speak to, may cause both the matter and words to pierce the deeper. When we read that “Isaac went out to meditate in the field,” the margin says, “to pray;” for the Hebrew word signifies both. Thus, in our meditations, to intermix soliloquy and prayer, sometimes speaking to our own hearts, and sometimes to God, is, I apprehend, the highest step to which we can advance in this heavenly work. Nor should we imagine it will be as well to take up with prayer alone, and lay aside meditation; for they are distinct duties, and must

both of them be performed. We need one as well as the other, and therefore shall wrong ourselves by neglecting either. Besides, the mixture of them, like music, will be more engaging; as the one serves to put life into the other. And our speaking to ourselves in meditation, should go before our speaking to God in prayer. For want of attending to this due order, men speak to God with far less reverence and affection than they would speak to an angel if he should appear to them; or to a judge, if they were speaking for their lives. Speaking to the God of heaven in prayer, is a weightier duty than most are aware of.

6.16. CHAPTER XV

HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION ASSISTED BY SENSIBLE OBJECTS, AND GUARDED AGAINST A TREACHEROUS HEART.

It is difficult to maintain a lively impression of heavenly things: therefore, I. Heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects; 1. If we draw strong suppositions from sense; and 2. If we compare the objects of sense with the objects of faith. II. Heavenly contemplation may also be guarded against a treacherous heart, by considering, 1. The great backwardness of the heart to this duty; 2. Its trifling in it; 3. Its wandering from it; and, 4. Its too abruptly putting an end to it. The most difficult part of heavenly contemplation is, to maintain a lively sense of heavenly things upon our hearts. It is easier merely to think of heaven a whole day, than to be lively and affectionate in those thoughts a quarter of an hour. Faith is imperfect-for we are renewed but in part-and goes against a world of resistance; and, being supernatural, is prone to decline and languish, unless it be continually excited. Sense is strong according to the strength of the flesh; and, being natural, continues while nature continues. The objects of faith are far off; but those of sense are nigh. We must go as far as heaven for our joys. To rejoice in what we never saw, nor ever knew the man that did see, and this upon a mere promise of the Bible, is not so easy as to rejoice in what we see and possess. It must, therefore, be a point of spiritual prudence, to call in sense to the assistance of faith. It will be a good work, if we can make friends of these usual enemies, and make them instruments for raising us to God, which are so often the means of drawing us from him. Why hath God given us either our senses or their common objects, if they might not be serviceable to his praise? Why doth the Holy Spirit describe the glory of the New Jerusalem in expressions that are even grateful to the flesh? Is it that we might think heaven to be made of gold and pearl? or that saints and angels eat and drink? No, but to help us to conceive of them as we are able, and to use these borrowed phrases as a glass, in which we must see the things themselves imperfectly represented, till we come to an immediate and perfect sight. Besides showing how heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, this chapter will also show how it may be preserved from a wandering heart.

First. In order that heavenly contemplation may be ASSISTED BY SENSIBLE OBJECTS, let me only advise to draw strong suppositions from sense, and to compare the objects of sense with the objects of faith.

1. For the helping of thy affections in heavenly contemplation, draw as strong suppositions as possible from thy senses. Think on the joys above, as boldly as Scripture hath expressed them. Bring down thy conceptions to the reach of sense. Both love and joy are promoted by familiar acquaintance. When we attempt to think of God and glory, without the Scripture’s manner of representing them, we are lost, and have nothing to fix our thoughts upon; we set them so far from us, that our thoughts are strange, and we are ready to say, what is above us is nothing to us. To conceive of God and glory only as above our conception, will beget but little love; or above our love, will produce little joy. Therefore put Christ no farther from you than he hath put himself, lest

the divine nature be again inaccessible. Think of Christ as in our own glorified nature. Think of glorified saints as men made perfect. Suppose thyself a companion with John, in his survey of the New Jerusalem, and viewing the thrones, the majesty, the heavenly hosts, the shining splendor which he saw. Suppose thyself his fellow-traveller into the celestial kingdom, and that thou hadst seen all the saints in their white robes, with “palms in their hands;” and that thou hadst heard those “songs of Moses and of the Lamb.” If thou hadst really seen and heard these things, in what a rapture wouldst thou have been! And the more seriously thou puttest this supposition to thyself, the more will thy meditation elevate thy heart. Do not, like the Papists, draw them in pictures! but get the liveliest picture of them in thy mind that thou possibly canst, by contemplating the Scripture account of them, till thou canst say, “Methinks I see a glimpse of glory! Methinks I hear the shouts of joy and praise, and even stand by Abraham and David, Peter and Paul, and other triumphant souls! Methinks I even see the Son of God appearing in the clouds, and the world standing at his bar to receive their doom; and hear him say, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father;’ and see them go rejoicing into the joy of their Lord! My very dreams of these things have sometimes greatly affected me; and should not these just suppositions much more affect me? What if I had seen, with Paul, those ‘unutterable things?’ Or, with Stephen, had seen ‘heaven opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God?’ Surely that one sight was worth his storm of stones. What if I had seen, as Micaiah did, ‘the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left?’ Such things did these men of God see; and I shall shortly see far more than ever they saw, till they were loosed from the flesh, as I must be.” Thus you see how it excites our affections in this heavenly work, if we make strong and familiar suppositions from our bodily senses, concerning the state of blessedness, as the Spirit hath in condescending language expressed it.

2. The other way in which our senses may promote this heavenly work, is by comparing the objects of sense with the objects of faith. As for instance: You may strongly argue with your heart from the corrupt delights of sensual men to the joys above. Think with thy self, “Is it such a delight to a sinner to do wickedly? and will it not be delightful indeed to live with God? Hath the drunkard such delight in his cups, that the fears of damnation will not make him forsake them? Will the licentious man rather part with his credit, estate and salvation, than with his brutish delights? If the way to hell can afford such pleasure, what then are the pleasures of the saints in heaven! If the covetous man hath so much pleasure in his wealth, and the ambitious man in places of power and titles of honor, what then have the saints in everlasting treasures, and in heavenly honors, where we shall be set above principalities and powers, and be made the glorious spouse of Christ! How delightfully will the voluptuous follow their recreations from morning till night, or sit at their cards and dice nights and days together! O the delight we shall have, when we come to our rest, in beholding the face of the living God, and in singing forth praises unto him and the Lamb!”

Compare also the delights above with the lawful and moderate delights of sense. Think with thyself, “How sweet is food to my taste when I am hungry; especially if it be, as Isaac said, ‘such as I love,’ which my temperance and appetite incline to? What delight, then, must my soul have in feeding upon ‘Christ, the living bread,’ and in ‘eating with him at his table in his kingdom!’ Was a mess of pottage so sweet to Esau in his hunger, that he would buy it at so dear a rate as his birthright? How highly, then, should I value this never-perishing food! How pleasant is drink in the extremity of thirst; scarcely to be expressed; enough to make the ‘strength of Samson revive!’ O

how delightful will it be to my soul to drink of that ‘fountain of living water, which whoso drinketh shall thirst no more!’ How delightful are grateful odors to the smell; or music to the ear; or beautiful sights to the eye! what fragrance, then, hath ‘the precious ointment which is poured on the head’ of our glorified Savior, and which must be poured on the head of all his saints, and will fill all heaven with its odor! How pleasing will be those real beauties above! How glorious the ‘building not made with hands,’ the house that God himself dwells in, the walks and prospects in ‘the city of God,’ and the celestial paradise!”

Compare, also, the delights above with those we find in natural knowledge. These are far beyond the delights of sense; but how much farther are the delights of heaven! Think, then, “can an Archimedes be so taken up with his mathematical invention, that the threats of death cannot disengage him, but he will die in the midst of his contemplations? Should not I be much more taken up with the delights of glory, and die with these contemplations fresh upon my soul; especially when my death will perfect my delights, while those of Archimedes die with him? What exquisite pleasure is it to dive into the secrets of nature, and find out the mysteries of arts and sciences; especially if we make a new discovery in any one of them! What high delights are there, then, in the knowledge of God and Christ! If the face of human learning be so beautiful as to make sensual pleasures appear base and brutish, how beautiful, then, is the face of God! When we meet with some choice book, how could we read it day and night, almost forgetful of meat, drink, or sleep! What delights are there, then, at God’s right hand, where we shall know in a moment all that is to be known!”

Compare, also, the delights above with the delights of morality and of the natural affections. What delight had many sober heathen in the rules and practice of moral duty, so that they took him alone for an honest man who did well through the love of virtue, and not merely for fear of punishment; yea, so much valued was this moral virtue, that they thought a man’s chief happiness consisted in it! Think, then, “What excellency will there be in our heavenly perfection, and in that uncreated perfection of God which we shall behold! what sweetness is there in the exercise of natural love, whether to children, parents, yoke-fellows, or intimate friends! Does David say of Jonathan, ‘Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women!’ Did the ‘soul of Jonathan cleave to David?’ Had Christ himself one ‘disciple whom he especially loved, and who was wont to lean on his breast?’ If, then, the delights of close and cordial friendship be so great, what delight shall we have in the friendship of the Most High, and in the dearest love of the saints! Surely this will be a stricter friendship than these, more lovely and desirable friends than ever the sun beheld; and both our affections to our Father and Savior, and especially theirs to us, will be such as we never knew here. If one angel could destroy a host, the affections of spirits must also be proportionably stronger, so that we shall then love a thousand times more ardently than we can now. As all the attributes and works of God are incomprehensible, so is this of love: he will love us infinitely beyond our most perfect love to Him. What, then, will there be in this mutual love!”

Compare also the excellencies of heaven with those glorious works of creation which our eyes now behold. What wisdom, power and goodness are manifested therein! How does the majesty of the Creator shine in this fabric of the world! “His works are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.” What divine skill in forming the bodies of men or beasts! What excellency in every plant! What beauty in flowers! What variety and usefulness in herbs, plants, fruits and minerals! What wonders are contained in the earth and its inhabitants; the ocean of waters, with its

motions and dimensions; and the constant succession of spring and autumn, of summer and winter! Think, then, “If these things, which are but servants to sinful man, are so full of mysterious worth, what is that place where God himself dwells, and which is prepared for just men made perfect with Christ! What glory is there in the least of yonder stars! What a vast resplendent body is yonder moon, and every planet! What an inconceivable glory has the sun! But all this is nothing to the glory of heaven. Yonder sun must there be laid aside as useless. Yonder sun is but darkness to the lustre of my Father’s house. I shall myself be as glorious as that sun. This whole earth is but my Father’s footstool. This thunder is nothing to his dreadful voice. These winds are nothing to the breath of his mouth. If the ‘sending rain, and making the sun to rise on the just and on the unjust,’ be so wonderful, how much more wonderful and glorious will that Sun be which must shine on none but saints and angels?”

Compare also the enjoyments above with the wonders of Providence in the church and the world. Would it not be an astonishing sight to see “the sea stand as a wall on the right hand and on the left, and the dry land appear in the midst, and the people of Israel pass safely through, and Pharaoh and his host drowned?” or to have seen the ten plagues of Egypt? or the rock gushing forth streams? or manna and quails rained from heaven? or the earth opening and swallowing up the wicked? But we shall see far greater things than these; not only sights more wonderful, but more delightful! there shall be no blood, nor wrath, intermingled; nor shall we cry out, as the men of Beth-shemesh, “Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?” How astonishing to see the sun stand still in the firmament, or “the dial of Ahaz go back ten degrees!” But we shall see when there shall be no sun; or rather shall behold for ever a Sun of infinitely greater brightness. What a life should we have, if we could have drought or rain at our prayers; or have fire from heaven to destroy our enemies, as Elisha; or miraculously cure diseases, and speak all languages, as the apostles! Alas, these are nothing to the wonders we shall see and possess with God; and all of them wonders of goodness and love! We shall ourselves be the subjects of more wonderful mercies than any of these. Jonah was raised but from a three days’ burial in the belly of a fish; but we shall be raised from many years’ decay and dust; and that dust exalted to the glory of the sun; and that glory perpetuated through eternity. Surely, if we observe but common providences, as the motions of the sun; the tides of the sea; the standing of the earth; the watering it with rain, as a garden; the keeping in order a wicked, confused world; with many others, they are all admirable. But what are these to the Sion of God, the vision of the divine Majesty, and the order of the heavenly host?

Add to these, those particular providences which thou hast thyself enjoyed and recorded through thy life, and compare them with the mercies thou shalt have above. Look over the mercies of thy youth and riper age, of thy prosperity and adversity, of thy several places and relations; are they not excellent and innumerable, rich and engaging? How sweet was it to thee, when God resolved thy doubts; scattered thy fears; prevented the inconveniences into which thy own counsel would have cast thee; eased thy pains; healed thy sickness; and raised thee up, as from death and the grave! Think, then, “Are all these so sweet and precious, that without them my life would have been a perpetual misery? Hath his providence on earth lifted me so high, ‘and his gentleness made me so great?’ How sweet, then, will his glorious presence be! How high will his eternal love exalt me! And how great shall I be made in communion with his greatness! If my pilgrimage and warfare have such mercies, what shall I find in my home and in my triumph? If God communicates

so much to me while I remain a sinner, what will he bestow when I am a perfected saint! If I have had so much at such a distance from him, what shall I have in his immediate presence, where I shall ever stand before his throne!"

Compare the joys above with the comforts thou hast here received in ordinances. Has not the Bible been to thee as an open fountain, flowing with comforts day and night? What suitable promises have come into thy mind; so that, with David, thou mayst say, "Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction!" Think, then, "If his word be so full of consolation, what overflowing springs shall we find in God himself! If his letters are so comfortable, what will the glory of his presence be! If the promise is so sweet, what will the performance be! If the testament of our Lord, and our charter for the kingdom, be so comfortable, what will be our possession of the kingdom itself!"

Think farther, "What delights have I also found in the word preached! When I have sat under a heavenly, heart-searching teacher, how has my heart been warmed! Methinks I have felt myself almost in heaven. How often have I gone to the congregation, troubled in spirit, and returned joyful! How often have I gone doubting, and God hath sent me home persuaded of his love in Christ! What cordials have I met with to animate me in every conflict! If the face of Moses shine so gloriously, what glory is there in the face of God! If 'the feet of them that publish peace, that bring good tidings of salvation, be beautiful,' how beautiful is the face of the Prince of Peace! If this treasure be so precious in earthen vessels, what is that treasure laid up in heaven! Blessed are the eyes that see what is seen there, and the ears that hear the things that are heard there. There shall I hear Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John, Peter, Paul; not preaching to gainsayers, in imprisonment, persecution and reproach; but triumphing in the praises of him who hath raised them to honor and glory."

Think also, "What joy is it to have access and acceptance in prayer; that I may always go to God, and open my case, and unbosom my soul to him, as to my most faithful friend! but it will be a more unspeakable joy, when I shall receive all blessings without asking, and all my necessities and miseries will be removed, and when God himself will be the portion and inheritance of my soul." As for the Lord's supper, "What a privilege is it to be admitted to sit at his table, to have his covenant sealed to me there! But all the life and comfort there, is to assure me of the comforts hereafter. O the difference between the last supper of Christ on earth, and the marriage supper of the Lamb at the great day! Then his room will be the glorious heavens; his attendants, all the hosts of angels and saints: no Judas, no unfurnished guest comes there; but the humble believers must sit down by them, and their feast will be their mutual loving and rejoicing."

Concerning the communion of saints, think with thyself, "What a pleasure is it to live with intelligent and heavenly Christians! David says of such, they were 'all his delight.' O what a delightful society, then, shall I have above! Had I but seen Job on the dunghill, what a mirror of patience! and what will it be to see him in glory! How delightful to have heard Paul and Silas singing in the stocks! how much more to hear them sing praises in heaven! What melody did David make on his harp! but how much more melodious to hear that sweet singer in the heavenly choir! What would I have given for an hour's free converse with Paul, when he was just come down from the third heaven! But I must shortly see those things myself, and possess what I see."

Once more, think of praising God in concert with his saints: “What if I had been in the place of those shepherds who saw and heard the heavenly host singing, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!” But I shall see and hear more glorious things. How blessed should I have thought myself, had I heard Christ in his thanksgivings to his Father! How much more, when I shall hear him pronounce me blessed! If there was such joy at bringing back the ark, or at rebuilding the temple; what will there be in the New Jerusalem! If the earth rent when the people rejoiced at Solomon’s coronation; what a joyful shout will there be at the appearing of the King of the church! If, ‘when the foundations of the earth were laid, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;’ what a joyful song will there be, when the world of glory is both founded and finished, when the top-stone is laid, and when ‘the holy city is adorned as the bride, the Lamb’s wife!'“

Compare the joys thou shalt have in heaven with what the saints have found in the way to it, and in the foretastes of it. When did God ever reveal the least of himself to any of his saints, but the joy of their hearts corresponded to the revelation? In what an ecstasy was Peter on the mount of transfiguration! “Master,” says he, “it is good for us to be here: let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” As if he had said, “O let us not go down again to yonder persecuting rabble; let us not return to our mean and suffering state. Is it not better to stay here, now we are here? Is not here better company and sweeter pleasure?” How was Paul lifted up with what he saw! How did the face of Moses shine when he had been talking with God! These were all extraordinary foretastes; but little to the full beatific vision. How often have we read and heard of dying saints who have been full of joy; and when their bodies have felt the extremity of sickness and pain, have had so much of heaven in their spirits that their joy has far exceeded their sorrows! If a spark of this fire be so glorious even amidst the sea of adversity; what then is glory itself! O the joy that the martyrs have felt in the flames! They were flesh and blood, as well as we; it must therefore be some excellent thing that filled their spirits with joy while their bodies were burning. Think, reader, in thy meditations, “Sure it must be some wonderful foretaste of glory that made the flames of fire easy, and the king of terrors welcome. What then is glory itself! What a blessed rest, when the thoughts of it made Paul desire to depart and be with Christ; and make the saints never think themselves well till they are dead! Shall Saunders embrace the stake, and cry, ‘Welcome, cross!’ And shall I not more delightfully embrace my blessedness, and cry, ‘Welcome, crown?’ Shall Bradford kiss the fagot, and shall I not kiss the Savior? Shall another poor martyr rejoice to have her foot in the same hole of the stocks in which Mr. Philpot’s had been before her? And shall not I rejoice that my soul shall live in the same place of glory where Christ and his apostles are gone before me? Shall fire and fagot, prisons and banishment, cruel mockings and scourgings, be more welcome to others than Christ and glory to me? God forbid!'“

Compare the glory of the heavenly kingdom with the glory of the church on earth, and of Christ in his state of humiliation. If Christ’s suffering in the room of sinners had such excellency, what is Christ at his Father’s right hand! If the church under her sins and enemies have so much beauty, what will she have at the marriage of the Lamb! How wonderful was the Son of God in the form of a servant! When he is born, a new star must appear, and conduct the strangers to worship him in a manger, heavenly hosts with their songs must celebrate his nativity; while a child, he must dispute with doctors; when he enters upon his office, he turns water into wine, feeds thousands with a few loaves and fishes, cleanses the lepers, heals the sick, restores the lame, gives sight to the blind,

and raises the dead. How wonderful, then, is his celestial glory! If there be such cutting down of boughs, and spreading of garments, and crying Hosanna, for one that comes into Jerusalem riding on an ass; what will there be when he comes with his angels in his glory! If they had heard him “preach the Gospel of the kingdom,” confess, “Never man spake like this man;” they, then, that behold his majesty in his kingdom will say, “There was never glory like this glory.” If, when his enemies came to apprehend him, they fell to the ground; if, when he is dying, the earth quakes, the veil of the temple is rent, the sun is eclipsed, the dead bodies of the saints arise, and the standers-by acknowledge, “truly this was the Son of God;” O what a day will it be when the dead must all arise and stand before him! when he “will once shake, not the earth only, but the heavens also!: when this sun shall be taken out of the firmament, and be everlastingly darkened with his glory! and when every tongue shall confess him to be the Lord and King! If, when he rose again, death and the grave lost their power; if angels must “roll away the stone,” terrify the keepers till they are “as dead men,” and send the tidings to his disciples; if he ascend to heaven in their sight; of what power, dominion and glory is he now possessed, and which we must for ever possess with him! When he is gone, can a few poor fishermen and tent-makers cure the lame, blind and sick, open prisons, destroy the disobedient, raise the dead, and astonish their adversaries? what a world will that be, where every one can do greater works than these! If the preaching of the Gospel be accompanied with such power as to discover the secrets of the heart, humble the proud sinner, and make the most obdurate tremble; if it can make men burn their books, sell their lands, and bring in the price and lay it down at the preacher’s feet; if it can convert thousands, and turn the world upside down; if its doctrine, from the prisoner at the bar, can make the judge on the bench tremble; if Christ and his saints have this power and honor in the day of their abasement, and in the time appointed for their suffering and disgrace, what then will they have in their absolute dominion and full advancement in their kingdom of glory!

Compare the glorious change thou shalt have at last, with the gracious change which the Spirit hath here wrought on thy heart. There is not the smallest sincere grace in thee, but is of greater worth than the riches of the Indies; not a hearty desire after Christ, but is more to be valued than the kingdoms of the world. A renewed nature is the very image of God; Christ dwelling in us, and the Spirit of God abiding in us; it is a beam from the face of God; the seed of God remaining in us; the only inherent beauty of the rational soul: it ennobles man above all nobility; fits him to understand his Maker’s pleasure, do his will, and receive his glory. If this grain of mustard-seed be so precious, what is “the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God!” If a spark of life, which will but strive against corruptions, and flame out a few desires and groans, be of so much worth, how glorious then is the fountain of this life! If we are said to be like God when we are pressed down with a body of sin; surely we shall be much more like God when we have no such thing as sin within us. Is the desire after, and love of heaven, so excellent; what then is the thing itself? Is our joy in foreseeing and believing so sweet; what will be the joy of full possession? How glad is a Christian when he feels his heart begin to melt, and be dissolved with the thoughts of sinful unkindness! Even this sorrow yields him joy. O what then will it be, when we shall know, and love, and rejoice, and praise in the highest perfection! Thine with thyself, “What a change was it to be taken from that state wherein I was born, and in which I was riveted by custom, when thousands of sins lay against me; and if I had so died, I have been damned for ever! What an astonishing change, to be justified from all these enormous crimes, and freed from all these fearful plagues, and made an heir of heaven! How often, when I have thought of my regeneration, have I cried out,

O blessed day! and blessed be the Lord that ever I saw it! How, then, shall I cry out in heaven, O blessed eternity! and blessed be the Lord that brought me to it! Did the angels of God rejoice to see my conversion? surely they will congratulate my felicity in my salvation. Grace is but a spark raked up in the ashes, covered with flesh from the sight of the world, and sometimes covered with corruption from my own sight; but my everlasting glory will not be so clouded, nor my light be 'under a bushel, but upon a hill,' even upon mount Sion, the mount of God."

Once more, compare the joys which thou shalt have above, with those foretastes of it which the Spirit hath given thee here. Hath not God sometimes revealed himself extraordinarily to thy soul, and let a drop of glory fall upon it? Hast thou not been ready to say, "O that it might be thus with my soul continually!" Didst thou never cry out with the martyr, after thy long and mournful expectations, "He is come! he is come!" Didst thou never, under a lively sermon of heaven, or in thy retired contemplations on that blessed state, perceive thy drooping spirits revive, and thy dejected heart lift up thy head, and the light of heaven dawn on thy soul? Think with thyself, "What is this earnest to the full inheritance? Alas, all this light, that so amazeth and rejoiceth me, is but a candle lighted from heaven to lead me thither through this world of darkness! If some godly men have been overwhelmed with joy till they have cried out, 'Hold, Lord, stay thy hand; I can bear no more!' what then will be my joys in heaven, when my soul shall be so capable of seeing and enjoying God, that though the light be ten thousand times greater than the sun, yet my eyes shall be able for ever to behold it!: Or if thou hast not yet felt these sweet foretastes, (for every believer hath not felt them,) then make use of such delights as thou hast felt, in order the better to discern what thou shalt hereafter feel.

Secondly. I am now to show how heavenly contemplation may be PRESERVED FROM A WANDERING HEART. Our chief work here is to discover the danger, and that will direct to the fittest remedy. The heart will prove the greatest hinderance in this heavenly employment; either, by backwardness to it;-or, by trifling in it;-or by frequent excursions to other objects;-or, by abruptly ending the work before it is well begun. As you value the comfort of this work, these dangerous evils must be faithfully resisted.

1. Thou wilt find thy heart as backward to this, I think, as to any work in the world. O what excuses will it make! What evasions will it find out! What delays and demurs, when it is ever so much convinced! Either it will question whether it be a duty or not; or if it be so to others, whether to thyself. It will tell thee, "This is a work for ministers that have nothing else to study; or, for persons that have more leisure than thou hast." If thou be a minister, it will tell thee, "This is the duty of the people; it is enough for thee to meditate for their instruction, and let them meditate on what they have heard." As if it was thy duty only to cook their meat and serve it up, and they alone must eat it, digest it, and live upon it. If all this will not do, thy heart will tell thee of other business, or set thee upon some other duty; for it had rather go to any duty than this. Perhaps it will tell thee, "Other duties are greater, and therefore this must give place to them, because thou hast no time for both. Public business is more important; to study and preach for the saving of souls must be preferred before these private contemplations." As if thou hadst not time to care for thy own salvation, for looking after that of others; or thy charity to others were so great, that it obliges thee to neglect thy own eternal welfare; or as if there was any better way to fit us to be useful to others, than making this proof of our doctrine ourselves. Certainly heaven is the best fire to light our candle at, and the best book for a preacher to study; and if we would be persuaded to study that

more, the church would be provided with more heavenly lights; and when our studies are divine and our spirits divine, our preaching will also be divine, and we may be called divines indeed. Or if thy heart will have nothing to say against the work, it will trifle away the time in delays, and promise this day and the next, but still keep off from the business. Or it will give thee a flat denial, and oppose its own unwillingness to thy reason. all this I speak of the heart, so far as it is still carnal; for I know, so far as it is spiritual, it will judge this the sweetest work in the world.

What is now to be done? Wilt thou do it if I tell thee? Wouldst thou not say in a like case, “What should I do with a servant that will not work, or with a horse that will not travel? Shall I keep them to look at?” Then faithfully deal thus with thy heart; persuade it to the work, take no denial, chide it for its backwardness, use violence with it. Hast thou no command of thy own thoughts? Is not the subject of thy meditations a matter of choice, especially under the guidance of thy judgment? Surely God gave thee, with thy new nature, some power to govern thy thoughts. Art thou again become a slave to thy depraved nature? Resume thy authority. Call in the Spirit of Christ to thine assistance, who is never backward to so good a work, nor will deny his help in so just a cause. Say to him, “Lord, thou gavest my reason the command of my thoughts and affections; the authority I have received over them is from thee; and now, behold, they refuse to obey thine authority. Thou commandest me to set them to the work of heavenly meditation, but they rebel and stubbornly refuse the duty. Wilt thou not assist me to exercise that authority which thou hast given me? O send down thy Spirit, that I may enforce thy commands, and effectually compel them to obey thy will!: Thus thou shalt see thy heart will submit, its resistance be overcome, and its backwardness be turned into cheerful compliance.

2. Thy heart will also be likely to betray thee by trifling, when it should be effectually meditating. Perhaps, when thou hast an hour for meditation, the time will be spent before thy heart will be serious. This doing of duty as if we did it not, ruins as many as the omission of it. Here let thine eye be always upon thy heart. Look not so much to the time it spends in the duty, as to the quantity and quality of the work that is done. You can tell by his work, whether a servant has been diligent. Ask yourself, “What affections have yet been exercised? How much nearer am I to heaven?” Think not, since thy heart is so trifling, it is better to let it alone: for, by this means thou wilt certainly banish all spiritual obedience; because the best hearts, being but sanctified in part, will resist, so far as they are carnal. But rather consider well the corruptions of thy nature; and that its sinful indispositions will not supersede the commands of God; nor one sin excuse another; and that God has appointed means to excite our affections. This self-reasoning, self-considering duty of heavenly meditation, is the most effective means both to excite and increase love. Therefore neglect not the duty till thou feelest thy love constrain thee, any more than thou wouldst stay from the fire till thou feelest thyself warm; but engage in the work till love is excited, and then love will constrain thee to further duty.

3. Thy heart will also be making excursions from thy heavenly meditation to other objects. It will be turning aside, like a careless servant, to talk with every one that passes by. When there should be nothing in thy mind but heaven, it will be thinking of thy calling, or thy afflictions, or of every bird, or tree, or place thou seest. The cure is here the same as before: use watchfulness and violence. Say to thy heart, “What! did I come hither to think of my worldly business, of persons, places, news or vanity, or of any thing but heaven, be it ever so good? ‘Canst thou not watch one hour?’ Wouldst thou leave this world and dwell for ever with Christ in heaven, and not leave it one hour to

dwell with Christ in meditation? ‘Is this thy love to thy friend?’ Dost thou love Christ, and the place of thy eternal, blessed abode, no more than this?” If the ravening fowls of wandering thoughts devour the meditations intended for heaven, they devour the life and joy of thy thoughts; therefore drive them away from thy sacrifice, and strictly keep thy heart to the work.

4. Abruptly ending thy meditation before it is well begun, is another way in which thy heart will deceive thee. Thou mayest easily perceive this in other duties. In secret prayer, is not thy heart urging thee to cut it short, and frequently making a motion to have done? So in heavenly contemplation, thy heart will be weary of the work, and will stop thy heavenly walk before thou art well warm. But charge it in the name of God to stay, and not do so great a work by halves. Say to it, “Foolish heart! if thou beg a while, and goest away before thou hast thine alms, is not thy begging a lost labor? If thou stoppest before the end of thy journey, is not thy travel lost? Thou camest hither in hope to have a sight of the glory which thou must inherit; and wilt thou stop when thou art almost at the top of the hill, and turn back before thou hast taken thy survey? Thou camest hither in hope to speak with God; and wilt thou go before thou hast seen him? Thou camest to bathe thyself in the streams of consolation, and to that end didst unclothe thyself of thy earthly thoughts; and wilt thou only touch the bank and return? Thou camest to ‘spy out the land of promise;’ go not back without ‘one cluster of grapes to show thy brethren,’ for their encouragement. Let them see that thou hast tasted of the wine by the gladness of thy heart; and that thou hast been anointed with the oil, by the cheerfulness of thy countenance; and hast fed of the milk and honey, by the mildness of thy disposition and the sweetness of thy conversation. This heavenly fire would melt thy frozen heart, and refine and spiritualize it; but it must have time to operate.” Thus pursue the work till something be done, till thy graces be in exercise, thy affections raised, and thy soul refreshed with the delights above; or, if thou canst not attain these ends at once, be the more earnest at another time. “Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.”

6.17. CHAPTER XVI

HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION EXEMPLIFIED, AND THE WHOLE WORK CONCLUDED. The reader's attention excited to the following example of meditation. 1. The excellencies of heavenly rest; 2. its nearness; 3. dreadful to sinners; 4. and joyful to saints; 5. its dear purchase; 6. its difference from earth. 7. The heart pleaded with; 8. unbelief banished; 9. a careless world pitied. 10. Heavenly rest the object of love; 11. and joy. 12. The heart's backwardness to heavenly joy lamented. 13. Heavenly rest the object of desire. And now, reader, according to the above directions, make conscience of daily exercising thy graces in meditation as well as prayer. Retire into some secret place, at a time the most convenient to thyself, and, laying aside all worldly thoughts, with all possible seriousness and reverence look up towards heaven; remember there is thine everlasting rest; study its excellency and reality; and rise from sense to faith, by comparing heavenly with earthly joys. Then mix ejaculations with thy soliloquies; till, having pleaded the case reverently with God, and seriously with thy own heart, thou hast pleaded thyself from a clod to a flame; from a forgetful sinner, and a lover of the world, to an ardent lover of God; from a fearful coward to a resolved Christian; from an unfruitful sadness to a joyful life; in a word, till thou hast pleaded thy heart from earth to heaven; from conversing below, to walking with God; and till thou canst lay thy heart to rest, as in the bosom of Christ, by some such meditation of thy everlasting rest as is here added for thy assistance.

1. "Rest! How sweet the sound. It is melody to my ears! It lies as a reviving cordial to my heart, and from thence sends forth lively spirits, which beat through all the pulses of my soul! Rest! not as the stone that rests on the earth, nor as this flesh shall rest in the grave, nor such a rest as the carnal world desires. O blessed rest! when we 'rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" when we shall rest from sin, but not from worship; from suffering and sorrow, but not from joy! O blessed day! when I shall rest with God! when I shall rest in the bosom of my Lord! when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing and praising! when my perfect soul and body shall together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God! when God, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me, and rest in his love to me, as I shall rest in my love to him; and rejoice over me with joy, and joy over me with singing, as I shall rejoice in him!

2. "How near is that most blessed, joyful day! It comes apace. 'He that shall come will come, and will not tarry! Though my Lord seems to delay his coming, yet a little while and he will be here. What is a few hundred years when they are over? How surely will his sign appear! How suddenly will he seize upon the careless world, even 'as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth unto the west!' He who is gone hence shall so come. Methinks I hear his trumpet sound! Methinks I see him coming in clouds, with his attending angels, in majesty and glory!

3. "O, secure sinners! what now will you do? where will you hide yourselves? what shall cover you? Mountains are gone; the heavens and the earth, which were, are passed away; the devouring fire hath consumed all, except yourselves, who must be the fuel for ever. O that you could consume as soon as the earth, and melt away as did the heavens! Ah, these wishes are

now but vain! The Lamb himself would have been your friend; he would have loved you, and ruled you, and now have saved you; but you would not then and now it is too late. Cry not, Lord, Lord; it is too late, too late. Why dost thou look about? can any save thee? Whither dost thou run? can any hide thee? O, wretch, that hast brought thyself to this!

4. “Now, blessed saints, that have believed and obeyed! this is the end of faith and patience. This is it for which you prayed and waited. Do you now repent your sufferings and sorrows, your self-denial and holy walking? Are your tears of repentance now bitter or sweet? See how the Judge smiles upon you: there is love in his looks; the titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head, are written in his amiable, shining face. Hark, he calls you! he bids you stand here on his right hand: fear not, for there he sets his sheep. O joyful sentence! ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ He takes you by the hand, the door is open, the kingdom is his, and therefore yours; there is your place before his throne! The Father receives you as the spouse of his Son, and bids you welcome to the crown of glory. Ever so unworthy, you must be crowned. This was the project of free redeeming grace, the purpose of eternal love. O blessed grace! O blessed love! O how love and joy will rise! But I cannot express it, I cannot conceive it.

5. “This is that joy which was procured by sorrow, that crown which was procured by the cross. My Lord wept, that now my tears might be wiped away; he bled, that I might now rejoice; he was forsaken, that I might not now be forsaken; he then died, that I might now live. O free mercy, that can exalt so vile a wretch! Free to me, though dear to Christ! Free grace, that hath chosen me when thousands were forsaken! When my companions in sin must burn in hell, I must here rejoice in rest! Here must I rejoice in rest! Here must I live with all these saints! O comfortable meeting of my old acquaintance, with whom I prayed, and wept, and suffered, and spoke often of this day and place! I see the grave could not detain you: the same love hath redeemed and saved you also.

6. “This is not like our cottages of clay, our prisons, our earthly dwellings. This voice of joy is not like our old complaints, our impatient groans and sighs; nor this melodious praise like the scoffs and revilings, or the oaths and curses which we heard on earth. This body is not like that we had, nor this soul like the soul we had, nor this life like the life we lived. We have changed our place and state, our clothes and thoughts, our looks, language and company. Before, a saint was weak and despised; so proud and peevish we could often scarce discern his graces; but now, how glorious is a saint! Where is now their body of sin, which wearied themselves and those about them? Where are now our different judgments, reproachful names, divided spirits, exasperated passions, strange looks, uncharitable censures? Now we are all of one judgment, of one name, of one heart, house and glory. O sweet reconciliation! Happy union! Now the Gospel shall no more be dishonored through our folly. No more, my soul, shalt thou lament the sufferings of the saints or the church’s ruins; nor mourn thy suffering friends, nor weep over their dying beds or their graves. Thou shalt never suffer thy old temptations from Satan, the world or thy own flesh. Thy pains and sickness are all cured; thy body shall no more burden thee with weakness and weariness; thy aching head and heart, thy hunger and thirst, thy sleep and labor are all gone. O what a mighty change is this! from the dunghill to the throne! from persecuting sinners to praising saints! from a vile body to this which ‘shines as the brightness of the firmament!’ from a sense of God’s displeasure to the perfect enjoyment of him in love! from all my doubts and fears to this possession which puts me out of doubt! from all my fearful thoughts of death to this joyful life!

Blessed change! Farewell sin and sorrow for ever; farewell my rocky, proud, unbelieving heart; my worldly, sensual, carnal heart; and welcome now my most holy, heavenly nature. Farewell repentance, faith and hope; and welcome love, and joy, and praise. I shall now have my harvest, without ploughing or sowing; my joy, without a preacher or a promise; even all from the face of God himself. Whatever mixture is in the streams, there is nothing but pure joy in the fountain. Here shall I be encircled with eternity, and ever live, and ever, ever praise the Lord; my face will not wrinkle nor my hair be gray; 'for this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. O death, where is now thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' The date of my lease will no more expire, nor shall I trouble myself with thoughts of death, nor lose my joys through fear of losing them. When millions of ages are passed, my glory is but beginning; and when millions more are passed, it is no nearer ending. Every day is all noon, every month is harvest, every year is a jubilee, every day is full manhood, and all this is one eternity. O blessed eternity! the glory of my glory! the perfection of my perfection!

7. "Ah, drowsy, earthly heart! how coldly dost thou think of this reviving day! Hadst thou rather sit down in dirt, than walk in the palace of God? Art thou now remembering thy worldly business, or thinking of thy lusts, earthly delights and merry company? Is it better to be here than above with God? Is the company better? Are the pleasures greater? Come away; make no excuse nor delay; God commands and I command thee; gird up thy loins; ascend the mount; look about thee with faith and seriousness. Look not back upon the way of the wilderness, except it be to compare the kingdom with that howling desert, more sensibly to perceive the wide difference. Yonder is thy Father's glory; yonder, O my soul, must thou remove when thou departest from this body; and when the power of thy Lord hath raised it again and joined thee to it, yonder must thou live with God for ever. There is the glorious New Jerusalem, the gates of pearl, the foundation of pearl, the streets and pavements of transparent gold. That sun, which lighteth all this world, will be useless there; even thyself shall be as bright as yonder shining sun; God will be the sun and Christ the light, and in his light shalt thou have light.

8. "O my soul! dost thou 'stagger at the promises of God through unbelief? I much suspect thee. Didst thou believe indeed, thou wouldst be more affected with it. Is it not under the hand, and seal, and oath of God? Can God lie? Can he that is truth itself be false? What need hath God to flatter or deceive thee? Why should he promise thee more than he will perform? Dare not to charge the wise, almighty, faithful God with this. How many of the promises have been performed to thee in thy conversion! Would God so powerfully concur with a feigned word? O wretched heart of unbelief! Hath God made thee a promise of rest, and wilt thou come short of it? Thine eyes, thine ears and all thy senses may prove delusions sooner than a promise of God can delude thee. Thou mayst be surer of that which is written in the word, than if thou didst see it with thine eyes, or feel it with thine hands. Art thou sure thou art alive, or that this is earth thou standest on, or that thine eyes see the sun? As sure is all this glory to the saints; as sure shall I be higher than yonder stars, and live for ever in the holy city, and joyfully sound forth the praises of my Redeemer, if I be not shut out by this 'evil heart of unbelief,' causing me to 'depart from the living God.'

9. "And is this rest so sweet and so sure? Then what mean the careless world? Know they what they neglect? Did they ever hear of it, or are they yet asleep, or are they dead? Do they certainly know that the crown is before them, while they thus sit still, or follow trifles? Undoubtedly they are beside themselves, to mind so much their provision by the way, when they are hasting so fast to

another world, and their eternal happiness lies at stake. Were there left one spark of reason, they would never sell their rest for toil, nor their glory for worldly vanities, nor venture heaven for sinful pleasure. Poor men! O that you would once consider what you hazard, and then you would scorn these tempting baits! Blessed for ever be that love which hath rescued me from this bewitching darkness!

10. “Draw yet nearer, O my soul! with thy most fervent love. Here is matter for it to work upon, something worth thy loving. O see what beauty presents itself! Is not all the beauty in the world united here? Is not all other beauty but deformity? Dost thou now need to be persuaded to love? Here is a feast for thine eyes and all the powers of thy soul: dost thou need entreaties to feed upon it? Canst thou love a little shining earth, a walking piece of clay? and canst thou not love that God, that Christ, that glory, which are so truly and unmeasurably lovely? Thou canst love thy friend, because he loves thee; and is the love of a friend like the love of Christ? Their weeping or bleeding for thee does not ease thee, nor stay the course of thy tears or blood; but the tears and blood that fell from thy Lord have a sovereign, healing virtue. O my soul! if love deserves and should beget love, what incomprehensible love is here before thee! Pour out all the store of thy affections here, and all is too little. O that it were more ! O that it were many thousand times more! Let him have the first-born and strength of thy soul, who parted with strength, and life, and love for thee.

“O my soul! dost thou love for excellency? Yonder is the region of light; this is the land of darkness. Yonder twinkling stars, that shining moon and radiant sun, are all but lanterns, hung out of thy Father’s house, to light thee while thou walkest in this dark world. But how little dost thou know the glory and blessedness that are within.

“Dost thou love for suitableness? What person more suitable than Christ? His God-head and humanity, his fullness and freeness, his willingness and constancy, all proclaim him thy most suitable friend. What state more suitable to thy misery than mercy? or to thy sin and pollution, than honor and perfection? What place more suitable to thee than heaven? Does this world agree with thy desires? Hast thou not had a sufficient trial of it, or dost thou love for interest and near relation? Where hast thou better interest than in heaven, or nearer relation than there?

“Dost thou love for acquaintance and familiarity? Though thine eyes have never seen thy Lord, yet thou hast heard his voice, received his benefits, and lived in his bosom. He taught thee to know thyself and him; he opened thee that first window, through which thou sawest into heaven. Hast thou forgotten since thy heart was careless, and he awakened it; hard, and he softened it; stubborn, and he made it yield; at peace, and he troubled it; whole, and he broke it; and broken, till he healed it again? Hast thou forgotten the times when he found thee in tears; when he heard thy secret sighs and groans, and left all to come and comfort thee; when he took thee, as it were, in his arms, and asked thee, ‘Poor soul, what ails thee? Dost thou weep, when I have wept so much? Be of good cheer; thy wounds are saving, and not deadly; it is I have made them, who mean thee no hurt; though I let out thy blood, I will not let out thy life.’ I remember his voice. How gently did he take me up! How carefully did he dress my wounds! Methinks I hear him still saying to me, ‘Poor sinner, though thou hast dealt unkindly with me, and cast me off, yet I will not do so by thee. Though thou hast set light by me and all my mercies, yet they and myself are all thine. What wouldst thou have that I can give thee? And what dost thou want, that I cannot give thee? If any thing I have will give thee pleasure, thou shalt have it. Wouldst thou have pardon? I freely forgive

thee all the debt. Wouldst thou have grace and peace? Thou shalt have both. Wouldst thou have myself? Behold I am thine, thy Friend, thy Lord, thy Brother, Husband and Head. Wouldst thou have the Father? I will bring thee to him, and thou shalt have him, in and by me.' These were my Lord's reviving words.

"After all, when I was doubtful of his love, methinks I yet remember his overcoming arguments: 'Have I done so much, sinner, to testify my love, and yet dost thou doubt? Have I offered thee myself and love so long, and yet dost thou question my willingness to be thine? At what dearer rate should I tell thee that I love thee? Wilt thou not believe my bitter passion proceeded from love? Have I made myself in the Gospel a lion to thine enemies and a lamb to thee, and dost thou overlook my lamb-like nature? Had I been willing to let thee perish, what need I have done and suffered so much? What need I follow thee with such patience and importunity? Why dost thou tell me of thy wants; have I not enough for me and thee? or of thy unworthiness; for if thou wast thyself worthy, what shouldst thou do with my worthiness? Did I ever invite or save the worthy and righteous? or is there any such upon earth? Hast thou nothing? art thou lost and miserable, helpless and forlorn? Dost thou believe I am an all-sufficient Savior, and wouldst thou have me? Lo, I am thine: take me; if thou art willing, I am; and neither sin nor Satan shall break the bond.' These, O these, were the blessed words which his Spirit from his Gospel spoke unto me, till he made me cast myself at his feet, and cry out, 'My Savior, and my Lord, thou hast broken, thou hast revived my heart; thou hast overcome, thou hast won my heart; take it, it is thine; if such a heart can please thee, take it; if it cannot, make it such as thou wouldst have it.' Thus, O my soul, mayst thou remember the sweet familiarity thou hast had with Christ; therefore, if acquaintance will cause affection, let out thy heart unto him. It is he that has stood by thy bed of sickness, has eased thy pains, refreshed thy weariness, and removed thy fears. He has been always ready, when thou has earnestly sought him; has met thee in public and private; has been found of thee in the congregation, in thy house, in thy closet, in the field, in thy waking nights, in thy deepest dangers.

"If bounty and compassion be an attractive of love, how unmeasurably, then, am I bound to love him! All the mercies that have filled up my life, all the places that ever I abode in, all the societies and persons I have been conversant with, all my employments and relations, every condition I have been in, and every change I have passed through, all tell me that the fountain is overflowing goodness. Lord, what a sum of love am I indebted to thee! And how does my debt continually increase! How should I love again for so much love? But shall I dare to think of requiting thee, or of recompensing all thy love with mine? Will my mite requite thee for thy golden mines; my faint wishes, for thy constant bounty; mine, which is nothing, or not mine, for thine, which is infinite, and thine own? Shall I dare to contend in love with thee, or set my borrowed, languid spark against the sun of love? Can I love as high, as deep, and broad, as long as Love itself? as much as he that made me, and that made me love, and gave me all that little which I have? As I cannot match thee in the works of power, nor make, nor preserve, nor rule the worlds; no more can I match thee in love. No, Lord, I yield; I am overcome. O blessed conquest! Go on victoriously, and still prevail, and triumph in thy love. The captive of love shall proclaim thy victory; when thou leadest me in triumph from earth to heaven, from death to life, from the tribunal to the throne! myself, and all that see it, shall acknowledge thou has prevailed, and all shall say, "Behold, how he loved him!" Yet let me love in subjection to thy love; as thy redeemed captive, though not thy peer. Shall I not love at all, because I cannot reach thy measure? O that I could feelingly say, 'I love thee,' even as I love

my friend and myself! Though I cannot say, as the apostle, ‘Thou knowest that I love thee;’ yet I can say, Lord, thou knowest that I would love thee. I am angry with my heart, that it doth not love thee; I chide it, yet it doth not mend; I reason with it, and would fain persuade it, yet I do not perceive it stir; I rub and chafe it in the use of ordinances, and yet I feel it not warm within me.

“Unworthy soul! is not thine eye now upon the only lovely object? Art thou not now beholding the ravishing glory of the saints? And dost thou not love? Art thou not a rational soul, and should not reason tell thee that earth is a dungeon to the celestial glory? Art thou not thyself a spirit, and shouldst thou not love God, ‘who is a spirit, and the Father of spirits?’ Why dost thou love so much thy perishing clay, and love no more the heavenly glory? Shall thou love when thou comest there; when the Lord shall take thy body from the grave, and make thee shine as the sun in glory for ever and ever; shalt thou then love, or shalt thou not? Is not the place a meeting of lovers? Is not the life a state of love? Is not the great marriage-day of the Lamb? Is not the employment there the work of love, where the souls with Christ take their fill? O then, my soul, begin it here! ‘Be sick with love’ now, that thou mayst be well with love there. ‘Keep thyself’ now ‘in the love of God;’ and let ‘neither life, nor death, nor any thing, separate thee from it;’ and thou shalt be kept in the fulness of love for ever, and nothing shall imbitter or abate thy pleasure; for the Lord hath prepared a city of love, a place for communicating love to his chosen, ‘and they that love his name shall dwell therein.’

11. “Awake, then, O my drowsy soul! To sleep under the light of grace is unreasonable, much more in the approach of the light of glory. Come forth, my dull, congealed spirit; thy Lord bids thee ‘rejoice, and again rejoice. ‘ Thou hast lain long enough in thy prison of flesh, where Satan has been thy jailer, cares have been thy irons, fears thy scourges, and thy food the bread and water of affliction; where sorrows have been thy lodgings, and thy sin and foes have made thy bed, and an unbelieving heart has been the gates and bars that have kept thee in: the angel of the covenant now calls thee, and bids thee ‘arise and follow him.’ Up, O my soul! and cheerfully obey, and thy bolts and bars shall all fly open: follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Shouldst thou fear to follow such a guide? Can the sun lead thee to a state of darkness? Will He lead thee to death, who died to save thee from it? Follow him, and he will show thee the paradise of God; he will give thee a sight of the New Jerusalem, and a taste of the tree of life. Come forth, my drooping soul, and lay aside thy winter dress; let it be seen, by thy ‘garments of joy and praise,’ that the spring has come; and as thou now seest thy comforts green, thou shalt shortly see them ‘white and ripe for harvest,’ and then thou shalt be called to reap, and gather and take possession. Should I suspend and delay my joys till then? Should not the joys of the spring go before the joys of harvest? Is title nothing before possession? Is the heir in no better a state than a slave? My Lord has taught me to rejoice in hope of his glory, and how to see it through the bars of a prison; for, when persecuted for righteousness’ sake, he commands me to ‘rejoice and be exceeding glad,’ because ‘my reward in heaven is great.’

“I know he would have my joys exceed my sorrows; and as much as he delights in ‘the humble and contrite,’ he yet more delights in the soul that ‘delights in him.’ Hath my Lord spread me a table in this wilderness, and furnished it with the promises of everlasting glory, and set before me angels’ food? Doth he frequently and importunately invite me to sit down and partake, and spare not? Hath he to that end furnished me with reason, and faith, and a joyful disposition; and is it possible that he should be unwilling to have me rejoice? Is it not his command to ‘delight thyself in the Lord;’ and his promise, to ‘give thee the desires of thine heart?’ Art thou not charged to ‘rejoice

evermore;' yea, to 'sing aloud and shout for joy?' Why should I, then, be discouraged? My God is willing, if I were but willing. He is delighted in my delights. He would have it my constant frame and daily business to be near him in my believing meditations, and to live in the sweetest thoughts of his goodness. O blessed employment, fit for the sons of God! But thy feast, my Lord, is nothing to me without an appetite. Thou hast set the dainties of heaven before me; but alas! I am blind and cannot see them! I am sick and cannot relish them! I am so benumbed that I cannot put forth a hand to take them! I therefore humbly beg this grace, that, as thou hast opened heaven to me in thy word, so thou wouldst open mine eyes to see it, and my heart to delight in it; else heaven will be no heaven to me. O thou Spirit of life! breathe upon thy graces in me; take me by the hand and lift me from the earth, that I may see what glory 'thou hast prepared for them that love thee!'

"Away, then, ye soul-tormenting cares and fears, ye heart-vexing sorrows! At least forbear a little while: stand by; stay here below, till I go up and see my rest. The way is strange to me, but not to Christ. There was the eternal abode of his glorious Deity; and thither hath he also brought his glorified flesh. It was his work to purchase it; it is his to prepare it, and to prepare me for it, and bring me to it. the eternal God of truth hath given me his promise, his seal and oath, that, 'believing in Christ, I shall not perish, but have everlasting life.' Thither shall my soul be speedily removed, and my body very shortly follow. And can my tongue say that I shall shortly and surely live with God, and yet my heart not leap within me? can I say it with faith, and not with joy? Ah, faith, how sensibly do I now perceive thy weakness! But though unbelief darken my light, and dull my life, and suppress my joys, it shall not be able to conquer and destroy me; though it envy all my comforts, yet some, it spite of it, I shall even here receive; and if that did not hinder, what abundance might I have! The light of heaven would shine into my heart, and I might be almost as familiar there as I am on earth. Come away, then, my soul; stop thine ears to the ignorant language of infidelity; thou art able to answer all its arguments; or, if thou art not, yet tread them under thy feet. Come away; stand not looking on that grave, nor turning those bones, nor reading thy lesson now in the dust; those lines will soon be wiped out. But lift up thy head and look to heaven, and see thy name written in golden letters 'in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.'

"What if an angel should tell thee that there is a mansion in heaven prepared for thee, that it shall certainly be thine for ever; would not such a message make thee glad? And dost thou make light of the infallible Word of promise, which was delivered by the Spirit, and even by the Son himself? Suppose thou hadst seen a fiery chariot come for thee, and take thee up to heaven, like Elijah; would not this rejoice thee? But thy Lord assures thee that the soul of a Lazarus hath a convoy of angels to carry it into Abraham's bosom. Shall a drunkard be so merry among his cups, or the glutton in his delicious fare, and shall not I rejoice, who must shortly be in heaven? Can meat and drink delight me when I hunger and thirst? Can I find pleasure in walks, and gardens, and convenient dwellings? Can beautiful objects delight my eyes; or grateful odors my smell; or melody my ears? and shall not the forethought of celestial bliss delight me? Methinks among my books I could employ myself in sweet content, and bid the world farewell, and pity the rich and great that know not this happiness; what then will my happiness in heaven be, where my knowledge will be perfect! If 'the queen of Sheba came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon,' and see his glory; how cheerfully should I pass from earth to heaven, to see the glory of the eternal majesty, and attain the height of wisdom, compared with which the most learned on earth are but fools and idiots! What if God had made me commander of the earth;

what if I could ‘remove mountains, heal diseases with a word or a touch, or cast out devils,’ should I not rejoice in such privileges and honors as these, and shall I not much more rejoice that my name is written in heaven? I cannot here enjoy my parents, or my near and beloved friends, without some delight; especially, when I have given my whole heart to my friend, how sweet was that exercise of my love! O what will it then be to live in perpetual love of God! ‘For brethren to dwell together in unity here, how good and how pleasant it is!’ To see a family live in love; husband and wife, parents, children and servants doing all in love to one another; to see a town live together in love, without any envyings, brawlings, or contentions, law-suits, factions, or divisions, but every man loving his neighbor as himself, thinking they can never do too much for one another, but striving to go beyond each other in love; how happy, how delightful a sight is this! O then, what blessed society will the family of heaven be, and those peaceful inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, where there is no division nor differing judgments, no disaffection nor strangeness, no deceitful friendship, no, not one unkind expression, not an angry look or thought; but all are one in Christ, who is one with the Father, and all live in the love of him who is love itself! The soul is not more where it lives, than where it loves. How near, then, will my soul be united to God, when I shall so heartily, strongly and incessantly love him! Ah, wretched, unbelieving heart, that can think of such a day, and work, and life, as this, with such low and feeble joys! But my future enjoyments will be more lively.

“How delightful is it to me to behold and study those inferior works of creation! What a beautiful fabric do we here dwell in; the floor so dressed with herbs, and flowers, and trees, and watered with springs and rivers; the roof so widely expanded, so admirably adorned! What wonders do sun, moon and stars, seas and winds, contain! And hath God prepared such a house for corruptible flesh, for a soul imprisoned? and doth he bestow so many millions of wonders upon his enemies? O what a dwelling must that be which he prepares for his dearly beloved children! and how will the glory of the New Jerusalem exceed all the present glory of earth! Arise then, O my soul, in thy contemplation, and let thy thoughts of that glory as far exceed in sweetness thy thoughts of the excellencies below! Fear not to go out of this body and this world, when thou must make so happy a change: but say, as one did when he was dying, ‘I am glad and even leap for joy, that the time is come, in which that mighty Jehovah, whose majesty in my search of nature I have admired, whose goodness I have adored, whom by faith I have desired and panted after, will now show himself to me face to face.’

“How wonderful, also, are the works of Providence! How delightful to see the greatest God interest himself in the safety and advancement of a few humble, praying, but despised persons; and to review those special mercies with which my own life has been adorned and sweetened! How often have my prayers been heard, my tears regarded, my troubled soul relieved! How often hath my Lord bid me be of good cheer! What a support are these experiences, these clear testimonies of my Father’s love, to my fearful, unbelieving heart! O then, what a blessed day will that be when I shall have all mercy, perfection of mercy, and fully enjoy the Lord of mercy; when I shall stand on the shore and look back on the raging seas I have safely passed; when I shall review my pains and sorrows, my fears and tears, and possess the glory which was the end of all! If one drop of lively faith was mixed with these considerations, what a heaven-ravishing heart should I carry within me! Fain would ‘I believe; Lord, help my unbelief.’

“How sweet, O my soul, have ordinances been to thee! What delight hast thou had in prayer and thanksgiving, under heavenly sermons and in the society of saints, and to see ‘the Lord adding to the church such as should be saved!’ How, then, can my heart conceive the joy which I shall have to see the perfected church in heaven, and to be admitted into the celestial temple, and with the heavenly host praise the Lord for ever? Was the word of God sweeter to Job than his necessary food, and to David than honey and the honeycomb, and was it the joy and rejoicing of Jeremiah’s heart; how blessed a day will that be when we shall fully enjoy the Lord of this word, and shall no more need these written precepts and promises, nor read any book but the face of the glorious God! If they that heard Christ speak on earth ‘were astonished at his wisdom and answers, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth,’ how shall I, then, be affected to behold him in his majesty!

“Can the prospect of his glory make others welcome the cross and even refuse deliverance; and cannot it make thee cheerful under lesser sufferings? Can it sweeten the flames of martyrdom and not sweeten thy life, or thy sickness, or thy natural death? Is it not the same heaven which they and I must live in? Is not their God, their Christ, their crown and mine the same? And shall I look upon it with an eye so dim, a heart so dull, a countenance so dejected? Some small foretastes of it have I myself had; and how much more delightful have they been than any earthly things ever were! What, then, will the full enjoyment be!

“What a beauty is there here in the imperfect graces of the Spirit! Alas! how small are these to what we shall enjoy in our perfect state! What a happy life should I here live, could I but love God as much as I would; could I be all love and always loving! O my soul, what wouldst thou give for such a life? Had I such apprehensions of God, such knowledge of his word as I desire; could I fully trust him in all my straits; could I be as lively as I would in every duty; could I make God my constant desire and delight; I would not envy the world their honors or pleasures. What a blessed state, O my soul! wilt thou shortly be in, when thou shalt have far more of these than thou canst now desire, and shalt exercise thy perfected graces in the immediate vision of God, and not in the dark, and at a distance, as now!

“Is the sinning, afflicted, persecuted church of Christ so much more excellent than any particular gracious soul? What then will the church be when it is fully gathered and glorified; when it has ascended from the valley of tears to Mount Sion; when it shall sin and suffer no more! The glory of the Old Jerusalem will be darkness and deformity to the glory of the New. What cause shall we have, then, to shout for joy, when we shall see how glorious the heavenly temple is, and remember the meanness of the church on earth!

12. “But, alas! at what a loss am I in the midst of my contemplation! I thought my heart had all the while attended, but I see it hath not. What life is there in empty thoughts and words, without affections? Neither God, nor I, find pleasure in them. Where hast thou been, unworthy heart, while I was opening to thee the everlasting treasures? Art thou not ashamed to complain so much of an uncomfortable life, and to murmur at God for filling thee with sorrows, when he in vain offers thee the delights of angels? Hadst thou now but followed me close, it would have made thee revive and leap for joy, and forget thy pains and sorrows. Did I think my heart had been so backward to rejoice?

13. “Lord, thou hast reserved my perfect joys for heaven; therefore, help me to desire till I may possess, and let me long when I cannot, as I would, rejoice. O my soul, thou knowest, to thy sorrow, that thou art not yet at thy rest. When shall I arrive at that safe and quiet harbor where there are none of these storms, waves, and dangers; when I shall never more have a weary, restless night or day? Then my life will not be such a mixture of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow; nor shall flesh and spirit be combating within me; nor faith and unbelief, humility and pride, maintain a continual conflict. O when shall I be past these soul-tormenting fears, and cares and griefs? when shall I be out of this soul-contradicting, ensnaring, deceitful flesh; this corruptible body, this vain, vexatious world? Alas, that I must stand and see the church and cause of Christ tossed about in contention, and made subservient to private interests or deluded fancies. There is none of this disorder in the heavenly Jerusalem; there I shall find a harmonious concert of perfected spirits, obeying and praising their everlasting King. O how much better to be a door-keeper there, than the commander of this tumultuous world. Why am I no more weary of this weariness? Why do I so forget my resting-place? Up then, O my soul, in thy most raised and fervent desires! Stay not till this flesh can desire with thee; expect not that sense should apprehend thy blessed object, and tell thee when and what to desire.

“Doth not the dulness of thy desires after rest accuse thee of most detestable ingratitude and folly? Must thy Lord procure thee a rest at so dear a rate, and dost thou no more value it? Must he go before to prepare so glorious a mansion for such a wretch, and art thou loth to go and possess it? Shall the Lord of glory be desirous of thy company, and thou not desirous of his? Must earth become a very hell to thee before thou art willing to be with God? Behold the most lovely creature, or the most desirable state, and tell me, where wouldst thou be if not with God? Poverty is a burden; riches a snare; sickness unpleasing; health unsafe; the frowning world bruises thy heel; the smiling world stings thee to the heart; so much as the world is loved and delighted in, it hurts and endangers the lover; and if it may not be loved, why should it be desired? If thou art applauded, it proves the most contagious breath; if thou art vilified, or unkindly used, methinks this should not entice thy love. If thy successful labors and thy godly friends seem better to thee than a life with God, it is time for god to take them from thee. If thy studies have been sweet, have they not also been bitter? And, at best, what are they to the everlasting view of the God of truth? Thy friends here have been thy delight, and have they not also been thy vexation and grief? They are gracious, and are they not also sinful? They are kind, and are they not soon displeased? They are humble, but, alas, how proud also! Their graces are sweet, and their gifts helpful; but are not their corruptions bitter, and their imperfections hurtful? And art thou so loth to go from them to thy God?

“O my soul, look above this world of sorrows! Hast thou so long felt the smarting rod of affliction, and no better understood its meaning? Is not every stroke to drive thee hence? Is not its voice like that to Elijah, ‘What doest thou here?’ Dost thou forget thy Lord’s prediction? ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation; in me ye shall have peace!’ Ah, my dear Lord, I feel thy meaning; it is written in my flesh, engraved in my bones. My heart thou aimest at; thy rod drives, thy silken cord of love draws; and all to bring it to thyself. Lord, can such a heart be worth thy having? Make it worthy, and then it is thine; take it to thyself, and then take me. This clod hath life to stir, but not to rise. As the feeble child to the tender mother, it looketh up to thee, and stretcheth out the hands, and fain would have thee take it up. Though I cannot say, ‘My soul longeth after thee;’ yet I can say, I long for such a longing heart. ‘The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.’ My spirit cries, ‘Let thy kingdom

come, or let me come to thy kingdom; but the flesh is afraid thou shouldst hear my prayer, and take me at my word. O blessed be thy grace, which makes use of my corruptions to kill themselves; for I fear my fears, and sorrow for my sorrows, and long for greater longings; and thus the painful means of attaining my desires increase my weariness, and that makes me groan to be at rest.

“Indeed, Lord, my soul itself is in a strait, and what to choose I know not; but thou knowest what to give: ‘to depart and be with thee, is far better;’ but ‘to abide in the flesh’ seems needful. Thou knowest I am not weary of thy work, but of sorrow and sin; I am willing to stay while thou wilt employ me, and despatch the work thou hast put into my hands; but, I beseech thee, stay no longer when this is done; and while I must be here, let me be still amending and ascending; make me still better, and take me at the best. I dare not be so impatient as to importune thee to cut off my time, and snatch me hence unready; because I know my everlasting state so much depends on the improvement of this life. Nor would I stay when my work is done, and remain here sinning, while my brethren are triumphing. Thy footsteps bruise this worm, while those stars shine in the firmament of glory. Yet I am thy child as well as they. Christ is my Head as well as theirs; why is there, then, so great a distance? But I acknowledge the equity of thy ways; though we are all children, yet I am the prodigal, and therefore more fit, in this remote country, to feed on husks, while they are always with thee, and possess thy glory. They were once themselves in my condition, and I shall shortly be in theirs. They were of the lowest form before they came to the highest; they suffered before they reigned; they ‘came out of great tribulation, who are now before thy throne;’ and shall I not be content to come to the crown as they did; and to ‘drink of their cup, before I sit with them in the kingdom?’ Lord, I am content to stay thy time, and go thy way, so thou wilt exalt me also in thy season, and take me into thy barn when thou seest me ripe. In the meantime, I may desire, though I am not to repine; I may believe and wish, though not make any sinful haste; I am willing to wait for thee, but not to lose thee; and when thou seest me too contented with thine absence, then quicken my languid desires, and blow up the dying spark of love; and leave me not until I am able unfeignedly to cry out, ‘As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God! My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My conversation is in heaven, from whence I look for a Savior. My affections are set on things above, where Christ sitteth, and my life is hid. I walk by faith, and not by sight; willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.’

“What interest hath this empty world in me; and what is there in it that may seem so lovely as to entice my desires from my God, or make me loth to soar away? Methinks, when I look upon it with a deliberate eye, it is a howling wilderness, and too many of its inhabitants are untamed monsters. I can view all its beauty as deformity, and drown all its pleasures in a few penitent tears; or the wind of a sigh will scatter them away. O let not this flesh so seduce my soul as to make it prefer this weary life before the joys that are about thy throne! And though death itself be unwelcome to nature, yet thy grace make thy glory appear to me so desirable that the king of terrors may be the messenger of my joy. Let not my soul be ejected by violence, and dispossessed of its habitation against its will; but draw it to thyself by the secret power of thy love, as the sunshine in the spring draws forth the creatures from their winter cells; meet it half-way, and entice it to thee as the loadstone doth the iron, and as the greater flame attracts the less! Dispel, therefore, the clouds that hide thy love from me, or remove the scales that hinder mine eyes from beholding thee; for

the beams that stream from thy face, and the foretastes of thy great salvation, and nothing else, can make a soul unfeignedly say, ‘Now let thy servant depart in peace!’ But it is not thy ordinary discoveries that will here suffice; as the work is greater, so must thy help be. O turn these fears into strong desires; and this lothness to die into longings after thee! While I must be absent from thee, let my soul as heartily groan as my body doth under its want of health! If I have any more time to spend on earth, let me live as without the world in thee, as I have sometimes lived as without thee in the world! While I have a thought to think, let me not forget thee; or a tongue to move, let me mention thee with delight; or breath to breathe, let it be after thee, and for thee; or a knee to bend, let it daily bow at thy footstool; and when by sickness thou confinest me, do thou ‘make my bed, number my pains, and put all my tears into thy bottle!’

“As my flesh desired what my spirit abhorred, so now let my spirit desire that day which my flesh abhorreth; that my friends may not with so much sorrow wait for the departure of my soul, as my soul with joy shall wait for its own departure! Then ‘let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;’ even a removal to that glory which shall never end! Then let thy convoy of angels bear my departing soul among the perfected spirits of the just, and let me follow my dear friends who have died in Christ before me; and while my sorrowing friends are weeping over my grave, let my spirit be reposed with thee in rest; and while my body shall lie mouldering in the dust, let my soul have ‘the inheritance of the saints in light!’ O thou that numberest the very hairs of my head, number all the days that my body lies in the dust; and thou that ‘writest all my members in thy book,’ keep an account of my scattered bones! O my Savior, hasten the time of thy return; send forth thy angels, and let that dreadful, joyful trumpet sound! Delay not, lest the living give up their hope; delay not, lest earth should grow like hell, and thy church, by division, be all crumbled to dust; delay not lest thy enemies get advantage of thy flock, and lest pride, hypocrisy, sensuality and unbelief prevail against that little remnant, and share among them thy whole inheritance, and when thou comest, thou find not faith on the earth; delay not, lest the grave should boast of victory, and, having learned rebellion of its guest, should refuse to deliver thee up thy due! O hasten that great resurrection day, when thy command shall go forth, and none disobey: when ‘the sea and the earth shall yield up their hostages, and all that sleep in the grave shall awake, and the dead in Christ shall rise first;’ when the seed which thou sowest corruptible, shall come forth incorruptible; and graves that received rottenness and dust, shall return thee glorious stars and suns! Therefore dare I lay down my body in the dust, intrusting it, not to a grave, but to thee; and therefore my flesh shall rest in hope, till thou shalt raise it to the possession of everlasting rest. ‘Return, O Lord, how long? O let thy kingdom come!’ Thy desolate ‘bride saith, Come’ for thy Spirit within her saith, Come; and teacheth her thus to ‘pray with groanings which cannot be uttered; yea, the whole creation saith, Come, waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.’ Thou thyself has said, ‘Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.’“

6.18. CONCLUSION

Thus, reader, I have given thee my best advice for maintaining a heavenly conversation. It thou canst not thus meditate methodically and fully, yet do it as thou canst; only be sure to do it seriously and frequently. Be acquainted with this heavenly work, and thou wilt, in some degree, be acquainted with God; thy joys will be spiritual, prevalent and lasting, according to the nature of their blessed object; thou wilt have comfort in life and death. When thou hast neither wealth, nor health, nor the pleasures of this world, yet wilt thou have comfort. Without the presence or help of any friend, without a minister, without a book, when all means are denied thee, or taken from thee, yet mayst thou have vigorous, real comfort. Thy graces will be mighty, active and victorious; and the daily joy which is thus drawn from heaven will be thy strength. Thou wilt be as one that stands on the top of an exceeding high mountain; he looks down on the world as if it were quite below him; fields and woods, cities and towns seem to him but little spots. Thus despicably wilt thou look on all things here below. The greatest princes will seem but as grass-hoppers; the busy, contentious, covetous world, but as a heap of ants. Men's threatenings will be no terror to thee, nor the honors of this world any strong enticement; temptations will be more harmless, as having lost their strength; and afflictions less grievous, as having lost their sting; and every mercy will be better known and relished. It is now, under God, in thy own choice, whether thou wilt live this blessed life or not; and whether all this pains I have taken for thee shall prosper, or be lost. if it be lost through thy neglect, thou thyself wilt prove the greatest loser. O man, what hast thou to mind but God and heaven? art thou not almost out of this world already? Dost thou not look every day, when one disease or another will release thy soul? Does not the grave wait to be thine house, and worms to feed upon thy face and heart? What if thy pulse must beat a few strokes more? What if thou hast a little longer to breathe, before thou breathe out thy last; a few more nights to sleep, before thou sleepest in the dust? Alas! what will this be when it is gone? And is it not almost gone already? Very shortly thou wilt see thy glass run out, and say to thyself, "My life is done! My time is gone! It is past recalling! There is nothing now but heaven or hell before me!" Where, then, should thy heart be now but in heaven? Didst thou know what a dreadful thing it is to have a doubt of heaven when a man is dying, it would raise thee up. And what else but doubt can that man then do, that never seriously thought of heaven before.

Some there be that say, "It is not worth so much time and trouble to think of the greatness of the joys above; if we can make sure they are ours, we know they are great." But as these men obey not the command of God, which requires them to have their "conversation in heaven, and to set their affections on things above;" so they wilfully make their own lives miserable, by refusing the delights which God hath set before them. And if this were all, it were a small matter: but see what abundance of other mischiefs follow the neglect of these heavenly delights. This neglect will damp, if not destroy, their love to God-will make it unpleasant to them to think or speak of God, or engage in his service-it tends to pervert their judgment concerning the ways and ordinances of God-it makes them sensual and voluptuous-it leaves them under the power of every affliction and temptation, and is a preparative to total apostacy-it will also make them fearful and unwilling to die;

for who would go to a God or a place he hath no delight in? who would leave his pleasure here, if he had not better to go to? Had I only proposed a course of melancholy, and fear, and sorrow, you might reasonably have objected. But you must have heavenly delights, or none that are lasting. God is willing you should daily walk with him, and draw consolations from the everlasting fountain: if you are unwilling, even bear the loss; and, when you are dying, seek for comfort where you can get it, and see whether fleshly delights will remain with you. Then conscience will remember, in spite of you, that you were once persuaded to a way for more excellent pleasures-pleasures that would have followed you through death, and have lasted to eternity. As for you, whose hearts God hath weaned from all things here below, I hope you will value this heavenly life, and take one walk every day in the New Jerusalem. God is your love and your desire; you would fain be more acquainted with your Savior; and I know it is your grief that your hearts are not nearer to him, and that they do not more feelingly love him and delight in him. O try this life of meditation on your heavenly rest! Here is the mount on which the fluctuating ark of your souls may rest. Let the world see, by your heavenly lives, that religion is something more than opinions and disputes, or a task of outward duties. If ever a Christian is like himself, and conformable to his principles and profession, it is when he is most serious and lively in his duty. As Moses, before he died, went up into Mount Nebo to take a survey of the land of Canaan; so the Christian ascends the mount of contemplation, and by faith surveys his rest. He looks upon the glorious mansions, and says, “glorious things are” deservedly “spoken of thee, thou city of God!” He hears, as it were, the melody of the heavenly choir, and says, “Happy is the people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!” He looks upon the glorified inhabitants, and says, “Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the lord, who is the shield of thy help and the sword of thine excellency!” When he looks upon the Lord himself, who is their glory, he is ready, with the rest, to “fall down and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and say, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come! Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power!” When he looks on the glorified Savior, he is ready to say Amen to that “new song, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb, for ever and ever. For thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us, unto our God, kings and priests!: When he looks back on the wilderness of this world, he blesses the believing, patient, despised saints; he pities the ignorant, obstinate, miserable world; and for himself he says, as Peter, “It is good to be here;” or, as Asaph, “It is good for me to draw near to God; for, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish.” Thus as Daniel, in his captivity, daily opened his window towards Jerusalem, though far out of sight, when he went to God in his devotions; so may the believing soul, in this captivity of the flesh, look towards “Jerusalem which is above.” And as Paul was to the Colossians, so may the believer be with the glorified spirits, “though absent in the flesh, yet with them in the spirit, joying and beholding their heavenly order.” And as the lark sweetly sings while she soars on high, but is suddenly silenced when she falls to the earth; so is the frame of the soul most delightful and divine while fixed in the views of God by heavenly contemplation. Alas, we make there too short a stay, fall down again, and lay by our music! But “O thou, the merciful Father of spirits, the attraction of love and ocean of delights, draw up these drossy hearts unto thyself, and keep them there till they are spiritualized and refined; and second thy servant’s weak endeavors, and persuade those that read these lines, to the practice of this delightful, heavenly work! O suffer not the soul of thy most unworthy servant to be a stranger to

those joys which he describes to others; but keep me, while I remain on earth, in daily breathings after thee, and in a believing, affectionate walking with thee! And when thou comest, let me be found so doing; not serving my flesh, nor asleep, with my lamp unfurnished; but waiting and longing for my Lord's return! Let those who shall read these heavenly directions, not merely read the fruit of my studies, but the breathing of my active hope and love; that if my heart were open to their view, they might there read the same most deeply engraven with a beam from the face of the Son of God; and not find vanity, or lust, or pride within, when the words of life appear without; that so these lines may not witness against me; but proceeding from the heart of the writer, may be effectual, through thy grace, upon the heart of the reader, and so be the savor of life to both! Amen."

"Glory be to God in the highest; on earth peace, good-will toward men." THE END

Chapter 89

S. Advice On Reading

Advice On Reading by Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

"Make careful choice of the books which you read: let the holy scriptures ever have the pre-eminence, and, next to them, those solid, lively, heavenly treatises which best expound and apply the scriptures, and next, credible histories, especially of the Church . . . but take heed of false teachers who would corrupt your understandings."

1. As there is a more excellent appearance of the Spirit of God in the holy scripture, than in any other book whatever, so it has more power and fitness to convey the Spirit, and make us spiritual, by imprinting itself upon our hearts. As there is more of God in it, so it will acquaint us more with God, and bring us nearer Him, and make the reader more reverent, serious and divine. Let scripture be first and most in your hearts and hands and other books be used as subservient to it. The endeavours of the devil and papists to keep it from you, doth shew that it is most necessary and desirable to you.

2. The writings of divines are nothing else but a preaching of the gospel to the eye, as the voice preaches it to the ear. Vocal preaching has the pre-eminence in moving the affections, and being diversified according to the state of the congregation which attend it: this way the milk comes warmest from the breast. But books have the advantage in many other respects: you may read an able preacher when you have but a average one to hear. Every congregation cannot hear the most judicious or powerful preachers: but every single person may read the books of the most powerful and judicious; preachers may be silenced or banished, when books may be at hand: books may be kept at a smaller charge than preachers: we may choose books which treat of that, very subject which we desire to hear of; but we cannot choose what subject the preacher shall treat of. Books we may have at hand every day. and hour; when we can have sermons but seldom, and at set times. If sermons be forgotten, they are gone; but a book we may read over and over, till we remember it: and if we forget it, may again peruse it at our pleasure, or at our leisure. So that good books are a very great mercy to the world: the Holy Ghost chose the way of writing, to preserve His doctrine and laws to the ’Church, as knowing how easy and sure a way it is of keeping it safe to all generations, in comparison of mere verbal traditions.

3. You have need of a judicious teacher at hand, to direct you what books to use or to refuse: for among good books there are some very good that are sound and lively; and some good, but mediocre, and weak and somewhat dull; and some are very good in part, but have mixtures of error, or else of incautious, injudicious expressions, fitter to puzzle than edify the weak.

Baxter’s Guide To The Value Of A Book While reading ask oneself:

1. Could I spend this time no better?

2. Are there better books that would edify me more?

3. Are the lovers of such a book as this the greatest lovers of the Book of God and of a holy life?

4. Does this book increase my love to the Word of God, kill my sin, and prepare me for the life to come?

Chapter 90

S. Cases And Directions Against Censoriousness And Unwarrantable Judging.

Cases And Directions Against Censoriousness And Unwarrantable Judging. by Richard Baxter Titus 1:1-16 Cases of Conscience about Judging of Others.

Quest. 1. Am I not bound to judge truly of every one as he is?

Answer. I. There are many that you are not bound to meddle with, and to pass any judgment at all upon. 2. There are many whose faults are secret, and their virtues open and of such you cannot judge as they are, because, you have no proof or evidence to enable you: you cannot see that which is latent in the heart, or done in darkness. 3. You neither ought on pretence of charity, nor can believe an evident known untruth of any man.

Quest. Doth not charity bind me to judge men better than they are?

Answer. Charity bindeth you, 1. Rather to observe the best in them, than the worst. 2. And, as I said, to judge of no man's faults uncalled. 3. Nor to judge of that which is not evident, but out of sight and thus consequently it bindeth you to judge some men to be better than they are; but not directly.

Quest. Then a man is bound to err and believe an untruth.

Answer. No; you are not bound to believe that it is certainly true, that such a man is better than he is; because you have no evidence of its certain truth. But you are bound to believe it a thing probable or likely, likely to be true, by an opinion or fallible human faith and this is not a falsehood; for that is likely and probable to you, which hath the more probable evidence, and more for it than against it so that the thing which you are to believe immediately is this proposition: There is more evidence to me to prove it likely that this man is sincere than contrary: and consequently you believe this, and believe not the contrary, because the contrary hath no evidence. But you are not to take it as a certain thing, that the contrary hath no latent reality.

Quest. II. How far may I judge ill of one by outward appearances, as by the countenance, gestures, and other uncertain but suspicious signs?

Answer. There are some signs which are not so much as probable, but a little suspicious, and which men are very ordinarily mistaken by: as those that will judge of a man at the first look by his face; and those that will judge a studious, serious person (a lawyer, a judge, or a divine) to be morose or proud, because they are not complimentary, but of few words; or because they have not patience to waste precious hours in hearing an empty vessel sound, an ignorant, self-conceited person talk foolishly. Such censures are but the effects of injudiciousness, unrighteousness, and rash haste. There are other signs which make it probable to a wise and charitable person, that the man is bad (e.g. proud, or covetous, or a hypocrite). If with these, there are as great sins to make the contrary probable, we must rather incline to the better than the worse. But if not, we may fear

the worst of that person, but not conclude it as a certainty; and therefore we may not in public censures, proceed upon such uncertainties, nor venture to divulge them; but only use them to help us for due caution, and pity, and prayer, and endeavour for such a one's recovery and help.

Quest. III. How far may I censure upon the report of others?

Answer. According to the degree of the credibility of the persons, and evidence of the narrative; not simply in themselves, but as compared with all that is to be heard on the contrary part; else you are partial and unjust.

Quest. IV. Doth not the fifth command oblige me in honour to parents and princes, to judge them to be better than their lives declare them to be?

Answer. You are gradually to honour them more than others, and therefore to be more afraid of dishonoring them, and must not sit in judgment on them, to believe any harm of them, which evidence doth not compel you to believe. But you are not to judge any sin the less, because it is theirs; nor to judge contrary to evidence, nor to call evil good, nor to be willfully blind, nor to flatter any in their sin.

Quest. V. Whom must we judge for sincere and sanctified Christians?

Answer. 1. All those that profess to be such, whom you cannot disprove. 2 But as there are several degrees of evidence and probability, so must there be several degrees of your good opinion of others. Of some who give you the highest probability, you may have the strongest confidence short of certainty of others you may have less; and of some you may have much more fear than hope. 3. And yet in matters of church rights and public communion, your fears will not allow you to accept them as no Christians; for their profession of faith and repentance is certain and as long as your fears of their hypocrisy or unsoundness are but uncertain, it must not (on that account) prevail to deprive another of his right.

Quest. VI. But is not my error my sin, if I prove mistaken, and take that man for a sincere Christian who is none?

Answer. If you judged it to be certain, your judgment and error was your sin; but if you only judged him a professor of Christianity, and one that on that account you were bound to have church communion with as if he were sincere, because you cannot prove the contrary, this was no error; or if you erred for lack of sufficient evidence to know the truth, this error is not in itself a sin.

Quest. VII. Whom must I judge a visible member of the church, with whom I am thus bound to hold communion?

Answer. 1. If you are the pastor of the church who are made the judge, at his admission by baptism, or afterwards, you must so judge of every one who maketh a credible profession of true Christianity, that is, of his present consent to the sacramental covenant: and that profession is credible, which Isaiah 1:1-31. Understood by him that maketh it. 2. Deliberate. 3. Voluntary. 4. Seemingly serious. 5. And is not disproved by valid evidence of the contrary. These are the true measures of church communion; for every man, next God, is the judge of his own heart; and God would have every man the chooser or refuser of his own mercies.

2. But if you are but a private member of the church, you are to judge that person a visible member of the church, whom the pastor hath taken in by baptism, and not cast out again by excommunication; except the contrary be notorious: and even then you are oft obliged for order sake to carry yourself towards him as a visible member, till he be regularly cast out.

Quest. VIII. Whom must I judge a true worshipper of God, and whom not?

Answer. Him that professeth true Christianity, and joineth in true worship with a Christian church, or privately (when hindered) acknowledgeth the true God in all his essential attributes, and heareth his word, and prayeth to him for all things necessary to salvation, and praiseth him accordingly, not giving the worship proper to God unto any creature; and doth all this as a sinner redeemed by Jesus Christ, trusting in his merits, sacrifice, and intercession, and giveth not his office to any other. And he is a false worshipper who denieth any essential attribute of God, or essential part of the office of Christ, or giveth these to any other; or refuseth his word, or excludeth in his prayers any thing essential to Christianity, or absolutely necessary to salvation. But secundum quid, in lesser parts, or in circumstances, or measures, every man on earth is a false worshiper, that is, he offereth God a worship some way faulty and imperfect, and hath some sin in his worshipping of God; and sin is a thing that God requireth not, but forbiddeth even in the smallest measures.

Quest. IX. Which must I judge a true church of Christ, and which a false church?

Answer. The universal church is but one, and is the whole society of Christians as united to Christ their only Head; and this cannot be a false church. But if any other set up a usurper as the universal head, and so make another polity and church, this is a false church formally, or in its polity; but yet the members of this false church or policy may some of them as Christians be also members of the true church of Christ: and thus the Roman church as papal is a false catholic church, having the polity of a usurper; but as Christians they may be members of the true catholic church of Christ. But for a particular church which is but part of the universal, that is a true church considered merely as an ungoverned community, which is a true part of the catholic, prepared for a pastor, but yet being without one: but that only is a true political church, which consisteth of professed Christians conjoined under a true pastor, for communion in the profession of true Christianity, and for the true worshipping of God, and orderly walking for their mutual assistance and salvation.

Quest. X. Whom must we judge true prophets and pastors of the church?

Answer. He is a true prophet who is sent by God, and speaketh truth by immediate supernatural revelation or inspiration. And he is a false prophet who either falsely saith that he hath divine revelations or inspiration, or prophesieth falsehood as from God And he is a true pastor at the bar of God, who Isaiah 1:1-31. Competently qualified with abilities for the office. 2. Competently disposed to it, with willingness and desire of success; and hath right ends in undertaking and discharging it. 3. Who hath a just admission, by true ordination of pastors, and consent of the flock; and he is to be accounted a true pastor in foro ecclesia, in the church’s judgment, whom the church judgeth to have all these qualifications, and thereupon admitteth him into possession of the place, till his incapacity be notoriously or publicly and sufficiently proved, or he be removed or made uncapable.

Titus 2:1-15 Directions for the Cure of Sinful Censoriousness.

Direct. I. Meddle not at all in judging of others without a call. Know first whether it be any of your work; if not, be afraid of those words of your Judge, Matthew 7:1-5, "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, you shall be judged," &c. And Romans 14:1-23 :, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." And Romans 14:10, and Romans 14:13, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ—Every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more." 1 Corinthians 4:3-5, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment—therefore judge nothing before the time till the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts-." Colossians 2:16, "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of any holy day, or of the new moon, or Sabbath."

Quest. But when have I a call to judge another?

Answer. If your office and place require it as a magistrate, pastor, parent, master, tutor, &c. 2. If the safety of the church or your neighbour do require it. 3. If the good of the sinner require it that you may seek his repentance and reformation. 4. If your own preservation or welfare (or any other duty) require it.

Direct. II. Keep up a humble sense of your own faults, and that will make you compassionate to others. He that is truly vile in his own eyes, is least inclined to vilify others: and he that judgeth himself with the greatest penitent severity, is the least inclined to be censorious to his brother. Pride is the common cause of censoriousness: he that saith with the Pharisee, "I fast twice a week, and pay tithes of all that I have, I am no adulterer," &c. will also say, "I am not as other men, nor as this publican:" when the true penitent findeth so much of his own to be condemned, that he smiteth on his own breast and saith, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The prouder, self-conceited sort of Christians are ever the most censorious of their neighbours.

Direct. III. Be much therefore at home in searching, and watching, and amending your own hearts and then you will find so much to do about yourselves, that you will have no mind or leisure to be censuring others; whereas the superficial hypocrite, whose religion is in externals, and is unacquainted with his heart and heaven, is so little employed in the true work of a Christian, that he hath leisure for the work of a censorious Pharisee.

Direct. IV. Labour for a deep experimental insight into the nature of religion, and of every duty. For no men are so censorious as the ignorant who know not what they say; whilst experienced persons know those difficulties and other reasons which calm their minds. As in common business, no man will sooner find fault with a workman in his work, than idle praters who least understand it. So is it commonly in matters of religion: women and young men that never saw into the great mysteries of divinity, but have been lately changed from a vicious life, and have neither acquaintance with the hard points of religion, nor with their own ignorance of them, are the common, proud censurers of their brethren much wiser than themselves, and of all men that are more moderate and peaceable than themselves, and are more addicted to unity, and more averse to sects and separations than they. Study harder, and wait till you grow up to the experience of the aged, and you will be less censorious and more peaceable.

Direct. V. Think not yourselves fit judges of that which you understand not: and think not proudly that you are more like to understand the difficulties in religion, with your short and lazy studies, than those that in reading, meditation, and prayer have spent their lives in searching after them. Let not pride make you abuse the Holy Ghost, by pretending that he hath given you more wisdom in a little time, and with little means and diligence, than your betters have by the holy industry of their lives: say not, God can give more to you in a year than to others in twenty; for it is a poor argument to prove that God hath done it, because he can do it. He can make you an angel, but that will not prove you one. Prove your wisdom before you pretend to it, and overvalue it not: Hebrews 5:11-12, showeth that it is God's ordinary way to give men wisdom according to their time and means, unless their own negligence deprive them of his blessing.

Direct. VI. Study to keep up Christian love, and to keep it lively. For love is not censorious, but is inclined to judge the best, till evidence constrain you to the contrary. Censoriousness is a vermin which crawleth in the carcass of Christian love, when the life of it is gone.

Direct. VII. Value all God's graces in his servants; and then you will see something to love them for, when hypocrites can see nothing: make not too light of small degrees of grace, and then your censure will not overlook them.

Direct. VIII. Remember the tenderness of Christ, who condemneth not the weak, nor casteth infants out of his family, nor the diseased out of his hospital but dealeth with them in such a gracious gentleness, as beseemeth a tender-hearted Saviour: he will not break the bruised reed: he carrieth his lambs in his arms, and gently driveth those with young! He taketh up the wounded man, when the priest and Levite pass him by. And have you not need of the tenderness of Christ yourselves as well as others? Are you not afraid lest he should find greater faults with you than you find in others; and condemn you as you condemn them?

Direct. IX. Let the sense of the common corruption of the world, and imperfection of the godly, moderate your particular censures. As Seneca saith, To censure a man for that which is common to all men, is in a sort to censure him for being a man, which beseemeth not him that is a man himself. Do you not know the frailty of the best, and the common pravity of human nature? How few are there that must not have great allowance, or else they will not pass for current in the balance! Elias was a man subject to passions: Jonah to peevishness Job had his impatience: Paul saith even of the teachers of the primitive church, "They all (that were with him) seek their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ." What blots are charged on almost all the churches, and almost all the holy persons, mentioned throughout all the Scriptures! Learn then of Paul a better lesson than censoriousness: Galatians 6:1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Let every man prove his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone," &c.

Direct. X. Remember that judgment is God's prerogative (further than as we are called to it for the performance of some duty, either of office, or of private charity, or self-preservation): and that the judge is at the door! And that judging unmercifully maketh us liable to judgment without mercy. The prospect of that impending universal judgment, which will pass the doom on us and all men, will do much to cure us of our rash censoriousness.

Direct. XI. Peruse and observe all the directions in the last chapter against evil-speaking and backbiting, that I may not need to repeat them: especially avoid, 1. The snare of selfishness and interest. For most men judge of others principally by their own interest. He is the good man that is good to them, or is on their side; that loveth and honoreth them, and answereth their desires: this is the common false judgment of the corrupted, selfish world; who vilify and hate the best, because they seem unsuitable to them and their carnal interest. Therefore take heed of their judgment about any man that you have a falling out with: for it is two to one but you will wrong him through this selfishness. 2. Avoid passion; which blindeth the judgment. 3. Avoid faction; which maketh you judge of all men as they agree or disagree with your opinions, or your side and party. 4. Avoid too hasty belief of censures, and rebuke them. 5. Hear every man speak for himself before you censure him, if it be possible, and the case be not notorious.

Direct. XII. Keep still upon your mind a just and deep apprehension of the malignity of this sin of rash censuring. It is of greatest consequence to the mortifying of any sin, what apprehensions of it are upon the mind. If religious persons apprehended the odiousness of this as much as they do of swear-jag, drunkenness, fornication, &c. they would as carefully avoid it. Therefore I shall show you the malignity of this sin.

Titus 3:1-15. The Evil of the Sin of Censoriousness.

1. It is a usurpation of God’s prerogative, who is the Judge of all the world: it is a stepping up into his judgment-seat, and undertaking his work; as if you said, I will be God as to this action. And if he be called the antichrist, who usurpeth the office of Christ, to be the universal monarch and head of the church, you may imagine what he doth, who (though but in one point) doth set up himself in the place of God.

2. They that usurp not God’s part in judging, yet ordinarily usurp the part of the magistrate or pastors of the church. As when mistaken, censorious Christians refuse to come to the sacrament of communion, because many persons are there whom they judge to be ungodly, what do they but usurp the office of the pastors of the church, to whom the keys are committed for admission and exclusion, and so are the appointed judges of that case? The duty of private members is but to admonish the offender first secretly, and then before witnesses, and to tell the church if he repent not, and humbly to tell the pastors of their duty, if they neglect it: and when this is done, they have discharged their part, and must no more excommunicate men themselves, than they must hang thieves when the magistrate doth neglect to hang them.

3. Censoriousness signifieth the absence or decay of love: which inclineth men to think evil, and judge the worst, and aggravate infirmities, and overlook or extenuate any good that is in others. And there is least grace where there is least love.

4. It showeth also much lack of self-acquaintance, and such heart employment as the sincerest Christians are taken up with. And it showeth much lack of Christian humility and sense of your own infirmities and badness; and much prevalency of pride and self-conceitedness. If you knew how ignorant you are, you would not be so peremptory in judging: and if you knew how bad you are, you would not be so forward to condemn your neighbours. So that here is together the effect of much self-estrangedness, hypocrisy, and pride. Did you ever well consider the mind of Christ, when he bid them that accused the adulterous woman, John 8:7, "He that is without sin among

you, let him first cast a stone at her?" Certainly adultery was a heinous crime, and to be punished with death, and Christ was no patron of uncleanness; but he knew that it was a hypocritical sort of persons whom he spake to, who were busy in judging others rather than themselves. Have you studied his words against rash censurers, Matthew 7:3-4; "And why beholdest thou the mote in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite! First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote which is in thy brother's eye." I know well that impenitent sinners do use to pervert all these words of Christ, against any that would bring them to repentance for their sin; and account all men rash censurers, who would make them acquainted with their unsanctified hearts and lives. But it is not their abuse of Scripture, which will justify our passing over it with neglect. Christ spake it not for nothing; and it must be studied by his disciples.

5. Censoriousness is injustice, in that the censurers would not be so censured themselves. You will say, Yes, if we were as bad, and did deserve it. But though you have not that same fault, have you no other? And are you willing to have it aggravated, and be thus rashly judged? You do not as you would be done by: yea, commonly censurers are guilty of false judging; and whilst they take things hastily upon trust, and stay not to hear men speak for themselves, or to inquire thoroughly into the cause, they commonly condemn the innocent; and call good evil, and put light for darkness; and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him, when God hath cursed such with a woe.

6. And false censuring is the proper work of the devil, the accuser of the brethren, Revelation 12:10, "Who accuseth them before God, day and night;" And Christians should not bear his image, nor do his work.

7. Censoriousness is contrary to the nature and office of Jesus Christ: he came to pardon sin, and cover the infirmities of his servants, and to cast them behind his back, and into the depth of the sea, and to bury them in his grave; and it is the censurer's work to rake them up, and to make them seem more and greater than they are, and to bring them into the open light.

8. Censoriousness causeth uncharitableness and sinful separations in the censurers: when they have conceited their brethren to be worse than they are, they must then reproach them, or have no communion with them, and avoid them as too bad for the company of such as they: or when they have usurped the pastor's work in judging, they begin the execution by sinful separation.

9. Censoriousness is an infectious sin, which easily taketh with the younger and prouder sort of Christians, and so setteth them on vilifying others: and at this little gap there entereth all uncharitableness, backbitings, revilings, church divisions, and sects, yea, and too often rebellious and bloody wars at last.

10. Censoriousness is a sore temptation to them that are censured, either to contemn such as censure them, and go on the other hand too far from them; or else to comply with the errors and sinful humors of the censurers, and to strain their consciences to keep pace with the censorious. And here I must leave it on record to posterity for their warning, that the great and lamentable actions, changes, and calamities of this age have arisen (next to gross impiety) from this sin of censoriousness producing these two contrary effects, and thereby dividing men into two contrary

parties: the younger sort of religious people, and the more ignorant, and many women, having more zeal than judgment, placed too much of their religion in a sharp opposition to all ceremonies, formalities, and opinions which they thought unlawful; and were much inclined to schism and unjust separations upon that account; and therefore censured such things as anti-Christian, and those that used them as superstitious and temporizers; and no man's learning, piety, wisdom, or laboriousness in the ministry could save him from these sharp, reproachful censures. Hereupon one party had not humility and patience enough to endure to be so judged of; nor love and tenderness enough for such peevish Christians, to bear with them in pity, as parents do with froward infants; but because these professed holiness and zeal, even holiness and zeal were brought under suspicion for their sakes; and they were taken to be persons intolerable, as unfit to lie in any building, and unmeet to submit to Christian government; and therefore meet to be used accordingly. Another sort were so wearied with the profaneness and ungodliness of the vulgar rabble, and saw so few that were judiciously religious, that they thought it their duty to love and cherish the zeal and piety of their censorious weak ones, and to bear patiently with their frowardness, till ripeness and experience cured them (and so far they were right). And because they thought that they could do them no good, if they once lost their interest in them, (and were also themselves too impatient of their censure,) some of them seemed (to please them) to be more of their opinion than they were; and more of them forbore to reprove their petulance, but silently suffered them to go on; especially when they fell into the sects of antinomians, Anabaptists, and separatists, they durst not reprove them as they deserved, lest they should drive them out of the hive, to some of these late swarms. And thus censoriousness in the ignorant and self-conceited drove away one part to take them as their enemies; and silenced or drew on another party to follow them that led the van in some irregular, violent actions; and the wise and sober moderators were disregarded, and in the noise of these tumults and contentions could not be heard, till the smart of either party in their suffering forced them to honour such, whom in their exaltation again they despised or abused. This is the true sum of all the tragedies in Britain of this age.

Tit. 4. Directions for those that are rashly censured.

Direct. 1 Remember when you are injured by censures, that God is now trying your humility, charity, and patience; and therefore be most studious to exercise and preserve these three. 1. Take heed lest pride make you disdainful to the censurer; a humble man can bear contempt; hard censures hurt men so far as they are proud. 2. Take heed lest imbecility add to your impatience, and concur with pride: cannot you bear greater things than these? Impatience will disclose that badness in yourselves, which will make you censured much more; and it will show you as weak in one respect as the censurers are in another. 3. Take heed lest their fault do not draw you to overlook or undervalue that serious godliness which is in many of the censorious; and that you do not presently judge them hypocrites or schismatics, and abate your charity to them, or incline to handle them more roughly than the tenderness of Christ alloweth you. Remember that in all ages it hath been thus: the church hath had peevish children within, as well as persecuting enemies without; insomuch as Paul, Romans 14:1-23 giveth you the picture of these times, and giveth them this counsel, which from him I am giving you. The weak in knowledge were censorious, and judged the strong; the strong in knowledge were weak in charity, and contemned the weak: just as now one party saith, These are superstitious persons, and anti-Christian; the other saith, What giddy

schismatics are these! but Paul chideth them both; one sort for censuring, and the other for despising them.

Direct. II. Take heed lest whilst you are impatient under their censures, you fall into the same sin yourselves. Do they censure you for differing ill some forms or ceremonies from them? Take heed lest you over-censure them for their censoriousness: if you censure them as hypocrites who censure you as superstitious, you condemn yourselves while you are condemning them. For why will not censuring too far, prove you hypocrites also, if it prove them such?

Direct. III. Remember that Christ beareth with their weakness, who is wronged by it more than you, and is more against it. He doth not quit his title to them for their frowardness, nor cease his love, nor turn every infant out of his family that will cry and wrangle, nor every patient out of his hospital that doth complain and groan; and we must imitate our Lord and love where he loveth, and pity where he pitieth, and be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful.

Direct. IV. Remember how amiable a thing the least degree of grace is, even when it is clouded and blotted with infirmities. It is the divine nature, and the image of God, and the seed of glory; and therefore as an infant hath the noble nature of a man, and in all his weakness is much more honourable than the best of brutes (so that it is death to kill an infant, but not a beast): so is the most infirm and froward true Christian more honourable and amiable than the most splendid infidel. Bear with them in love and honor to the image and interest of Christ.

Direct. V. Remember that you were once weak in grace yourselves; and if happy education under peaceable guides did not prevent it, it is two to one but you were yourselves censorious. Bear therefore with others as you bear with crying children, because you were once a child yourself. Not that the sin is ever the better, but you should be the more compassionate.

Direct. VI. Remember that your own strength and judgment is so great a mercy, that you should the easilier bear with a censorious tongue. The rich and noble can bear with the envious, remembering that it is happy to have that worth or felicity which men do envy. You suffer fools gladly, seeing you yourselves are wise. If you are in the right let losers talk.

Direct. VII. Remember that we shall be shortly together in heaven, where they will recant their censures, and you will easily forgive them, and perfectly love them. And will not the foresight of such a meeting cause you to bear with them, and forgive and love them now?

Direct. VIII. Remember how inconsiderable a thing it is as to your own interest, to be judged of man; and that you stand or fall to the judgment of the Lord, 1 Corinthians 4:3-4. What are you the better or the worse for the thoughts or words of a man; when your salvation or damnation lieth upon God’s judgment. It is too much hypocrisy, to be too much desirous of man’s esteem and approbation, and too much troubled at his disesteem and censure, and not to be satisfied with the approbation of God. Read what is written against man-pleasing, part i.

Direct. IX. Make some advantage of other men’s censures, for your own proficiency. If good men censure you, be not too quick in concluding that you are innocent, and justifying yourselves; but be suspicious of yourselves, lest they should prove the right, and examine yourselves with double diligence. If you find that you are clear in the point that you are censured for, suspect and examine lest some other sin hath provoked God to try you by these censures; and if you find not any other

notable fault, let it make you the more watchful by way of prevention, seeing the eyes of God and men are on you; and it may he God’s warning, to bid you take heed for the time to come. If you are thus brought to repentance, or to the more careful life, by occasion of men’s censures, they will prove so great a benefit to you, that you may bear them the more easily.

Chapter 91

S. Cases Of Conscience, and Directions Against Backbiting, Slandering, and Evil Speaking

Cases Of Conscience, and Directions Against Backbiting, Slandering, and Evil Speaking by Richard Baxter Title 1 Cases of Conscience about Backbiting and Evil-speaking.

Question I. May I not speak evil of that which is evil? And call every one truly as he is?

Answer. You must not speak a known falsehood of any man under pretense of charity or speaking well. But you are not to speak all the evil of every man which is true: as opening the faults of the king or your parents, though never so truly, is a sin against the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and mother:" so if you do it without a call, you sin against your neighbor's honour, and many other ways offend.

Quest. II. Is it not sinful silence, and a consenting to or countenancing of the sins of others, to say nothing against them, as tender of their honour?

Answer. It is sinful to be silent when you have a call to speak: if you forbear to admonish the offender in love between him and you, when you have opportunity and just cause, it is sinful to be silent then, but to silence backbiting is no sin. If you must be guilty of every man's sin that you talk not against behind his back, your whole discourse must be nothing but backbiting.

Quest. III. May I not speak that which honest, religious, credible persons do report?

Answer. Not without both sufficient evidence and a sufficient call. You must not judge of the action by the person, but of the person by the action. Nor must you imitate any man in evil-doing. If a good man abuse you, are you willing that all men follow him and abuse you more?

Quest. IV. May I believe the bad report of an honest, credible person?

Answer. You must first consider whether you may hear it, or meddle with it: for if it be a case that you have nothing to do with, you may not set your judgment to it, either to believe it, or to disbelieve it. And if it be a thing that you are called to judge of, yet every honest man's word is not presently to be believed: you must first know whether it be a thing that he saw, or is certain of himself, or a thing which he only taketh upon report; and what his evidence and proof is; and whether he be not engaged by interest, passion, or any difference of opinion; or be not engaged in some contrary faction, where the interest of a party or cause is his temptation; or whether he be not used to rash reports and uncharitable speeches; and what concurrence of testimonies there is, and what is said on the other side; especially what the person accused saith in his own defense. If it be so heinous a crime in public judgment, to pass sentence before both parties are heard, and to condemn a man before he speak for himself; it cannot be justifiable in private judgment. Would you be willing yourselves that all should be believed of you, which is spoken by any honest man? And how uncertain are we of other men's honesty, that we should on that account think ill of others.

Quest. V. May I not speak evil of them that are enemies to God, to religion and godliness, and are open persecutors of it; or are enemies to the king or church?

Answer. You may on all meet occasions speak evil of the sin; and of the persons when you have a just call; but not at your own pleasure.

Quest. VI. What if it be one whose honour and credit countenanceth an ill cause, and his dishonour would disable him to do hurt?

Answer. You may not belie the devil, nor wrong the worst man that is, though under pretense of doing good; God needeth not malice, nor calumnies, nor injustice to his glory: it is an ill cause that cannot be maintained without such means as these. And when the matter is true, you must have a call to speak it, and you must speak it justly, without unrighteous aggravations, or hiding the better part, which should make the case and person better understood. There is a time and due manner, in which that man's crimes and just dishonour may be published, whose false reputation injureth the truth. But yet I must say, that a great deal of villainy and slander is committed upon this plausible pretense; and that there is scarce a more common cloak for the most inhuman lies and calumnies.

Quest. VII. May I not lawfully make a true narration of such matters of fact, as are criminal and dishonorable to offenders? Else no man may write a true history to posterity of men's crimes.

Answer. When you have a just call to do it, you may; but not at your own pleasure. Historians may take much more liberty to speak the truth of the dead, than you may of the living: though no untruth must be spoken of either: yet the honour of princes and magistrates while they are alive is needful to their government, and therefore must be maintained, ofttimes by the concealment of their faults: and so proportionably the honour of other men is needful to a life of love, and peace, and just society; but when they are dead, they are not subjects capable of a right to any such honour as must be maintained by such silencing of the truth, to the injury of posterity: and posterity hath usually a right to historical truth, that good examples may draw them to imitation, and bad examples may warn them to take heed of sin. God will have the name of the wicked to rot; and the faults of a Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, Peter, &c. shall be recorded. Yet nothing unprofitable to posterity may be recorded of the dead, though it be true; nor the faults of men unnecessarily divulged; much less may the dead be slandered or abused.

Quest. VIII. What if it be one that hath been oft admonished in vain? May not the faults of such a one be mentioned behind his back?

Answer. I confess such a one (the case being proved, and he being notoriously impenitent) hath made a much greater forfeiture of his honour than other men; and no man can save that man's honour who will cast it away himself. But yet it is not every one that committeth a sin after admonition, who is here to be understood; but such as are impenitent in some mortal or ruling sin: for some may sin oft in a small and controverted point, for want of ability to discern the truth; and some may live in daily infirmities, (as the best men do,) which they condemn themselves for, and desire to be delivered from. And even the most impenitent man's sins must not be meddled with by every one at his pleasure, but only when you have just cause.

Quest. IX. What if it be one whom I cannot speak to face to face?

Answer. You must let him alone, till you have just cause to speak of him.

Quest. X. When hath a man a just cause and call to open another's faults?

Answer. Negatively:1. Not to fill up the time with other idle chat, or table talk. 2. Not to second any man, how good soever, who backbiteth others; no, though he pretend to do it to make the sin more odious, or to exercise godly sorrow for other men's sin. 3. Not whenever interest, passion, faction, or company seemeth to require it. But, affirmatively, 1. When we may speak it to his face in love and privacy, in due manner and circumstances, as is most hopeful to conduce to his amendment. 2. When, after due admonition, we take two or three, and after that tell the church (in a case that requireth it). 3. When we have a sufficient cause to accuse him to the magistrate. 4. When the magistrate or the pastors of the church, reprove or punish him. 5. When it is necessary to the preservation of another: as if I see my friend in danger of marrying with a wicked person, or taking a false servant, or trading and bargaining with one that is like to overreach him, or going among cheaters, or going to hear or converse with a dangerous heretic or seducer; I must open the faults of those that they are in danger of, so far as their safety and my charity require. 6. When it is any treason or conspiracy against the king or commonwealth; where my concealment may be an injury to the king, or damage or danger to the kingdom. 7. When the person himself doth, by his self-justification, force me to it. 8. When his reputation is so built upon the injury of others, and slanders of the just, that the justifying of him is the condemning of the innocent, we may then indirectly condemn him, by vindicating the just; as if it be in a case of contention between two, if we cannot justify the right without dishonour to the injurious, there is no remedy but he must bear his blame. 9. When a man's notorious wickedness hath set him up as a spectacle of warning and lamentation, so that his crimes cannot be hid, and he hath forfeited his reputation, we must give others warning by his fall as an excommunicate person, or malefactor at the gallows, &c. 10. When we have just occasion to make a bare narrative of some public matters of fact; as of the sentence of a judge, or punishment of offenders, &c. 11. When the crime is so heinous, as that all good persons are obliged to join to make it odious, as Phinehas was to execute judgment. As in cases of open rebellion, treason, blasphemy, atheism, idolatry, murders, perjury, cruelty; such as the French massacre, the Irish far greater massacre, the murdering of kings, the powder-plot, the burning of London, &c. [Note: The reader will recognise that Baxter's imperfect knowledge of history does not detract from his argument.] Crimes notorious should not go about in the mouths or ears of men, but with just detestation. 12. When any person's false reputation is a seducement to men's souls, and made by himself or others the instruments of God's dishonour, and the injury of church or state, or others, though we may do no unjust thing to blast his reputation, we may tell the truth so far as justice, or mercy, or piety requireth it.

Quest. XI. What if I hear flatterers applauding wicked men, and speaking well of them, and extenuating their crimes, and praising them for evil doing?

Answer. You must on all just occasions speak evil of sin; but when that is enough, you need not meddle with the sinner; no, not though other men applaud him, and you know it be false; for you are not bound to contradict every falsehood which you hear. But if in any of the twelve forementioned cases you have a call to do it, (as for the preservation of the hearers from a snare thereby; as if men commend a traitor or a wicked man to draw another to like his way,) in such cases you may contradict the false report.

Quest. XII. Are we bound to reprove every back-biter, in this age when honest people are grown to make little conscience of it, but think it their duty to divulge men's faults?

Answer. Most of all, that you may stop the stream of this common sin, ordinarily whenever we can do it without doing greater hurt, we should rebuke the tongue that reporteth evil of other men causelessly behind their backs; for our silence is their encouragement in sin.

Titus 2:1-15 Directions against Backbiting, Slandering, and Evil Speaking.

Direct. I. Maintain the life of brotherly love. Love your neighbour as yourself.

Direct. II. Watch narrowly lest interest or passion should prevail upon you. For where these prevail, the tongue is set on fire of hell, and will set on fire the course of nature, James 2:1-26. Selfishness and passion will not only prompt you to speak evil, but also to justify it, and think you do well; yea, and to be angry with those that will not hearken to you and believe you.

Direct. III. Especially involve not yourselves in any faction, religious or secular. I do not mean that you should not imitate the best, and hold most intimate communion with them; but that you abhor unlawful divisions and sidings; and when error, or uncharitableness, or carnal interest hath broken the church into pieces where you live, and one is of Paul, and another of Apollos, and another of Cephas, one of this party, and another of that, take heed of espousing the interest of any party, as it stands cross to the interest of the whole. It would have been hardly credible, if sad experience had not proved it, how commonly and heinously almost every sect of Christians do sin in this point against each other and how far the interest of their sect, which they account the interest of Christ, will prevail with multitudes even of zealous people, to belie, speak evil, backbite, and reproach those that are against their opinion and their party! Yea, how easily will they proceed beyond reproaches, to bloody persecutions!

He that thinketh he doth God service by killing Christ or his disciples, will think that he doth him service by calling him a deceiver, and one that hath a devil, a blasphemer, and an enemy to Caesar, and calling his disciples pestilent fellows and movers of sedition among the people, and accounting them as the filth and offscouring of the world. That zeal which murdered and destroyed many hundred thousand of the Waldenses and Albigenses, and thirty thousand or forty thousand in one French massacre, and two hundred thousand in one Irish massacre, [See note above.] and which kindled the Marian bonfires in England, made the powder mine, and burnt the city of London, and keepeth up the Inquisition, I say, that zeal will certainly think it a service to the church, (that is, their sect,) to write the most odious lies and slanders of Luther, Zuinglius, Calvin, Beza, and any such excellent servants of the Lord. So full of horrid, impudent lies are the writings of (not one but) many sects against those that were their chief opposers, that I still admonish all posterity, to see good evidence for it, before they believe the hard sayings of any factious historian or divine, against those that are against his party. It is only men of eminent conscience, and candor, and veracity, and impartiality, who are to be believed in their bad report of others, except where notoriety or very good evidence doth command belief above their own authority and veracity. A siding factious zeal, which is hotter for any sect or party, than for the common Christianity and catholic church, is always a railing, a lying, and a slandering zeal, and is notably described, James 3:1-18, as "earthly, sensual, and devilish," causing "envy, strife, and confusion, and every evil work."

Direct. IV. Observe well the commonness of this sin of backbiting, that it may make you the more afraid of falling into that which so few do escape. I will not say, among high and low, rich and poor, court and country, how common is this sin; but among men professing the greatest zeal and strictness in religion, how few make conscience of it! Mark in all companies that you come into, how common it is to take liberty to say what they think of all men; yea, to report what they hear, though they dare not say that they believe it! And how commonly the relating of other men's faults, and telling what this man or that man is, or did, or said, is part of the chat to waste the hour in! And if it be but true, they think they sin not: nay, nor if they did but hear that it is true. For my part I must profess, that my conscience having brought me to a custom of rebuking such backbiters, I am ordinarily censured for it, either as one that loveth contradiction, or one that dependeth sin and wickedness, by taking part with wicked men; all because I would stop the course of this common vice of evil speaking and backbiting where men have no call. And I must thankfully profess, that among all other sins in the world, the sins of selfishness, pride, and back-biting, I have been most brought to hate and fear, by the observation of the commonness of them, even in persons seeming godly: nothing hath fixed an apprehension of their odiousness so deeply in me, nor engaged my heart against them above all other sins so much, as this lamentable experience of their prevalence in the world, among the more religious, and not only in the profane.

Direct. V. Take not the honesty of the person as a sufficient cause to hear or believe a bad report of others. It is lamentable to hear how far men, otherwise honest, do too often here offend. Suspect evil speakers, and be not over-credulous of them. Charity thinketh not evil, nor easily and hastily believeth it. Liars are more used to evil speaking, than men of truth and credit are. It is no wrong to the best, that you believe him not when he backbiteth without good evidence.

Direct. VI. Rebuke backbiters, and encourage them not by hearkening to their tales. Proverbs 25:23, "The north wind driveth away rain, so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." It may be they think themselves religious persons, and will take it for an injury to be driven away with an angry countenance: but God himself, who loveth his servants better than we, is more offended at their sin; and that which offendeth him, must offend us. We must not hurt their souls, and displease God, by drawing upon us the guilt of their sins, for fear of displeasing them. Tell them how God doth hate backbiting, and advise them if they know any hurt by others, to go to them privately, and tell them of it in a way that tendeth to their repentance.

Direct. VII. Make mention often of the good which is in others; (except it be unseasonable, and will seem to be a promoting of their sin): God's gifts in every man deserve commendations; and we have allowance to mention men's virtues oftener than to mention their vices. Indeed when a bad man is praised in order to the disparagement of the good, or to honour some wicked cause or action against truth and godliness, we must not concur in such malicious praises; but otherwise we must commend that which is truly commendable in all. And this custom will have a double benefit against backbiting: it will use your own tongues to a contrary course, and it will rebuke the evil tongues of others, and be an example to them of more charitable language.

Direct. VIII. Understand yourselves, and speak often to others, of the sinfulness of evil-speaking and backbiting. Show them the scriptures which condemn it, and the intrinsical malignity which is in it: as here followeth.

Direct. IX. Make conscience of just reproof and exhorting sinners to their faces. Go tell them of it privately and lovingly, and it will have better effects, and bring you more comfort, and cure the sin of backbiting.

Titus 3:1-15 The Evil of Backbiting and Evil-speaking.

1. It is forbidden of God among the heinous, damning sins, and made the character of a notorious wicked person, and the avoiding of it is made the mark of such as are accepted of God and shall be saved: Romans 1:29-30, it is made the mark of a reprobate mind, and joined with murder, and hating God, viz. "full of envy, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters." Psalms 15:2-3, "Lord, who in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." And when Paul describeth those whom he must sharply rebuke and censure, he just describeth the factious sort of Christians of our times. 2 Corinthians 12:20, "For I fear lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice, and be in one to another, and tender hearted—."

2.It is a sin which gratifieth Satan, and serveth his malice against our neighbour. He is malicious against all, and speaking evil, and doing hurt, are the works which are suitable to his malignity! And should a Christian make his tongue the instrument of the accuser of the brethren, to do his work against each other?

3.It signifieth lack of Christian love. For love speaketh not evil, nor openeth men’s faults without a cause, but covereth infirmities; much less will it lie and slander others, and carry about uncertain reports against them. It is not to do as you would be alone by: and how essential love is to true Christianity, Christ himself bath often told us.

4.It is a sin which directly serveth to destroy the hearers’ love, and consequently to destroy their souls. If the backbiter understood himself, he would confess that it is his very end to cause you to hate (or abate your love to) him whom he speaketh evil of. He that speaketh good of a man, representeth him amiable; for amiableness and goodness are all one. And he that speaketh evil of a man representeth him hateful or unlovely; for hatefulness, unloveliness, and evil are all one. And as it is not the natural way of winning love, to entreat and beg it, and say, I pray you love this person, or that thing; but to open the goodness of the thing or person, which will command love: so is it not the natural way to stir up hatred, by entreating men to hate this man or that; but to tell how bad they are, which will command hatred in them that do believe it. Therefore to speak evil of another, is more than to say to the hearers, I pray you hate this man, or abate your love to him. And that the killing of love is the killing or destroying of men’s souls, the apostle John doth frequently declare.

5 And it tendeth also to destroy the love, and consequently the soul of him that you speak evil of. For when it cometh to his hearing, (as one way or other it may do) what evil you have reported of him behind his back, it tendeth to make him hate you, and so to make him worse.

6. It is a great contention-maker and peace-breaker wherever it is practiced. It tendeth to set people together by the ears. When it is told that such a one spake evil of you in such a place, there

are then heart-burnings, and rehearsals, and sidings, and such ensuing malice as the devil intended by this design.

7. They who often speak evil of others behind their backs, it is ten to one will speak falsehoods of them when they do not know it. Fame is too ordinarily a liar, and they shall be liars who will be its messengers. How know you whether the thing that you report is true? Is it only because a credible person spake it? But how did that person know it to be true? Might he not take it upon trust as well as you? And might he not take a person to be credible that is not? And how commonly doth faction, or interest, or passion, or credulity, mike that person incredible in one tiling, who is credible in others, where he hath no such temptation. If you know it not to be true, or have not sufficient evidence to prove it, you are guilty of lying and slandering interpretatively, though it should prove true; because it might have been a lie for aught you knew.

8. It is gross injustice to talk of a man's faults, before you have heard him speak for himself. I know it is usual with such to say, O we have heard it from such as we are certain will not lie. But he is a foolish and unrighteous judge will be peremptory upon hearing one party only speak, and knoweth not how ordinary it is for a man when speaketh for himself; to blow away the most confident and plausible accusations, and make the case appear to be quite another thing. You know not what another man hath to say till you have heard him.

9. Backbiting teacheth others to backbite. Your example inviteth them to do the like: and sins which are common, are easily swallowed, and hardly repented of: men think that the commonness justifieth or extenuateth the fault.

10. It encourageth ungodly men to the odious sin of backbiting and slandering the most religious, righteous person. It is ordinary with the devil's family to make Christ's faithfullest servants their table talk, and the objects of their reproach and scorn, and the song of drunkards? What abundance of lies go current among such malignant persons, against the most innocent, which would all be ashamed, if they had first admitted them to speak for themselves. And such slanders and lies are the devil's common means to keep ungodly men from the love of godliness, and so from repentance and salvation. And backbiting professors of religion encourage men to this; for with what measure they mete, it shall be measured to them again. And they that are themselves evil spoken of, will think that they are warranted to requite the backbiters with the like.

11. It is a sin which commonly excludeth true, profitable reproof and exhortation. They that speak most behind men's backs, do usually say least to the sinner's face, in any way which tendeth to his salvation. They will not go lovingly to him in private, and set home his sin upon his conscience, and exhort him to repentance; but any thing shall serve as a sufficient excuse against this duty; that they may make the sin of backbiting serve instead of it: and all is out of carnal self-saving; they fear men will be offended if they speak to their faces, and therefore they will whisper against them behind their backs.

12. It is at the least, but idle talk and a misspending of your time: what the better are the healers for hearing of other men's misdoings? And you know that it no whit profiteth the person of whom you speak. A skillful, friendly admonition might do him good! But to neglect this, and talk of his faults unprofitably, behind his back, is but to aggravate the sin of your uncharitableness, as being not contented to refuse your help to a man in sin, but you must also injure him and do him hurt.

Chapter 92

S. Cases and Directions About Confessing Sins and Injuries to Others.

Cases and Directions About Confessing Sins and Injuries to Others. by Richard Baxter Tit. I. Cases about Confessing Sins and Injuries to others.

Quest. I In what cases is it a duty to confess wrongs to those that we have wronged?

Answer. 1. When in real injuries you are unable to make any restitution, and therefore must desire forgiveness, you cannot well do it without confession. 2. When you have wronged a man by a lie, or by false witness, or that he cannot be righted till you confess the truth. 3. When you have wronged a man in his honour or fame, where the natural remedy is to speak the contrary, and confess the wrong. 4. When it is necessary to cure the revengeful inclination of him whom you have wronged, or to keep up his charity, and so to enable him to love you and forgive you. 5. Therefore all known wrongs to another must he confessed, except when impossibility, or some in effect which is greater than the good, be like to follow. Because all men are apt to abate their love to those that injure them, and therefore all have need of this remedy. And we must do our part to be forgiven by all whom we have wronged.

Quest. II. What causes will excuse us from confessing wrongs to others?

Answer. 1. When full recompense may be made without it and no forgiveness of the wrong is necessary from the injured, nor any of the aforesaid causes require it. 2. When the wrong is secret and not known to the injured party, and the confessing of it would but trouble his mind, and do him more harm than good. 3. When the injured party is so implacable and inhumane that he would make use of the confession to the ruin of the penitent, or to bring upon him greater penalty than he deserveth. 4. When it would injure a third person who is Interested in the business, or bring them under oppression and undeserved misery. 5. When it tendeth to the dishonour of religion, and to make it scorned because of the fault of the penitent confessor. 6. When it tendeth to set people together by the ears, and breed dissension, or otherwise injure the commonwealth or government. 7. In general, it is no duty to confess our sin to him that we have wronged, when, all things considered, it is like in the judgment of the truly wise, to do more hurt than good for it is appointed as a means to good, and not to do evil.

Quest. III. If I have had a secret thought or purpose to wrong another, am I bound to confess it, when it was never executed?

Answer. 1. You are not bound to confess it to the party whom you intended to wrong, as any act of justice to make him reparation; nor to procure his forgiveness to yourself: because it was no wrong to him indeed, nor do thoughts and things secret come under his judgment, and therefore need not his pardon. 2. But it is a sin against God, and to him you must confess it. 3. And by accident, finis gratia, you must confess it to men, in case it be necessary to be a warning to others, or to the increase of their hatred of sin, or their watchfulness, or to exercise your own humiliation, or prevent

a relapse, or to quiet your conscience, or in a word, when it is like to do more good than hurt.

Quest. IV. To whom, and in what cases, must I confess to men my sins against God, and when not?

Answer. The cases about that confession which belongeth to church discipline, belongeth to the second part; and therefore shall here be passed by. But briefly and in general, I may answer the question thus There are conveniences and inconveniences to be compared together, and you must make your choice accordingly. The reasons which may move you to confess your sins to another are these:1. When another hath sinned with you, or persuaded or drawn you to it, and must be brought to repentance with you. 2. When your conscience hath in vain tried all other fit means for peace or comfort, and cannot obtain it, and there is any probability of such advice from others as may procure it. 3. When you have need of advice to resolve your conscience, whether it be sin or not, or of what degree, or what you are obliged to in order to forgiveness. 4. When you have need of counsel to prevent the sin for the time to come, and mortify the habit of it. The inconveniences which may attend it, are such as these:1. You are not certain of another's secrecy; his mind may change, or his understanding fail, or he may fall out with you, or some great necessity may befall him to drive him to open what you tried him. 2. Then whether your shame or loss will not make you repent it, should be foreseen. 3. And how far others may suffer in it. 4. And how far it will reflect dishonour on religion. All things being considered on both sides, the preponderating reasons must prevail.

Titus 2:1-15 Directions about Confessing Sin to others.

Direct. I. Do nothing which you are not willing to confess, or which may trouble you much, if your confession should be opened. Prevention is the easiest way: and foresight of the consequents should make a wise man still take heed.

Direct. II. When you have sinned or wronged any, weigh well the consequents on both sides before you make your confession: that you may neither do that which you may wish undone again, nor causelessly refuse your duty: and that inconveniences foreseen may be the better undergone when they cannot be avoided.

Direct. III. When a well-informed conscience telleth you that confession is your duty, let not self-respects detain you from it, but do it whatever it may cost you. Be true to conscience, and do not willfully put off your duty. To live in the neglect of a known duty, is to live in a known sin: which will give you cause to question your sincerity, and cause more terrible effects in your souls, than the inconveniences of confession could ever have been.

Direct. IV. Look to your repentance that it be deep and absolute, and free from hypocritical exceptions and reserves. For half and hollow repentance will not carry you through hard and costly duties. but that which is sincere, will break over all it will make you so angry with yourselves and sins, that you will he as inclined to take shame to yourselves in an honest revenge, as an angry man is to bring shame upon his adversary. We are seldom over-tender of a man's reputation whom we fall out with: and repentance is a falling out with ourselves. We can bear sharp remedies, when we feel the pain, and perceive the mortal danger of the disease: and repentance is such a perception of our pain and danger. We will not tenderly hide a mortal enemy, but bring him to the most open shame: and repentance causeth us to hate sin as our mortal enemy. It is lack

of repentance that maketh men so unwilling to make a just confession.

Direct. V. Take heed of pride, which maketh men so tender of their reputation, that they will venture their souls to save their honour: men call it bashfulness, and say they cannot confess for shame; but it is pride that maketh them so much ashamed to be known by men to be offenders, while they less fear the eye and judgment of the Almighty. Impudence is a mark of a profligate sinner; but he that pretendeth shame against his duty, is foolishly proud; and should be more ashamed to neglect his duty, and continue impenitent in his sin. A humble person can perform a self-abasing, humbling duty.

Direct. VI. Know the true uses of confession of sin, and use it accordingly. Do it with a hatred of sin, to express yourselves implacable enemies to it: do it to repair the wrong which you have done to others, and the dishonour you have done to the Christian religion, and to warn the hearers to take heed of sin and temptation by your fall; it is worth ail your shame, if you save one sinner by it from his sin: do it to lay the greater obligation upon yourselves for the future, to avoid the sin and live more carefully; for it is a double shame to sin after such humbling confessions.

Chapter 93

S. Cases and Directions for Loving Our Neighbour as Ourselves

Cases and Directions for Loving Our Neighbour as Ourselves by Richard Baxter Contributed by Steven Doan Word format PDF format Title I. Cases of Conscience about Loving our Neighbour.

Question I. In what sense is it that I must love my neighbour as myself? Whether in the kind, of love, or in the degree, or only in the reality.

Answer. The true meaning of the text is, you must love him according to his true worth, without the diversion and hinderance of selfishness and partiality. As you must love yourself according to that degree of goodness which is in you, and no more; so must you as impartially love your neighbour according to that degree of goodness which is in him so that it truly extendeth to the reality, the kind and the degree of love, supposing it in both proportioned to the goodness of the object. But before this can be understood, the true nature of love must be well understood.

Quest. II. What is the true nature of love, both as to myself and neighbor?

Answer. Love is nothing but the prime motion of the will to its proper object; which is called complacence: the object of it is simple goodness, or good as such it ariseth from suitableness between the object and the will, as, appetite doth from the suitableness of the desired fancy and food. This good, as it is variously modified, or any way differeth, doth accordingly cause or require a difference in our love therefore that love which in its prime net and nature is but one, is diversely denominated, as its objects are diversified. To an object as simply good, in itself, it followeth the understanding's estimation, and is called, as I said, mere complacence or attachment: to an object as not yet attained, but absent, or distant, and attainable, it is called desire or desiring love: and as expected, hope, or hoping love (which is a conjunction of desire and expectation): to an object nearest and attained, it is called fruition, or delight, or delighting love: to an object which by means must be attained, it is called seeking love, as it exciteth to the use of those means: and to an object missed it is, by accident, mourning love. But still love itself in its essential act is one and the same. As it respecteth an object which wanteth something to make it perfect, and desireth the supply of that want, it is called love of benevolence; denominated from this occasion, as it desireth to do good to him that is loved. And it is a love of the same nature which we exercise towards God, who needeth nothing, as we rejoice in that perfection and happiness which he hath; though it he not to be called properly by the same name. Goodness being the true object of love, is the true measure of it; and therefore God, as infinitely and primitively good, is the prime and only simple object of our absolute, total love. And therefore those who understand no goodness in any being, but as profitable to them, or to some other creature, do know no God, nor love God as God, nor have any love but selfish and idolatrous. By this you may perceive the nature of love.

Quest. III. But may none be loved above the measure of his goodness? How then did God love us when we were not, or were his enemies? And how must we love the wicked? And how must an ungodly person love himself?

Answer. If only good, as such, be the object of love, then certainly none should be loved but in proportion to his goodness. But you must distinguish between mere natural and sensitive love or appetite, and rational love; and between love, and the effects of love; and between natural goodness in the object, and moral goodness. And so I further answer, I. There is in every man a natural and sensitive love of himself and his own pleasure and felicity, and an averseness to death and pain and sorrow, as there is in every brute: and this God hath planted there for the preservation of the creature. This falleth not under commands or prohibitions directly, because it is not free but necessary; as no man is commanded or forbidden to be hungry, or thirsty, or weary, or the like: it is not this love which is meant when we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves. For I am not commanded to feel hunger, and thirst, nor to desire meat and drink by the sensitive appetite for my neighbour: nor sensitively to feel his pain or pleasure, nor to have that natural aversion from death and pain, nor sensitive desire of life and pleasure, for him as for myself. But the love here spoken of; is that volition with the due affection conjunct, which is our rational love as being the act of our highest faculty, and falling under God's command. As to the sensitive love, it proceedeth not upon the sense or estimate of goodness in the person who loveth himself or any other (as beasts love their young ones without respect to their excellency). But it is rational love which is proportioned to the estimated goodness of the thing beloved 2. Physical goodness may be in an object which hath no moral goodness; and this may contain a capacity of moral goodness: and each of them is amiable according to its nature and degree. 3. Beneficence is sometimes all effect of love, and sometimes an effect of wisdom only is to the object, and of love to something else; but it is never love itself. Usually benevolence is an act of love, and beneficence an effect, but not always. I may do good to another without any love to him, for some ends of my own, or for the sake of another. And a man may be obliged to greater beneficence, where he is not obliged to greater love. And now to the instances, I further answer, 1. When we had no being, God did not properly love us in esse reali (unless you will go to our co-existence in eternity; for we were not in esse reali); but only as we were in esse cognito; which is but to love the idea in himself: but he purposed to make us, and to make us lovely, and to do us good, and so he had that which is called amer benevolentae to us which properly was not love to us, but a love to himself, and the idea in his own eternal mind, which is called a loving us in esse cognito, and a purpose to make us good and lovely. That which is not lovely is not an object of love: man was not lovely indeed, when he was not; therefore he was not an object of love (but in esse cognito.) The same we say of God's loving us when we were enemies: he really loved us with complacency so far as our physical goodness made us lovely; and as morally lovely he did not love us, otherwise than in esse cognito. But he purposed to make us morally lovely, and gave us his mercies to that end; and so loved us with a love of benevolence, as it is called; which signifieth no more than out of a complacence (or love) to himself, and to us, as physically good, to purpose to make us morally good and happy.

2. So also we must love a wicked man with a love of benevolence: which properly is but to love him in his physical worth, and his capacity of moral goodness and happiness, and thereupon (but especially through the love of God) to desire his happiness.

3. And as to the loving of ourselves, (besides the sensitive love before mentioned which respecteth self as self; and not as good,) a wicked man may rationally love himself according to his physical goodness as a man, which containeth his capacity of moral goodness, and so of being

holy and serviceable to God and to good men, and happy in the fruition of God. But beyond all such goodness (which only is amiableness) no man may rationally love himself or any other, with the true formal act of love, which is complacence; though he may wish good to himself or another beyond the present goodness which is in them; nay, he wisheth them good, not because they are good, but because they lack good. And though some define loving to be bene velle alicui ut illi bene sit, to desire another's welfare, yet indeed this may be without any true formal love at all. As I may desire the welfare of my horse, without any proper love to him, even for myself and use. When God from eternity willeth to make Paul, and to convert and save him, ut illi bene sit, it is called love of benevolence; but properly it is only to be called, a will to make Paul good and lovely (but if any be resolved to call mere benevolence by the name of love, I will not contend about a name); it being only God himself who is the original and ultimate end of that will and purpose; and himself only which he then loveth, there being nothing but himself to love; till in that instant that Paul is existent, and so really lovely. For Paul in esse cognito is not Paul; yet no reality doth oriri de novo in God but a new respect and denomination, and in the creature new effects. (Of which elsewhere.) Quest. IV. Must I love every one as much as myself in degree, or only some?

Answer. You must love every one impartially as yourself; according to his goodness; and you must wish as well to every one as to yourself; but you must love no man complacentially so much as yourself; who is not or seemeth not to have as much loveliness, that is, as much goodness, or as much of God, as yourself.

Quest. V. Must I love any one more than myself?

Answer. Yes, every one that is and appeareth better than yourself. Your sensitive love to another cannot be as much as to yourself; and your beneficence (ordinarily) must be most to yourself, because God in nature and his laws hath so appointed it; and your benevolence to yourself and to others must be alike; but your rational estimation, and love or complacence, (with the honour and praise attending it,) must be more to every one that is better than yourself; for that which is best is most amiable, and that which hath most of God.

Quest. VI. Will it not then follow, that I must love another man's wife and children better than mine own, when they are really better?

Answer. Yes, no doubt; But it is only with that rational, estimative love. But there is besides a love to wife and children, which is in some measure sensitive, which you are not obliged to give to others and rationally they are more amiable to you, in their peculiar relations and respects, though others are more amiable in other respects; and besides, though you value and rationally love another more, yet the expressions must not be the same; for those must follow the relation according to God's command. You may not cohabit or embrace, nor maintain and provide for others as your own, even when you rationally love them more; the common good requires this order in the expressive part, as well as God's command.

Quest. VII. Who is my neighbour that I must love as myself?

Answer. Not devils or damned souls, who are under justice and from under mercy, and are none of our society: but, 1. Every natural man in via, being a member of God's kingdom in the same world, is to be loved as my natural self; and every spiritual man as a member of the same kingdom of Christ, must be loved as my spiritual self; and every spiritual man as such, above my natural self

as such; and no natural man as such, so much as my spiritual self as such; so that no man on earth is excluded from your love, which must be impartial to all as to yourself, but proportioned to their goodness.

Quest. VIII. Are not antichrist and those that sin against the Holy Ghost excepted out of this our love, and out of our prayers and endeavours of their good?

Answer. Those that (with Zanchius) think Mahomet to be antichrist, may so conclude, because he is dead and out of our communion. Those that take the Papacy to be antichrist (as most Protestants do) cannot so conclude; because as there is but one antichrist, that is, one Papacy, though a hundred Popes be in that seat, so every one of those popes is in via, and under mercy, and recoverable out of that condition; and therefore is to be loved and prayed for accordingly. And as for those that blaspheme the holy Ghost, it is a sin that one man cannot certainly know in another, ordinarily at least; and therefore cannot characterize a person unfit for our love, and prayers, and endeavors.

Quest. IX. May we not hate the enemies of God? How then must we love them as ourselves?

Answer. We may and must hate sin in every one; and where it is predominant, as God is said to hate the sinner for his sin, so must we; and yet still love him as ourselves: for you must hate sin in yourselves as much or more than in any other; and if you are wicked you must hate yourselves as such; yea, if you are godly, you must secundum quid, or in that measure as you are sinful, abhor, and loathe, and hate yourselves as such. And yet you must love yourselves according to the in measure of all that natural and moral goodness which is in you; and you must desire and endeavour all the good to yourselves that you can. Just so must you hate and love another; love them and hate them impartially as you must do yourselves.

Quest. X. May I not wish hurt sometimes to another, more than to myself?

Answer. You may wish a mediate hurt which tendeth to his good, or to the good of others; but you must never wish any final hurt and misery to him. You may wish your friend a vomit or bloodletting for his cure; and you may wish him some affliction, when it is needful and apt to humble him and do him good, or to restrain him from doing hurt to others; and on the same accounts, and for the public good, you may desire penal justice to be done upon him yea, sometimes unto death; but still with a desire of the saving of his soul. And such hurt you may also wish yourself as is necessary to your good; but you are not to wish the same penalties to yourself; 1. Because you have somewhat else first to wish and do, even to repent and prevent it. 2. Because you are not bound ordinarily to do execution upon yourself. It is more in your power to repent yourself; and make repentance less necessary by humble confession and amendment, than to bring another to repentance. Yet I may add also, that hypothetically you may wish that destruction to the enemies of God in this life, which absolutely you may not wish; that is, you must desire first that they may repent, and secondly, that they may be restrained from hurting others; but if neither of these may be attained, that they may be cut off.

Titus 2:1-15 Directions for Loving our Neighbour as Ourselves.

Direct I. Take heed of selfishness and covetousness, the two great enemies of love. Of which I have spoken more at large before.

Direct. II. Fall out with no man; or if you do, be speedily reconciled; for passions and dissensions are the extinguishers of love.

Direct. III. Love God truly, and you will easily love your neighbour; for you will see God's image of him, or interest in him, and feel all his precepts and mercies obliging you hereunto. As 1 John 3:11, 1 John 3:23; and 1 John 4:7, 1 John 4:12, 1 John 4:20-21.

Direct. IV. To this end let Christ be your continual study. He is the full revelation of the love of God; the lively pattern of love, and the best teacher of it that ever was in the world: his incarnation, life, and sufferings, his gospel and covenant, his intercession and preparations for our heavenly felicity, all are the great demonstrations of condescending, matchless love. Mark both: God's love to us in him, and his love to man, and you will have the best directive and incentive of your love.

Direct. V. Observe all the good which is in every man. Consider of the good of humanity in his nature, and the goodness of all that truth which he confesseth, and of all that moral good which appeareth in his heart and life; and let not oversight or partiality cause you to overlook it, or make light of it. For it is goodness which is the only attractive of love; and if you overlook men's goodness, you cannot love them.

Direct. VI. Abhor and beware of a censorious disposition, which magnifieth men's faults, and vilifieth their virtues, and maketh men seem worse than indeed they are. For as this cometh from the want of love, so doth it destroy that little which is left.

Direct. VII. Beware of superstition and in erring judgment, which maketh men place religion where God never placed it. For when this hath taught you to make duties and sins of your own humour and invention, it will quickly teach you to love or hate men accordingly as they fit or cross your opinion and humour: thus many a papist loveth not those that are not subjects of the Roman monarch, and that follow not all his irrational fopperies. Many an anabaptist loveth not those that are against his opinion of re-baptizing: one loveth not those who are for liturgies, forms of worship, and church music and many love not those who are against them; and so of other things (of which more anon).

Direct. VIII. Avoid the company of censorious backbiters and proud contemners of their brethren: hearken not to them that are causelessly vilifying others, aggravating their faults and extenuating their virtues. For such proud, supercilious persons (religious or profane) are but the messengers of Satan, by whom he entreateth you to hate your neighbour, or abate your love to him. And to hear them speak evil of others, is but to go hear a sermon against charity, which may take with such hearts as ours before we are aware.

Direct. IX. Keep still the motives and incentives of love upon your minds. Which I shall here next set before you.

Titus 3:1-15. The Reasons or Motives of Love to our Neighbour.

Motive I. Consider well of the image and interest of God in man. The worst man is his creature, and hath his natural image, though not his moral image; and you should love the work for the workman's sake. There is something of God upon all human nature above the brutes; it is intelligent, and capable of knowing him, of loving him, and of serving him; and possibly may be brought to do all this better than you can do it. Undervalue not the noble nature of man, nor

overlook that of God which is upon them, nor the interest which he hath in them.

Motive II. Consider well of God's own love to man. He hateth their sins more than any of us; and yet he loveth his workmanship upon them: "And maketh his sun to shine and his rain to fall on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust," Matthew 5:45. And what should more stir us up to love, than to be like to God?

Motive III. And think oft of the love of Christ unto mankind; yea, even unto his enemies. Can you have a better example, a livelier incentive, or a surer guide?

Motive IV. Consider of our unity of nature with all men: suitableness breedeth and maintaineth love. Even birds and beasts do love their kind; and man should much more have a love to man, as being of the same specific form.

Motive V. Love is the principle of doing good to others. It inclineth men to beneficence: and all men call him good who is inclined to do good.

Motive VI. Love is the bond of societies; of families, cities, kingdoms, and churches: without love, they will be but enemies conjunct; who are so much the more hurtful and pernicious to each other, by how much they are nearer to each other. The soul of societies is gone when love is gone.

Motive VII. Consider why it is that you love yourselves, (rationally,) and why it is that you would be beloved of others. And you will see that the same reasons will be of equal force to call for love to others from you.

Motive VIII. What abundance of duty is summarily performed in love! And what abundance of sin is avoided and prevented by it! If it be the fulfilling of the law, it avoideth all the violations of the law (proportionably). So far as you have love, you will neither dishonour superiors, nor oppress inferiors, nor injure equals: you will neither covet that which is your neighbor's, nor envy, nor malice them, nor defame, nor backbite, nor censure them unjustly nor will you rob them or defraud them, nor withhold any duty or kindness to them.

Motive IX. Consider how much love pleaseth God; and why it is made so great a part of all your duty; and why the gospel doth so highly commend it, and so strictly command it, and so terribly condemn the want of it! And also how suitable a duty it is for you, who are obliged by so much love of God! These things well studied will not be without effect.

Motive X. Consider also that it is your own interest, as well as your great duty. 1. It is the soundness and honesty of your hearts. 2. It is pleasing to that God on whom only you depend. 3. It is a condition of your receiving the saving benefits of his love. 4. It is an amiable virtue, and maketh you lovely to all sober men: all men love a loving nature, and hate those that hate and hurt their neighbours. Love commandeth love, and hurtfulness is hatefulness. 5. It is a sweet, delightful duty: all love is essentiated with some complacence and delight. 6. It tendeth to the case and quietness of your lives. What contentions and troubles will love avoid! What peace and pleasure doth it cause in families, neighborhoods, and all societies! And what brawling vexations come where it is wanting! It will make all your neighbours and relations to be a comfort and delight to you, which would be a burden and trouble, if love were absent. 7. It maketh all other men's felicity and comforts to be yours. If you love them as yourselves, their riches, their health, their honours, their lordships, their kingdom is, yea, more, their knowledge, and learning, and grace, and

happiness, are partly to you as your own: as the comforts of wife and children, and your dearest friends, are; and as our love to Christ, and the blessed angels and saints in heaven, do make their joys to be partly ours. How excellent, and easy, and honest a way is this, of making all the world your own, and receiving that benefit and pleasure from all things both in heaven and earth, which no distance, no malice of enemies can deny you! If those whom you truly love have it, you have it. Why then do you complain that you have no more health, or wealth, or honour, or that others are preferred before you? Love your neighbour as yourselves, and then you will be comforted in his health, his wealth, and his preferment, and say, Those have it whom I love as myself, and therefore it is to me as mine own. When you see your neighbour's houses, pastures, corn, and cattle, love will make it as good and pleasant to you as if it were your own. Why else do you rejoice in the portions and estates of your children as if it were your own? The covetous man saith, Oh how glad should I be if this house, this land, this corn were mine: but love will make you say, It is all to me as mine own. What a sure and cheap way is this of making all the world your own! Oh what a mercy doth God bestow on his servants' souls, in the day that he sanctifieth them with unfeigned love! How much doth he give us in that one grace! And oh what a world of blessing and comforts do the ungodly, the malicious, the selfish and the censorious east away, when they cast away or quench the love of their neighbours; and what abundance of calamity do they bring upon themselves! In this one summary instance we may see, how much religion and obedience to God doth tend to our own felicity and delight; and how easy a work it would be, if a wicked heart did not make it difficult! And how great a plague sin is unto the sinner; and how sore a punishment of itself! And by this you may see, what it is that all fallings-out, divisions, and contentions tend to; and all temptations to the abatement of our love; and who it is that is the greater loser by it, when love to our neighbour is lost; and that backbiters and censurers who speak ill of others, come to us as the greatest enemies and thieves, to rob us of our chiefest jewel and greatest comfort in this world; and accordingly should they be entertained.

S. Consider the Nature of Man in General

Consider the Nature of Man in General by Richard Baxter

But, 1. We must know how frail, and erroneous, and unconstant a thing man is; and therefore not be too high in our expectations from man. We must suppose that men will mistake us, and wrong us, and slander us, through ignorance, passion, prejudice, or self-interest. And when this befalls us, we must not account it strange and unexpected.

2. We must consider how far the enmity that is in lapsed man to holiness, and the ignorance, prejudice, and passion of the ungodly, will carry them to despise, and scorn, and slander all such as seriously and zealously serve God, and cross them in their carnal interest. And therefore, if for the sake of Christ and righteousness, we are accounted as the scorn and offscouring of all things, and as pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition among the people and such as are unworthy to live and have all manner of evil spoken of us falsely, it must not seem strange or unexpected to us, nor cast us down, but we must bear it patiently, yea, and exceedingly rejoice in hope of our reward in heaven.

3. Considering what remnants of pride and self-conceitedness remain in many that have true grace, and how many hypocrites are in the church, whose religion consisteth in opinions and their several modes of worship; we must expect to be reproached and abused by such, as in opinions, and modes, and circumstances do differ from us, and take us therefore as their adversaries. A great deal of injustice, sometimes by slanders or reproach, and sometimes by greater violence, must be expected, from contentious professors of the same religion with ourselves: especially when the interest of their faction or cause requireth it: and especially if we bring any truth among them, which seemeth new to them, or crosseth the opinions which are there in credit, or would be reformers of them in any thing that is amiss.

4. No men must be pleased by sin, nor their favour preferred before the pleasing of God. Man’s favour as against God, is to be despised, and their displeasure made light of. If doing our duty will displease them, let them be displeased; we can but pity them.

5. We must place none of our happiness in the favour or approbation of men, but account it as to ourselves to be a matter of no great moment, neither worth any great care or endeavour to obtain it, or grief for losing it. We must not only contemn it as compared to the approbation and favour of God but we must value it but as other transitory things, in itself considered; estimating it as a means to some higher end, the service of God, and our own or other men’s greater good: and further than it conduceth to some of these, it must be almost indifferent to us what men think or say of us: and the displeasure of all men, if unjust, must be reckoned with our light afflictions.

6. One truth of God, and the smallest duty, must be preferred before the pleasing and favour of all the men in the world. Though yet as a means to the pro noting of a greater truth or duty, the favour and pleasing of men must be preferred before the uttering of a lesser truth, or doing a lesser good at that time: because it is no duty then to do it.

7. Our hearts are so selfish and deceitful, naturally, that when we are very solicitous about our reputation, we must carefully watch them lest self be intended, while God is pretended. And we must take special care, that we be sure it be the honour of God, and religion, and the good of souls, or some greater benefit than honour itself, that we value our honour and reputation for.

8. Man’s nature is so prone to go too far in valuing our esteem with men, that we should more fear lest we err on that hand, than on the other, in undervaluing it. And it is far safer to do too little than too much, in the vindicating of our own reputation, whether by the magistrate’s justice, or by disputing, or any contentious means.

9. We must not wholly rest on the judgment of and, about the state of our souls, nor take their judgment of us for infallible; but use their help that we may know ourselves.

10. If ministers, or councils called general, do err and contradict the word of God, we must do our best to discern it; and discerning it, must desert their error rather than the truth of God. As Calvin, and after him Paraeus on 1 Corinthians 4:3, say, "We must give an account of our doctrine to all men that require it, especially to ministers and councils: but when a faithful pastor perceiveth himself oppressed with unrighteous and perverse designs and factions and that there is no place for equity and truth, he ought to be careless of man’s esteem, and appeal to God, and fly to his tribunal. And if we see ourselves condemned, our cause being unpleaded, and judgment passed, our cause being unheard, let us lift up our minds to this magnanimity, as despising men’s judgment, to expect with boldness the judgment of God;" and say with Paul, "With me it is a small matter to be judged of you, or of man’s judgment, I have one that judgeth me, even the Lord."

11. God must be enough for a gracious soul, and we must know "that in his favour is life," and his "loving-kindness is better than life itself," and this must be our care and labour, that "whether living or dying" we may be accepted of him, and if we have his approbation it must satisfy us, though all the world condemn us. Therefore having faithfully done our duty, we must leave the matter of our reputation to God, who, if our ways please him, can make our enemies to be at peace with us, or be harmless to us as if they were no enemies. As we must quietly leave it to him what measure of wealth we shall have, so also what measure of honour we shall have. It is our duty to love and honour, but not to be beloved and honoured.

12. The prophecy of our Saviour must be still believed, that the "world will hate us," and his example must be still before our eyes, who submitted to be spit upon, and scorned and buffeted, and slandered as a traitor or usurper of the crown, and "made himself of no reputation," and "endured the cross," and "despised the shame;" leaving us an example that we should follow his steps, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed all to him that judgeth righteously." This is the usage that must be the christian’s expectation, and not to be well spoken of by all, nor to have the applause and honour of the world.

13. It is not only the approbation of the ignorant and ungodly that we must thus set light by; but even of the most learned and godly themselves, so as to bear their censures as an easy burden, when God is pleased this way to try us; and to be satisfied in God alone, and the expectation of his final judgment.

Chapter 95

S. Directions Against Covetousness, or Love of Riches, and Against Worldly Cares.

Directions Against Covetousness, or Love of Riches, and Against Worldly Cares. by Richard Baxter

I shall say but little on this subject now, because I have written a Treatise of it already, called "The Crucifying of the World by the Cross of Christ;" in which I have given many directions (in the preface and treatise) against this sin.

Direct. I. Understand well the nature and malignity of this sin; both what it is, and why it is so great and perilous. I shall here show you, 1. What love of riches is lawful. 2. What it is that is unlawful; and in what this sin of covetousness or worldliness doth consist 3. Wherein the malignity or greatness of it lieth. 4. The signs of it. 5. What counterfeits of the contrary virtue do hide this sin from the eyes of worldlings. 6. What false appearances of it do cause many to be suspected of covetousness unjustly.

Lawful Love of Creatures

I. All love of the creature, the world or riches, is not sin. For:1. The works of God are all good, as such; and all goodness is worthy of love. As they are related to God, and his power, and wisdom, and goodness are imprinted on them, so we must love them, even for his sake. 2. All the impressions of the attributes of God appearing on his works, do make them as a mirror, in which at this distance we must see the Creator; and their sweetness is a drop from him; by which his goodness and love are tasted. And so they were all made to lead us up to God, and help our minds to converse with him, and kindle the love of God in our breasts, as a love-token from our dearest friend; and thus, as the means of our communion with God, the love of them is a duty, and not a sin. 3. They are naturally the means of sustaining our bodies, and preserving life, and health, and alacrity; and as such, our sensitive part hath a love to them, as every beast hath to its food and this love in itself is not of a moral kind, and is neither a virtue nor a vice, till it either be used in obedience to our reason, (and so it is good,) or in disobedience to it (and so it is evil). 4. The creatures are necessary means to support our bodies, while we are doing God the service which we owe him in the world; and so they must be loved, as a means to his service; though we cannot say properly that riches are ordinarily thus necessary. 5. The creatures are necessary to sustain our bodies in our journey to heaven, while we are preparing for eternity; and thus they must be loved as indirect helps to our salvation. And in these two last respects we call it in our prayers "our daily bread." 6. Riches may enable us to relieve our needy brethren, and to promote good works for church or state. And thus also they may be loved; so far as we must be thankful for them, so far we may love them; for we must be thankful for nothing but what is good.

What is Covetousness?

II. But worldliness, or sinful love of riches, Isaiah 1:1-31. When riches are loved and desired, and sought more for the flesh than for God or our salvation; even as the matter or means of our worldly prosperity, that the flesh may lack nothing to please it, and satisfy its desires.(Php 3:7-9; James 1:10; Php 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:5; Proverbs 23:4, "Labour not to be rich.") Or that pride may have enough wherewith to support itself, by gratifying and obliging others, and living ostentatiously, and in that splendor, as may show our greatness, or further our domination over others. 2. And when we therefore desire them in that proportion which we think most agreeable to these carnal ends, and are not contented with our daily bread, and that proportion which may sustain us as passengers to heaven, and tend most to the securing of our souls, and to the service of God. So that it is the end by which a sinful love of riches is principally to be discerned; when they are loved for pride or flesh-pleasing, as they are the matter of a worldly, corporal felicity, and not principally for God and his service, and servants and our salvation. And indeed, as sensualists love them, they should be hated. When Worldliness is Predominant.

Worldliness is either predominant, and so a certain sign of death; or else mortified, and in a subdued degree, consistent with some saving grace. Worldliness predominant, as in the ungodly, is, when men that have not a lively belief of the everlasting happiness, nor have laid up their treasure and hopes in heaven, do take the pleasure and prosperity of this life for that felicity which is highest in their esteem, and dearest to their hearts, and therefore love the riches of the world, or full provisions, as the matter and means of this their temporal felicity.(Luke 14:26, Luke 14:33) Worldliness in a mortified person, is, when he that hath laid up his treasure in heaven, and practically esteemeth his everlasting hopes above all the pleasure and prosperity of the flesh, and seeketh first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and useth his estate principally for God and his salvation, hath yet some remnants of inordinate desire to the prosperity and pleasure of the flesh, and some inordinate desire of riches for that end; which yet he hateth, lamenteth, resisteth, and so far subdueth, that it is not predominant, against the interest of God and his salvation.(Matthew 6:19-21, Matthew 6:33; John 6:27; Luke 12:19-20 Luke 18:22-23) Yet this is a great sin, though it be forgiven. The malignity of it.

III. The malignity or greatness of this sin consisteth in these points (especially when it is predominant). 1. The love of the world, or of riches, is a sin of deliberation, and not of mere temerity or sudden passion: worldlings contrive the attaining of their ends. 2. It is a sin of interest, love, and choice, set up against our chiefest interest: it is the setting up of a false end, and seeking that; and not only a sin of error in the means, or a seeking the right end in a mistaken way. 3. It is idolatry,(Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5; James 4:4.) or a denying God, and deposing him in our hearts, and setting up his creatures in his stead, in that measure as it prevaileth. The worldling giveth that love and that trust unto the creature, which are due to God alone; he delighteth in it instead of God, and seeketh and holdeth it as his felicity instead of God: and therefore, so far as any man loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John 2:15. And the friendship of the world is enmity to God. 4. It is a contempt of heaven; when it must be neglected, and a miserable world preferred. 5. It showeth that unbelief prevaileth at the heart so far as worldliness prevaileth: for if men did practically believe the heavenly glory, and the promise thereof, they would be carried above these present things. 6. It is a debasing of the soul of man, and using it like the brutes, while it is principally set upon the serving of the flesh, and on a temporal felicity, and neglecteth its eternal happiness and concernments. 7. It is a perverting of the very drift of a man’s

life, as employed in seeking a wrong end, and not only of some one faculty or act: it is an habitual sin of the state and course of mind and life, and not only a particular actual sin. 8. It is a perverting of God's creatures to an end and use clean contrary to that which they were made and given for; and an abusing God by his own gifts, by which he should he served and honoured; and a destroying our souls with those mercies which were given us for their help and benefit. This is the true character of this heinous sin. In a word, it is the forsaking God, and turning the heart from him, and alienating the life from his service, to this present world, and the service of the flesh. Fornication, drunkenness, murder, swearing, perjury, lying, stealing, &c. are very heinous sins. But a single act of one of these, committed rashly in the violence of passion, or temptation, speaketh not such a malignant turning away of the heart habitually from God, as to say a man is covetous, or a worldling.

Signs of Covetousness.

IV. The signs of covetousness are these:1. Not preferring God and our everlasting happiness before the prosperity and pleasure of the flesh; but valuing and loving fleshly prosperity above its worth.(Romans 13:14; Matthew 6:19; 1 Timothy 3:8; Php 3:19; Ezekiel 33:31; Jeremiah 9:23.) 2. Esteeming and loving the creatures of God as provision for the flesh, and not to further us in the service of God. 3. Desiring more than is needful or useful to further us in our duty. 4. An inordinate eagerness in our desires after earthly things. 5. Distrustfulness, and vexatious cares, and contrivances for time to come. 6. Discontent, and trouble, and a longing discontent at a poor condition, when we have no more than our daily bread. 7. When the world taketh up our thoughts inordinately: when our thoughts will more easily run out upon the world, than upon better things: and when our thoughts of worldly plenty are more pleasant and sweet to us, than our thoughts of Christ, and grace, and heaven; and our thoughts of neediness and poverty are more bitter and grievous to us, than our thoughts of sin and God's displeasure. 8. When our speech is freer and sweeter about prosperity in the world, than about the concernments of God and our souls. 9. When the world beareth sway in our families and converse, and shutteth out all serious endeavours in the service of God, and for our own and others' souls: or at least doth cut short religious duties, and is preferred before them, and thrusteth them into a corner, and maketh us slightly huddle them over. 10. When we are dejected overmuch, and impatient under losses, and crosses, and worldly injuries from men. 11. When worldly matters seem sufficient to engage us in contentions, and to make us break peace: and we will by lawsuits seek our right, when greater hurt is more likely to follow to our brother's soul, or greater wrong to the cause of religion, or the honour of God, than our right is worth. 12. When in our trouble and distress we fetch our comfort more from the thoughts of our provisions in the world, or our hopes of supply, than from our trust in God, and our hopes of heaven.(Job 1:21.) 13. When we are more thankful to God or man for outward riches, or any gift for the provision of the flesh, than for hopes or helps in order to salvation; for a powerful ministry, good books, or seasonable instructions for the soul. 14. When we are quiet and pleased if we do but prosper, and have plenty in the world, though the soul be miserable, unsanctified, and unpardoned. 15. When we are more careful to provide a worldly than a heavenly portion, for children and friends, and rejoice more in their bodily than their spiritual prosperity, and are troubled more for their poverty than their ungodliness or sin. 16. When we can see our brother have need, and shut up the bowels of our compassion, or can part with no more than mere superfluities for his relief: when we cannot spare that which makes but for our better being, when it

is necessary to preserve his being itself; or when we give unwillingly or sparingly.(1 Timothy 6:17-18; Malachi 3:8-9; Judges 7:21.) 17. When we will venture upon sinful means for gain, as lying, overreaching, deceiving, flattering, or going against our consciences, or the commands of God. 18. When we are too much in expecting liberality from others, and think that all we buy of should sell cheaper to us than they can afford, and consider not their loss or need, so that we have the gain: nor are contented if they be never so bountiful to others, if they be not so to us.(When Alexander sent Phocion a hundred talents, he asked, Why he rather sent it to him than all the rest of the Athenians? He answered, Because he took him to be the only honest man in Athens: whereupon Phocion returned it to him again, entreating him to give him leave to be honest still.) 19. When we make too much ado in the world for riches, taking too much upon us, or striving for preferment, and flattering great ones, and envying any that are preferred before us, or get that which we expected. 20. When we hold our money tighter than our innocency, and cannot part with it for the sake of Christ, when he requireth it; but will stretch our consciences and sin against him, or forsake his cause, to save our estates; or will not part with it for the service of his church, or of our country, when we are called to it. 21. When the riches which we have, are used but for the pampering of our flesh, and superfluous provision for our posterity, and nothing but some inconsiderable crumbs or driblets are employed for God and his servants, nor used to further us in his service, and towards the laying up of a treasure in heaven. These are the signs of a worldly, covetous wretch.

V. The counterfeits of liberality or freedom from covetousness, which deceive the worldling, are such as these 1. He thinks he is not covetous because he hath a necessity of doing what he doth for more. Either he is in debt or he is poor, and scarcely hath whereon to live; and the poor think that none are worldlings and covetous but the rich. But he may love riches that lacketh them, as much as he that hath them. If you have a necessity of laboring in your callings, you have no necessity of loving the world, or of caring inordinately, or of being discontented with your estate. Impatience under your poverty shows a love of the world and flesh, as much as other men’s bravado that possess it.

2. Another thinks he is not a worldling, because if he could but have necessaries, even food and raiment, and conveniences for himself and family, he would be content; and it is not riches or great matters that he desireth.(It was one of Chilon’s sayings, Lapideis cotibus aurum examinari: auro autem bonorum malorumque hominum mentem cujusmodi sit comprobari: i.e. As the touchstone trieth gold, so gold trieth men’s minds, whether they be good or bad. Laertius in Chil. p. 43.) But if your hearts are more set upon the getting of these necessaries or little things, than upon the preparing for death, and making sure of the heavenly treasure, you are miserable worldlings still. And the poor man that will set his heart more upon a poor and miserable life, than upon heaven, is more inexcusable than he that setteth his heart more upon lordships and honours than upon heaven; though both of them are but the slaves of the world, and have as yet no treasure in heaven, Matthew 6:19-21. And, moreover, you that are now so covetous for a little more, if you had that, would be as covetous for a little more still; and when you had that, for a little more yet. You would next wear better clothing, and have better fare; and next you would have your house repaired, and then you would have your land enlarged, and then you would have something more for your children, and you would never be satisfied. You think otherwise now; but your hearts deceive you; you do not know them. If you believe me not, judge by the case of other men that

have been as confident as you, that if they had but so much or so much they would be content; but when they have it, they would still have more. And this, which is your pretense, is the common pretense of almost all the covetous: for lords and princes think themselves still in as great necessity as you think yourselves: as they have more, so they have more to do with it; and usually are still wanting as much as the poor. The question is not how much you desire? But to what use, and to what end, and in what order?

3. Another thinks he is not covetous, because he coveteth not any thing that is his neighbour's: he thinks that covetousness is only a desiring that which is not our own. But if you love the world and worldly plenty inordinately, and covet more, you are covetous worldlings, though you wish it not from another. It is the worldly mind and love of wealth that is the sin at the root: the ways of getting it are but the branches.

4. Another thinks he is no worldling, because he useth no unlawful means, but the labour of his calling, to grow rich. The same answer serves to this. The love of wealth for the satisfying of the flesh is unlawful, whatever the means be. And is it not also an unlawful means of getting, to neglect God and your souls, and the poor, and shut out other duties for the world, as you often do?

5. Another thinks he is no worldling, because he is contented with what he hath, and coveteth no more. When that which he hath is a full provision for his fleshly desires. But if you over-love the world, and delight more in it than God, you are worldlings, though you desire no more. He is described by Christ as a miserable, worldly fool, Luke 12:19-20, that saith, "Soul, take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." To over-love what you have, is worldliness, as well as to desire more.

6. Another thinks he is no worldling, because he gives God thanks for what he hath, and asked it of God in prayer. But if thou he a lover of the world, and make provision for the desires of the flesh, it is but an aggravation of thy sin, to desire God to be a servant to thy fleshly lusts, and to thank him for satisfying thy sinful desires. Thy prayers and thanks are profane and carnal: they were no service to God, but to thy flesh. As if a drunkard or a glutton should beg of God provision for their greedy throats, and thank him for it when they have it: or a fornicator should pray God to pander to his lusts, and then thank him for it: or a wanton man of fashion should make fine clothes and gallantry the matter of his prayer and thanksgiving.

7. Another thinks he is no worldling, because he hath some thoughts of heaven, and is loath to be damned when he can keep the world no longer, and prayeth often, and perhaps fasteth with the Pharisee twice a week, and giveth alms often, and payeth tithes, and wrongeth no man.(Luke 18:11-13; Matthew 6:16, Matthew 6:18) But the Pharisees were covetous for all these, Luke 16:14. The question is not whether you think of heaven, and do something for it? But whether it be heaven or earth which you seek first, and make the end of all things else, which all are referred to? Every worldling knoweth that he must die, and therefore he would have heaven at last for a reserve, rather than hell. But where is it that you are laying up your treasure, and that you place all your happiness and hopes? And where are your hearts? On earth, or in heaven? Colossians 3:1-3; Matthew 6:20-21. The question is not whether you give now and then an alms to deceive your consciences, and part with so much as the flesh can spare, as a swine will do when he can eat no more? but whether all that you have be devoted to the will of God, and made to stoop to his service and the saving of your souls, and can be forsaken rather than Christ forsaken, Luke 14:33.

8. Another thinks that he is not covetous, because it is but for his children that he provideth: and "he that provideth not for his own, is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. v.8. But the text speaketh only of providing necessaries for our families and kindred, rather than cast them on the church to be maintained. If you so overvalue the world, that you think it the happiness of your children to be rich, you are worldlings and covetous, both for yourselves and them. It is for their children that the richest and greatest make provision, that their posterity may be great and wealthy after them: and this maketh them the more worldlings, and not the less; because they are covetous for after-ages, when they are dead, and not only for themselves.

9. Another thinks he is no worldling, because he can speak as severely of covetous men as any other. But many a one revileth others as covetous that is covetous himself; yea, covetous men are aptest to accuse others of covetousness, and of selling too dear, and buying too cheap, and giving too little, because they would get the more themselves. And many preachers, by their reading and knowledge, may make a vehement sermon against worldliness, and yet go to hell at last for being worldlings. Words are cheap.

10. Another thinks he is not covetous, because he purposeth to leave much to charitable uses when he is dead. I confess that much is well: I would more would do so. But the flesh itself can spare it, when it seeth that it must lie down in the grave. If they could carry their riches with them and enjoy them after death, they would do it no doubt: to leave it when you cannot keep it any longer, is not thank-worthy. So the glutton, and drunkard, and whoremonger, and the proud must all leave their pleasure at the grave. But do you serve God or the flesh with your riches while you have them? And do you use them to help or to hinder your salvation? Deceive not yourselves, for God is not mocked, Galatians 6:7.

False Accusations of Covetousness

VI. Yet many are falsely accused of covetousness upon such grounds as these:1. Because they possess much and are rich: for the poor take the rich for worldlings. But God giveth not to all alike: he putteth ten talents into the hands of one servant, and but one into another’s: and to whom men commit much, of them will they require the more.(Luke 12:48; Luke 16:9-10; 2 Corinthians 8:14-15) Therefore, to be intrusted with more than others is no sin, unless they betray that trust.

2. Others are accused as covetous, because they satisfy not the covetous desires of those they deal with, or that expect much from them, and because they give not where it is not their duty, but their sin to give. Thus the buyer saith the seller is covetous; and the seller saith the buyer is covetous, because they answer not their covetous desires. An idle beggar will accuse you of uncharitableness, because you maintain him not in sinful idleness. The proud look you should help to maintain their pride. The drunkard, and riotous, and gamesters expect their parents should maintain their sin. No man that hath any thing, shall escape the censure of being covetous, as long as there is another in the world that coveteth that which he hath: selfishness looketh to no rules but their own desires.

3. Others are judged covetous, because they give not that which they have not to give. Those that know not another’s estate, will pass conjectures at it; and if their handsome apparel or deportment, or the common fame, do make men think them richer than they are, then they are accounted covetous, because their bounty answereth not men’s expectations.

4. Others are thought covetous, because they are laborious in their callings, and thrifty, and saving, not willing that any thing be lost. But all this is their duty: if they were lords or princes, idleness and wastefulness would be their sin. God would have all men labour in their several callings, that are able: and Christ himself said, when he had fed many thousands by miracle, yet "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." The question is, How they use that which they labour so hard for, and save so sparingly. If they use it for God, and charitable uses, there is no man taketh a righter course. He is the best servant for God, that will be laborious and sparing, that he may be able to do good.

5. Others are thought covetous, because, to avoid hypocrisy, they give in secret, and keep their works of charity from the knowledge of men. These shall have their reward from God: and his wrath shall be the reward of their presumptuous censures.

6. Others are thought covetous, because they lawfully and peaceably seek their right, and let not the unjust and covetous wrong them at their pleasure. It is true, we must let go our right, whenever the recovering of it will do more hurt to others than it will do us good. But yet the laws are not made in vain: nor must we encourage men in covetousness, thievery, and deceit, by letting them do what they desire: nor must we be careless of our Master’s talents; if he entrust us with them, we must not let every one take them from us to serve his lusts with.

Consider the Greatness of Heaven

Direct. II. Seriously consider of your everlasting state, and how much greater things than riches you have to mind. Behold by faith the endless joys which you may have with God, and the endless misery which worldlings must undergo in hell. There is no true cure for an earthly mind, but by showing it the far greater matters to be minded: by acquainting it better with its own concernments; and with the greater miseries than poverty or want, which we have to escape; and the greater good than worldly plenty, which we have to seek. It is lack of faith that makes men worldlings: they see not what is in another world: they say their creed, but do not heartily believe the day of judgment, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. There is not a man of them all, but, if he had one sight of heaven and hell, would set lighter by the world than ever he did before; and would turn his covetous care and toil to a speedy and diligent care of his salvation. If he heard the joyful praises of the saints, and the woeful lamentations of the damned, but one day or hour, he would think ever after that he had greater matters to mind than the scraping together a heap of wealth. Remember, man, that thou hast another world to live in; and a far longer life to make provision for; and that thou must be in heaven or hell for ever. This is true, whether thou believe it or not: and thou hast no time but this to make all thy preparation in: and as thou believest, and livest, and labourest now, it must go with thee to all eternity. These are matters worthy of thy care. Canst thou have while to make such a disturbance here in the dust, and care and labour for a thing of nought, while thou hast such things as these to care for, and a work of such transcendent consequence to do? Can a man that understands what heaven and hell are, find room for any needless matters, or time for so much unnecessary work? The providing for thy salvation is a thing that God hath made thy own work, much more than the providing for the flesh. When he speaks of thy body, he saith, "Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or drink, nor for your body, what you shall put on: —for your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things," Matthew 6:25, Matthew 6:32. "Be careful for nothing," Php 4:6. "Cast all your care upon him, for he careth

for you," 1 Peter 5:7. But when he speaks of your salvation, he bids you "work it out with fear and trembling," Php 2:12; and "give diligence to make your calling and election sure," 2 Peter 1:10; and "strive to enter in at the strait gate," Matthew 7:13; Luke 13:24. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life," John 6:27. That is, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you," Matthew 6:33. Look up to heaven, man, and remember that there is thy home, and there are thy hopes, or else thou art a man undone for ever; and therefore it is for that that thou must care and labour. Believe unfeignedly that thou must dwell for ever in heaven or hell, as thou makest thy preparation here, and consider of this as becometh a man, and then be a worldling and covetous if thou canst: riches will seem dust and chaff to thee, if thou believe and consider thy everlasting state. Write upon the doors of thy shop and chamber, I must be in heaven or hell for ever; or, This is the time on which my endless life dependeth; and methinks every time thou readest it, thou shouldst feel thy covetousness stabbed at the heart. O blinded mortals! that love, like worms, to dwell in earth! Would God but give you an eye of faith, to foresee your end, and where you must dwell to all eternity, what a change would it make upon your earthly minds! Either faith or sense will be your guides. Nothing but reason sanctified by faith can govern sense. Remember that thou art not a beast, that hath no life to live but this: thou hast a reasonable, immortal soul, that was made by God for higher things, even for God himself, to admire him, love him, serve him, and enjoy him. If an angel were to dwell awhile in flesh, should he turn an earthworm, and forget his higher life of glory? Thou art like to an incarnate angel; and mayst be equal with the angels, when thou art freed from this sinful flesh, Luke 20:36. O beg of God a heavenly light, and a heavenly mind, and look often into the word of God, which tells thee where thou must be for ever; and worldliness will vanish away in shame.

Remember the Shortness of Life

Direct. III. Remember how short a time thou must keep and enjoy the wealth which thou hast gotten. How quickly thou must be stripped of all! Canst thou keep it when thou hast it? (1 Corinthians 7:31.) Canst thou make a covenant with death, that it shall not call away thy soul? Thou knowest beforehand that thou art of short continuance, and the world is but thy inn or passage; and that a narrow grave for thy flesh to rot in, is all that thou canst keep of thy largest possessions, save what thou layest up in heaven, by laying it out in obedience to God. How short is life! How quickly gone! Thou art almost dead and gone already! What are a few days or a few years more? And wilt thou make so much ado for so short a life? and so careful a provision for so short a stay? Yea, how uncertain is thy time, as well as short! Thou canst not say what world thou shalt be in tomorrow. Remember, man, that Thou must die! Thou must die! Thou must quickly die! Thou knowest not how soon! Breathe yet a few breaths more, and thou art gone! And yet canst thou be covetous, and drown thy soul with earthly cares? Dost thou soberly read thy Savior’s warning, Luke 12:19-21? Is it not spoken as to thee? "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be rerequired of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is every one that layeth up riches for himself, and is not rich towards God."(Remember Gehazi, Achan, Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, Demetrius, Demas. Jeremiah 6:13; Jeremiah 8:10) If thou be rich today, and be in another world tomorrow, had not poverty been as good? Distracted soul! Dost thou make so great a matter of it, whether thou have much or little for so short a time? And takest no more care, either where thou shalt be, or what thou shalt have to all eternity? Dost thou say, thou

wilt cast this care on God? I tell thee, he will make thee care thyself; and care again before he will save thee. And why canst thou not cast the care of smaller matters on him, when he commandeth thee? Is it any great matter whether thou be rich or poor, that art going so fast unto another world, where these are things of no signification? Tell me, if thou wert sure that thou must die tomorrow, (yea, or the next month or year,) wouldst thou not be more indifferent whether thou be rich or poor, and look more after greater things? Then thou wouldst be of the apostle's mind, 2 Corinthians 4:18, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Our eye of faith should be so fixed on invisible, eternal things, that we should scarce have leisure or mind to look at or once regard the things that are visible and temporal. A man that is going to execution scarce looks at all the bustle or business that is done in streets and shops as he passeth by; because these little concern him in his departing case. And how little do the wealth and honours of the world concern a soul that is going into another world, and knows not but it may be this night! Then keep thy wealth, or take it with thee, if thou canst.

Consider What You Really Need

Direct. IV. Labour to feel thy greatest needs, which worldly wealth will not supply. Thou hast sinned against God, and money will not buy thy pardon.(Proverbs 11:4, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath.") Thou hast incurred his displeasure, and money will not reconcile him to thee. Thou art condemned to everlasting misery by the law, and money will not pay thy ransom. Thou art dead in sin, and polluted, and captivated by the flesh, and money will sooner increase thy bondage than deliver thee. Thy conscience is ready to tear thy heart for thy willful folly and contempt of grace, and money will not bribe it to be quiet. Judas brought back his money, and hanged himself, when conscience was but once awakened. Money will not enlighten a blinded mind, nor soften a hard heart, nor humble a proud heart, nor justify a guilty soul. It will not keep off a fever or consumption, nor ease the gout, or stone, or toothache. It will not keep off ghastly death, but die thou must, if thou have all the world! Look up to God, and remember that thou art wholly in his hands; and think whether he will love or favour thee for thy wealth. Look unto the day of judgment, and think whether money will there bring thee off, or the rich speed better than the poor.

Riches are Useless at Death

Direct. V. Be often with those that are sick and dying, and mark what all their riches will do for them, and what esteem they have then of the world; and mark how it useth all at last. Then you shall see that it forsaketh all men in the hour of their greatest necessity and distress; (Jeremiah 17:11; James 5:1-3.) when they would cry to friends, and wealth, and honour, if they had any hopes, If ever you will help me, let it be now; if ever you will do any thing for me, O save me from death, and the wrath of God! But, alas! such cries would be all in vain! Then, oh then! One drop of mercy, one spark of grace, the smallest well-grounded hope of heaven, would be worth more than the empire of Caesar or Alexander! Is not this true, sinner? Dost thou not know it to be true? And yet wilt thou cheat and betray thy soul? Is not that best now, which will be best then? And is not that of little value now, which will be then so little set by? Dost thou not think that men are wiser then than now? Wilt thou do so much, and pay so dear for that, which will do thee no more good, and which thou wilt set no more by when thou hast it? Doth not all the world cry out at last of the deceitfulness of riches, and the vanity of pleasure and prosperity on earth, and the perniciousness

of all worldly cares? And doth not thy conscience tell thee, that when thou comest to die, thou art like to have the same thoughts thyself? And yet wilt thou not be warned in time? Then all the content and pleasure of thy plenty and prosperity will be past: and when it is past it is nothing. And wilt thou venture on everlasting woe, and cast away everlasting joy, for that which is today a dream and shadow, and tomorrow, or very shortly, will be nothing? The poorest then will be equal with thee. And will honest poverty, or over-loved wealth; be sweeter at the last? How glad then wouldst thou be, to have been without thy wealth, so thou mightst have been without the sin and guilt, How glad then wouldst thou be to die the death of the poorest saint! Do you think that poverty, or riches, are liker to make a man loath to die? Or are usually more troublesome to the conscience of a dying man? O look to the end, and live as you die, and set most by that, and seek that now, which you know you shall set most by at last when full experience hath made you wiser!

Beware the Perils of Riches

Direct. VI. Remember that riches do make it much harder for a man to be saved; and the love of this world is the commonest cause of men’s damnation. This is certainly true, for all that poverty also hath its temptations; and for all that the poor are far more numerous than the rich. For even the poor may be undone by the love of that wealth and plenty which they never get; and those may perish for over-loving the world, that yet never prospered in the world. And if thou believe Christ, the point is out of controversy: for he saith, Luke 18:24-27, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And he said, The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God." So Luke 6:24-25, "But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation: woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger." Make but sense of these and many such like texts, and you can gather no less than this from them, that riches make the way to heaven much harder, and the salvation of the rich to be more difficult and rare, proportionably, than of other men. And Paul saith, 1 Corinthians 1:26, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." And the lovers of riches, though they are poor, must remember that it is said, "That the love of money is the root of all evil," 1 Timothy 6:10. And, "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world: for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John 2:15. Do you believe that here lieth the danger of your souls? and yet can you so love, and choose, and seek it? Would you have your salvation more difficult, and doubtful, and impossible with men? You had rather choose to live where few die young, than where most die young; and where sicknesses are rare, than where they are common. If you were sick, you had rather have the physician, and medicines, and diet which cure most, than those which few are cured by. If the country were beset with thieves, you had rather go the way that most escape in, than that few escape in. And yet, so it may but please your flesh, you will choose that way to heaven, that fewest escape in; and you will choose that state of life, which will make your salvation to be most hard and doubtful. Doth your conscience say that is wisely done? 1 know that if God put riches into your hand, by your birth, or his blessing on your honest labours, you must not cast away your Master’s talents, because he is austere; but by a holy improvement of them, you may further his service and your salvation. But this is no reason why you should over-love them, or desire and seek so great a danger. Believe Christ heartily, and it will quench your love of riches. The More You Have...

Direct. VII. Remember that the more you have, the more you have to give account for. And if the day of judgment be dreadful to you, you should not make it more dreadful by greatening your own accounts... If you desired riches but for the service of your Lord, and have used them for him, and can truly give in this account, that you laid them not out for the needless pleasure or pride of the flesh, but to furnish yourselves, and families, and others, for his service, and as near as you could, employ them according to his will, and for his use, then you may expect the reward of good and faithful servants; but if you desired and used them for the pride and pleasure of yourselves while you lived, and your posterity or kindred when you are dead, dropping some inconsiderable crumbs for God, you will then find that Mammon was an unprofitable master, and godliness, with content, would have been greater gain.(Proverbs 3:14; 1 Timothy 6:5-6) Consider the Cost

Direct. VIII. Remember how dear it costeth men, thus to hinder their salvation, and greaten their danger and accounts. What a deal of precious time is lost upon the world, by the lovers of it, which might have been improved to the getting of wisdom and grace, and making their calling and election sure! If you had believed that the gain of holy wisdom had been so much better than the gaming of gold, as Solomon saith, Proverbs 3:14, you would have laid out much of that time in laboring to understand the Scriptures, and preparing for your endless life. How many unnecessary thoughts have you cast away upon the world, which might better have been laid out on your greater concernments! How many cares, and vexations, and passions doth it cost men, to overload themselves with worldly provisions! Like a foolish traveler, who having a day's journey to go, doth spend all the day in gathering together a load of meat, and clothes, and money, more than he can carry, for fear of lacking by the way: or like a foolish runner, that hath a race to run for his life, and spends the time in which he should be running, in gathering a burden of pretended necessaries.(Saith Plutarch. de trauquillit. anim. Alexander wept because he was not lord of the world; when Crates, having but a wallet and a threadbare cloak, spent his whole life in mirth and joy, as if it had been a continual festival holiday.) You have all the while God's work to do, and your souls to mind, and judgment to prepare for, and you are tiring and vexing yourselves for unnecessary things, as if it were the top of your ambition to be able to say, in hell, that you died rich. 1 Timothy 6:6-10, "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred (or been seduced) from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Piercing sorrows here, and damnation hereafter, are a very expensive price to give for money.(Psalms 37:16; Proverbs 16:8) For saith Christ himself, "What shall it profit a man to gain all the world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark 8:36-37; that is, What money or price will recover it, if for the love of gain he lose it? Proverbs 15:27, "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live." Do you not know that a godly man contented with his daily bread, hath a far sweeter and quieter life and death than a self-troubling worldling? You may easily perceive it. Proverbs 15:16, "Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith."

Consider Christ's Example

Direct. IX. Look much on the life of Christ on earth, and see how strangely he condemneth worldliness by his example. Did he choose to be a prince or lord, or to have great possessions, lands, or money, or sumptuous buildings, or gallant attendance, and plentiful provisions? His housing you may read of, Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." His clothing you may read of at his crucifying, when they parted it. As for money, he was fain to send Peter to a fish for some to pay their tribute. If Christ did scrape and care for riches, then so do thou: if he thought it the happiest life, do thou think so too. But if he contemned it, do thou contemn it: if his whole life was directed to give thee the most perfect example of the contempt of all the prosperity of this world, then learn of his example, if thou take him for thy Saviour, and if thou love thyself. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might be rich," 2 Corinthians 8:9.

Consider the Early Christians

Direct. X. Think on the example of the primitive Christians, even the best of Christ's servants, and see how it condemneth worldliness. They that by miracle in the name of Christ could give limbs to the lame, yet tell him, "Silver and gold have we none," Acts 3:6. Those that had possessions sold them, and laid the money at the apostles' feet, and they had all things common, to show that faith overcometh the world, by contemning it, and subjecting it to charity, and devoting it entirely to God. Read whether the apostles did live sumptuous houses, with great attendance, and worldly plenty and prosperity? And so of the rest.(Chrysostom saith, his enemies charged him with many crimes, but never with covetousness or wantonness. And so it was with Christ and his enemies.)
Remember the Purpose of Worldly Goods

Direct. XI. Remember to what ends all worldly things were made and given you, and what a happy advantage you may make of them by renouncing them, as they would be provision for your lusts, and by devoting yourselves and them to God. The use of their sweetness is, to draw your souls to taste by faith the heavenly sweetness. They are the looking-glass of souls in flesh, that are not yet admitted to see these things spiritual face to face. They are the provender of our bodies; our traveling furniture and helps; our inns, and solacing company in the way; they are some of God's love-tokens, some of the lesser pieces of his coin, and bear his image and superscription. They are drops from the rivers of the eternal pleasures; to tell the mind by the way of the senses how good the Donor is, and how amiable; and what higher delights there are for souls; and to point us to the better things which these foretell. They are messengers from heaven, to testify our Father's care and love, and to bespeak our thankfulness, love, and duty; and to bear witness against sin, and bind us more tightly to obedience. They are the first volume of the word of God; the first book that man was set to read, to acquaint him fully with his Maker. As the word which we read and hear is the chariot of the Spirit, by which it maketh its accesses to the soul; so the delights of sight, and taste, and smell, and touch, and hearing, were appointed as an ordinary way for the speedy access of heavenly love and sweetness to the heart, that upon the first perception of the goodness and sweetness of the creature, there might presently he transmitted by a due progression, a deep impression of the goodness of God upon the soul; that the creatures, being the letters of God's book, which are seen by our eye, the sense (even the love of our great Creator) might presently be perceived by the mind: and no letter might once be looked upon but for the sense; no creature ever seen, or tasted, or heard, or felt in any delectable quality, without a sense of the love of God; that as the touch of the hand upon the strings of the lute do cause the melody, so God's touch by

his mercies upon our hearts, might presently tune them into love, and gratitude, and praise. They are the tools by which we must do much of our Master's work. They are means by which we may refresh our brethren, and express our love to one another, and our love to our Lord and Master in his servants. They are our Master's stock, which we must trade with, by the improvement of which, no less than the reward of endless happiness may be attained. These are the uses to which God gives us outward mercies. Love them thus, and delight in them, and use them thus, and spare not; yea, seek them thus, and be thankful for them. But when the creatures are given for so excellent a use, will you debase them all by making them only the fuel of your lusts, and the provisions for your flesh? And will you love them, and dote upon them in these base respects; while you utterly neglect their noblest use? You are just like children that cry for books, and can never have enow; but it is only to play with them because they are fine; but when they are set to learn and read them, they cry as much because they love it not: or like one that should spend his life and labour in getting the finest clothes, to dress his dogs and horses with, but himself goes naked and will not wear them.(Even Dionysius the tyrant was bountiful to philosophers. To Plato he gave above fourscore talents, Laert. in Platone, and much to Aristippus and many more, and he offered much to many philosophers that refused it. And so did Croesus.) Remember God's Promises

Direct. XII. Remember that God hath promised to provide for you, and that you shall lack nothing that is good for you, if you will live above these worldly things, and seek first his kingdom, and the righteousness thereof. And cannot you trust his promise? If you truly believe that he is God, and that he is true, and that his particular providence extendeth to the very numbering of your hairs,(Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7) you will sure trust him, rather than trust to your own forecast and industry. Do you think his provision is not better for you than your own? All your own care cannot keep you alive an hour, nor can prosper any of your labours, if you provoke him to blast them. And if you are not content with his provisions, nor submit yourselves to the disposal of his love and wisdom, you disoblige God, and provoke him to leave you to the fruits of your own care and diligence: and then you will find that it had been your wiser way to have trusted God. The Mischiefs of a Worldly Mind.

Direct. XIII. Think often on the dreadful importance and effects of the love of riches, or a worldly mind.(Look upon the face of the calamitous world, and inquire into the causes of all the oppressions, rapines, cruelties, and inhumanity which have made men so like to devils: look into the corrupted, lacerated churches, and inquire into the cause of their contentions, divisions, usurpations, malignity, and cruelty against each other: and you will find that pride and worldliness are the causes of all. When men of a proud and worldly mind have by fraud, and friendship, and simony usurped the pastorship of the churches, according to their minds and ends, they turn it into a malignant domination, and the carnal, worldly part of the church, is the great enemy and persecutor of the spiritual part; and the fleshly hypocrite, as Cain against Abel, is filled with envy against the serious believer, even out of the bitter displeasure of his mind, that his deceitful sacrifice is less respected.) 1. It is a most certain sign of a state of death and misery, where it hath the upper hand. It is the departing of the heart from God to creatures. See the malignity of it before. Good men have been overtaken with heinous sins; but it is hard to find where Scripture calleth any of them covetous. A heart secretly cleaving most to this present world and its prosperity, is the very killing sin of every hypocrite, yea, and of all ungodly men. 2. Worldliness makes the word unprofitable; and keepeth men from believing and repenting, and coming home to

God, and minding seriously the everlasting world. What so much hindereth the conversion of sinners, as the love and cares of earthly things? They cannot serve God and mammon: their treasure and hearts cannot chiefly be both in heaven and earth! They will not yield to the terms of Christ that love this world: they will not forsake all for a treasure in heaven. In a word, as you heard, the love of money is the root of all evil, and the love of the Father is not in the lovers of the world.(Matthew 6:25,; Matthew 13:22; Luke 16:13-14; Luke 14:33; Luke 18:22-23; Matthew 6:19-21; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; 1 John 2:15; Proverbs 28:9; Proverbs 18:8; James 4:3; Proverbs 28:20, "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.") 3. It destroyeth holy meditation and conference, and turneth the thoughts to worldly things: and it corrupteth prayer, and maketh it but a means to serve the flesh, and therefore maketh it odious to God. 4. it is the great hinderance of men's necessary preparation for death and judgment, and stealeth away their hearts and time till it is too late. 5. It is the great cause of contentions even among the nearest relations; and the cause of the wars and calamities of nations; and of the woeful divisions and persecutions of the church; when a worldly generation think that their worldly interest doth engage them, against self-denying and spiritual principles, practices, and persons. 6. It is the great cause of all the injustice, and oppression, and cruelty that rageth in the world. They would do as they would be done by, were it not for the love of money. It maketh men perfidious and false to all their friends and engagements: no vows to God; nor obligations to men, will hold a lover of the world.(James 5:1-5; 1 John 3:17.) The world is his god, and his worldly interest is his rule and law. 7. It is the great destroyer of charity and good works. No more is done for God and the poor, because the love of the world forbids it. 8. It disordereth and profaneth families; and betrayeth the souls of children and servants to the devil. It turneth out prayer, and reading the Scripture, and good books, and all serious speeches of the life to come, because their hearts are taken up with the world, and they have no relish of any thing but the provisions of their flesh. Even the Lord's own day cannot be reserved for holy works, nor a duty performed, but the world is interposing, or diverting the mind. 9. It tempteth men to sin against their knowledge, and to forsake the truth, and fit themselves to the rising side, and save their bodies and estates, whatever become of their souls. It is the very price that the devil gives for souls! With this he bought the soul of Judas, who went to the Pharisees, with a "What will you give me, and I will deliver him to you." With this he attempted Christ himself, Matthew 4:9, "All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." It is the cause of apostasy and unfaithfulness to God.(2 Timothy 4:10) And it is the price that sinners sell their God, their conscience, and their salvation for. 10. It depriveth the soul of holy communion with God, and comfort from him, and of all foretaste of the life to come, and finally of heaven itself.(b) For as the love of the world keepeth out the love of God and heaven, it must needs keep out the hopes and comforts which should arise from holy love. It would do much to cure the love of money, and of the world, if you knew how pernicious a sin it is.(1 Timothy 6:17-19) Consider the Lowliness of this Sin.

Direct. XIV. Remember how base a sin it is, and how dishonorable and debasing to the mind of man. If earth be baser than heaven, and money than God, then an earthly mind is baser than a heavenly mind. As the serpent's feeding on the dust is a baser life than that of angels, that are employed in admiring, and obeying, and praising the Most Holy God.

Consider God's Judgement

Direct. XV. Call yourselves to a daily reckoning, how you lay out all that God committeth to your trust; and try whether it be so as you would hear of it at judgment. If you did but use to sit in

judgment daily upon yourselves, as those that believe the judgment of God, it would make you more careful to use well what you have, than to get more; and it would quench your thirst after plenty and prosperity, when you perceived you must give so strict an account of it. The flesh itself will less desire it, when it finds it may not have the use of it.(Plato compareth our life to a game at tables. We may wish for a good throw, but whatever it be, we must play it as well as we can. Plutarch. de Tranquil. Anim.) Fight your Covetousness when it is Strong

Direct. XVI. When you find your covetousness most eager and dangerous, resolve most to cross it, and give more to pious or charitable uses than at another time. For a man hath reason to fly furthest from that sin, which he is most in danger of. And the acts tend to the increase of the habit. Obeying your covetousness doth increase it: and so the contrary acts, and the disobeying and displeasing it, do destroy it. This course will bring your covetousness into a despair of attaining its desire; and so will make it sit down and give over the pursuit. It is an open protesting against every covetous desire; and an effectual kind of repenting; and a wise and honest disarming sin, and turning its motions against itself, to its own destruction. Use it thus oft, and covetousness will think it wisdom to be quiet. Do not Save Heaven for Last

Direct. XVII. Above all take heed that you think not of reconciling God and mammon, and mixing heaven and earth to be your felicity, and of dreaming that you may keep heaven for a reserve at last, when the world hath been loved as your best, so long as you could keep it. Nothing so much defendeth worldliness, as a cheating hope, that you have it but in a subdued, pardoned degree; and that you are not worldlings when you are. And nothing so much supports this hope, as because you confess that heaven only must be your last refuge, and full felicity, and therefore you do something for it on the bye. But is not the world more loved, more sought, more delighted in, and harder held? Hath it not more of your hearts, your delight, desire, and industry? If you cannot let go all for heaven, and forsake all this world for a treasure above, you cannot be Christ’s true disciples, Luke 14:26-27, Luke 14:30, Luke 14:33.

Mortify the Flesh

Direct. XVIII. If ever you would overcome the love of the world, your great care must be to mortify the flesh; for the world is desired but as its provision. A mortified man hath no need of that which is a sensualist’s felicity. Quench your insatiable, feverish thirst, and then you will not make such a stir for drink. Cure the disease which enrageth your appetite; and that is the safest and cheapest way of satisfying it. Then you will be thankful to God, when you look on other men’s wealth and gallantry, that you need not these things. And you will think what a trouble and burden, and interruption of your better work and comfort it would be to you, to have so much land, and so many servants, and goods, and business, and persons to mind, as rich men have. And how much better you can enjoy God and yourself in a more retired, quiet state of life. But of this more in the next part.

Conclusion Did men but know how much of an ungodly, damnable state doth consist in the love of the world; and how much it is the enemy of souls; and how much of our religion consisteth in the contempt and conquest of it; and what is the meaning of their renouncing the world in their baptismal covenant; and how many millions the love of the world will damn for ever; they would not make such a stir for nothing, and spend all their days in providing for their perishing flesh; nor think them happiest that are richest; nor "boast themselves of their heart’s desire, and bless the

covetous whom the Lord abhorreth," Psalms 10:3. They would not think that so small a sin which Christians should not so much as "name," but in detestation, Ephesians 5:3; when God hath resolved that the "covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Corinthians 6:10; Ephesians 5:5; and a Christian must not so much as eat with them, 1 Cor. v.11. Did Christ say in vain, "Take heed and beware of covetousness," Luke 12:15. "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil," Habakkuk 2:9. Oh what deserving servants hath the world, that will serve it so diligently, so constantly, and at so costly a rate, when they beforehand know, that besides a little transitory, deluding pleasure, it will pay them with nothing but everlasting shame! Oh wonderful deceiving power, of such an empty shadow, or rather wonderful folly of mankind! That when so many ages have been deceived before us, and almost every one at death confesseth it did but deceive them, so many still should be deceived, and take no warning by such a world of examples! I conclude with Hebrews 13:5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

S. Directions Against Inordinate Man-pleasing

Directions Against Inordinate Man-pleasing or that overvaluing the Favour and Censure of Man, which is the Fruit of Pride, and a great cause of Hypocrisy; or, Directions against Idolizing Man. by Richard Baxter

CONTENTS Direction I. Do Not Run to the Opposite Extreme The Proper Respect We are to Have Towards Men Consider the Nature of Man in General Direct II. The Favour of Men is a Snare Direction III. Remember How Silly a Creature Man Is Direction IV. Remember the Judgment of God The Judgement of God Compared to that of Men Direction V. Why Honour Men so Much?

Direction VI. Men-Pleasing is Slavery Direction VII. Remember what a pitiful reward you seek.

Direction VIII. The Fleeting Nature of Honour Direction IX. Can You Please Men? The Folly of Trying to Please Men Direction X. Men-Pleasing a Vexation Direction XI. Remember Your True Business The Advantages of Pleasing God Rather than Men The Benefits of Seeking to Please God Signs of Living to Please God As in other cases, so in this, iniquity consisteth not simply in the heart's neglect of God, but in the preferring of some competitor, and prevalence of some object which standeth up for an opposite interest. And so the obeying man before God and against him, and the valuing the favour and approbation of man before or against the approbation of God, and the fearing of man's censure or displeasure more than God's, is an idolizing man, or setting him up in the place of God. It turneth our chiefest observance, and care, and labour, and pleasure, and grief into this human fleshly channel, and maketh all that to be but human in our hearts and lives, which (objectively) should be divine. Which is so great and dangerous a sin, partaking of so much impiety, hypocrisy, and pride, as that it deserveth a special place in my directions, and in all watchfulness and consideration to escape it. As all other creatures, so especially man, must be regarded and valued only in a due subordination and subserviency to God. If they be valued otherwise, they are made his enemies, and so are to be hated, and are made the principal engine of the ruin of such as overvalue them. See what the Scripture saith of this sin: Isaiah 2:22, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Matthew 23:9, "And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 23:8, "And be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master even Christ: but he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" Jeremiah 20:15, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." Psalms 118:6, Psalms 118:8-9, "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man,-yea, in princes." Job 32:21-22 "Let me not accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man: for I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." Job 21:4, "As for me, is my complaint to man? "Galatians 1:10, "Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of Christ." 1 Corinthians 4:3, "But with me it is a very small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment." Luke 14:26, "If a man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." "Blessed are ye when man shall revile you, and persecute

you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven," Matthew 5:1-12. "Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers," Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:22. 1 Thessalonians 2:4, "So we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who trieth our hearts." Jude 1:16, "Having men's persons in admiration because of advantage." This is enough to show you what Scripture saith of this inordinate man-pleasing, or respect to man: and now I shall proceed to direct you to escape it.

Direct. I. Understand well wherein the nature of this sin consisteth, that you may not run into the contrary extreme, but may know which way to bend your opposition. I shall therefore first show you, how far we may and must please men, and how far not. The Proper Respect We are to Have Towards Men Consider the Nature of Man in General

Direct II. Remember that the favour and pleasing of man is one of your snares, that would prevail against your pleasing God: therefore watch against the danger of it, as you must do against other earthly things.

Direct. III. Remember how silly a creature man is and that his favour can be no better than himself. The thoughts or words of a mortal worm are matters of no considerable value to us.

Direct. IV. Remember that it is the judgment of God alone, that your life or death for ever doth depend upon; and how little you are concerned in the judgment of man. The Judgement of God Compared to that of Men

Direct. V. Remember that the judgment of ungodly men, is corrupted and directed by the devil and to be overruled by their censures, or too much to fear them, is to be overruled by the devil, and to be afraid of his censures of. us. And will you honour him so much? Alas! it is he that puts those thoughts into the minds of the ungodly, and those reproachful words into their mouths. To prefer the judgment of a man before God's, is odious enough, though you did not prefer the devil's judgment.

Direct. VI. Consider what a slavery you choose, when you thus make yourselves the servants of every man, whose censures you fear, and whose approbation you are ambitious of. 1 Corinthians 7:23, "Ye are bought with a price. Be not ye the servants of men:" that is, do not needlessly enthral yourselves. What a task have men-pleasers! they have as many masters as beholders! No wonder if it take them off from the service of God; for the "friendship of the world is enmity to God;" and he that will thus be "a friend of the world, is an enemy to God," James 4:4. They cannot serve two masters God and the world. You know men will condemn you, if you be true to God: if, therefore, you must needs have the favour of men, you must take it alone without God's favour. A man-pleaser cannot be true to God, because he is a servant to the enemies of his service; the wind of a man's mouth will drive him about as the chaff, from any duty, and to any sin. How servile a person is a man-pleaser! How many masters hath he, and how mean ones! It perverteth the course of your hearts and lives, and turneth all from God to this unprofitable way.

Direct. VII. Remember what a pitiful reward you seek. "Verily," saith our Lord, concerning hypocrites and man-pleasers, "they have their reward,"Matthew 6:25. O miserable reward! The thought and breath of mortal men, instead of God-instead of heaven; this is their reward! Their happiness will be to lie in hell, and remember that they were well spoken of on earth! and that once they were accounted religious, learned, wise, or honourable! and to remember that they preferred

this reward be fore everlasting happiness with Christ! If this be not gain, your labour is all lost, which you lay out in hunting for applause. If this be enough to spend your time for, and to neglect your God for, and to lose your souls for, rejoice then in the hypocrite’s reward.

Direct. VIII. And remember that honour is such a thing as is found sooner by an honest contempt of it, than by an inordinate affection of it, and seeking it. It is a shadow which goeth from you if you follow it, and follows you as fast as you go from it. Whose names are now more honourable upon earth, than those prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and preachers, and holy, mortified christians, who in their days set lightest by the approbation of the world, and were made the scorn or foot-ball of the times in which they lived? Those that have been satisfied with the approbation of their heavenly Father, who saw them "in secret," have been "rewarded by him openly." It is, even in the eyes of rational men, a far greater honour to live to God, above worldly honour, than to seek it. And so much as a man is perceived to affect and seek it, so much he loseth of it: for he is thought to need it, and men perceive that he plays a low and pitiful game, that is so desirous of their applause! As they would contemn a man that should lick up the spittle of every man where he comes, so will they contemn him that liveth on their thoughts and breath, and honour him more that lives on God.

Direct. IX. If nothing else will cure this disease, at least let the impossibility of pleasing men, and attaining your ends, suffice against so fruitless an attempt. And here I shall show you how impossible it is, or, at least, a thing which you cannot reasonably expect. The Folly of Trying to Please Men

Direct. X. Remember what a life of unquietness and continual vexation you choose, if you place your peace or happiness in the good will or word of man. For having showed you how impossible a task you undertake, it must needs follow that the pursuit of it must be a life of torment. To engage yourselves in so great cares, when you are sure to be disappointed; to make that your end, which you cannot attain; to find that you labour in vain, and daily meet with displeasure instead of the favour you expected; must needs be a very grievous life. You are like one that dwelleth on the top of a mountain, and yet cannot endure the wind to blow upon him; or like him that dwelleth in a wood, and yet is afraid of the shaking of a leaf. You dwell among a world of ulcerated, selfish, contradictory, mutable, unpleasable minds, and yet you cannot endure their displeasure. Are you magistrates? The people will murmur at you, and those that are most incompetent and uncapable will be the forwardest to censure you, and think that they could govern much better than you. Those that bear the necessary burdens of the common safety and defence, will say that you oppress them, and the malefactors that are punished, will say you deal unmercifully by them; and those that have a cause never so unjust, will say you wrong them, if it go not on their side. Are you pastors and teachers? You will seem too rough to one, and too smooth to another; yea, too rough to the same man when by reproof or censure you correct his faults, who censureth you as too smooth and a friend to sinners, when you are to deal in the cause of others. No sermon that you preach is like to be pleasing to all your hearers; nor any of your ministerial works. Are you lawyers? The clients that lost their cause, behind your backs will call you unconscionable, and say you betrayed them; and those that prevailed, will call you covetous, and tell how much money you took of them, and how little you did for it: so that it is no wonder that among the vulgar your profession is the matter of their reproach. Are you physicians? You will be accused as guilty of the death of many that die; and as covetous takers of their money whether the patient die or live; for

this is the common talk of the vulgar, except with some few with whom your care has much succeeded. Are you tradesmen? Most men that buy of you are so selfish, that except you will beggar yourselves, they will say you deceive them, and deal unconscionably and sell too dear: little do they mind the necessary maintenance of your families, nor care whether you live or gain by your trading; but if you will wrong yourselves to sell them a good penny-worth, they will say you are very honest men: and yet when you are broken, they will accuse you of imprudence, and defrauding your creditors. You must buy dear and sell cheap, and live by the loss, or else displease.

Direct. XI. Remember still that the pleasing of God is your business in the world, and that in pleasing him your souls may have safety, rest, and full content, though all the world should be displeased with you. God is enough for you; and his approbation and favour is your portion and reward. How sweet and safe is the life of the sincere and upright ones, that study more to be good than to seem good, and think if God accept them that they have enough! O what a mercy is an upright heart! which renounceth the world, and all therein that stands in competition with his God; and taketh God for his God indeed even for his Lord, his Judge, his Portion, and his All: who in temptation remembereth the eye of God, and in all his duty is provoked and ruled by the will and pleasure of his Judge, and regardeth the eye and thoughts of man, but as he would do the presence of a bird or beast, unless as piety, justice, or charity, require him to have respect to man, in due subordination to God: who when men applaud him as a person of excellent holiness and goodness, is fearful and solicitous lest the all-knowing God should think otherwise of him than his applauders: and under all the censures, reproaches, and slanders of man, yea, (though through temptation good men should thus use him,) can live in peace upon the approbation of his God alone; and can rejoice in his justification by his righteous Judge and gracious Redeemer, though the inconsiderable censures of men condemn him. Verily I cannot apprehend, how any other man but this can live a life of true and solid peace and joy. If God’s approbation and favour quiet you not, nothing can rationally quiet you. If the pleasing of him does not satisfy you, though men, though good men, though all men should be displeased with you, I know not how or when you will be satisfied. Yea, if you be above the censures and displeasure of the profane and not also of the godly, (when God will permit them, as Job’s wife and friends, to be your trial,) it will not suffice to an even, contented, quiet life. And here consider The Advantages of Pleasing God Rather than Men

1. If you seek first to please God and are satisfied therein, you have but one to please instead of multitudes; and a multitude of masters are hardlier pleased than one.

2. And it is one that putteth upon you nothing that is unreasonable, for quantity or quality.

3. And one that is perfectly wise and good, not liable to misunderstand your case and actions.

4. And one that is most holy, and is not pleased in iniquity or dishonesty.

5. And he is one that is impartial and most just, and is no respecter of persons, Acts 10:34.

6. And he is one that is a competent judge, that hath fitness and authority, and is acquainted with your hearts, and every circumstance and reason of your actions.

7. And he is one that perfectly agreeth with himself, and putteth you not upon contradictions or impossibilities.

8. And he is one that is constant and unchangeable; and is not pleased with one thing to-day, and another contrary to-morrow; nor with one person this year, whom he will be weary of the next.

9. And he is one that is merciful, and requireth you not to hurt yourselves to please him: nay, he is pleased with nothing of thine but that which tendeth to thy happiness, and displeased with nothing but that which hurts thyself or others, as a father that is displeased with his children when they defile or hurt themselves.

10. He is gentle, though just, in his censures of thee; judging truly, but not with unjust rigour, nor making your actions worse than they are.

11. He is one that is not subject to the passions of men, which blind their minds, and carry them to injustice.

12. He is one that will not be moved by tale-bearers, whisperers, or false accusers, nor can be perverted by any misinformation. The Benefits of Seeking to Please God

Consider also the benefits of taking up with the pleasing of God. 1. The pleasing of him is your happiness itself; the matter of pure, and full, and constant comfort, which you may have continually at hand, and no man can take from you. Get this and you have the end of man; nothing can be added to it, but the perfection of the same, which is heaven itself.

2. What abundance of disappointments and vexations will you escape, which tear the very hearts of man-pleasers, and fill their lives with unprofitable sorrows!

3. It will guide and order your cares, and desires, and thoughts, and labours to their right and proper end, and prevent the perverting of them, and spending them in sin and vanity on the creature.

4. It will make your lives not only to be divine but this divine life to be sweet and easy, while you set light by human censures which would create you prejudice and difficulties. When others glory in wit, and wealth, and strength, you would glory in this, that you know the Lord, Jeremiah 9:23-24.

5. As God is above man, thy heart and life is highly ennobled by having so much respect to God, and rejecting inordinate respect to man: this is indeed to walk with God.

6. The sum of all graces is contained in this sincere desire to please thy God, and contentedness in this so far as thou findest it attained. Here is faith, and humility, and love, and, holy desire, and trust and the fear of God joined together. You "sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and make him your fear, and dread, and sanctuary," Isaiah 8:13-14.

7. If human approbation be good for you and worth your having, this is the best way to it; for God hath the disposal of it. "If a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him," Proverbs 16:7. God does this by appeasing their wrath, or restraining them from intended evil, or doing us good by that which they intend for hurt.

Signs of Living to Please God

See therefore that you live upon God's approval as that which you chiefly seek, and will suffice you: which you may discover by these signs.

1. You will be most careful to understand the Scripture, to know what doth please and displease God.

2. You will be more careful in the doing of every duty, to fit it to the pleasing of God than men.

3. You will look to your hearts, and not only to your actions; to your ends, and thoughts, and the inward manner and degree.

4. You will look to secret duties as well as public and to that which men see not, as well as unto that which they see.

5. You will reverence your consciences, and have much to do with them, and will not slight them: when they tell you of God's displeasure, it will disquiet you; when they tell you of his approval, it will comfort you.

6. Your pleasing men will be charitable for their good, and pious in order to the pleasing of God, and not proud and ambitious for your honour with them, nor impious against the pleasing of God.

7. Whether men be pleased or displeased, or how they judge of you, or what they call you, will seem a small matter to you, as their own interest, in comparison to God's judgment. You live not on them. You can bear their displeasure, censures, and reproaches, if God be but pleased. These will be your evidences.

Chapter 97

S. Directions Against Sinful Desires and Discontent

Directions Against Sinful Desires and Discontent by Richard Baxter Contributed by Steve Doan

I shall say but little here of this subject, because I have already treated so largely of it, in my book of "Self-denial," and in that of "Crucifying the World;" and here before in chap. 4 part. 6 against worldliness and flesh-pleasing, and here against sinful love, which is the cause.

How sinful desires may be known, you may gather from the discoveries of sinful love: as, 1. When you desire that which is forbidden you. 2. Or that which will do you no good, upon a misconceit that it is better or more needful than it Isaiah 3:1-26. Or when you desire it too eagerly, and must needs have it, or else you will be impatient or discontented, and cannot quietly be ruled and disposed of by God, but are murmuring at his providence and your lot. 4. Or when you desire it too hastily, and cannot stay God's time. 5. Or else too greedily as to the measure, being not content with God's allowance, but must needs have more than he thinks fit for you. 6. Or specially when your desires are perverse, preferring lesser things before greater; desiring bodily and transitory things more than the mercies for your souls which will be everlasting. 7 When you desire any thing ultimately and merely for the flesh, without referring it to God, it is a sin. Even your daily bread, and all your comforts, must be desired but as provender for your horse, that he may the better go his journey, even as provision for your bodies, to fit them to the better and more cheerful service of your souls and God. 8. Much more when your desires are for wicked ends, (as to serve your lust, or pride, or covetousness, or revenge,) they are wicked desires. 9. And when they are injurious to others.

Direct. I Be well acquainted with your own condition, and consider what it is that you have most need of; and then you will find that you have so much grace and mercy to desire for your souls, without which you are lost for ever, and that you have a Christ to desire, and an endless life with God to desire, that it will quench all your thirst after the things below. This, if any thing, will make you wiser, when you see you have greater things to mind. A man that is in present danger of his life, will not he solicitous for pins or trinkets: and the hopes of a lordship or a kingdom will cure the desire of little things: a man that needeth a physician for the dropsy or consumption, will scarce long for children's balls or tops. And methinks a man that is going to heaven or hell, should have somewhat greater than worldly things to long for. Oh what a vain and doting thing is a carnal mind; that hath pardon, and grace, and Christ and heaven, and God, to think of, and that with speed before it be too late; and can forget them all, or not regard them, and eagerly long for some little inconsiderable trifle; as if they said, I must needs taste of such a dish before I die; I must needs have such a house, or a child, or friend, before I go to another world O study what need thy distressed soul hath of a Christ, and of peace with God, and preparation for eternity, and what need thy darkened mind hath of more knowledge, and thy dead and carnal heart of more life, and tenderness, and love to God, and communion with him; feel these as thou hast cause, and the eagerness of thy carnal desires will be gone.

Direct. II. Remember how much your carnal desires do aggravate the weakness of your spiritual desires, and make the sin more odious and inexcusable. Are you so eager for a husband, a wife, a

child, for wealth, for preferment, or such things, while you are so cold and indifferent in your desires after God, and grace, and glory? Your desires after these are not so earnest! They make you not so importunate and restless; they take not up your thoughts both day and night; they set you not so much on contrivances and endeavours: you can live as quietly without more grace, or assurance of salvation, or communion with God, as if you were indifferent in the business; but you must needs have that which you desire in the world, or there is no quiet with you. Do you consider what a horrible contempt of God, and grace, and heaven, is manifested by this? Either you are regenerate or unregenerate. If you are regenerate, all your instructions, and all your experience of the worth of spiritual things, and the vanity of things temporal, do make it a heinous sin in you to be now so eager for those things which you have so often called vanity, while you are so cold towards God, whose goodness you have had so great experience of. Do you know no better yet the difference between the creature and the Creator? Do you yet no better understand your necessities and interest, and what it is that you live upon, and must trust to for your everlasting blessedness and content? If you are unregenerate, (as all are that love any thing better than God,) what a madness is it for one that is condemned in law to endless torments, and shall be quickly there, if he be not regenerate and justified by Christ, to be thirsting so eagerly for this or that thing, or person, upon earth, when he should presently bestir him with all his might to save his soul from endless misery! How incongruous are these desires to the good and bad!

Direct. III. Let every sinful desire humble you, for the worldliness and fleshliness which it discovereth to be yet unmortified in you; and turn your desires to the mortifying of that flesh and concupiscence which is the cause. If you did not yet love the world, and the things that are in the world, you would not be so eager for them. If you were not too carnal, and did not mind too much the things of the flesh, you would not be so earnest for them as you are. It should be a grievous thing to your hearts to consider what worldliness and fleshliness this showeth to be yet there. That you should set so much by the creature, as to be unable to bear the want of it; is this renouncing the world and flesh? The thing you need is not that which you much desire; but a better heart, to know the vanity of the creature, to be dead to the world, and to be able to bear the want or loss of any thing in it; and a fuller mortification of the flesh: mortifying and not satisfying it, is your work.

Direct. IV. Ask your hearts seriously whether God in Christ be enough for them, or not? If they say, no, they renounce him and all their hope of heaven; for no man takes God for his God that takes him not for his portion, and as enough for him: if they say, yea, then you have enough to stop the mouth of your fleshly desires, while your hearts confess that they have enough in God. Should that soul that hath a filial interest in God, and an inheritance in eternal life, be eager for any conveniences and contentments to the flesh? If God be not enough for you, you will never have enough. Turn to him more, and know him better, if you would have a satisfied mind.

Direct. V. Remember that every sinful desire is a rebelling of your wills against the will of God; and that it is his will that must govern and dispose of all, and your wills must be conformed to his; yea, that you must take pleasure and rest in the will of God. Reason the case with your hearts, and say, Who is it that is the governor of the world? and who is to rule me and dispose of my affairs? Is it I or God? Whose will is it that must lead, and whose must follow? Whose will is better guided, God's or mine? Either it is his will that I shall have what I desire, or not if it be, I need not be so eager, for I shall have it in his time and way; if it be not his will, is it fit for me to murmur and strive against him? Remember that your discontents and carnal desires are so many accusations brought in

against God; as if you said, Thou hast not dealt well or wisely, or mercifully by me; I must have it better: I will not stand to thy will and government; I must have it as I will, and have the disposal of myself.

Direct. VI. Observe how your eager desires are condemned by yourselves in your daily prayers, or else they make your prayers themselves condemnable. If you pray that the will of God may be done, why do your wills rebel against it, and your desires contradict your prayers? And if you ask no more than your daily bread, why thirst you after more? But if you pray as you desire, Lord, let my will be done, and my selfish, carnal desire be fulfilled, for I must needs have this or that; then what an abominable prayer is this! Desire as you must pray.

Direct. VII. Remember what covenant you have made with God; that you renounced the world and the flesh, and took him for your Lord, and King, and Father, and yielded up yourselves as his own, as his subject, and as his child, to be disposed of ruled, and provided for by him; and this covenant is essential not only to your Christianity, but to your taking him for your God. And do you repent of it? or will you break it, and forfeit all the benefits of the covenant? If you will needs have the disposal of yourselves, you discharge God of his covenant and fatherly care for you; and then what will become of you, if he so forsake you?

Direct. VIII. Bethink you how unmeet you are to be the choosers of your own condition. You foresee not what that person, or thing, or place will prove to you, which you so eagerly desire: for aught you know it may be your undoing, or the greatest misery that ever befell you. Many a one hath cried with Rachel, "Give me children or else I die," Genesis 30:1, that have died by the wickedness and unkindness of their children. Many a one hath been violent in their desires of a husband or a wife, that afterwards have broken their hearts, or proved a greater affliction to them than any enemy they had in the world. Many a one hath been eager for riches, and prosperity, and preferment, that hath been ensnared by them, to the damnation of his soul. Many a one hath been earnest for some office, dignity, or place of trust, which hath made it a great increaser of his sin and misery. And it is flesh and self that is the eager desirer of things that are against the will of God, and nothing is so blind and partial as self and flesh. You think not your child a competent judge of what is best for him, and make not his desires, but your own understanding, the guide and rule of your dealings with him, or disposals of him. And are you fitter choosers for yourselves in comparison of God, than your child is in comparison of you? Either you take God for your Father, or you do not. If you do not, call him not Father, and hope not for mercy and salvation from him: if you do, is he not wise and good enough to dispose of you, and to determine what is best for you, and to choose for you?

Direct. IX. Remember that it is one of the greatest plagues on this side hell, to be given up to our own desires, and that by your eagerness and discontents you provoke God thus to give you up. "So I gave them up to their own heart’s lust, and they walked in their own counsels: Oh that my people had hearkened to me!" &c. Psalms 81:12. "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts," &c. Romans 1:24, Romans 1:26. "For this cause God gave them up to vile affections," Romans 1:28. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient," 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. God may give you that which you so eagerly desire, as he gave "Israel a king, even in his anger," Hosea 13:10-11. Or as he gave the Israelites "their own

desire, even flesh which he rained upon them as dust, and feathered fowls as the sand of the sea; they were not estranged from their lust but while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them," Psalms 78:27, Psalms 78:29-31. "They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert, and he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls," Psalms 106:14-15. God may say, Follow your own lust, and if you are so eager, take that which you desire; take that person, that thing, that dignity which you are so earnest for; but take my curse and vengeance with it: never let it do you good, but be a snare and torment to you. "Let a fire come out of the bramble and devour you," Judges 9:15.

Direct. X. Take heed lest concupiscence and partiality entice you to justify your sinful desires and take them to be lawful. For if you do so, you will not repent of them, you will not confess them to God, nor beg pardon of them, nor beg help against them, nor use the means to extinguish them; but will cherish them, and be angry with all that are against them, and love those tempters best that encourage them: and how dangerous a case is this! And yet nothing is more ordinary among sinners, than to be blinded by their own affections, and think that they have sufficient reason to desire that which they do desire. And affection maketh them very witty and resolute to deceive themselves. It setteth them on studying all that can be said to defend their enemy, and put a deceitful gloss upon their cause. Try your desires well (as I before directed you). Q. 1 Is the thing that you desire a thing that God hath hid you desire, or promised in his word to give you, (as grace, Christ, and heaven)? If it be so, then desire it, and spare not; but if not so, Q. 2. Why then are you so eager for it when you should at most have but a submissive, conditional desire after it? Q. 3 Nay, is it not something which you are forbidden to desire? If so, dare you excuse it?

Direct. XI. Remember that concupiscence or sinful desire is the beginning of all sin of commission, and leadeth directly to the act. Theft, adultery, murder, fraud, contention, and all such mischiefs, begin in inordinate desires. For "every one is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed: then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death," James 1:14-15. By "lust" is meant, any fleshly desire or will; therefore when the apostle forbiddeth gluttony and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, strife and envying, he strikes at the root of all in this one word, "make no provision for the flesh to satisfy its lusts," (or wills,) Romans 13:13-14.

Direct. XII. Pull off the deceiving visor, and see that which you so eagerly desire, as it is. What will it be to you at the last? It is now in its spring or summer; but see it in its fall and winter? It is now in its youth; but see it withered to skin and bone in its decrepit age. It is now in its clean and curious ornaments; but see it in its uncleanness and in its homely dress: cure your deceit, and your desire is cured.

Direct. XIII. Promise not yourselves long life, but live as dying men, with your grave and winding-sheet always in your eye; and it will cure your thirst after the creature when you are sensible how short a time you must enjoy it, and especially how near you are unto eternity. This is the apostle’s method, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use the world, as not abusing it (or as if they used it not): for the fashion of this world passeth away." So you will desire as if you desired not, when you

perceive well how quickly the thing desired will pass away.

Direct. XIV. In all your desires, remember the account as well as the thing desired. Think not only what it is now at hand, but what account you must make to God of it; " for to whom men give or commit much, of them they require the more," Luke 12:48. Will you thirst after more power, more honour, more wealth, when you remember that you have the more to give account of? Matthew 25:1-46 :Have you not enough to reckon for already, unless you had hearts to use it better?

Direct. XV. Keep yourselves to the holy use of all your mercies, and let not the flesh devour them, nor any inordinate appetite fare ever the better for them when you have them, and this will powerfully extinguish the inordinate desire itself. We are in little danger of being over eager after things spiritual and holy, for the honour of God; resolve therefore that all you have shall he thus sanctified to God, and used for him, and not at all to satisfy any inordinate desire of the flesh, and then the flesh will cease its suit, when it finds it fares never the better for it. You are able to do much in this way if you will. If you cannot presently suppress the desire, you may presently resolve to deny the flesh the thing desired, (as David would not drink the water though he longed for it, 2 Samuel 23:15, 2 Samuel 23:17,) and you may presently deny it the more of that you have. If you cannot forbear your thirst, you can forbear to drink; if you cannot forbear to be hungry, you can forbear to eat whatever is forbidden or unfit: if Eve must needs have an appetite to the forbidden fruit, yet she might have commanded her hands and teeth, and not have eaten it. If you cannot otherwise cool your desire of ostentatious apparel, wear that which is somewhat homelier than else you would have worn, on purpose to rebuke and control that desire: if you cannot otherwise quench your covetous desires, give so much the more to the poor to cross that desire. You cannot say that the outward act is out of your power, if you be but willing.

Direct. XVI. When your desires are over eager, bethink you of the mercies which you have received already and do possess. Hath God done so much for you, and are you still calling for more, even of that which is unnecessary, when you should he giving thanks for what you have? This unthankful greediness is an odious sin. Think what you have already for soul and body, estate and friends; and will not all this quiet you, (even this with Christ and heaven,) unless you have the other lust or fancy satisfied, and unless God humor you in your sick desires?

Direct. XVII Understand how little it will satisfy you, if God should give you all that you earnestly desire. When you have it, it will not quiet you, nor answer your expectations. You think it will make you happy, and be exceeding sweet to you; but it deceiveth you, and you promise yourselves you know not what, and therefore desire you know not what. It would be to you but like a dreaming feast, which would leave you hungry in the morning, Isaiah 29:8.

Direct. XVIII. Remember still that the greatest hurt that the creature can do thee, is in being over-loved and desired, and it is never so dangerous to thee as when it seemeth most desirable. If you remembered this aright, you would be cast into the greatest fear and caution, when any thing below is presented very pleasing and desirable to you.

Direct. XIX. Consider that your desires do but make those wants a burden and misery to you which otherwise would be none. Thirst makes the want of drink a torment, which to another is no pain or trouble at all. The lustful wanton is ready to die for love of the desired mate which nobody else cares for, nor is ever the worse for being without. A proud ambitious Haman thinks himself undone

if he be not honoured, and is vexed if he be but cast down into the mean condition of a farmer; when many thousand honest, contented men live merrily and quietly in as low a condition. It is men's own desires, and not their real wants, which do torment them.

Direct. XX. Remember that when you have done all, if God love you he will be the chooser, and will not grant your sick desires, but will correct you for them till they are cured. If your child cry for a knife, or for unwholesome meat, or any thing that would hurt him, you will quiet him with the rod if he give not over. And it is a sign some rod of God is near you, when you are sick for this, or that, or the other thing, and will not be quiet and content unless your fancy and concupiscence be humored.

S. Directions Against Sinful Fear

Directions Against Sinful Fear by Richard Baxter

Fear is a necessary passion in man, which is planted in nature for the restraining of us from sin, and driving us on to duty, and preventing misery. It is either God, or devils, or men, or inferior creatures, or ourselves, that we fear. God must be feared as he is God; as he is great, and holy, and just, and true; as our Lord, and King, and Judge, and Father; and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom. Devils must be feared only as subordinate to God, as the executioners of his wrath; and so must men, and beasts, and fire, and water, and other creatures he feared, and not otherwise. We must so discern and fear a danger as to avoid it. Ourselves we are less apt to fear, because we know that we love ourselves. But there is no creature that we have so much cause to fear, as our folly, weakness, and willfulness in sin.

Fear is sinful, 1. When it proceedeth from unbelief, or a distrust of God. 2. When it ascribeth more to the creature than is its due: as when we fear devils or men, as great, or bad, or as our enemies, without due respect to their dependence upon the will of God: when we fear a chained creature, as if he were unchained. 3. When we fear God upon mistake or error, or fear that in him which is not in him, or is not to be feared. As when we fear lest he will break his promise; lest he will condemn the keepers of his covenant; lest he will not forgive the penitent that hate their sin; lest he will despise the contrite; lest he will not hear the prayers of the humble, faithful soul; lest he will fail them, and forsake them; lest he will not cause all things to work together for their good; lest he will forsake his church; lest Christ will not come again; lest our bodies shall not be raised; lest there be no life of glory for the just, or no immortality of souls: all such fears as these are sinful. 4. When our fear is so immoderate in degree, as to distract us, or hinder us from faith and prayer, and make us melancholy: or when it hindereth love, and praise, and thanks, and necessary joy; and tendeth not to drive us to God, and to the use of means to avoid the danger, but to drive us from God, and kill our hope, and make us sit down in despair.

Directions Against Sinful Fear of God.

Direct. I. Know God in his goodness, mercifulness, and truth, and it will banish sinful fears of him: for they proceed from the ignorance or unbelief of some of these; or not considering and applying them to the cause that is before you. Psalms 9:10, "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee."

Direct. II. Know God in Jesus Christ the Mediator, and come to him by him. And then you many have "access with boldness and confidence," Ephesians 3:12. We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by his blood, by the new and living way which he hath consecrated us, through the veil, that is to say, for his flesh. And having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," Hebrews 10:19-22. The sight of Christ by faith should banish immoderate fear. Matthew 14:27, "Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid."

Direct. III. Understand the intention of the gospel, and the freeness of the covenant of grace, and then you will there find abundant encouragement against the matter of inordinate fears.

Direct. IV. Employ yourselves as much as possible in love and praise: for love expelleth tormenting fear; there is no fear in love, 1 John 4:18.

Direct. V. Remember God's particular mercies to yourselves: for those will persuade you that he will use you kindly, when you find that he hath done so already. As when Manoah said, "We shall surely die because we have seen God;" his wife answered, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received an offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things," Judges 13:22-23.

Direct. VI. Labour to clear up your title to the promises and special interest in Christ. Otherwise the doubts of that will be still feeding and justifying your fears.

Direct. VII. Consider what a horrible injury it is to God, to think of him as you do of the devil, as an enemy to humble, willing souls, and a destroyer of them, and an adversary to them that diligently seek him; of whom he is a lover and rewarder, Hebrews 11:6. And so to think of God as evil, and fear him upon such misapprehensions.

Direct. VIII. Observe the sinfulness of your fear in the effects; how it driveth you from God, and hindereth faith, and love, and thankfulness, and discourageth you from prayer, and sacraments, and all duty. And therefore it must needs be pleasing to the devil, and displeasing to God, and no way to be pleaded for or justified.

Direct IX. Mark how you contradict the endeavours of God, in his word, and by his ministers. Do you find God driving any from him, and frightening away souls that would fain be his? Or doth he not prepare the way himself, and reconcile the world to himself in Christ, and then send his ambassadors in his name and stead to beseech them to be reconciled unto God, and to tell them that all things are ready, and compel them to come in.(2 Corinthians 5:19-20; Luke 14:17; Matthew 22:8.)

Direct. X. Consider how thou wrongest others, and keepest them from coming home to God. When they see thee terrified in a way of piety, they will fly from it as if some enemies or robbers were in the way. If you tread fearfully, others will fear there is some quicksand. If you tremble when you enter the ship with Christ, others will think he is an unfaithful pilot, or that it is a leaking vessel. Your fear discourageth them.

Direct. XI. Remember how remediless, as to comfort, you leave yourselves, while you inordinately fear him, who alone must comfort you against all your other fears. If you fear your remedy, what shall cure the fear of your disease? If you fear your meat, what shall cure your fear of hunger? If you fear him that is most good and faithful, and the friend of every upright soul, what shall ease you of your fear of the wicked and the enemies of holy souls? If you fear your Father, who shall comfort you against your foes? You cast away all peace, when you make God your terror.

Direct. XII. Yet take heed lest under this pretense you cast away the necessary fear of God; even such as belongeth to men in your condition, to drive them out of their sin and security unto Christ, and such as the truth of his threatenings require. For a senseless presumption and contempt of God, are a sin of a far greater danger.

Directions Against Sinful Fear of the Devil

Direct. I. Remember that the devil is chained up, and wholly at the will and beck of God. He could not touch Job, nor an ox, nor an ass of his, till he had permission from God, Job 1:1-22. He cannot appear to thee nor hurt thee unless God give him leave.

Direct. II. Labour therefore to make sure of the love of God, and then thou art safe; then thou hast God, his love and promise, always to set against the devil.

Direct. III. Remember that Christ hath conquered the devil in his temptations, on the cross, by his resurrection and ascension. He "destroyed through death him that had the power of death, even the devil, that he might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Hebrews 2:14-15. The prince of this world is conquered and cast out by him, and wilt thou fear a conquered foe?

Direct. IV. Remember that thou art already delivered from his power and dominion, if thou be renewed by the Spirit of God. And therefore let his own be afraid of him, that are under his power, and not the free-men and redeemed ones of Christ. God hath delivered thee in the day that he converted thee, from a thousand-fold greater calamity than the seeing of the devil would be; and having been saved from his greatest malice, you should not over-fear the less.

Direct. V. Remember what an injury it is to God, and to Christ that conquered him, to fear the devil, while God is your protector (any otherwise than as the instrument of God's displeasure): it seemeth as much as to say, I fear lest the devil be too hard for God; or lest God cannot deliver me from him.

Direct. VI. Remember how you honour the devil by fearing him, and pleasure him by thus honouring him. And will you not abhor to honour and please such an enemy of God and you? This is it that he would have; to be feared instead of God he glorieth in it as part of his dominion: as tyrants rejoice to see men fear them, as those that can destroy them when they will, so the devil triumpheth in your fears as his honour. When God reprehendeth the idolatry of the Israelites, it is as they feared their idols of wood and stone. To fear them, showed that they took them for their gods, 2 Kings 17:38-39; Daniel 6:26.

Direct. VII. Consider that it is a folly to be inordinately fearful of that which never did befall thee, and never befalleth one of many hundred thousand men: I mean any terrible appearance of the devil. Thou never sawest him; nor hearest credibly of but very few in an age that see him (besides witches). This fear therefore is irrational, the danger being utterly improbable.

Direct. VIII. Consider that if the devil should appear to thee, yea, and carry thee to the top of a mountain, or the pinnacle of the temple, and talk to thee with blasphemous temptations, it would be no other than what thy Lord himself submitted to; who was still the dearly beloved of the Father, Matthew 4:1-25. One sin is more terrible than this.

Direct. IX. Remember that if God should permit him to appear to thee, it might turn to thy very great advantage; by killing all thy unbelief, or doubts, of angels, and spirits, and the unseen world. It would sensibly prove to thee that there is indeed an unhappy race of spirits, who envy man and seek his ruin; and so would more convince thee of the evil of sin, the danger of souls, the need of godliness, and the truth of Christianity. And it is like this is one cause why the devil no more

appeareth in the world, not only because it is contrary to the ordinary government of God, who will have us live by faith and not by sight; but also because the devil knoweth how much it would do to destroy his kingdom, by destroying infidelity, atheism, and security, and awakening men to faith, and fear, and godliness. The fowler or the angler must not come in sight, lest he spoil his game by frightening it away.

Direct. X. If it be the spiritual temptations and molestations only of Satan which you fear, remember that you have more cause to fear yourselves, for he can but tempt you; and if you do not more against yourselves, than all the devils in hell can do, you will never perish. And if you are willing to accept and yield to Christ, you need not inordinately fear either Satan or yourselves. For it is in the name and strength of Christ, and under his conduct and protection, that you are to begin and finish your warfare. And the Spirit that is in us, is greater and stronger than the spirit that is in the world, and that molesteth us, 1 John 4:4. And the "Father that giveth us to Christ is greater than all, and none can pluck us out of his hands," John 10:29. "And the God of peace will tread down Satan under our feet," Romans 16:20. If it were in his power he would molest us daily, and we had never escaped so far as we have done: our daily experience telleth us that we have a Protector.

Directions Against the Sinful Fear of Men, and Sufferings by Them.

Direct. I. Ground thy soul and hopes on Christ, and lay up thy treasure in heaven; be not a worldling that liveth in hope of happiness in the creature; and then thou art so far above the fear of men, as knowing that thy treasure is above their reach, and thy foundation and fortress safe from their assaults. It is a base, hypocritical, worldly heart that maketh you immoderately afraid of men. Are you afraid lest they should storm and plunder heaven? Or lest they cast you into hell? Or lest they turn God against you? Or lest they bribe or overawe your Judge? No, no! These are none of your fears! No; you are not so much as afraid lest they hinder one of your prayers from prevailing with God; nor lest their prison walls and chains should keep out God and his Spirit from you, and force you from your communion with him! You are not afraid lest they forcibly rob you of one degree of grace, or heavenly-mindedness, or hopes of the life to come! (If it be lest they hinder you from these by tempting or affrighting you into sin, (which is all the hurt they can do your souls,) then you are the more engaged to cast away the fears of their hurting your bodies, because that is their very temptation to hurt your souls.) No; it is their hurting of your flesh, the diminishing your estates, the depriving you of your liberty or worldly accommodations, or of your lives, which is the thing you fear. And doth not this show how much your hearts are yet on earth? And how much unmortified worldliness and fleshliness is still within you? And how much yet your hearts are false to God and heaven? Oh how the discovery should humble you! To find that you are yet no more dead to the things of the world, and that the cross of Christ hath yet no more crucified it to you! To find that yet the fleshly interest is so powerful in you, and the interest of Christ and heaven is so low! that God seemeth not enough for you, and that you cannot take heaven alone for your portion, but are so much afraid of losing earth! O presently search into the bottom of this corruption in your hearts, and lament your worldliness and hypocrisy, and work it out, and set your hearts and hopes above, and be content with God and heaven alone, and then this inordinate fear of man will have nothing left to work upon.

Direct. II. Set God against man, and his wisdom against their deceit, and his love and mercy against their malice and cruelty, and his power against their impotency, and his truth, and omniscience, and righteousness against their slanders and lies, and his promises against their threatenings; and then if yet thou art inordinately afraid of man, thou must confess that in that measure thou believest not in God. If God be not wise enough, and good enough, and just enough, and powerful enough to save thee, so far as it is best for thee to he saved, then he is not God: away with atheism, and then fear not man.

Direct. III. Remember what man is that thou art afraid of. He is a bubble raised by Providence, to toss about the world, and for God to honor himself by or upon. He is the mere product of his Maker's will: his breath is in his nostrils! He is hastening to his dust, and in that day his worldly hopes and thoughts do perish with him. He is a worm that God can in one moment tread into the earth and hell. He is a dream, a shadow, a dry leaf or a little chaff, that is blown awhile about the world.(Job 13:25; Psalms 1:5-6; Psalms 68:2; Psalms 73:20; Job 20:8) He is just ready, in the height of his pride and fury, to drop into the grave; and that same man, or all those men, whom now thou fearest, shall one of these days most certainly lie rotting in the dust, and he hid in darkness, lest their ugly sight and stink be an annoyance to the living. Where now are all the proud ones that made such a bustle in the world but awhile ago? In one age they look big, and boast of their power, and rebel, and usurp authority, and are mad to be great and rulers in the world, or persecute the ministers and people of the Lord; and in the next (or in the same) they are viler than the dirt; their carcasses are buried, or their bones scattered abroad, and made the horror and wonder of beholders. And is this a creature to he feared above God, or against God? See Isaiah 51:7, "Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." Isaiah 2:22, "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Psalms 146:3-4, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help: his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." When Herod was magnified as a god, he could not save himself from being devoured alive by worms. When Pharaoh was in his pride and glory, he could not save his people from frogs, and flies, and lice. Saith God to Sennacherib, "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn,—and hath shaken her head at thee: whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed, and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted thine eyes on high?" Oh what a worm is man that you are so afraid of!

Direct. IV. Remember that men as well as devils are chained, and dependent upon God, and have no power but what he giveth them, and can do nothing but by his permission. And if God will have it done, thou hast his promise that it shall work unto thy good, Romans 8:28. And are you afraid lest God should do you good by them? If you see the knife or lancet in an enemy's hand only, you might fear it; but if you see it in the surgeon's or in a father's hand, though nature will a little shrink, yet reason will forbid you to make any great matter of it, or inordinately to fear. What if God will permit Joseph's brethren to bind him, and sell him to the Amalekites; and his master's wife to cause him to be imprisoned? Is he not to be trusted in all this, that he will turn it to his good? What if he will permit Shimei to curse David; or the king to cast Daniel into the lions' den; or the three confessors into the furnace of fire? Do you believe that your Father's will is the disposer of all?

And yet are you afraid of man? Our Lord told Pilate when he boasted of his power to take away his life or save it, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above," John 19:1-42 :II.

Objection: We Fear Them Only as God's Instruments.

I know you will say that it is only as God's instruments that you fear in them, and that if you were certain of his favour, and were not first afraid of his wrath, you should not fear the wrath of men.

Answer. By this you may see then what it is to be disobedient, and to cherish your fears of God's displeasure, and to hinder your own assurance of his love, when this must be the cause of, or the pretense for, so many other sins. But if really you fear them but as the instruments of God's displeasure; 1. Why then did you no more fear his displeasure before, when the danger from men did not appear? You know God never lacks instruments to execute his wrath or will. 2. And why fear you not the sin which doth displease him more than the instruments, when they could do you no hurt were it not for sin? 3. And why do you not more fear them as tempters than as afflicters? and consequently why fear you not their flatteries, and enticements, and preferments, and your prosperity, more than adversity, when prosperity more draweth you away to sin? 4. And why fear you not hell more than any thing that man can do against you, when God threateneth hell more than human penalties? 5. And why do you not apply yourselves to God chiefly for deliverance, but study how to pacify man? Why do you with more fear, and care, and diligence, and compliance, apply yourselves to those that you are afraid of if you fear God more than them? Repent and make your peace with God through Christ, and then be quiet, if it be God that you are afraid of: your business then is not first with the creature, but with God. 6. And if you fear them only as God's instruments, why doth not your fear make you the more cautiously to fly from further guilt, but rather make you to think of stretching your consciences as far as ever you dare, and venturing as far as you dare upon God's displeasure, to escape man's? Are these signs that you fear them only as the instruments of God's displeasure? or do you see how deceitful a thing your ear is? Indeed man is to be feared in a full subordination to God, 1. As his officers, commanding us to obey him; 2. As his executioners, punishing us for disobeying him; 3. But not as Satan's instruments, (by God's permission,) afflicting us for obeying him, or without desert. Romans 13:3-4, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil." Would you have the fuller exposition of this? It is in 1 Peter 3:10-15, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness, and fear. Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." See also 1 Peter 4:13-15.

Direct. V. Either you fear suffering from men as guilty or as innocent; for evil-doing, or for well-doing, or for nothing. If as guilty and for evil-doing, turn your fears the right way, and fear God, and his wrath for sin, and his threatenings of more than men can inflict; and acknowledge the goodness of justice both from God and man: but if it be as innocent or for well-doing, remember that Christ commandeth you exceedingly to rejoice; and remember that martyrs have the most glorious crown: and will you be excessively afraid of your highest honour, and gain, and joy? Believe well what Christ hath said, and you cannot be much afraid of suffering for him. Matthew 5:10-12, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." And will you fear the way of blessedness and exceeding joy? Matthew 10:17-19, "Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them—But take no thought," &c. You are allowed to beware of them, but not to be over-fearful or thoughtful of the matter. Matthew 10:22-23, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, fly to another."—Fly, but fear them not, with any immoderate fear: Matthew 10:39, "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Luke 18:29-30, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come, life everlasting." Can you believe all this, and yet be so afraid of your own felicity? Oh what a deal of secret unbelief is detected by our immoderate fears! 1 Peter 4:12-16, 1 Peter 4:19, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as an evil-doer. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him glorify God on that behalf—Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." There is scarce any point that God hath been pleased to be more full in, in the holy Scriptures, than the encouraging of his suffering servants against the fears of men; acquainting them that their sufferings are the matter of their profit and exceeding joy and therefore not of too great fear.

Direct. VI. Experience telleth us that men have never so much joy on earth as in suffering for the cause of Christ; nor so much honour as by being dishonored by men for him. How joyfully did the ancient Christians go to martyrdom! many of them lamented that they could not attain it: and what comfort have Christ's confessors found, above what they could ever attain before! And how honourable now are the names and memorials of those martyrs, who died then under the slanders, scorn, and cruelty of men! Even the papists that bloodily make more, do yet honour the names of the ancient martyrs with keeping holidays for them, and magnifying their shrines and relics; for God will have it so, for the honour of his holy sufferers, that even that same generation that persecute the living saints, shall honour the dead, and they that murder those they find alive, shall honour those whom their forefathers murdered: Matthew 23:29-31, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the

sepulchers of the righteous: and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them of the blood of the prophets." Comfort and honour attend the pain and shame of the cross. Acts 5:41, "They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Acts 16:25, "Paul and Silas sang praises to God at midnight in the prison and stocks," when their backs were sore with stripes. It is written of some of the Christians that were imprisoned by Julian, that they would not forbear in the emperor's hearing as he passed by, to sing, "Let God arise, and his enemies shall be scattered."

Direct. VII. Love better the holy image of God upon your souls, and then you will be glad of the great helps to holiness which sufferings do afford. Who findeth not that adversity is more safe and profitable to the soul than prosperity? especially that adversity which Christ is engaged to bless to his servants, as being undergone for him? Romans 10:3-5, "We glory in tribulation also knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed." God "chasteneth us for our profit that we may be partakers of his holiness: now no chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby," Hebrews 12:10-11. Moses "esteemed the very reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: and therefore rather chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Hebrews 11:25-26. It is but "now for a season, and if need be, that we are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of our faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 1:6-7. Who is it that knoweth himself, that feeleth not a need of some afflictions? To awake us from our drowsiness, and quicken us from our dullness, and refine us from our dross, and wean us from the world, and help us to mortify the flesh, and save us from the deceits of sin?

Direct. VIII. Remember that sufferings are the ordinary way to heaven. Love heaven better, and your sufferings will seem lighter, and your fear of them will be less. Christ hath resolved on it, that "if any one come to him, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be his disciple: and whoever doth not bear his cross and follow him, cannot be his disciple: and whoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be his disciple," Luke 14:26-27, Luke 14:33. "In the world we shall have tribulation, but peace in him," John 16:33. "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God," Acts 14:22. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us," Romans 8:17-18. "Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God," 1 Timothy 4:10. In preaching the gospel, Paul saith, he "suffered as an evil-doer even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound," 2 Timothy 2:9. "I suffer these things," saith he, "nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day," 2 Timothy 1:12. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 2 Timothy 3:12. Our patience in sufferings is the joy of our friends, and therefore they are not too much to be feared. 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5, "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer." Therefore take the conclusion of all from God, Revelation 2:10, "Fear none of those

things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Php 1:25-30, "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God: for to you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." And shall we fear so great a gift?

Direct. IX. Remember how small and short the suffering will be, and how great and long the glorious reward. It is but a little while, and the pain and shame will all be past; but the glory will be never past: what the worse now is Stephen for his stones, or John Baptist for being beheaded, or Paul for his bonds and afflictions, which did every where abide him, or any holy martyr for the torment and death which they underwent? Oh how the case is altered with them, now God hath wiped away all tears from their eyes Are we so tender that we cannot endure the grief that is but for a night, when we know that joy will come in the morning? Psalms 30:5. "For this cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal," 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Hebrews 10:35-38.

Direct. X. When you are delivered from the power of the devil himself' what cause have you to fear his instruments? Can they do more than he? If Goliath the champion and the general be overcome, the common soldiers are not like to overcome us.

Direct. XI. Are you better than your Lord? Look to him, and be confirmed. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household," Matthew 10:24. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God; for consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds," Hebrews 12:1-3.

Direct. XII. Be of good cheer: our Lord hath overcome the world, John 16:33. And shall we fear inordinately a conquered world? Yea, he overcame it by suffering, to show us that by suffering we shall overcome it. He triumphed over principalities and powers (greater than mortals) "on the cross," Colossians 2:15. And therefore "all power in heaven and earth is given to him," Matthew 28:19, and he is "Lord both of the dead and living," Romans 14:9, and "is made Head over all things to the church," Ephesians 1:21-22. And so, though "for his sake we be killed all the day long, and counted as sheep to the slaughter, yet in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us;" that is, we have a nobler victory than if we conquered them by the sword.

Direct. XIII. Think how little your suffering is in comparison of what your sin deserved, and your Lord hath freely saved you from. Should a man grudge at the opening of a vein for his health, who

deserved to have lost his life? Can you remember hell which was your due, and yet make a great matter of any thing that man can do against you?

Direct. XIV. Remember that to sin through fear of suffering, is to leap into hell to escape a little pain on earth. Are you afraid of man? Be more afraid of God. Is not God more terrible? "It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands: for he is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 10:31, Hebrews 10:26-27, Hebrews 10:29; Hebrews 12:29.) Hear your Lord. "And I say to you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear him which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him," Luke 13:4-5. If their fire be hot, remember that hell is hotter: and that God is the best friend, and the dreadfullest enemy.

Direct. XV. Remember that you shall suffer (and it is like as much) even here from God, if you escape by sin your suffering from men. If you sin to escape death, you shall die when you have done; and oh! how quickly! And how much more joyful it is to die in Christ, than a little after unwillingly to part with that life, which you denied to part with for your Lord! and what galls will you feel in your guilty conscience both in life and at your death! So that even in this life, your fear would drive you into greater misery.

Direct. XVI. Think of the dangerous effects of your immoderate fear. It is the way with Peter to deny your Lord: yea, the way to apostasy, or any wickedness which men shall drive you to by terrors. If you were where the Turk is now tyrannizing among Christians, if you overcome not your fear, he might overcome your fidelity, and make you turn from Jesus Christ: and that is the sin which the apostle so dreadfully describeth, Hebrews 10:26-27, Hebrews 10:29, "If we sin willfully, (that is, willfully renounce our Lord,) after the acknowledgment of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fire which shall devour the adversary." Oh how many have been drawn by the fear of men, to wound their consciences, neglect their duties, comply with sin, forsake the truth, dishonour God, and undo their souls. And often in this life they do as poor Spira did, who, by sinning through the fear of man, did cast himself into melancholy and self-murdering despair. Your fear is a more dangerous enemy to you than those that you fear are. "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe. Many seek the ruler’s favour, but every man’s judgment cometh of the Lord," Proverbs 29:25-26. Fear is given to preserve you: use it not to destroy you.

Direct. XVII. Believe and remember God’s special providence, extending to every hair of your head, and also the guard of angels which he hath set over you. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are numbered: fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows," Matthew 10:29-30. Oh that this were well believed and considered! Psalms 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

Direct. XVIII. Think what a vile dishonour it is to God to have his creature, even breathing dirt, to be feared more than him As if he were less powerful to do good or hurt to you than man, and were not able or willing to secure you, so far as to see that no man shall ever be a loser by him, or any thing which he suffereth for his cause (See Isaiah 7:4; Isaiah 35:4; Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 41:13; Isaiah 42:2, Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 54:4; Jeremiah 5:22). Isaiah 57:11, "And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart. Have I

not held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?" How did Daniel and the three confessors honour God, but by fearing him more than the king and the flaming furnace: saying, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: if it be so, the God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king: but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods," &c. (Daniel 3:16-18). Daniel would not cease praying thrice a day openly in his house, for fear of the king, or of the lions. "Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him that is invisible," Hebrews 11:27. "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me," Hebrews 13:6.

Direct. XIX. Remember the dangers which you have been saved from already; especially from sin and hell. And is an uncircumcised Philistine more invincible than the lion and the bear?

Direct. XX. Remember the great approaching day of judgment, where great and small will be equal before God; and where God will right all that were wronged by men, and be the full and final avenger of his children! He hath promised, though "he bear long, to avenge them speedily," Luke 18:7-8. Can you believe that day, and yet not think that it is soon enough to justify you fully and finally, and to make you of all your wrongs? Cannot you stay till Christ come to judge the quick and the dead? You will then be loth to be found with those that, as Saul, made haste to sacrifice, because he could not stay till Samuel came; whose soul, "drew back, because they could not live by faith." Matthew 10:26, "Fear them not therefore; for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known." 2 Thessalonians 2:6-10, "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance, &c. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."

Direct. XXI. Remember that the fearful and unbelieving shall be shut out of heaven, Revelation 21:8; that is, those that fear men more than God, and cannot trust him with their lives and all, but will rather venture upon his wrath by sin, than on the wrath of man.

Direct. XXII. Turn your fear of the instruments of the devil into pity and compassion to men in such lamentable misery; and pray for them as Christ and Stephen did: foresee now the misery that is near them. When you begin to be afraid of them, suppose that just now were the day of judgment, and you saw how they will then tremble at the bar of God (as conscience sometimes makes some of them do, at the hearing or remembering of it; as Felix before Paul): see them as ready to be sentenced to the fire prepared for the devil and his angels, as Matthew 25:1-46. Can you fear him that is near such endless misery, whom you should lament and pity (as the ancient martyrs used to do)? 1 Peter 4:17, "What shall the end" of the persecutors "be, and where shall the ungodly sinners appear, if judgment begin at the house of God, and the righteous be saved with so much ado?"

About the fear of death, I have written largely already in my "Treatise of Self-denial," and in the "Saints' Rest," and in "The Last Enemy Death," &c. and in "The Believer's Last Work." Therefore, I shall here pass it by.

Chapter 99

S. Directions for Grief at the Death of Friends

Directions for Grief at the Death of Friends by Richard Baxter

Direct. IX. Be neither unnaturally senseless at the death of friends, nor excessively dejected or afflicted. To make light of the death of relations and friends, be they good or bad, is a sign of a very vicious nature; that is so much selfish, as not much to regard the lives of others: and he that regards not the lives of his friends is little to be trusted in his lesser concernments. I speak not this of those persons whose temper allows them not to weep: for there may be as deep a regard and sorrow in some that have no tears, as in others that abound with them. But I speak of a mischievous, selfish nature, that is little affected with any one's concernments but its own.

Yet your grief for the death of friends, must be very different both in degree and kind. 1. For ungodly friends you must grieve for their own sakes, because if they died such, they are lost for ever. 2. For your godly friends you must mourn for the sake of yourselves and others, because God has removed such as were blessings to those about them. 3. For choice magistrates, and ministers, and other instruments of public good, your sorrow must be greater, because of the common loss, and the judgment thereby inflicted on the world. 4. For old, tried christians, that have overcome the world, and lived so long till age and weakness make them almost unserviceable to the church, and who groan to be unburdened and to be with Christ, your sorrow should be least, and your joy and thanks for their happiness should be greatest. But especially abhor that nature that secretly is glad of the death of parents, (or little sorrowful,) because that their estates are fallen to you, or you are enriched, or set at liberty by their death. God seldom leaves this sin unrevenged, by some heavy judgments even in this life.

Direct. X. To overcome your inordinate grief for the death of your relations, consider these things following. 1. That excess of sorrow is your sin: and sinning is an ill use to be made of your affliction. 2. That it tends to a great deal more: it unfits you for many duties which you are bound to, as to rejoice in God, and to be thankful for mercies, and cheerful in his love, and praise, and service: and is it a small sin to unfit yourselves for the greatest duties? If you are so troubled at God's disposal of his own, what does your will but rise up against the will of God; as if you grudged at the exercise of his dominion and government, that is, that he is God! Who is wisest, and best, and fittest to dispose of all men's lives? Is it God or you? Would you not have God to be the Lord of all, and to dispose of heaven and earth, and of the lives and crowns of the greatest princes? If you would not, you would not have him to be God. If you would, is it not unreasonable that you or your friends only should be excepted from his disposal? 4. If your friends are in heaven, how unsuitable is it, for you to be overmuch mourning for them, when they are rapt into the highest joys with Christ; and love should teach you to rejoice with them that rejoice, and not to mourn as those that have no hope. 5. You know not what mercy God showed to your friends, in taking them away from the evil to come, you know not what suffering the land or church is falling into; or at least might have fallen upon themselves; nor what sins they might have been tempted to. But you are sure that heaven is better than earth, and that it is far better for them to be with Christ. 6. You

always knew that your friends must die; to grieve that they were mortal, is but to grieve that they were but men. 7. If their mortality or death be grievous to you, you should rejoice that they are arrived at the state of immortality, where they must live indeed and die no more. 8. Remember how quickly you must be with them again. The expectation of living on yourselves, is the cause of your excessive grief for the death of friends. If you looked yourselves to die to-morrow, or within a few weeks, you would less grieve that your friends are gone before you. 9. Remember that the world is not for one generation only; others must have our places when we are gone; God will be served by successive generations, and not only by one. 10. If you are christians indeed, it is the highest of all your desires and hopes to be in heaven; and will you so grieve that your friends are gone thither, where you most desire and hope to be?

Object. All this is reasonable, if my friend were gone to heaven: but he died impenitently, and how should I be comforted for a soul that I have cause to think is damned?

Answ. Their misery must be your grief; but not such a grief as shall deprive you of your greater joys, or disable you for your greater duties. 1. God is fitter than you to judge of the measures of his mercy and his judgments, and you must neither pretend to be more merciful than he, nor to object to his justice. 2. All the works of God are good; and all that is good is amiable; though the misery of the creature be bad to it, yet the works of justice declare the wisdom and holiness of God; and the more perfect we are, the more they will be amiable to us. For, 3. God himself, and Christ, who is the merciful Saviour of the world, approve of the damnation of the finally ungodly. 4. And the saints and angels in heaven do know more of the misery of the souls in hell, than we do; and yet it abates not their joys. And the more perfect any is, the more he is like-minded unto God. 5. How glad and thankful should you be to think that God has delivered yourselves from those eternal flames! The misery of others should excite your thankfulness. 6. And should not the joys of all the saints and angels be your joy, as well as the sufferings of the wicked be your sorrows? But above all, the thoughts of the blessedness and glory of God himself, should overtop all the concernments of the creature with you. If you will mourn more for the thieves and murderers that are hanged, than you will rejoice in the justice, prosperity, and honour of the king, and the welfare of all his faithful subjects, you behave not yourselves as faithful subjects. 7. Shortly you hope to come to heaven: mourn now for the damned, as you shall do then; or at least, let not the difference be too great, when that, and not this, is your perfect state.

Chapter 100

S. Directions for Hating Sin

Directions for Hating Sin by Richard Baxter

Direct. I. Labour to know God, and to be affected with his attributes, and always to live as in his sight.—No man can know sin perfectly, because no man can know God perfectly. You can no further know what sin is than you know what God is, whom you sin against; for the formal malignity of sin is relative, as it is against the will and attributes of God. The godly have some knowledge of the malignity of sin, because they have some knowledge of God that is wronged by it. The wicked have no practical, prevalent knowledge of the malignity of sin, because they have no such knowledge of God. They that fear God will fear sinning; they that in their hearts are bold irreverently with God, will, in heart and life, be bold with sin: the atheist, who thinks there is no God thinks there is no sin against him. Nothing in world will tell us so plainly and powerfully of the evil of sin, as the knowledge of the greatness, wisdom goodness, holiness, authority, justice, truth, &c. of God. The sense of his presence, therefore, will revive our sense of sin's malignity.

Direct. II. Consider well of the office, the bloodshed, and the holy life of Christ.—His office is to expiate sin, and to destroy it. His blood was shed for it: his life condemned it. Love Christ, and you will hate that which caused his death. Love him, and you will love to be made like him, and hate that which is so contrary to Christ. These two great lights will show the odiousness of darkness.

Direct. III. Think well both how holy the office and work of the Holy Ghost is, and how great a mercy it is to us.—Shall God himself, the heavenly light, come down into a sinful heart, to illuminate and purify it? And yet shall I keep my darkness and defilement, in opposition to such wonderful mercy? Though all sin against the Holy Ghost be not the unpardonable blasphemy, yet all is aggravated hereby.

Direct. IV. Know and consider the wonderful love and mercy of God, and think what he has done for you; and you will hate sin, and be ashamed of it. It is an aggravation which makes sin odious even to common reason and ingenuity, that we should offend a God of infinite goodness, who has filled up our lives with mercy. It will grieve you if you have wronged an extraordinary friend: his love and kindness will come into your thoughts, and make you angry with your own unkindness. Here look over the catalogue of God's mercies to you, for soul and body. And here observe that Satan, in hiding the love of God from you, and tempting you under the pretence of humility to deny his greatest, special mercy, seeks to destroy your repentance and humiliation, also, by hiding the greatest aggravation of your sin.

Direct. V. Think what the soul of man is made for, and should be used to, even to love, obey, and glorify our Maker; and then you will see what sin is, which disables and perverts it.—How excellent, and high, and holy a work are we created for and called to! And should we defile the temple of God? And serve the devil in filthiness and folly, when we should receive, and serve, and magnify our Creator?

Direct. VI. Think well what pure and sweet delights a holy soul may enjoy from God, in his holy service; and then you will see what sin is, which robs him of these delights, and prefers fleshly lusts before them.—O how happily might we perform every duty, and how fruitfully might we serve our Lord, and what delight should we find in his love and acceptation, and the foresight of everlasting blessedness, if it were not for sin; which brings down the soul from the doors of heaven, to wallow with swine in a beloved dunghill!

Direct. VII. Bethink you what a life it is which you must live for ever, if you live in heaven; and what a life the holy ones there now live; and then think whether sin, which is so contrary to it, be not a vile and hateful thing.—Either you would live in heaven, or not. If not, you are not those I speak to. If you would, you know that there is no sinning; no worldly mind, no pride, no passion, no fleshly lust or pleasures there. Oh, did you but see and hear one hour, how those blessed spirits are taken up in loving and magnifying the glorious God in purity and holiness, and how far they are from sin, it would make you loathe sin ever after, and look on sinners as on men in bedlam wallowing naked in their dung. Especially, to think that you hope yourselves to live for ever like those holy spirits; and therefore sin does ill beseem you.

Direct. VIII. Look but to the state and torment of the damned, and think well of the difference betwixt angels and devils, and you may know what sin is.—Angels are pure; devils are polluted: holiness and sin do make the difference. Sin dwells in hell, and holiness in heaven. Remember that every temptation is from the devil, to make you like himself; as every holy motion is from Christ, to mike you like himself. Remember when you sin, that you are learning and imitating of the devil, and are so far like him, John 8:44. And the end of all is, that you may feel his pains. If hell-fire be not good, then sin is not good.

Direct. IX. Look always on sin as one that is ready to die, and consider how all men judge of it at the last.—What do men in heaven say of it? And what do men in hell say of it? And what do men at death say of it? And what do converted souls, or awakened consciences, say of it? Is it then followed with delight and fearlessness as it is now? Is it then applauded? Will any of them speak well of it? Nay, all the world speaks evil of sin in the general now, even when they love and commit the several acts. Will you sin when you are dying?

Direct. X. Look always on sin and judgment together.—Remember that you must answer for it before God, and angels, and all the world; and you will the better know it.

Direct. XI. Look now but upon sickness, poverty, shame, despair, death, and rottenness in the grave, and it may a little help you to know what sin is. These are things within your sight or feeling; you need not faith to tell you of them. And by such effects you might have some little knowledge of the cause.

Direct. XII. Look but upon some eminent, holy persons upon earth, and upon the mad, profane, malignant world; and the difference may tell you in part what sin is.—Is there not an amiableness in a holy, blameless person, that lives in love to God and man, and in the joyful hopes of life eternal? Is not a beastly drunkard or whoremonger, and a raging swearer, and a malicious persecutor, a very deformed, loathsome creature? Is not the mad, confused, ignorant, ungodly state of the world a very pitiful sight? What then is the sin that all this consists in?

Though the principal part of the cure is in turning the will to the hatred of sin, and is done by this discovery of its malignity; yet I shall add a few more directions for the executive part, supposing that what is said already has had its effect.

Direct. I. When you have found out your disease and danger, give up yourselves to Christ as the Saviour and Physician of souls, and to the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier, remembering that he is sufficient and willing to do the work which he has undertaken.—It is not you that are to be saviours and sanctifiers of yourselves (unless as you work under Christ). But he that has undertaken it, takes it for his glory to perform it.

Direct. II. Yet must you be willing and obedient in applying the remedies prescribed you by Christ, and observing his directions in order to your cure. And you must not be tender, and coy, and fine, and say his is too bitter, and that is too sharp; but trust his love, and skill, and care, and take it as he prescribes it, or gives it you, without any more ado. Say not, It is grievous, and I cannot take it: for he commands you nothing but what is safe, and wholesome, and necessary, and if you cannot take it, must try whether you can bear your sickness, and death, and the fire of hell! Are humiliation, confession, restitution, mortification, and holy diligence worse than hell?

Direct. III. See that you take not part with sin, and wrangle not, or strive not against your Physician, or any that would do you good.—Excusing sin, and heading for and extenuating it, and striving against the Spirit and conscience, and wrangling against ministers and godly friends, and hating reproof, are not the means to be cured and sanctified.

Direct. IV. See that malignity in every one of your particular sins, which you can see and say is in sin in general.—It is a gross deceit of yourselves, if you will speak a great deal of the evil of sin, and see none of this malignity in your pride, and your worldliness, and your passion and peevishness, and our malice and uncharitableness, and your lying, backbiting, slandering, or sinning against conscience for worldly commodity or safety. What self-contradiction is it for a man in prayer to aggravate sin, and when he is reproved for it, to justify or excuse it! This is like him that will speak against treason, and the enemies of the king, but because the traitors are his friends and kindred, will protect or hide them, and take their parts.

Direct. V. Keep as far as you can from those temptations which feed and strengthen the, sins which you would overcome.—Lay siege to your sins, and starve them out, by keeping away the food and fuel which is their maintenance and life.

Direct. VI. Live in the exercise of those graces and duties which are contrary to the sins which you are most in danger of.—For grace and duty are contrary to sin, and kill it, and cure us of it, as the fire cures us of cold, or health of sickness.

Direct. VII. Hearken not to weakening unbelief and distrust, and cast not away the comforts of God, which are your cordials and strength.—It is not a frightful, dejected, despairing frame of mind, that is fittest to resist sin; but it is the encouraging sense of the love of God, and thankful sense of grace received (with a cautious fear).

Direct. VIII. Be always suspicious of carnal self-love, and watch against it.—For that is the burrow or fortress of sin, and the common patron of it; ready to draw you to it, and ready to justify it. We are very prone to be partial in our own cause; as the case of Judah with Tamar, and David when

Nathan reproved him in a parable, show. our own passions, our own pride, our own censures, or backbitings, or injurious dealings, our own neglects of duty, seem small, excusable, if not justifiable things to us; whereas we could easily see the faultiness of all these in another, especially in an enemy: when yet we should be best acquainted with ourselves, and we should most love ourselves, and therefore hate our own sins most.

Direct. IX. Bestow your first and chiefest labour to kill sin at the root; to cleanse the heart, which is the fountain; for out of the heart come the evils of the life.—Know which are the master-roots; and bend your greatest care and industry to mortify those: and they are especially these that follow; 1. Ignorance. 2. Unbelief. 3. Inconsiderateness. 4. Selfishness and pride. 5. Fleshliness, in pleasing a brutish appetite, lust, or fantasy. 6. Senseless hard-heartedness and sleepiness in sin.

Direct. X. Account the world and all its pleasures, wealth, and honours, no better than indeed they are, and then Satan will find no bait to catch you. Esteem all as dung with Paul, Php 3:8; and no man will sin and sell his soul, for that which he accounts but as dung.

Direct. XI. Keep up above in a heavenly conversation, and then your souls will be always in the light, and as in the sight of God, and taken up with those businesses and delights which put them out of relish with the baits of sin.

Direct. XII. Let christian watchfulness be your daily work; and cherish a preserving, though not a distracting and discouraging fear.

Direct. XIII. Take heed of the first approaches and beginnings of sin. Oh how great a matter does a little of this fire kindle! And if you fall, rise quickly by sound repentance, whatever it may cost you.

Direct. XIV. Make God’s word your only rule and labour diligently to understand it.

Direct. XV. And in doubtful cases, do not easily depart from the unanimous judgment of the generality of the most wise and godly of all ages.

Direct. XVI. In doubtful cases be not passionate or rash, but proceed deliberately, and prove things well, before you fasten on them.

Direct. XVII. Be acquainted with your bodily temperature, and what sin it most inclines you to, and what sin also your calling or living situation leave you most open to, that there your watch may be the stricter.

Direct. XVIII. Keep in a life of holy order, such as God has appointed you to walk in. For there is no preservation for stragglers that keep not rank and file, but forsake the order which God commands them.—And this order lies principally in these points:1. That you keep in union with the universal church. Separate not from Christ’s body upon any pretence whatever. With the church as regenerate, hold spiritual communion, in faith, love, and holiness with the church as congregate and visible, hold outward communion, in profession and worship. 2. If you are not teachers, live under your particular, faithful pastors, as obedient disciples of Christ. 3. Let the most godly, if possible, be your familiars. 4. Be laborious in an outward calling.

Direct. XIX. Turn all God’s providences, whether of prosperity or adversity, against your sins.—If he gives you health and wealth, remember he thereby obliges you to obedience, and calls for

special service from you. If he afflict you, remember that it is sin that he is offended at, and searches after; and therefore take it as his medicine, and see that you hinder not, but help on its work, that it may purge away your sin.

Direct. XX. Wait patiently on Christ till he has finished the cure, which will not be till this trying life be finished.—Persevere in attendance on his Spirit and means; for he will come in season, and will not tarry. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain: as the latter and former rain upon the earth," Hosea 6:3. Though you have oft said, "There is no healing," Jeremiah 14:19; "He will heal your backslidings, and love you freely," Hosea 14:4. "Unto you that fear his name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings," Malachi 4:2: " and blessed are all they that wait for him," Isaiah 30:18.

Thus I have given such directions as may help for humiliation under sin, or hatred of it, and deliverance from it.

Chapter 101

S. Directions for a Peaceful Death

Directions for a Peaceful Death by Richard Baxter

Comfort is not desirable only as it pleases us, but also as it strengthens us, and helps us in our greatest duties. And when is it more needful than in sickness, and the approach of death? I shall therefore add such directions as are necessary to make our departure comfortable or peaceful at the least, as well as safe.

Direct. I. Because I would make this treatise no longer than I must; in order to overcome the fears of death, and get a cheerful willingness to die, I desire the sick to read over those twenty considerations, and the following directions, which I have laid down in my book of "Self-Denial." And when the fears of death are overcome, the great impediment of their comfort is removed.

Direct. II. Misunderstand not sickness, as if it were a greater evil than it is; but observe how great a mercy it is, that death has so suitable a harbinger or forerunner: that God should do so much before he takes us hence, to wean us from the world, and make us willing to be gone; that the unwilling flesh has the help of pain; and that the senses and appetite languish and decay, which did draw the mind to earthly things: and that we have so loud a call, and so great a help to true repentance and serious preparation! I know to those that have walked very close with God, and are always ready, a sudden death may be a mercy; as we have lately known divers holy ministers and others, that have died either after a sacrament, or in the evening of the Lord’s day, or in the midst of some holy exercise, with so little pain, that none about them perceived when they died. But ordinarily it is a mercy to have the flesh brought down and weakened by painful sickness, to help to conquer our natural unwillingness to die.

Direct. III. Remember whose messenger sickness is, and who it is that calls you to die. It is he, that is the Lord of all the world, and gave us the lives which he takes from us; and it is he, that must dispose of angels and men, of princes and kingdoms, of heaven and earth; and therefore there is no reason that such worms as we should desire to be excepted. You cannot deny him to be the disposer of all things, without denying him to be God: it is he that loves us, and never meant us any harm in any thing that he has done to us; that gave the life of his Son to redeem us; and therefore thinks not life too good for us. Our sickness and death are sent by the same love that sent us a Saviour, and sent us the powerful preachers of his word, and sent us his Spirit, and secretly and sweetly changed our hearts, and knit them to himself in love; which gave us a life of precious mercies for our souls and bodies, and has promised to give us life eternal; and shall we think, that he now intends us any harm? Cannot he turn this also to our good, as he has done many an affliction which we have complained about?

Direct. IV. Look by faith to your dying, buried, risen, ascended, glorified Lord. Nothing will more powerfully overcome both the poison and the fears of death, than the believing thoughts of him that has triumphed over it. Is it terrible as it separates the soul from the body? So it did by our Lord, who yet overcame it. Is it terrible as it lays the body in the grave? So it did by our Saviour;

though he saw not corruption, but quickly rose by the power of his Godhead. He died to teach us believingly and boldly to submit to death. He was buried, to teach us not overmuch to fear a grave. He rose a again to conquer death for us, and to assure those who rise to newness of life, that they shall be raised at last by his power unto glory; and being made partakers of the first resurrection, the second death shall have no power over them. He lives as our head, that we might live by him; and that he might assure all those that are here risen with him, and seek first the things that are above, that though in themselves they are dead, "yet their life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory," Colossians 3:1-2,Colossians 3:4-5. What a comfortable word is that, John 14:19, "Because I live, you shall live also." Death could not hold the Lord of life; nor can it hold us against his will, who has the "keys of death and hell," Revelation 1:18. He loves every one of his sanctified ones much better than you love an eye, or a hand, or any other member of your body, which you are not willing to lose if you are able to save it. When he ascended, he left us that message full of comfort for his followers, John 20:17, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God." Which, with these two following, I would have written before me on my sick bed. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall my servant be," John 12:26. And, "Verily, I say unto you, to-day shall you be with me in paradise," Luke 23:43. Oh what a joyful thought should it be to a believer, to think when he is dying, that he is going to his Saviour, and that our Lord is risen and gone before us, to prepare a place for us, and take us in season to himself, John 14:2-4. "As you believe in God, believe thus in Christ; and then your hearts will be less troubled," John 14:1. It is not a stranger that we talk of to you; but your Head and Saviour, that loves you better than you love yourselves, whose office it is there to appear continually for you before God, and at last to receive your departing souls; and into his hand it is, that you must then commend them, as Stephen did, Acts 7:59.

Direct. V. Choose out some promises most suitable to your condition, and roll them over and over in your mind, and feed and live on them by faith. A sick man is not (usually) fit to think of very many things; and therefore two or three comfortable promises, to be still before his eyes, may be the most profitable matter of his thoughts; such as those three which I named before. If he be most troubled with the greatness of his sin, let it be such as these. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3:16. "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses," Acts 13:39. "For I will be merciful unto their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," Hebrews 8:12. If it be the weakness of his grace that troubles him, let him choose such passages as these: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young," Isaiah 40:11. "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other; so that you cannot do the things that you would," Galatians 5:17. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matthew 26:41. All that the Father gives me, shall come to me and him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out," John 6:37. "The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith," Luke 17:5. If it be the fear of death, and strangeness to the other world, that troubles you, remember the words of Christ before cited, and 2 Corinthians 5:1-6, 2 Corinthians 5:8, "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan

being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." "For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," Php 1:23. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yet, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them," Revelation 14:13. "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" 1 Corinthians 15:55. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," Acts 7:59. Fix upon some such word or promise, which may support you in your extremity.

Direct. VI. Look up to God, who is the glory of heaven, and the light, and life, and joy of souls, and believe that you are going to see his face, and to live in the perfect, everlasting fruition of his fullest love among the glorified. If it be delectable here to know his works, what will it be to see the cause of all? All creatures in heaven and earth conjoined, can never afford such content and joy to holy souls, as God alone! Oh if we knew him whom we must there behold, how weary should we be of this dungeon of mortality! and how fervently should we long to see his face! The chicken that comes out of the shell, or the infant that newly comes out of the womb, into this illuminated world of human converse, receives not such a joyful change, as the soul that is newly loosed from the flesh, and passes from this mortal life to God. One sight of God by a blessed soul, is worth more than all the kingdoms of the earth. It is pleasant to the eyes to behold the sun; but the sun is darkness and useless compared to his glory. "And the city had no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof," Revelation 21:23. "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads: and there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, nor light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever," Revelation 22:3-5. If David in the wilderness so impatiently thirsted to appear before God in his sanctuary at Jerusalem, Psalms 42:1-11, then how earnestly should we long to see his glory in the heavenly Jerusalem! The glimpse of his back parts, was as much as Moses might behold, Exodus 34:1-35, yet that much put a shining glory upon his face, Exodus 34:9 and Exodus 34:30. The sight that Stephen had when men were ready to stone him, was a delectable sight, Acts 7:55-56. The glimpse of Christ in his transfiguration ravished the three apostles that beheld it, Matthew 17:2, Matthew 17:6. Paul’s vision which rapt him up into the third heavens, did advance him above the rest of mankind! But our beatific sight of the glory of God, will very far excel all this. When our perfected bodies shall have the perfect glorious body of Christ to see, and our perfected souls shall have the God of truth, the most perfect uncreated light to know, what more is a created understanding capable of? And yet this is not the top of our felicity; for the understanding is but the passage to the heart or will, and truth is but subservient to goodness: and therefore though the understanding be capable of no more than the beatific vision, yet the man is capable of more; even of receiving the fullest communications of God’s love, and feeling it poured out upon the heart, and living in the returns of perfect love; and in this intercourse of love will be our highest joys, and this is the top of our heavenly felicity. Oh that God would make us foreknow by a lively faith, what it is to behold him in his glory, and to dwell in perfect love and joy, and then death would no more be able to dismay us, nor should we be unwilling of such a blessed change! But having spoken of this so largely in my "Saints’ Rest," I must stop here, and refer you thither.

Direct. VII. Look up to the blessed society of angels and saints with Christ, and remember their blessedness and joy, and that you also belong to the same society, and are going to be numbered with them. It will greatly overcome the fears of death, to see by faith the joys of them that have gone before us; and withal to think of their relation to us; as it will encourage a man that is to go beyond sea, if the far greatest part of his dearest friends be gone before him, and he bears of their safe arrival, and of their joy and happiness. Those angels that now see the face of God are our special friends and guardians, and entirely love us, better than any of our friends on earth do! They rejoiced at our conversion, and will rejoice at our glorification; and as they are better, and love us better, so therefore our love should be greater to them, than to any upon earth, and we should more desire to be with them. Those blessed souls that are now with Christ, were once as we are here on earth; they were compassed with temptations, and clogged with flesh, and burdened with sin, and persecuted by the world, and they went out of the world by sickness and death, as we must do; and yet now their tears are wiped away, their pains, and groans, and fears are turned into inexpressible blessedness and joy: and would we not be with them? Is not their company desirable? And their felicity more desirable? The glory of the New Jerusalem is not described to us in vain, Revelation 21:1-27 and Revelation 22:1-21. God will be all in all there to us, as the only sun and glory of that world; and yet we shall have pleasure, not only to see our glorified Redeemer, but also to converse with the heavenly society, and to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, and to love and praise him in consort and harmony with all those holy, blessed spirits. And shall we be afraid to follow, where the saints of all generations have gone before us? And shall the company of our best, and most, and happiest friends, be no inducement to us? Though it must be our highest joy to think that we shall dwell with God, and next that we shall see the glory of Christ, Yet is it no small part of my comfort to consider, that I shall follow all those holy persons, whom I once conversed with, that are gone before me; and that I shall dwell with such as Enoch and Elias, and Abraham and Moses, and Job and David, and Peter and John, and Paul and Timothy, and Ignatius tnd Polycarp, and Cyprian and Nazianzen, and Augustine and Chrysostom and Bernard and Gerson, and Savonarola and Mirandula, and Taulerus and Kempisius, and Melancthon and Alasco, and Calvin and Bucholtzer, and Bullinger and Musculus, and Zanchy and Bucer, and and Grynaeus, and Chemnitius and Gerhard, and Chamier and Capellus, and Blondel and Rivet, and Rogers and Bradford, and Hooper and Latimer, and Hildersham and Amesius, and Langley and Nicolls, and Whitaker and Cartwright, and Hooker and Bayne, and Preston and Sibbes, and Perkins and Dod, and Parker and Ball, and Usher and Hall, and Gataker and Bradshaw, and Vines and Ash, and millions more of the family of God.. [I name these for my own delight and comfort; it being pleasant to me to remember what companions I shall have in the heavenly joys and praises of my Lord. Reader, bear with this mixture: for God will own his image when peevish contenders do deny it, or blaspheme it; and will receive those whom faction and proud domination would cast out, and vilify with scorn and slanders.] How few are all the saints on earth, in comparison of those that are now with Christ! And, alas, how weak, and ignorant, and corrupt, how selfish, and contentious, and troublesome, are God’s poor infants here in flesh, when above there is nothing but holiness and perfection! If knowledge, or goodness, or any excellency do make the creatures truly amiable, all this is there in the highest degree; but here, alas, how little have we! If the love of God, or the love of us, do make others lovely to us, it is there and not here that these and all perfections flourish. Oh how much now do I find the company of the wise and learned, the godly and sincere, to differ from the

company of the ignorant, brutish, the proud and malicious, the false-hearted and ungodly rabble! How sweet is the converse of a holy, wise, experienced christian! Oh then what a place is the New Jerusalem; and how pleasant will it be with saints and angels to see and love and praise the Lord.

Direct. VIII. That sickness and death may be comfortable to you, as your passage to eternity, take notice of the seal and earnest of God, even the Spirit of grace which he has put into your heart. That which emboldened Paul and such others to groan after immortality, and to "be most willing to be absent from the body and present with the Lord," was because God himself "wrought or made them for it, and given them the earnest or pledge of his Spirit," 2 Corinthians 5:4-5, 2 Corinthians 5:8. For this is God's mark upon his chosen and justified ones, by which they are "sealed up to the day of their redemption," Ephesians 1:13, "In whom also after you believed, you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, "God has anointed us, and sealed us, and given us the pledge or earnest of his Spirit into our hearts." "This is the ledge or earnest of our inheritance," Ephesians 1:14. And what a comfort should it be to us, when we look towards heaven, to find such a pledge of God within us! If you say, I fear I have not this earnest of the Spirit; whence then did your desires of holiness arise. what weaned you from the world, and made you place your hopes and happiness above? Whence came your enmity to sin, and opposition to it, and your earnest desires after the glory of God, the prosperity of the gospel, and the good of souls? The very love of holiness and holy persons, and your desires to know God and perfectly love him, do show that heavenly nature or spirit within you, which is your surest evidence for eternal life: for that spirit was sent from heaven, to draw up your hearts, and fit you for it; and God does not give you such natures, and desires, and preparations in vain. This also is called "The witness of the Spirit with (or to) our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Romans 8:15-17. It witnesses our adoption, by evidencing it; as a seal or pledge gives witness to our title to that which is so confirmed to us. The nature of every thing is suited to its use and end; God would not have given us a heavenly nature or desire, if he had not intended us for heaven.

Direct. IX. Look also to the testimony of a holy life, since grace has employed you in seeking after the heavenly inheritance. It is unlawful and perilous to look after any works or righteousness of your own, so as to set it in whole or in part instead of Christ, or to ascribe to it any honour that is proper to him; as to imagine that you are innocent, or have fulfilled the law, or have made God a compensation by your merits or sufferings, for the sin you have committed; but yet you must judge yourselves on your sick beds as near as you can as God will judge you. And "he will judge every man according to his work;" and will recompense and reward men according to their works. Matthew 25:21, Matthew 25:34, &c. "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a little, I will make you ruler over much. Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you —for I was hungry and you fed me," &c.—Hebrews 5:9, "He is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." Matthew 7:24-25, "Whosoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man that built his house upon a rock—." Revelation 22:11 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gate into the city, for without are dogs," &c. "Thus must you rejoice in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," not only is he was crucified on it for you, but also as you are "crucified by it to the world, and the world to you," Galatians 6:14. He that as a benefactor will give you that glory which you could never deserve of him, on terms of commutative justice, (for so no creature

can deserve any thing of God,) will y et, as a righteous governor and judge, deliver it you only on the terms of his paternal, governing, distributive justice; and all shall receive according to what they have done in the body. And therefore you may take comfort in that evangelical righteousness, which consists in your fulfilling the conditions of the new covenant, though you have no legal righteousness, (which consists in innocency, or freedom from the curse of the law,) but only in the merits and sacrifice of Christ. If you are accused as being impenitent, unbelievers, or hypocrites, Christ's righteousness will not justify you from that accusation; but only your repentance, faith, and sincerity (wrought in you by the Spirit of Christ). But if you can but show the evidence of this evangelical righteousness, Christ then will justify you against all the other accusations of guilt that can be charged on you. (Of which more anon.) Seeing therefore the Spirit has given you these evidences, to difference you from the wretched world, and prove your title to eternal life, if you overlook these, you resist your Comforter, and can see no other ground of comfort, than every graceless hypocrite may see. Imitate holy Paul:2 Corinthians 1:12, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world—." 2 Timothy 4:7-8, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing." To look back and see that in sincerity you have gone the way to heaven, is a just and necessary ground of assurance, that you shall attain it. If you say, But I have been a grievous sinner! I answer, so was Paul that yet rejoiced after in this evidence! Are not those sins repented of and pardoned? If you say, But I cannot look back upon a holy life with comfort, it has been so blotted and uneven! I answer, has it not been sincere, though it was imperfect.? Did you not "first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness?" Matthew 6:33. If you say, My whole life has been ungodly, till now at last that God has humbled me; I answer, it is not the length of time, but the sincerity of your hearts and service, that is your evidence. If you came in it the last hour, if now you are faithfully devoted to God, you may look with comfort on this change at last, though you must look with repentance on your sinful lives.

Direct. X. When you see any of this evidence of your interest in Christ appeal to him to acquit you from all the sin that can be charged on you; for all that believe in him are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," Romans 8:1. Whatever sin a penitent believer has committed, he is not chargeable with it; Christ has undertaken to answer for it, and justify him from it; and therefore look not on it with terror, but with Penitent shame, and believing thankfulness, as that which shall tend to the honour of the Redeemer, and not to the condemnation of the sinner. He has borne our transgressions and we are healed by his stripes.

Direct. XI. Look back upon all the mercies of your lives, and think whence they came and what they signify. Love tokens are to draw your hearts to him that sent them; these are dropped from heaven, to entice you thither! If God has been so good to you on earth, what will he be in glory! If he so blessed you in this wilderness, what will he do in the land of promise! It greatly emboldens my soul to go to that God, that has so tenderly loved me, and so graciously preserved me, and so much abounded in all sorts of mercies to me through all my life. Surely he is good that so delights to do good! And his presence must be sweet, when his distant mercies have been so sweet! What love shall I enjoy when perfection has fitted me for his love, who has tasted of so much in this state

of sin and imperfection! The sense of mercy will banish the fears and misgivings of the heart.

Direct. XII. Remember (if you have attained to a declining age) what a competent time you have had already in the world. If you are grieved that you are mortal, you might on that account have grieved all your days; but if it be only that you die so soon, if you have lived well, you have lived long. When I think how many years of mercy I have had, since I was near to death, and since many younger than I are gone, and when I think what abundance of mercy I have had in all that time, candour forbids me to grudge at the season of my death, and makes me almost ashamed to ask for longer life. How long would you stay, before you would be willing to come to God? If he desired our company no more than we do his, and desired our happiness in heaven no more than we desire it ourselves, we should linger here as Lot in Sodom! Must we be snatched away against our wills, and carried by force to our Father's presence?

Direct. XIII. Remember that all mankind are mortal, and you are to go no other way than all that ever came into the world have gone before you (except Enoch and Elias). Yea, the poor brute creatures must die at your pleasure, to satisfy your hunger or delight. Beasts, and birds, and fishes, even many to make one meal, must die for you. And why then should you shrink at the entrance of such a trodden path, which leads you not to hell, as it does the wicked, nor merely to corruption, as it does the brutes: but to live in joy with Christ and his church triumphant?

Direct. XIV. Remember both how vile your body is, and how great an enemy it has proved to your soul; and then you will the more patiently bear its dissolution. It is not your dwelling-house, but your tent or prison, that God is pulling down. And yet even this vile body, when it is corrupted, shall at last be changed "into the likeness of Christ's glorious body, by the working of his irresistible power," Php 3:20-21. And it is a flesh that has so rebelled against the spirit, and made your way to heaven so difficult, and put the soul to so many conflicts, that we should more easily submit it to the will of justice, and let it perish for a time, when we are assured that mercy will it last recover it.

Direct. XV. Remember what a world it is that you are to leave, and compare it with that which you are going to; and compare the life which is near an end, with that which you are next to enter upon. Was it not Enoch's reward when he had walked with God, to be taken to him from a polluted world? 1. While you are here, you are yourselves defiled; sin is in your natures, and your graces are all imperfect; sin is in your lives, and your duties are all imperfect; you cannot be free from it one day or hour. And is it not a mercy to be delivered from it? Is it not desirable to you to sin no more? And to be perfect in holiness? To know God and love him as much and more than you can now desire? You are here every day lamenting your darkness, and unbelief, and estrangedness from God, and lack of love to him. How oft have you prayed for a cure of all this! And now would you not have it, when God would give it you? Why has God put that spark of heavenly life into you, but to fight against sin, and make you weary of it? And yet had you rather continue sinning, than have the victory and be with Christ? 2. It is a life of grief as well as sin; and a life of cares, and doubts, and fears! When you are at the worst, you are fearing worse! If it were nothing but the fears of death itself, it should make you the more willing to submit to it, that you might be past those fears. 3. You are daily afflicted with the infirmities of that flesh, which are so unwilling to be dissolved. To satisfy its hunger and thirst, to cover its nakedness, to provide it a habitation, and supply all its wants, what care and labour does it cost you! Its infirmities, sicknesses, and pains, do make you oft weary of yourselves so that you "groan, being burdened," as Paul speaks, 2

Corinthians 5:3-4, 2 Corinthians 5:6. And yet is it not desirable to be with Christ? 4. You are compassed with temptations, and are in continual danger through your weakness: and yet would you not be past the danger? Would you have more of those horrid and odious temptations? 5. You are purposely turned here into a wilderness, among wild beasts; you are as lambs among wolves, and through many tribulations you must enter into heaven. You must deny yourselves, and take up your cross, and forsake all that you have; and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution. In the world you must have trouble: the seed of the serpent must bruise your heel, before God bruise Satan under your feet! And is such a life as this more desirable than to be with Christ? Are we afraid to land after such storms and tempests? Is a wicked world, a malicious world, a cruel world, an implacable world, more pleasing to us, than the joy of angels, and the sight of Christ, and God himself in the majesty of his glory? Has God on purpose made the world so bitter to us, and permitted it to use us unjustly and cruelly, and all to make us love it less, and to drive home our hearts unto himself? And yet are we so unwilling to be gone?

Direct. XVI. Settle your estates early, that worldly matters may not distract or discompose you. And if God has endowed you with riches, dispose of a due proportion to such pious or charitable uses, in which they may be most serviceable to him that gave them you. Though we should give what we can in the time of life and health, yet many that have but so much as will serve to their necessary maintenance, may well part with that to good uses at their death, which they could not spare in the time of their health: especially they that have no children, or such wicked children, as are like to do hurt with all that is given them above their daily bread.

Direct. XVII. If it may be, get some able, faithful guide and comforter to be with you in your sickness, to counsel you, and resolve your doubts, and pray with you, and discourse of heavenly things, when you are disabled by weakness for such exercises yourselves. Let not carnal persons disturb you with their vain babblings. Though the difference between good company and bad, be very great in the time of health, yet now in sickness it will be more discernible. And though a faithful friend and spiritual pastor be always a great mercy, yet now especially in your last necessity. Therefore make use of them as far as your pain and weakness will permit.

Direct. XVIII. Be fortified against all the temptations of Satan by which he uses to assault men in their extremity: stand it out in the last conflict, and the crown is yours.

Chapter 102

S. Directions for the Holy Spending of Every Day

Directions for the holy spending of every day Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

It somewhat tends to make a holy life more easy to us, when we know the ordinary course and method of our duties, and everything falls into its proper place; as it helps the farmer or tradesman to know the ordinary course of his work, that he need not go out of it, unless in extraordinary cases. Therefore I shall here give you some brief directions for the holy spending of every day.

Direction 1. Proportion the time of your sleep aright, (if it be in your power,) that you waste not your precious morning hours sluggishly in your bed. Let the time of your sleep be rationally fitted to your health and labor, and not sensually to your slothful pleasure. The morning hours are the most precious of all the day, for all our duties; especially those who are scanted of time, must take it then for prayer, if possible, lest they have none at all.

Direction 2. Let God have your first awaking thoughts: lift up your hearts to him reverently and thankfully for the rest of the night past, and briefly cast yourselves upon him for the upcoming day; and accustom yourselves so constantly to this, that your consciences may check you, when common thoughts shall first intrude. It will be a great help against the temptations that may else surprise you, and a holy engagement of your hearts to God, for all the day.

Direction 3. Resolve, that pride and the fashions of the times shall never tempt you into such a garb of attire, as will make you long in dressing in the morning; but wear such clothing as is soon put on. It is dear-bought 'decency' as they will needs call it, which must cost every day an hour's or a quarter of an hour's time: I had rather go as the wild Indians, than have those morning hours to answer for, as too many ladies and other gallants have.

Direction 4. You may employ that time in some fruitful meditation, or conference with those about you, as far as your necessary occasions do give leave: as, to think or speak of the mercy of a night's rest, and of your renewed time, and how many spent that night in hell, and how many in prison, and how many in a colder, harder lodging, and how many in grievous pain and sickness, weary of their beds and of their lives, and how many in distracting terrors of their minds; and how many souls that night were called from their bodies, to appear before the awesome God. And think how fast days and nights roll on! and how speedily your last night and day will come! and observe what is lacking in the readiness of your soul for such a time, and seek it presently without delay.

Direction 5. If more necessary duties call you not away, let secret prayer by yourself alone, go before the common prayers of the family; and delay it not causelessly, but if it may be, let it be first, before any other work of the day. Yet be not formal and superstitious to your hours, as if God had absolutely tied you to such a time: nor think it your duty to pray once in secret, and once with the family every morning, when more necessary duties call you off. That hour is best for one, which is worst for another: to most, private prayer is most seasonable as soon as they are up and clothed; to others some other hour may be more free and fit. And those people that have not more necessary duties, may do well to pray at all the opportunities before mentioned; but reading and

meditation must be allowed their time also; and the labors of your callings must be painfully followed; and those who are not at liberty, or that have a necessity of providing for their families, may not lawfully take so much time for prayer, as some others may; especially the aged and weak that cannot follow a calling, may take longer time. And ministers, who have many souls to look after, and public work to do, must take heed of neglecting any of this, that they may be longer and oftener in private prayer. Always remember that when two duties are at once before you, and one must be omitted, that you prefer that which, all things considered, is the greatest; and understand what makes a duty greatest. Usually that is greatest which tends to the greatest good; yet sometimes that is greatest at that time which cannot be done at another time, when others may. Praying, in itself considered, is better than ploughing, or marketing, or conference; and yet these may be greater than it in their proper seasons; because prayer may be done at another time, when these cannot.

Direction 6. Let family worship be performed constantly and seasonably, twice a day, at that hour which is freest in regard of interruptions; not delaying it without just cause. But whenever it is performed, be sure it be reverently, seriously, and spiritually done. Begin with a brief invocation of God's name, and craving of his help and blessing through Christ; and then read some part of the holy Scripture in order; and either help the hearers to understand it and apply it, or if you are unable for that, then read some profitable book to them for such ends; and sing a psalm, (if there be enough to do it fitly,) and earnestly pour out your souls in prayer. But if unavoidable occasions will not give way to all this, do what you can, especially in prayer, and do the rest another time but pretend not necessity against any duty, when it is but unwillingness or negligence. The lively performance of family duties, is a principal means to keep up the power and interest of godliness in the world; which all decays when these grow dead, and slight, and formal.

Direction 7. Renew the actual intention and remembrance of your ultimate end, when you set yourselves to your day's work, or set upon any notable business in the world. Let HOLINESS TO THE LORD be written upon your hearts in all that you do. Do no work which you cannot entitle God to, and truly say he set you about; and do nothing in the world for any other ultimate end, than to please, and glorify, and enjoy him. And remember that whatever you do, must be done as a means to these, and as by one who is going on to heaven. All your labor must be as the labor of a traveler, which is all for his journey's end; and all your respect or affection to any place or thing in your way, must be in respect to your attainment of the end; as a traveler loves a good way, a good horse, a good inn, a dry cloak, or good company; but nothing must be loved here, as your end or home. Lift up your hearts to heaven and say, If this work and way did not tend there directly or indirectly, it were no work or way for me. Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Direction 7. Follow the labors of your calling carefully and diligently. From hence will follow many blessings:

1. You will show that you are not sluggish, and servants to your flesh, as those that cannot deny its ease; and you will further the mortification of all fleshly lusts and desires, which are fed by ease and idleness.

2. You will keep out idle thoughts from your mind, which swarm in the minds of idle people.

3. You will escape the loss of precious time, which idle people are daily guilty of.

4. You will be in a course of obedience to God, when the slothful are in a constant sin of omission.

5. You may have the more time to spare for holy exercises, if you follow your labor closely when you are at it; while idle people can have no time for prayer or reading, because they lose it by loitering at their work.

6. You may expect God's blessing for the comfortable provision for yourselves and families, and to have to give to those who have need, when the slothful are in need themselves, and cast by their poverty into abundance of temptations, and have nothing to do good with.

7. And it will also tend to the health of your bodies, which will make them the fitter for the service of your souls. Slothfulness wastes time, and health, and estate, and wit, and grace, and all.

Direction 9. Be thoroughly acquainted with your corruptions and temptations, and watch against them all the day; especially the most dangerous sort of your corruptions, and those temptations which your company or business will unavoidably lay before you. Be still watching and working against the master sins of unbelief, hypocrisy, selfishness, pride, sensuality, or flesh-pleasing, and the inordinate love of earthly things. Take heed lest, under pretense of diligence in your calling, you are drawn to earthly-mindedness, and excessive cares or covetous designs for rising in the world.

If you are to trade or deal with others, take heed of selfishness, which desires to obtain money from others, as much as you can for yourselves and your own advantage; take heed of all that savors of injustice or uncharitableness in all your dealings with others. If you converse with vain talkers, be still provided against the temptation of vanity of talk. If you converse with angry people, be still fortified against their provocations. If you converse with wanton people, or such as are tempting those of the other gender, maintain that modesty and necessary distance and cleanness of speech which the laws of chastity require. If you have servants that are still faulty, be so provided against the temptation, that their faults may not make you faulty, and you may do nothing that is unseemly or unjust, but only that which tends to their amendment. If you are poor, be still provided against the temptations of poverty, that it brings not upon you an evil far greater than itself. If you are rich, be most diligent in fortifying your hearts against those more dangerous temptations of riches, which very few escape. If you converse with flatterers or those that much admire you, be fortified against swelling pride. If you converse with those that despise and injure you, he fortified against impatient, revengeful pride.

These works at first will be very difficult, while sin is in any strength; but when you have got an habitual apprehension of the poisonous danger of every one of these sins, and of the tendency of all temptations, your hearts will readily and easily avoid them, without much tiring, thoughtfulness, and care; even as a man will pass by a house infected with the plague, or anything that would hurt him.

Direction 10. When you are alone in your labors, improve the time in practical, fruitful (not speculative and barren) meditations; especially in heart work and heaven work. Let your chief meditations be on the infinite goodness and perfections of God, and the life of glory, which in the love and praise of him, you must live forever; and next let Christ, and the mysteries of grace in

man’s redemption, be the matter of your thoughts; and next that your own hearts and lives. If you are able to manage meditations methodically it will be best; but if you cannot do that, without so much striving as will confound you, and distract you, and cast you into melancholy, it is better let your meditations be more short and easy, like ejaculatory prayers; but let them usually be operative to do some good upon your hearts.

Direction 11. If you labor in company with others, be provided with matter, skill, resolution, and zeal, to improve the time in profitable conference, and to avoid diversions.

Direction 12. Whatever you are doing, in company or alone, let the day be spent in the inward excitation and exercise of the graces of the soul, as well as in external bodily duties. And to that end know, that there is no external duty, but must have some internal grace to animate it, or else it is unacceptable to God. When you are praying and reading, there are the graces of faith, desire, love, repentance, etc. to be exercised there. When you are alone, meditation may help to actuate any grace as you find most needful. When you are conferring with others, you must exercise love to them, and love to that truth about which you do confer, and other graces as the subject shall require. When you are provoked or under suffering, you have patience to exercise. But especially it must be your principal daily business, by the exercise of faith, to keep your hearts warm in the love of God and your dear Redeemer, and in the hopes and delightful thoughts of heaven. As the means are various and admit of deliberation and choice, because they are to be used but as means, and not all at once, but sometimes one, and sometimes another, when the end is still the same and past deliberation or choice; so all those graces which are but means, must be used thus variously, and with deliberation and choice; when the love of God and of eternal life must be the constant tenor and constitution of the mind, as being the final grace, which consists with the exercise of every other mediate grace. Never take up with lip-labor or bodily exercise alone, nor barren thoughts, unless your hearts be also employed in a course of duty, and holy breathings after God, or motion towards him, or in the sincere internal part of the duty which you perform to men. Justice and love are graces which you must still exercise towards all that you have to deal with in the world. Love is called the fulfilling of the law, Romans 13:10; because the love of God and man is the soul of every outward duty, and a cause that will bring forth these as its effects.

Direction 13. Keep up a high esteem of time; and be every day more careful that you lose none of your time, than you are that you lose none of your gold or silver. If vain recreations, dressings, feastings, idle talk, unprofitable company, or sleep—are temptations to rob you of any of your time, accordingly heighten your watchfulness and firm resolutions against them. Do not be more careful to escape thieves and robbers—than to escape that person, or action, or course of life, which would rob you of any of your time. And for the redeeming of time, especially see, not only that you be never idle, but also that you be doing the greatest good that you can do, and prefer not a less before a greater good.

Direction 14. Eat and drink with temperance and thankfulness; for health, and not for unprofitable pleasure. Most carefully avoid excess. Never please your appetite in food or drink, when it tends to the detriment of your health. God calls us to deny our unnecessary, sensual delights, and use the body so as it may be most serviceable to the soul and him. "Eat at a proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness." Ecclesiastes 10:17

Take heed of intemperance and excess. Let your diet incline rather to the coarser than the finer sort, and to the cheaper than the costly sort, and to sparing abstinence than to fullness. I would advise rich men especially, to write in great letters on the walls of their dining-rooms or parlors these verses: "Sodom's sins were pride, laziness, and gluttony, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door." Ezekiel 16:49. "There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed and who lived each day in luxury. . . Remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony!" Luke 16:19, Luke 16:25.

Paul wept when he mentioned those "whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things, being enemies to the cross," Php 3:18-19. O live not after the flesh, lest you die! Romans 8:13; Galatians 6:8; Galatians 5:21, Galatians 5:23-24.

Direction 15. If any temptation prevails against you, and you fall into any sin, presently lament it, and confess it to God; and rise by a true and thorough repentance, immediately without delay. Spare not the flesh, and daub not over the breach, and do not by excuses palliate the sore, but speedily rise, whatever it cost; for it will certainly cost you more to remain impenitent. And for your besetting sins, make not too light of them, but confess them, and daily strive against them; and examine what strength you get against them, and do not aggravate them by impenitence and contempt.

Direction 16. Every day look to the special duties of your several relations: whether you are husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, pastors, people, magistrates, subjects; remember that every relation has its special duty, and its advantage for the doing of some good; and that God requires your faithfulness in these, as well as in any other duty. And that in these a man's sincerity or hypocrisy is usually more tried, than in any other parts of our lives.

Direction 17. In the evening return to the worshiping of God, in the family and in secret, as was directed for the morning. And do all with seriousness, as in the sight of God, and in the sense of your necessities; and make it your delight to receive instructions from the holy Scripture, and praise God, and call upon his name through Christ.

Direction 18. If you have any extraordinary impediments one day to hinder you in your duty to God and man, make it up by diligence the next; and if you have any extraordinary helps, make use of them, and let them not slip away.

Direction 19. Before you betake yourselves to sleep, it is ordinarily a safe and needful course, to take a review of the actions and mercies of the past day; that you may be specially thankful for all special mercies, and humbled for your sins; and may renew your repentance and resolutions for obedience; and may examine yourselves, whether your souls grew better or worse; and whether sin or grace increased; and whether you are any better prepared for sufferings and death. But yet waste not too much time in the ordinary accounts of your life, as those that neglect their duty while they are examining themselves how they perform it, and perplexing themselves with the long perusal of their ordinary infirmities. But by a general (yet sincere) repentance, bewail your unavoidable daily failings, and have recourse to Christ for a daily pardon and renewed grace. And in case of extraordinary sins or mercies, be sure to be extraordinarily humbled or thankful. Some

think it best to keep a daily catalogue or journal of their sins and mercies. If you do so, be not too particular in the enumeration of those that are the matter of every day's return; for it will be but a temptation to waste your time, and neglect greater duty, and to make you grow customary and senseless of such sins and mercies, when the same come to be recited over and over from day to day. But let the common mercies be more generally recorded, and the common sins generally confessed (yet neither of them therefore slighted); and let the extraordinary mercies, and greater sins, have a more particular observation. And yet remember, that sins and mercies, which it is not fit that others be acquainted with, are more safe committed to memory than to writing: and methinks, a well humbled and a thankful heart should not easily let the memory of them slip.

Direction 20. When you compose yourselves to sleep, again commit yourselves to God through Christ, and crave his protection, and close up the day with some holy exercise of faith and love. And if you one who lies awake in the night, let your meditations be holy, and exercised upon subjects which are profitable to your souls.

I have briefly laid together these twenty directions for the right spending of every day, that those who need them, may at least get these few engraved on their minds, and make them the daily practice of their lives; which if you will sincerely do, you cannot conceive how much it will conduce to the holiness, fruitfulness, and quietness of your lives, and to your peaceful and comfortable death.

Chapter 103

S. Directives for Avoiding Dissension in the Home

Directives for avoiding dissension in the home by Richard Baxter

It is a great duty of husbands and wives to live in quietness and peace, and avoid all occasions of wrath and discord. Because this is a duty of so great importance, I shall first open to you the great NECESSITY of it, and then give you more particular directions to perform it.

(1) Your discord will be your pain, and the vexation of our lives. Like a disease, or wound, or fracture in your own bodies, which will pain you until it is cured; you will hardly keep peace in your minds, when peace is broken so near you in your family. As you would take heed of hurting yourselves, and as you would hasten the cure when you are hurt; so should you take heed of any breach of peace, and quickly seek to heal it when it is broken.

(2) Dissension tends to cool your love; frequent dissension tends to leave a habit of distaste and averseness on the mind. Wounding is separating; and to be tied together by any outward bonds, when your hearts are separated, is but to be tormented; and to have the insides of adversaries, while you have marital outsides. As the difference between my 'home' and my 'prison' is that I willingly and with delight dwell in the one, but am unwillingly confined to the other; such will be the difference between a quiet and an unquiet life, in your married state; it turns your dwelling and delight into a prison, where you are chained to those calamities, which in a free condition you might flee.

(3) Dissension between the husband and the wife, disorders all other family affairs. They are like oxen unequally yoked--which can perform no work, because they are always striving with one another.

(4) It exceedingly unfits you for the worship of God; you are not fit to pray together, nor to confer together of heavenly things, nor to be helpers to each other's souls. I need not tell you this, you feel it by experience. Wrath and bitterness will not allow you so much exercise of love and holy composedness of mind, as every one of those duties requires.

(5) Dissension disables you to govern your families aright. Your children will take example by you; or think they are at liberty to do what they desire, when they find you taken up with such animosity between yourselves. They will think you unfit to reprove them for their faults--when they see you guilty of such faults and folly of your own. Nay, you will become the shame and secret derision of your children, and bring yourselves into contempt.

(6) Your dissensions will expose you to the malice of Satan, and give him advantage for manifold temptations. A house divided cannot stand; an army divided is easily conquered, and made a prey to the enemy. You cannot foresee what abundance of sin you put yourselves in danger of. By all these reasons, you may see what dissensions between husband and wife do tend to.

DIRECTIVES for avoiding dissension in the home

(1) Keep up your marital love in a constant heat and vigor. Love will suppress wrath. You cannot become bitter upon small provocations, against those whom you dearly love; much less can you proceed to reviling words, or to averseness and estrangedness, or any abuse of one another. Or if a breach and wound be unhappily made, the balsamic quality of love will heal it. But when love once cools, small matters exasperate and breed antipathy.

(2) Both husband and wife must mortify their pride and passion, which are the causes of impatience; and must pray and labor for a humble, meek, and quiet spirit. A proud heart is troubled and provoked by every word or action that seems to tend to their undervaluing. A peevish, proud mind is like a sore and ulcerated member--which will be pained if it be touched. He that must live near such a sore, diseased, impatient, proud mind--must live even as the nurse does with the child, that makes it her business to rock it, and lull, and sing it quiet when it cries; for to be angry with it, will do no good. And if you have married one of such a sick or childish temper, you must resolve to bear and use them accordingly. But no Christian should bear with such a malady in themselves; nor be patient with such impatience, pride and haughtiness in themselves. Once get the victory over yourselves, and the cure of your own impatience, and you will easily keep peace with one another.

(3) Agree together beforehand, that when one is in a tempestuous, angry fit, the other shall silently and gently bear it--until it be past and you have come to your senses again. Do not both be angry at the same time. When the fire is kindled, quench it with gentle words and demeanor, and do not cast on more fuel, by answering provokingly and sharply, or by multiplying words, and by answering wrath with wrath.

(4) If you cannot quickly quench the anger in your heart--yet at least refrain your tongues! Speak no reproachful or provoking words. Talking hotly and angrily does blow the fire, and increase the flame. Be but silent, and you will the sooner return to your serenity and peace. Foul words tend to more displeasure. As Socrates said when his wife first railed at him, and next threw a vessel of foul water upon him, "I thought when I heard the thunder, there would come rain"; so you may foretell worse following, when foul, unfitting words begin. If you cannot easily allay your wrath, you may hold your tongues, if you are truly willing.

(5) Let the sober party condescend to speak gently and to entreat the other. Say to your angry wife or husband, 'You know this should not be between us; love must allay it, and it must be repented of. God does not approve it, and we shall not approve it when this heated argument is over. This frame of mind is contrary to a praying frame, and this language contrary to a praying language; we must pray together soon; let us do nothing contrary to prayer now. Sweet water and bitter come not from one spring,' etc. Some calm and humble words of reason, may stop the torrent, and revive the reason which passion had overcome.

(6) Confess your fault to one another, when angry passion has prevailed against you; and ask forgiveness of each other, and join in prayer to God for pardon. This will lay a greater engagement on you the next time, to refrain from argument. You will surely be ashamed to do that which you have so confessed and asked forgiveness for--of God and each other.

If you will but practice these directives, your family peace may be preserved.

Chapter 104

S. How to Spend the Day With God

How to Spend the Day With God adapted and updated from RICHARD BAXTER (1615-1691) by Matthew Vogan A holy life is inclined to be made easier when we know the usual sequence and method of our duties - with everything falling into its proper place. Therefore, I shall give some brief directions for spending the day in a holy manner.

Sleep

Measure the time of your sleep appropriately so that you do not waste your precious morning hours sluggishly in your bed. Let the time of your sleep be matched to your health and labour, and not to slothful pleasure.

First Thoughts

Let God have your first awaking thoughts; lift up your hearts to Him reverently and thankfully for the rest enjoyed the night before and cast yourself upon Him for the day which follows.

Familiarise yourself so consistently to this that your conscience may check you when common thoughts shall first intrude. Think of the mercy of a night’s rest and of how many that have spent that night in Hell; how many in prison; how many in cold, hard lodgings; how many suffering from agonising pains and sickness, weary of their beds and of their lives.

Think of how many souls were that night called from their bodies terrifyingly to appear before God and think how quickly days and nights are rolling on! How speedily your last night and day will come! Observe that which is lacking in the preparedness of your soul for such a time and seek it without delay.

Prayer

Let prayer by yourself alone (or with your partner) take place before the collective prayer of the family. If possible let it be first, before any work of the day.

Family Worship

Let family worship be performed consistently and at a time when it is most likely for the family to be free of interruptions.

Ultimate Purpose

Remember your ultimate purpose, and when you set yourself to your day’s work or approach any activity in the world, let HOLINESS TO THE LORD be written upon your hearts in all that you do. Do no activity which you cannot entitle God to, and truly say that he set you about it, and do nothing in the world for any other ultimate purpose than to please, glorify and enjoy Him. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." - 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Diligence in Your Calling Follow the tasks of your calling carefully and diligently. Thus:

(a) You will show that you are not sluggish and servants to your flesh (as those that cannot deny it ease), and you will further the putting to death of all the fleshly lusts and desires that are fed by ease and idleness.

(b) You will keep out idle thoughts from your mind, that swarm in the minds of idle persons.

(c) You will not lose precious time, something that idle persons are daily guilty of.

(d) You will be in a way of obedience to God when the slothful are in constant sins of omission.

(e) You may have more time to spend in holy duties if you follow your occupation diligently. Idle persons have no time for praying and reading because they lose time by loitering at their work.

(f) You may expect God's blessing and comfortable provision for both yourself and your families.

(g) it may also encourage the health of your body which will increase its competence for the service of your soul.

Temptations and Things That Corrupt Be thoroughly acquainted with your temptations and the things that may corrupt you - and watch against them all day long. You should watch especially the most dangerous of the things that corrupt, and those temptations that either your company or business will unavoidably lay before you.

Watch against the master sins of unbelief: hypocrisy, selfishness, pride, flesh pleasing and the excessive love of earthly things. Take care against being drawn into earthly mindedness and excessive cares, or covetous designs for rising in the world, under the pretence of diligence in your calling.

If you are to trade or deal with others, be vigilant against selfishness and all that smacks of injustice or uncharitableness. In all your dealings with others, watch against the temptation of empty and idle talking. Watch also against those persons who would tempt you to anger. Maintain that modesty and cleanness of speech that the laws of purity require. If you converse with flatterers, be on your guard against swelling pride.

If you converse with those that despise and injure you, strengthen yourself against impatient, revengeful pride. At first these things will be very difficult, while sin has any strength in you, but once you have grasped a continual awareness of the poisonous danger of any one of these sins, your heart will readily and easily avoid them.

Meditation When alone in your occupations, improve the time in practical and beneficial meditations. Meditate upon the infinite goodness and perfections of God; Christ and redemption; Heaven and how unworthy you are of going there and how you deserve eternal misery in Hell. The Only Motive

Whatever you are doing, in company or alone, do it all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). Otherwise, it is unacceptable to God.

Redeeming The Time

Place a high value upon your time, be more careful of not losing it than you would of losing your money. Do not let worthless recreations, television, idle talk, unprofitable company, or sleep rob

you of your precious time. Be more careful to escape that person, action or course of life that would rob you of your time than you would be to escape thieves and robbers.

Make sure that you are not merely never idle, but rather that you are using your time in the most profitable way that you can and do not prefer a less profitable way before one of greater profit.

Eating and Drinking

Eat and drink with moderation and thankfulness for health, not for unprofitable pleasure. Never please your appetite in food or drink when it is prone to be detrimental to your health.

Remember the sin of Sodom: "Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food and abundance of idleness" - Ezekiel 16:49. The Apostle Paul wept when he mentioned those "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame -- who set their minds on earthly things, being enemies to the cross of Christ" - Php 3:18-19. O then do not live according to the flesh lest you die (Romans 8:13).

Prevailing Sins

If any temptation prevails against you and you fall into any sins in addition to habitual failures, immediately lament it and confess it to God; repent quickly whatever the cost. It will certainly cost you more if you continue in sin and remain unrepentant. Do not make light of your habitual failures, but confess them and daily strive against them, taking care not to aggravate them by unrepentance and contempt.

Relationships

Remember every day the special duties of various relationships: whether as husbands, wives, children, masters, servants, pastors, people, magistrates, subjects.

Remember every relationship has its special duty and its advantage for the doing of some good. God requires your faithfulness in this matter as well as in any other duty.

Closing the Day

Before returning to sleep, it is wise and necessary to review the actions and mercies of the day past, so that you may be thankful for all the special mercies and humbled for all your sins. This is necessary in order that you might renew your repentance as well as your resolve for obedience, and in order that you may examine yourself to see whether your soul grew better or worse, whether sin goes down and grace goes up and whether you are better prepared for suffering, death and eternity. May these directions be engraven upon your mind and be made the daily practice of your life.

If sincerely adhered to, these will be conducive to the holiness, fruitfulness and quietness of your life and add to you a comfortable and peaceful death.

Chapter 105

S. Making Light of Christ and Salvation

Making Light of Christ and Salvation But they made light of it.—Matthew 22:5.

Beloved hearers; the office that God hath called us to is, by declaring the glory of His grace, to help under Christ to the saving of men's souls. I hope you think not that I come hither to-day on another errand. The Lord knows I had not set a foot out-of-doors but in hope to succeed in this work for your souls. I have considered, and often considered, what is the matter that so many thousands should perish when God hath done so much for their salvation; and I find this that is mentioned in my text is the cause. It is one of the wonders of the world, that when God hath so loved the world as to send His Son, and Christ hath made a satisfaction by His death sufficient for them all, and offereth the benefits of it so freely to them, even without money or price, that yet the most of the world should perish; yea, the most of those that are thus called by His Word! Why, here is the reason—when Christ hath done all this, men make light of it. God hath showed that He is not unwilling; and Christ hath showed that He is not unwilling that men should be restored to God's favor and be saved; but men are actually unwilling themselves. God takes not pleasure in the death of sinners, but rather that they return and live. But men take such pleasure in sin that they will die before they will return. The Lord Jesus was content to be their physician, and hath provided them a sufficient plaster of His own blood: but if men make light of it, and will not apply it, what wonder if they perish after all? This Scripture giveth us the reason of their perdition. This, sad experience tells us, the most of the world is guilty of. It is a most lamentable thing to see how most men do spend their care, their time, their pains, for known vanities, while God and glory are cast aside; that He who is all should seem to them as nothing, and that which is nothing should seem to them as good as all; that God should set mankind in such a race where heaven or hell is their certain end, and that they should sit down, and loiter, or run after the childish toys of the world, and so much forget the prize that they should run for. Were it but possible for one of us to see the whole of this business as the all-seeing God doth; to see at one view both heaven and hell, which men are so near; and see what most men in the world are minding, and what they are doing every day, it would be the saddest sight that could be imagined. Oh, how should we marvel at their madness, and lament their self-delusion! O poor distracted world! what is it you run after? and what is it that you neglect? If God had never told them what they were sent into the world to do, or whither they were going, or what was before them in another world, then they had been excusable; but He hath told them over and over, till they were weary of it. Had He left it doubtful, there had been some excuse; but it is His sealed word, and they profess to believe it, and would take it ill of us if we should question whether they do believe it or not.

Beloved, I come not to accuse any of you particularly of this crime; but seeing it is the commonest cause of men's destruction, I suppose you will judge it the fittest matter for our inquiry, and deserving our greatest care for the cure. To which end I shall, (1) endeavor the conviction of the guilty; (2) shall give them such considerations as may tend to humble and reform them; (3) I shall conclude with such direction as may help them that are willing to escape the destroying power of this sin. And for the first, consider: It is the case of most sinners to think themselves freest from

those sins that they are most enslaved to; and one reason why we can not reform them is because we can not convince them of their guilt. It is the nature of sin so far to blind and befool the sinner, that he knoweth not what he doth, but thinketh he is free from it when it reigneth in him, or when he is committing it: it bringeth men to be so much unacquainted with themselves that they know not what they think, or what they mean and intend, nor what they love or hate, much less what they are habituated and disposed to. They are alive to sin, and dead to all the reason, consideration, and resolution that should recover them, as if it were only by their sinning that we must know that they are alive. May I hope that you that hear me to-day are but willing to know the truth of your case, and then I shall be encouraged to proceed to an inquiry. God will judge impartially; why should not we do so? Let me, therefore, by these following questions, try whether none of you are slighters of Christ and your own salvation. And follow me, I beseech you, by putting them close to your own hearts, and faithfully answering them.

Things that men highly value will be remembered; they will be matter of their freest and sweetest thoughts. This is a known case. Do not those then make light of Christ and salvation that think of them so seldom and coldly in comparison of other things? Follow thy own heart, man, and observe what it daily runneth after; and then judge whether it make not light of Christ.

We can not persuade men to one hour's sober consideration what they should do for an interest in Christ, or in thankfulness for His love, and yet they will not believe that they make light of Him.

Things that we highly value will be matter of our discourse; the judgment and heart will command the tongue. Freely and delightfully will our speech run after them. This also is a known case. Do not those men make light of Christ and salvation that shun the mention of His name, unless it be in a vain or sinful use? Those that love not the company where Christ and salvation is much talked of, but think it troublesome, precise discourse: that had rather hear some merry jests, or idle tales, or talk of their riches or business in the world; when you may follow them from morning to night, and scarce have a savory word of Christ; but perhaps some slight and weary mention of Him sometimes; judge whether these make not light of Christ and salvation. How seriously do they talk of the world and speak of vanity! but how heartlessly do they make mention of Christ and salvation! The things that we highly value we would secure the possession of, and therefore would take any convenient course to have all doubts and fears about them well resolved. Do not those men then make light of Christ and salvation that have lived twenty or thirty years in uncertainty whether they have any part in these or not, and yet never seek out for the right resolution of their doubts? Are all that hear me this day certain they shall be saved? Oh, that they were! Oh, had you not made light of salvation, you could not so easily bear such doubting of it; you could not rest till you had made it sure, or done your best to make it sure. Have you nobody to inquire of, that might help you in such a work? Why, you have ministers that are purposely appointed to that office. Have you gone to them, and told them the doubtfulness of your case, and asked their help in the judging of your condition? Alas! ministers may sit in their studies from one year to another, before ten persons among a thousand will come to them on such an errand! Do not these make light of Christ and salvation? When the gospel pierceth the heart indeed, they cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" Trembling and astonished, Paul cries out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And so did the convinced Jews to Peter. But when hear we such questions? The things that we value do deeply affect us, and some motions will be in the heart according to our estimation of them. O sirs, if men made not light of these things, what working would there be in

the hearts of all our hearers! What strange affections would it raise in them to hear of the matters of the world to come! How would their hearts melt before the power of the gospel! What sorrow would be wrought in the discovery of their sins! What astonishment at the consideration of their misery! What unspeakable joy at the glad tidings of salvation by the blood of Christ! What resolution would be raised in them upon the discovery of their duty! Oh, what hearers should we have, if it were not for this sin! Whereas now we are liker to weary them, or preach them asleep with matters of this unspeakable moment. We talk to them of Christ and salvation till we make their heads ache: little would one think by their careless carriage that they heard and regarded what we said, or though we spoke at all to them. Our estimation of things will be seen in the diligence of our endeavors. That which we highliest value, we shall think no pains too great to obtain. Do not those men then make light of Christ and salvation that think all too much that they do for them; that murmur at His service, and think it too grievous for them to endure? that ask His service as Judas of the ointment. What need this waste? Can not men be saved without so much ado? This is more ado than needs. For the world they will labor all the day, and all their lives; but for Christ and salvation they are afraid of doing too much. Let us preach to them as long as we will, we can not bring them to relish or resolve upon a life of holiness. Follow them to their houses, and you shall not hear them read a chapter, nor call upon God with their families once a day; nor will they allow Him that one day in seven which He hath separated to His service. But pleasure, or worldly business, or idleness, must have a part. And many of them are so far hardened as to reproach them that will not be as mad as themselves. And is not Christ worth the seeking? Is not everlasting salvation worth more than all this? Doth not that soul make light of all these that thinks his ease more worth than they? Let but common sense judge. That which we most highly value, we think we can not buy too dear. Christ and salvation are freely given, and yet the most of men go without them because they can not enjoy the world and them together. They are called but to part with that which would hinder them Christ, and they will not do it. They are called but to give God His own, and to resign all to His will, and let go the profits and pleasures of this world, when they must let go either Christ or them, and they will not. They think this too dear a bargain, and say they can not spare these things: they must hold their credit with men; they must look to their estates: how shall they live else? They must have their pleasure, whatsoever becomes of Christ and salvation: as if they could live without Christ better than without these; as if they were afraid of being losers by Christ, or could make a saving match by losing their souls to gain the world. Christ hath told us over and over that if we will not forsake all for Him we can not be His disciples. Far are these men from forsaking all, and yet will needs think that they are His disciples indeed. That which men highly esteem, they would help their friends to as well as themselves. Do not those men make light of Christ and salvation that can take so much care to leave their children portions in the world, and do so little to help them to heaven? that provide outward necessaries so carefully for their families, but do so little to the saving of their souls? Their neglected children and friends will witness that either Christ, or their children’s souls, or both, were made light of. That which men highly esteem, they will so diligently seek after that you may see it in the success, if it be a matter within their reach. You may see how many make light of Christ, by the little knowledge they have of Him, and the little communion with Him, and the communication from Him; and the little, yea, none, of His special grace in them. Alas! how many ministers can speak it to the sorrow of their hearts, that many of their people know almost nothing of Christ, though they hear of Him daily! Nor know they what they must do to be saved: if we ask them an account of these things, they answer as if they

understood not what we say to them, and tell us they are no scholars, and therefore think they are excusable for their ignorance. Oh, if these men had not made light of Christ and their salvation, but had bestowed but half as much pains to know and enjoy Him as they have done to understand the matters of their trades and callings in the world, they would not have been so ignorant as they are: they make light of these things, and therefore will not be at the pains to study or learn them. When men that can learn the hardest trade in a few years have not learned a catechism, nor how to understand their creed, under twenty or thirty years' preaching, nor can abide to be questioned about such things, doth not this show that they have slighted them in their hearts? How will these despisers of Christ and salvation be able one day to look Him in the face, and to give an account of these neglects?

Thus much I have spoken in order to your conviction. Do not some of your consciences by this time smite you, and say, I am the man that have made light of my salvation? If they do not, it is because you make light of it still, for all that is said to you. But because, if it be the will of the Lord, I would fain have this damning distemper cured, and am loath to leave you in such a desperate condition, if I knew how to remedy it, I will give you some considerations, which may move you, if you be men of reason and understanding, to look better about you; and I beseech you to weigh them, and make use of them as we go, and lay open your hearts to the work of grace, and sadly bethink you what a case you are in, if you prove such as make light of Christ.

Consider, 1. Thou makest light of Him that made not light of thee who deserve it. Thou wast worthy of nothing but contempt. As a man, what art thou but a worm to God? As a sinner, thou art far viler than a toad: yet Christ was so far from making light of thee and thy happiness, that He came down into the flesh, and lived a life of suffering, and offered Himself a sacrifice to the justice which thou hadst provoked, that thy miserable soul might have a remedy. It is no less than miracles of love and mercy that He hath showed to us; and yet shall we slight them after all?

Angels admire them, whom they less concern, and shall redeemed sinners make light of them? What barbarous, yea, devilish-yea, worse than devilish—ingratitude is this! The devils never had a savior offered to them; but thou hast, and dost thou yet make light of Him?

2. Consider, the work of man's salvation by Jesus Christ is the masterpiece of all the works of God, wherein He would have His love and mercy to be magnified. As the creation declareth His goodness and power, so doth redemption His goodness and mercy; He hath contrived the very frame of His worship so that it shall much consist in the magnifying of this work; and, after all this, will you make light of it? "His name is wonderful." "He did the work that none could do." "Greater love could none show than His." How great was the evil and misery that He delivered us from! the good procured from us! All are wonders, from His birth to His ascension; from our new birth to our glorification, all are wonders of matchless mercy—and yet do you make light of them?

3. You make light of matters of greatest excellency and moment in the world: you know not what it is that you slight: had you well known, you would not have done it. As Christ said to the woman of Samaria, "Hadst thou known who it is that speaketh to thee, thou wouldst have asked of Him the waters of life"; had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. So, had you known what Christ is, you would not have made light of Him; had you been one day in heaven, and but seen what they possess, and seen also what miserable souls must endure that are shut out, you would never sure have made so light of Christ.

O sirs, it is no trifles or jesting matters that the gospel speaks of. I must needs profess to you that when I have the most serious thoughts of these things myself, I am ready to marvel that such amazing matters do not overwhelm the souls of men; that the greatness of the subject doth not so overmatch our understandings and affections as even to drive men besides themselves, but that God hath always somewhat allayed it by the distance; much more that men should be so blockish as to make light of them. O Lord, that men did but know what everlasting glory and everlasting torments are: would they then hear us as they do? would they read and think of these things as they do? I profess I have been ready to wonder, when I have heard such weighty things delivered, how people can forbear crying out in the congregation; much more how they can rest till they have gone to their ministers, and learned what they should do to be saved, that this great business might be put out of doubt. Oh, that heaven and hell should work no more on men! Oh, that everlastingness work no more! Oh, how can you forbear when you are alone to think with yourselves what it is to be everlastingly in joy or in torment! I wonder that such thoughts do not break your sleep, and that they come not in your mind when you are about your labor! I wonder how you can almost do anything else! how you can have any quietness in your minds! How you can eat, or drink, or rest, till you have got some ground of everlasting consolations! Is that a man or a corpse that is not affected with matters of this moment? that can be readier to sleep than to tremble when he heareth how he must stand at the bar of God? Is that a man or a clod of clay that can rise or lie down without being deeply affected with his everlasting estate? that can follow his worldly business and make nothing of the great business of salvation or damnation; and that when they know it is hard at hand? Truly, sirs, when I think of the weight of the matter, I wonder at the very best of God's saints upon the earth that they are no better, and do no more in so weighty a case. I wonder at those whom the world accounteth more holy than needs, and scorns for making too much ado, that they can put off Christ and their souls with so little; that they pour not out their souls in every supplication; that they are not more taken up with God; that their thoughts be more serious in preparation for their account. I wonder that they be not a hundred times more strict in their lives, and more laborious and unwearied in striving for the crown, than they are. And for myself, as I am ashamed of my dull and careless heart, and of my slow and unprofitable course of life, so the Lord knows I am ashamed of every sermon that I preach: when I think what I have been speaking of, and who sent me, and that men's salvation or damnation is so much concerned in it, I am ready to tremble lest God should judge me as a slighter of His truth and the souls of men, and lest in the best sermon I should be guilty of their blood. Methinks we should not speak a word to men in matters of such consequence without tears, or the greatest earnestness that possibly we can: were not we too much guilty of the sin which we reprove, it would be so. Whether we are alone, or in company, methinks our end, and such an end, should still be in our mind, and before our eyes; and we should sooner forget anything, and set light by anything, or by all things, than by this.

Consider, 4. Who is it that sends this weighty message to you? Is it not God Himself? Shall the God of heaven speak and men make light of it? You would not slight the voice of an angel or a prince.

5. Whose salvation is it that you make light of? Is it not your own? Are you no more near or dear to yourselves than to make light of your own happiness or misery? Why, sirs, do you not care whether you be saved or damned? Is self-love lost? are you turned your own enemies? As he that

slighteth his meat doth slight his life, so if you slight Christ, whatsoever you may think, you will find it was your own salvation that you slighted. Hear what He saith, “All they that hate me love death.”

6. Your sin is greater, in that you profess to believe the gospel which you make so light of. For a profest infidel to do it that believes not that ever Christ died, or rose again, or doth not believe that there is a heaven or hell, this were no such marvel—but for you, that make it your creed, and your very religion, and call yourselves Christians, and have been baptized into this faith, and seemed to stand to it, this is the wonder, and hath no excuse. What! believe that you shall live in endless joy or torment, and yet make no more of it to escape torment, and obtain that joy! What! believe that God will shortly judge you, and yet make no preparation for it! Either say plainly, I am no Christian, I do not believe these wonderful things, I will believe nothing but what I see, or else let your hearts be affected with your belief, and live as you say you do believe. What do you think when you repeat the creed, and mention Christ’s judgment and everlasting life?

7. What are these things you set so much by as to prefer them before Christ and the saving of your soul? Have you found a better friend, a greater and a surer happiness than this? Good Lord! what dung is it that men make so much of, while they set so light by everlasting glory? What toys are they that are daily taken up with, while matters of life and death are neglected? Why, sirs, if you had every one a kingdom in your hopes, what were it in comparison of the everlasting kingdom? I can not but look upon all the glory and dignity of this world, lands and lordships, crowns and kingdoms, even as on some brain-sick, beggarly fellow, that borroweth fine clothes, and plays the part of a king or a lord for an hour on a stage, and then comes down, and the sport is ended, and they are beggars again. Were it not for God’s interest in the authority of magistrates, or for the service they might do Him, I should judge no better of them. For, as to their own glory, it is but a smoke: what matter is it whether you live poor or rich, unless it were a greater matter to die rich than it is? You know well enough that death levels all. What matter is it at judgment, whether you be to answer for the life of a rich man or a poor man? Is Dives, then, any better than Lazarus? Oh, that men knew what poor, deceiving shadow they grasp at while they let go the everlasting substance! The strongest, and richest, and most voluptuous sinners do but lay in fuel for their sorrows, while they think they are gathering together a treasure. Alas! they are asleep, and dream that they are happy; but when they awake, what a change will they find! Their crown is made of thorns; their pleasure hath such a sting as will stick in the heart through all eternity, except unfeigned repentance do prevent it. Oh, how sadly will these wretches be convinced ere long, what a foolish bargain they made in selling Christ and their salvation for these trifles! Let your farms and merchandise, then, save you, if they can, and do that for you that Christ would have done. Cry then to Baal, to save thee! Oh, what thoughts have drunkards and adulterers, etc., of Christ, that will not part with the basest lust for Him? “For a piece of bread,” saith Solomon, “such men do transgress.”

8. To set so light by Christ and salvation is a certain mark that thou hast no part in them, and if thou so continue, that Christ will set as light by thee: “Those that honor him he will honor, and those that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.” Thou wilt feel one day that thou canst not live without Him; thou wilt confess then thy need of Him; and then thou mayest go look for a savior where thou wilt; for He will be no Savior for thee hereafter, that wouldst not value Him, and submit to Him here. Then who will prove the loser by thy contempt? Oh, what a thing will it be for a poor miserable soul to cry to Christ for help in the day of extremity, and to hear so sad an answer as

this! Thou didst set lightly by Me and My law in the day of thy prosperity, and I will now set as light by thee in the day of thy adversity. Read Proverbs 1:24-33. Thou that, as Esau, didst sell thy birthright for a mess of pottage, shalt then find no place for repentance, though thou seek it with tears. Do you think that Christ shed His blood to save them that continue to make light of it? and to save them that value a cup of drink or a lust before His salvation? I tell you, sirs, though you set so light by Christ and salvation, God doth not so: He will not give them on such terms as these: He valueth the blood of His Son, and the everlasting glory, and He will make you value them if ever you have them. Nay, this will be thy condemnation, and leaveth no remedy. All the world can not save him that sets lightly by Christ. None of them shall taste of His supper. Nor can you blame Him to deny you what you made light of yourselves. Can you find fault if you miss of the salvation which you slighted?

9. The time is near when Christ and salvation will not be made light of as now they are. When God hath shaken those careless souls out of their bodies, and you must answer for all your sins in your own name, oh, then, what would you not give for a Savior! When a thousand bills shall be brought in against you, and none to relieve you, then you will consider, Oh! Christ would now have stood between me and the wrath of God; had I not despised Him, He would have answered all. When you see the world hath left you, and your companions in sin have deceived themselves and you, and all your merry days are gone, then what would you not give for that Christ and salvation that now you account not worth your labor! Do you think that when you see the judgment seat, and you are doomed to everlasting perdition for your wickedness, that you should then make as light of Christ as now? Why will you not judge now as you know you shall judge then? Will He then be worth ten thousand worlds? And is He not now worth your highest estimation and dearest affection?

10. God will not only deny thee that salvation thou madest light of, but He will take from thee all that which thou didst value before it: he that most highly esteems Christ shall have Him, and the creatures, so far as they are good here, and Him without the creature hereafter, because the creature is not useful; and he that sets more by the creature than by Christ, shall have some of the creature without Christ here, and neither Christ nor it hereafter. So much of these considerations, which may show the true face of this heinous sin.

What think you now, friends, of this business? Do you not see by this time what a case that soul is in that maketh light of Christ and salvation? What need then is there that you should take heed lest this should prove your own case! The Lord knows it is too common a case. Whoever is found guilty at the last of this sin, it were better for that man he had never been born. It were better for him he had been a Turk or Indian, that never had heard the name of a Savior, and that never had salvation offered to him: for such men “have no cloak for their sin.” Besides all the rest of their sins, they have this killing sin to answer for, which will undo them. And this will aggravate their misery, that Christ whom they set light by must be their Judge, and for this sin will He judge them. Oh, that such would now consider how they will answer that question that Christ put to their predecessors: “How will ye escape the damnation of hell?” or, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Can you escape without a Christ? or will a despised Christ save you then? If he be accurst that sets light by father or mother, what then is he that sets light by Christ? It was the heinous sin of the Jews, that among them were found such as set light by father and mother. But among us, men slight the Father of Spirits! In the name of God, brethren, I beseech you to

consider how you will then bear this anger which you now make light of! You that can not make light of a little sickness or want, or of natural death, no, not of a toothache, but groan as if you were undone; how will you then make light of the fury of the Lord, which will burn against the contemners of His grace! Doth it not behoove you beforehand to think of these things?

Dearly beloved in the Lord, I have now done that work which I came upon; what effect it hath, or will have, upon your hearts, I know not, nor is it any further in my power to accomplish that which my soul desireth for you. Were it the Lord's will that I might have my wish herein, the words that you have this day heard should so stick by you that the secure should be awakened by them, and none of you should perish by the slighting of your salvation. I can not follow you to your several habitations to apply this word to your particular necessities; but oh, that I could make every man's conscience a preacher to himself that it might do it, which is ever with you! That the next time you go prayerless to bed, or about your business, conscience might cry out, Dost thou set no more by Christ and thy salvation? That the next time you are tempted to think hardly of a holy and diligent life (I will not say to deride it as more ado than needs), conscience might cry out to thee, Dost thou set so light by Christ and thy salvation? That the next time you are ready to rush upon unknown sin, and to please your fleshly desires against the command of God, conscience might cry out, Is Christ and salvation no more worth than to cast them away, or venture them for thy lust? That when you are following the world with your most eager desires, forgetting the world to come, and the change that is a. little before you, conscience might cry out to you, Is Christ and salvation no more worth than so? That when you are next spending the Lord's day in idleness or vain sports, conscience might tell you what you are doing. In a word, that in all your neglects of duty, your sticking at the supposed labor or cost of a godly life, yea, in all your cold and lazy prayers and performances, conscience might tell you how unsuitable such endeavors are to the reward; and that Christ and salvation should not be so slighted. I will say no more but this at this time, it is a thousand pities that when God hath provided a Savior for the world, and when Christ hath suffered so much for their sins, and made so full a satisfaction to justice, and purchased so glorious a kingdom for His saints, and all this is offered so freely to sinners, to lost, unworthy sinners, even for nothing, that yet so many millions should everlastingly perish because they make light of their Savior and salvation, and prefer the vain world and their lusts before them. I have delivered my message, the Lord open your hearts to receive it. I have persuaded you with the word of truth and soberness; the Lord persuade you more effectually, or else all this is lost Amen.

S. Ministerial Pride

Ministerial Pride by Richard Baxter

One of our most heinous and palpable sins is PRIDE. This is a sin which has too much sway in most ministers, but which is more hateful and inexcusable in us than in other men. Yet is it so prevalent in some of us, that it fills our discourses, it chooses our company, it forms our countenances, it puts the accent and emphasis upon our words. It fills some men's minds with aspiring desires, and designs. It possesses them with envious and bitter thoughts against those who stand in their light, or who by any means eclipse their glory, or hinder the progress of their reputation. Oh what a constant companion, what a tyrannical commander, what a sly and subtle insinuating enemy, is this sin of pride! It goes with men to the draper, the mercer, the tailor: it chooses them their cloth, their trimming and their fashion. Fewer ministers would ruffle it out in the fashion in hair and habit, if it were not for the command of this tyrannous vice.

I wish that this were all, or the worst. But, alas, how frequently does PRIDE go with us to our study, and there sit with us and do our work! How oft does it choose our subject, and, more frequently still, our words and ornaments! God commands us to be as plain as we can—that we may inform the ignorant; and as convincing and serious as we are able—that we may melt and change their hardened hearts. But pride stands by and contradicts all, and produces its toys and trifles. It pollutes, rather than polishes. And, under presence of laudable ornaments, dishonors our sermons with childish things, as if a prince were to be decked in the clothes of a stage-player, or a painted fool. Pride persuades us to paint the window, that it may dim the light, and to speak to our people that which they cannot understand, to let them know that we are able to speak unprofitably. If we have a plain and cutting passage, it takes off the edge, and dulls the life of our preaching, under presence of filing off the roughness, unevenness, and excess. When God charges us to deal with men as for their lives, and to beseech them with all the earnestness that we are able; this cursed sin controls all, and condemns the most holy commands of God, and says to us, 'What! Will you make people think you are mad? Will you make them say you rage or rave? Cannot you speak soberly and moderately?' And thus does pride make many a man's sermons! And what pride makes the devil makes, and what sermons the devil will make and to what end, we may easily conjecture. Though the matter is of God—yet if the dress, and manner, and end is from Satan—we have no great reason to expect success. And when pride has made the sermon in the study—it goes with us into the pulpit—and forms our tone, animates us in the delivery, takes us off from that which may be displeasing, howsoever necessary, and sets us in pursuit of vain applause! In short, the sum of all is this—pride makes men, both in studying and preaching—to seek themselves, and deny God—when they should be seeking God's glory, and denying themselves! When they should inquire, "What shall I say, and how shall I say it—to please God best, and do most good?" pride makes them ask, "What shall I say, and how shall I deliver it, to be thought a learned able preacher, and to be applauded by all that hear me?" When the sermon is done, pride goes home with them, and makes them more eager to know whether they were applauded, than whether they did prevail for the saving of souls. Were it not for shame, they could find in their hearts to ask

people how they liked them and to draw out their commendations. If they perceive that they are highly thought of, they rejoice, as having attained their end; but if they see that they are considered but weak or common men, they are displeased, as having missed the prize they had in view! But even this is not all, nor the worst, if worse may be. Oh, that ever it should be said of godly ministers, that they are so set upon popular air, and on sitting highest in men's estimation; that they envy the talents and names of their brethren who are preferred before them. As if all were taken from their praise, that is given to another; and as if God had given them his gifts to be the mere ornaments and trappings of their persons, that they may walk as men of reputation in the world, and as if all his gifts to others were to be trodden down and vilified, if they seem to stand in the way of their honor!

What! A saint, a preacher of Christ, and yet envy that which has the image of Christ, and malign his gifts for which he should have the glory, and all because they seem to hinder our glory? Is not every true Christian a member of the body of Christ, and, therefore, partaker of the blessings of the whole, and of each particular member thereof? And does not every man owe thanks to God for his brethren's gifts, not only as having himself a part in them, as the foot has the benefit of the guidance of the eye, but also because his own ends may be attained by his brethren's gifts, as well as by his own? For if the glory of God, and the Church's felicity, be not his end, he is not a Christian. Will any workman malign another, because he helps him to do his master's work? Yet, alas, how common is this heinous crime of envy and pride—among the ministers of Christ! They can secretly blot the reputation of those that stand in the way of their own; and what they cannot for shame do in plain and open terms, lest they be proved liars and slanderers, they will do in generals, and by malicious intimations, raising suspicions where they cannot fasten accusations. And some go so far, that they are unwilling that anyone who is abler than themselves, should come into their pulpits, lest they should be more applauded than themselves! A fearful thing it is, that any man, who has the least of the fear of God, should so envy God's gifts, and had rather that his carnal hearers should remain unconverted, and the drowsy unawakened, than that it should be done by another who may be preferred before him!

Yes, so far does this cursed vice prevail, that in large congregations, which have need of the help of many preachers, we can scarcely, in many places, get two of equality to live together in love and quietness, and unanimously to carry on the work of God. But unless one of them be quite below the other in abilities, and content to be so esteemed, or unless he is willing to be ruled by him, they are contending for precedency, and envying each other's interest, and walking with coldness and jealousy towards one another, to the shame of their profession, and the great wrong of their people!

I am ashamed to think of it, that when I have been laboring to convince people of the great necessity of more ministers than one in large congregations, they tell me, "they will never agree together!" I hope the objection is unfounded as to the most, but it is a sad case that it should be true of any. Nay, some men are so far gone in pride, that when they might have an equal assistant to further the work of God, they had rather take all the burden upon themselves, though more than they can bear, than that anyone should share with them in the honor, or that their interest in the esteem of the people should be diminished!

Hence also it is, that men do so magnify their own opinions, and are as censorious of any who differ from them in lesser things, as if it were all one to differ from them, and from God. They expect that all should conform to their judgment, as if they were the rulers of the Church's faith; and while we cry down papal infallibility, too many of us would be popes ourselves, and have all stand to our determination, as if we were infallible! It is true, we have more modesty than expressly to say so. We pretend that it is only the evidence of truth in our reasons, that we expect men should yield to, and our zeal is the truth—and not for ourselves. But as that must needs be taken for truth which is ours, so our reasons must needs be taken for valid. And if they be but freely examined and be found fallacious, as we are exceedingly backward to see it ourselves, because the opinions are ours—so we are angry that our errors should be disclosed to others. We so espouse the cause of our errors, as if all that were spoken against them were spoken against our persons, and we were heinously injured to have our arguments thoroughly confuted, by which we injured the truth and the souls of men. So high indeed are our spirits, that when it becomes the duty of any one to reprove us—we are commonly impatient both of the matter and the manner. We love the man who will say as we say, and be of our opinion, and promote our reputation, though in other respects, he is less worthy of our esteem. But we think that one is ungrateful to us—if he differs from us, and deals plainly with us as to our errors, and tells us of our faults. Especially in the management of our public arguings, where the eye of the world is upon us, we can scarcely endure any reproof or plain dealing. I know that railing language is to be abhorred, and that we should be as tender of each other's reputation, as our fidelity to the truth will permit. But our pride makes too many of us think all men condemn us—who do not admire us, yes, and admire all we say, and submit their judgments to our most obvious mistakes! We are so tender—that a man can scarcely touch us but we are hurt. We are so high-minded, that a man who is not versed in complimenting and skilled in flattery, can scarcely tell how to speak to us, without us being offended at some word, which our proud hearts will fasten on and take as injurious to our honor.

I confess I have often wondered that this most heinous sin should be made so light of, and thought so consistent with a holy frame of heart and life, when far less sins are by ourselves, proclaimed to be so damnable in our people! And I have wondered more, to see the difference between godly preachers and ungodly sinners, in this respect. When we speak to drunkards, worldlings, or ignorant unconverted persons, we disgrace them to the utmost, and lay it on as plainly as we can speak, and tell them of their sin, and shame, and misery. And we expect that they should not only bear all patiently, but take all thankfully. And most that I deal with do take it patiently; and many gross sinners will commend the closest preachers most, and will say that they care not for hearing a man that will not tell them plainly of their sins. But if we speak to ministers against their errors or their sins, if we do not honor them and reverence them, and speak as smoothly as we are able to speak, yes, if we mix not commendations with our reproofs, and if the applause is not predominant, so as to drown all the force of the reproof, they take it as almost an insufferable injury!

Brethren, I know this is a sad confession, but that all this should exist among us, should be more grievous to us—than to be told of it. Could the evil be hidden, I would not have disclosed it, at least so openly in the view of all. But, alas, it has been so long open to the eyes of the world. We have dishonored ourselves by idolizing our honor; we print our shame, and preach our shame, thus proclaiming it to the whole world. Some will think that I speak over-charitably when I call such

persons godly men, in whom so great a sin as pride, does so much prevail. I know, indeed, that where it is predominant, not hated, and bewailed, and mortified in the main—there can be no true godliness; and I beseech every man to exercise a strict jealousy and search of his own heart. But if all be graceless who are guilty of any pride, or of most of the fore-mentioned discoveries of pride, the Lord be merciful to the ministers of this land, and give us quickly another spirit, for grace is then a rarer thing than most of us have supposed it to be.

Yet I must needs say, that I do not mean to involve all the ministers of Christ in this charge. To the praise of Divine grace be it spoken, we have some among us who are eminent for humility and meekness, and who, in these respects, are exemplary to their flocks and to their brethren. It is their glory, and shall be their glory; and makes them truly honorable and lovely in the eyes of God and of all good men, and even in the eyes of the ungodly themselves. O that the rest of us were eminent for humility and meekness! But, alas, this is not the case with all of us.

O that the Lord would lay us at his feet in the tears of sincere sorrow for this sin of pride! Brethren, may I expostulate this case a little with my own heart and yours, that we may see the evil of our sin, and be reformed! Is not pride the sin of devils, the first-born of hell? Is not pride, that wherein Satan's image does much consist? And is pride to be tolerated in men who are so engaged against him and his kingdom as we are? The very design of the gospel is to abase us, and the work of grace is begun and carried on in humiliation. Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creature. It is a contradiction in terms—to be a Christian, and not humble. All who will be Christians must be Christ's disciples, and 'come to him to learn'; and the lesson which he teaches then, is, to 'be meek and lowly.' Oh, how many precepts and admirable examples has our Lord and Master given us to this end. Can we behold him washing and wiping his servants' feet—and yet be proud and self-important? Shall he converse with the poorest of the people, and shall we avoid them as below our notice, and think none but people of wealth and honor fit for our society? How many of us are oftener found in the houses of gentlemen than in the cottages of the poor—who most need our help? There are many of us who would think it below us, to be daily with the most needy and beggarly people, instructing them in the way of life and salvation, as if we had taken charge of the souls of rich people only!

Alas, what is it that we have to be proud of? Is it of our body? Why, is it not made of the like materials as the brutes, and must it not shortly be as loathsome and abominable as a carcass? Is it of our graces? Why, the more we are proud of them—the less we have to be proud of. When so much of the nature of grace consists in humility, it is a great absurdity to be proud of it. Is it of our knowledge and learning? Why, if we have any knowledge at all, we must know how much reason we have to be humble! And if we know more than others, how much must more reason have we to be humble. How little is it that the most learned know, in comparison of that of which they are ignorant! To know that things are past your reach, and to know how ignorant you are, one would think should be no great cause of pride. However, do not the devils know more than you? And will you be proud of that in which the devils excel you? Our very business is to teach the great lesson of humility to our people; and how unfit, then, is it that we should be proud ourselves? We must study humility, and preach humility; and must we not possess and practice humility? A proud preacher of humility is a self-condemning man.

What a sad case is it, that so vile a sin is not more easily discerned in ourselves! Many who are most proud—can see it in others—and yet take no notice of the pride in themselves! The world takes notice of some among us—that they have proud hearts, and seek for the highest place, and must be the rulers, and bear the sway wherever they are—or else there is no living with them. In any dialog, they come not to search after truth, but to dictate to others—who, perhaps, are fit to teach them! In a word, they have such arrogant domineering spirits, that the world sees it plainly—and yet they will not see it in themselves!

Brethren, I desire to deal closely with my own heart and yours. I beseech you to consider whether it will benefit us to speak of the grace of humility—while we possess it not; or to speak against the sin of pride—while we indulge in it? Have not many of us cause to inquire diligently, whether sincerity will consist with such a measure of pride as we have in our hearts? When we are telling the drunkard that he cannot be saved unless he becomes temperate, and the fornicator that he cannot be saved unless he become chaste; have we not as great reason if we are proud, to say to ourselves—that we cannot be saved unless we become humble? Pride, in fact, is a greater sin than drunkenness or whoredom; and humility is as necessary as sobriety and chastity.

Truly, brethren, a man may as certainly, and more slyly, make haste to hell, in the way of earnest preaching of the gospel, and seeming zeal for a holy life—as in a way of drunkeness and filthiness. For what is holiness, but a devotedness to God and a living to him? And what is a damnable state, but a devotedness to carnal self and a living to ourselves? And does any one live more to himself, or less to God, than the proud man? And may not pride make a preacher study for himself; and pray and preach, and live to himself—even when he seems to surpass others in the work? It is not the work without the right principle and end—which will prove us upright. The work may be God's, and yet we may do it, not for God, but for ourselves! I confess I feel such continual danger on this point—that if I do not watch, lest I should study for myself, and preach for myself, and write for myself, rather than for Christ—I would soon miscarry; and after all, I justify not myself, when I must condemn the sin.

Consider, I beseech you, brethren, what baits there are in the work of the ministry to entice a man to self-exaltation, even in the highest works of piety. The fame of a godly man is as great a snare—as the fame of a learned man. But woe to him that desires the fame of godliness, instead of godliness! 'Truly I say unto you, they have their reward in full.' When the times were all for learning and empty formalities, the temptation of the proud did lie that way. But now, when, through the unspeakable mercy of God, the most lively practical preaching is in credit, and godliness itself is in credit, the temptation of the proud is to pretend to be zealous preachers and godly men. Oh, what a fine thing is it to have the people crowding to hear us, and affected with what we say, and yielding up to us their judgments and affections! What a fine thing is it to be cried up as the ablest and godliest man in the country, to be famed through the land for the highest spiritual excellencies! Alas, brethren, a little grace combined with such inducements will serve to make you join yourselves with the forwardest in promoting the cause of Christ in the world. Nay, pride may do it—without grace!

Oh, therefore, be jealous of yourselves, and, amidst all your studies, be sure to study humility. 'He who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.' I commonly observe that almost all men, whether good or bad, do loathe the proud, and love the humble. So

far indeed does pride contradict itself, that, conscious of its own deformity—it often borrows the homely dress of humility. We have the more cause to be jealous of it, because it is a sin most deeply rooted in our nature—and is the most stubborn sin to be extirpated from the soul.

Chapter 107

S. Ministers of Love

Ministers of Love by Richard Baxter (from "What Light Must Shine in Our Works?") The dominion of love in the hearts of Christians, appearing in all the course of their lives, doth much glorify God and their religion.—I mean a common hearty love to all men, and a special love to holy men, according to their various degrees of loveliness. Love is a thing so agreeable to right reason, and to sociable nature, and to the common interest of all mankind, that all men commend it; and they that have it not for others, would have it from others. Who is it that loveth not to be loved? And who is it that loveth not the man that he is convinced loveth him, better than him that hateth him, or regardeth him not? And do you think that the same course, which maketh men hate yourselves, is like to make them love your religion?

Love is the powerful conqueror of the world. By it God conquereth the enmity of man, and reconcileth to himself even malignant sinners; and by it he hath taught us to conquer all the tribulations and persecutions by which the world would separate us from his love; yea, and to be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us," and thereby did kindle in us our reflecting love; (Romans 8:34-38;) and by it he hath instructed us to go on to conquer both his enemies and our own; yea, to conquer the enmity rather than the enemy, in imitation of himself, who saveth the sinner, and kills the sin; and this is the most noble kind of victory. Every soldier can end a fever or other disease by cutting a man’s throat, and ending his life; but it is the work of the physician to kill the disease, and save the man. The scandalous pastor is for curing heresy in the Roman way, by silencing sound preachers, and tormenting and burning the supposed heretics; or at least to trust for the acceptance and success of his labours to the sword. And if that which will restrain men from crossing the pastor, would restrain them from resisting the Spirit of God, and constrain them to the love of holiness, it were well; then the glory of conversion should be more ascribed to the magistrate and soldier than to the preacher. But the true pastor is armed with a special measure of life, light, and love, that he may be a meet instrument for the regenerating of souls, who by holy life, and light, and love, must be renewed to their Father’s image. Every thing naturally generateth its like, which hath a generative power. And it is the love of God which the preacher is to bring all men to that must be saved; this is his office, this is his work, and this must be his study; he doeth little or nothing if he doeth not this.

Souls are not sanctified till they are wrought up to the love of God and holiness; and, therefore, the furniture and arms which Christ hath left us in his word, are all suited to this work of love. We have the love of God himself to preach to them, and the love of a humbled, dying and glorified Redeemer; and all the amiable blessings of heaven and earth to open to them, and all the loving promises and invitations of the gospel: and must not our hearts, our ministry, and our lives, be answerable to all this? Believe it, it must be a preacher whose matter and manner of preaching and living doth show forth a hearty love to God, and love to godliness, and love to all his people’s souls, that is the fit instrument to glorify God by convincing and converting sinners.

God can work by what means he will; by a scandalous, domineering, self-seeking preacher; but it is not his ordinary way. Foxes and wolves are not nature's instruments to generate sheep. I never knew much good done to souls by any pastors, but such as preached and lived in the power of love, working by clear convincing light, and both managed by a holy, lively seriousness. You must bring fire, if you would kindle fire. Trust not here to the Cartesian philosophy, that mere motion will turn another element into fire. Speak as loud as you will, and make as great a stir as you will, it will be all in vain to win men's love to God and goodness, till their hearts be touched with his love and amiableness, which usually must be done by the instrumentality of the preacher's love. "Let them hate me, so they do but fear me and obey me," is the saying of such as set up for themselves, (and but foolishly for themselves,) and, like Satan, would rule men to damnation. If love be the sum and fulfilling of the law, love must be the sum and fulfilling of our ministry. But yet by "love" I mean not flattery: parents do love as necessarily as any, and yet must correct; and God himself can love, and yet correct; yea, "he chasteneth every son that he receiveth." (Hebrews 12:6-7) And his love consisteth with paternal justice, and with hatred of sin, and plain and sharp reproof of sinners: and so must ours; but all, as the various operations of love, as the objects vary. And what I say of ministers, I say of every Christian in his place. Love is the great and the "new" commandment; that is, the last which Christ would leave, at his departure, to his disciples. O, could we learn of the Lord of love, and Him who calleth himself Love itself, to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to do good to the evil, and pray for them that hurt and persecute us, we should not only prove that we are genuine Christians, the children of our heavenly Father, (Matthew 5:44-45) but should heap coals of fire on our enemies' heads, and melt them into compassion and some remorse, if not into a holy love. I tell you, it is the Christian who doth truly love his neighbour as himself; who loveth the godly as his co-heirs of heaven, and loveth the ungodly with a desire to make them truly godly; who loveth a friend as a friend, and an enemy as a man that is capable of holiness and salvation. It is he that liveth, walketh, speaketh, converseth (yea, suffereth, which is the great difficulty) in love, and is, as it were, turned, by the love of God shed abroad upon his heart, into love itself; who doth glorify God in the world, and glorify his religion, and really rebuke the blasphemer that derideth the Spirit in believers, as if it were but a fanatic dream. And it is he that by tyranny, cruelty, contempt of others, and needless proud singularities and separations, magisterially condemning and vilifying all that walk not in his fashion, and pray not in his fashion, and are not of his opinion, where it is like enough he is himself mistaken, that is the scandalous Christian; who doeth as much against God, and religion, and the church, and men's souls, as he doeth against love. And though it be Satan's way, as an angel of light, and his ministers' way, as ministers of righteousness, to destroy Christ's interest by dividing it, and separate things which God will have conjoined, and so to pretend the love of truth, the love of order, or the love of godliness or discipline, against the love of souls, and to use even the name of love itself against love, to justify all their cruelties, or censures, and alienations; yet God will keep up that sacred fire in the hearts of the sound Christians which shall live and conquer these temptations, and they will understand and regard the warning of the Holy Ghost: "I beseech you, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them," in their sinful, dividing, offensive ways. "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ," though they may confidently think they do, "but their own belly," or carnal interests, though perhaps they will not see it in themselves; "and by good words and fair," or by "flattering speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple." (Romans 16:17-18) The word is twn akakwn,

hominum minime malorum, "no bad men," or "harmless, well-meaning men;" who, in case it be not to mortal errors, perhaps may be in the main sincere, and may be saved when their stubble is burnt; but whether sincere or not, they are scandals in the world, and great dishonourers of God, and serve Satan, when they little think so, in all that they do contrary to that universal love by which God must be glorified, and sinners overcome.

S. Motives for a Holy and Careful Education of Children

Motives for a holy and careful education of children By Richard Baxter "Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

"Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with the rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell." (Proverbs 23:13-14)

Because the chief part of family care and government consists in the right education of children, I shall adjoin here some more special motives to quicken considerate parents to this duty.

Motive 1. Consider how deeply nature itself does engage you to the greatest care and diligence for the holy education of your children. They are, as it were, parts of yourselves, and those whom nature teaches you to love and provide for, and take most care for, next to yourselves; and will you be regardless of their chief concernments? and neglective of their souls? Will you no other way show your love to your children, than every beast or bird will to their young, to cherish them until they can go abroad and shift for themselves, for bodily sustenance? It is not dogs or beasts that you bring into the world, but children that have immortal souls; and therefore it is a care and education suitable to their natures which you owe them; even such as conduces most effectually to the happiness of their souls. Nature teaches them some natural things without you, as it does the bird to fly; but it has committed it to your trust and care to teach them the greatest and most necessary things: if you should think that you have nothing to do but to feed them, and leave all the rest to nature, then they would not learn to speak; and if nature itself would condemn you, if you teach them not to speak, it will much more condemn you, if you teach them not to understand both what they ought to speak and do.

They have an everlasting inheritance of happiness to attain; and it is that which you must bring them up for. They have an endless misery to escape; and it is that which you must diligently teach them. If you teach them not to escape the flames of hell, what thanks do they owe you for teaching them to speak and go? If you teach them not the way to heaven, and how they may make sure of their salvation, what thanks do they owe you for teaching them how to get their livings a little while in a miserable world? If you don’t teach them to know God, and how to serve him, and be saved—you teach them nothing, or worse than nothing. It is in your hands to do them the greatest kindness or cruelty in all the world! Help them to know God and to be saved, and you do more for them than if you helped them to be kings or princes. If you neglect their souls, and breed them in ignorance, worldliness, ungodliness, and sin, you betray them to the devil, the enemy of souls, even as truly as if you sold them to him! You sell them to be slaves to Satan! You betray them to him who will deceive them and abuse them in this life, and torment them in the next!

If you saw but a burning furnace, much more the flames of hell, would you not think that man or woman more fit to be called a devil than a parent, who could find in their hearts to cast their child into it, or to put him into the hands of one that would do it? What monsters then of inhumanity are you, who read in Scripture which is the way to hell, and who they are that God will deliver up to

Satan, to be tormented by him; and yet will bring up your children in that very way, and will not take pains to save them from it! What a stir do you make to provide them food and clothing, and a competent maintenance in the world when you are dead! And how little pains take you to prepare their souls for the heavenly inheritance! If you seriously believe that there are such joys or torments for your children (and yourselves) as soon as death removes you from this world, is it possible that you should take this for the least of their concernments, and make it the least and last of your cares—to assure them of an endless happiness?

If you love them, show it in those things on which their everlasting welfare does depend. Do not say you love them—and yet lead them unto hell! If you love them not, yet be not so unmerciful to them as to damn them! What can you do more to damn them, if you studied to do it as maliciously as the devil himself? You cannot possibly do more, than to bring them up in ignorance, carelessness, worldliness, sensuality, and ungodliness! The devil can do nothing else to damn either them or you, but by tempting to sin, and drawing you from godliness. There is no other way to hell. No man is damned for anything but this. And yet will you bring them up in such a life, and say—we do not desire to damn them? But it is no wonder; when those parents should have any mercy on their children's souls, that have no mercy on their own? You desire not to damn yourselves, but yet you do it, if you live ungodly lives! And so you will do by your children, if you train them up in ignorance of God, and in the service of the flesh and world. You do like one that should set fire on his house and say, God forbid, I intend not to burn it. Or like one that casts his child into the sea, and says, he intends not to drown him; or trains him up in robbing and thievery, and says, he intends not to have him hanged; but if you intend to make a thief of him, it is all one in effect, as if you intended his hanging; for the law determines it, and the judge will intend it. So if you intend to train up your children in ungodliness, as if they had no God nor souls to mind, you may as well say, you intend to have them damned. And were not an enemy, yes, is not the devil more excusable, for dealing thus cruelly by your children, than you who are their parents, that are bound by nature to love them, and prevent their misery? It is odious in ministers that take the charge of souls, to betray them by their negligence, and be guilty of their everlasting misery; but in parents it is more unnatural, and therefore more inexcusable.

Motive 2. Consider that God is the Lord and Owner of your children, both by the title of creation and redemption. Therefore in justice you must resign them to him, and educate them for him. Otherwise you rob God of his own creatures, and rob Christ of those for whom he died, and this to give them to the devil, the enemy of God and them. It was not the world, the flesh, or the devil that created them, or redeemed them, but God; and it is not possible for any right to be built upon a fuller title, than to make them of nothing, and redeem them from a state far worse than nothing. And after all this, shall the very parents of such children steal them from their absolute Lord and Father, and sell them to slavery and torment?

Motive 3. Consider how great power the education of children has upon all their following lives. Excepting nature and grace, there is nothing that usually does prevail so much with them—as the education they receive from their parents. Indeed the obstinacy of natural viciousness does often frustrate a good education; but if any means be likely to do good, it is this; but bad education is more constantly successful, to make them evil. This cherishes those seeds of wickedness which spring up when they come to age; this makes so many to be proud, and idle, and flesh-pleasers, and licentious, and lustful, and covetous, and all that is evil. And he has a hard task that comes

after to root out these vices, which an ungodly education has so deeply impressed. Ungodly parents do serve the devil so effectually in the first impressions on their children's minds, that it is more than magistrates and ministers and all reforming means can afterwards do to recover them from that sin to God. Whereas if you would first engage their hearts to God by a godly education, piety would then have all those advantages that sin has now. Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The language which you teach them to speak when they are children, they will use all their life after, if they live with those that use it. And so the opinions which they first receive, and the customs and habits which they learn at first, are very hardly changed afterward. I doubt not to affirm, that a godly education is God's first and ordinary appointed means, for the begetting of actual faith, and other graces, in the children of believers And the preaching of the word by public ministers is not the first ordinary means of grace, to any but those that were graceless until they come to hear such preaching; that is, to those on whom the first appointed means has been neglected, or proved in vain. That is, it is but the second means, to do that which was not done by the first. The proof is undeniable; because God appoints parents diligently to teach their children the doctrine of his holy word, before they come to the public ministry. Parents' teaching is the first teaching; and parents' teaching is for this end, as well as public teaching, even to beget faith, and love, and holiness; and God appoints no means to be used by us, on which we may not expect his blessing. Therefore it is apparent, that the ordinary appointed means for the first actual grace, is parents' godly instruction and education of their children. And public preaching is appointed for the conversion of those only that have missed the blessing o the first appointed means. Therefore if you deny your children pious education, you deny them the first appointed means of their actual faith and sanctification; and then the second comes upon disadvantage.

Motive 4. Consider also how many and great are your advantages above all others for your children's good.

1. Nothing is learned so well—as that which is known to come from love. The greater love is discerned in your instruction, the greater success may you expect. Now your children are more confident of their parents' love, than of any others; whether ministers and strangers speak to them in love, they cannot tell; but of their parents' love they make no doubt.

2. And their love to you is as great a preparative to your success. We all hearken to those who we dearly love, with greater attention and willingness than to others. They love not the minister as they do their parents.

3. You have them in hand early and often, before they have received any false opinions or bad impressions; before they have any sin but that which was born with them; you are to make the first impressions upon them; you have them while they are most teachable, and flexible, and tender, and make least resistance against instruction; they rise not up at first against your teaching with self-conceitedness and proud objections. But when they come to the minister, they are as paper that is written on or printed before, unapt to receive another impression; they have much to be untaught, before they can be taught; and come with proud and stiff resistance, to strive against instruction, rather than readily to receive it.

4. Your children do wholly depend on you for their present maintenance, and much for their future livelihood and portions; and therefore they know that it is their interest to obey and please you; and

as personal interest is the common bias of the world, so is it with your children; you may easier rule them, who have this handle to hold them by, than any other can do that have not this advantage. They know they serve you not for nothing.

5. Your authority over your children is most unquestionable. They will dispute the authority of ministers, yes, and of magistrates, and ask them who gave them the power to teach them, and to command them? But the parents' authority is beyond all dispute. They will not call you tyrants or usurpers, nor bid you prove the validity of your ordination, or the uninterruptedness of your succession. Therefore father and mother, as the first natural power, are mentioned rather than kings or queens in the fifth commandment.

6. You have the power of the rod to force them. Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." And your correction will be better understood to come from love, than that of the magistrate or any other.

7. You have best opportunity to know both the diseases and temperature of your children; which is a great advantage for the choosing and applying of the best remedy.

8. You have opportunity of watching over them, and discerning all their faults in time; but if a minister speaks to them, he can know no more what fault to reprehend, than others tell him, or the child will confess. You may also discern what success your former exhortations had, and whether they amend or still go on in sin, and whether you should proceed to more severe remedies.

9. You have opportunity of speaking to them in the most familiar manner; which is better understood than the set speech of a minister in the pulpit, which few of them mark or understand. You can quicken their attention by questions which put them upon answering you, and so awaken them to a serious regard of what you say.

10. You are so frequently with them, that you can repeat your instructions, and drive them home, that what is not done at one time, may be done at another; whereas other men can seldom speak to them, and what is so seldom spoken is easily neglected or forgotten.

11. You have power to place them under the best means, and to remove many impediments out of their way which usually frustrate other men's endeavors.

12. Your example and life are a continual and powerful sermon, which is always before your children and in their sight! By all these advantages God has enabled you, above all others, to be instruments of your children's good, and the first and greatest promoters of their salvation.

Motive 5. Consider how great a comfort it would be to you, to have your children such as you may confidently hope are the children of God, being brought to know him, and love, and serve him, through your own endeavors in a pious education of them.

1. You may love your children upon a higher account than as they are yours; even as they are God's, adorned with his image, and quickened with a divine celestial life; and this is to love them with a higher kind of love, than mere natural affection is. It would rejoice you to see your children advanced to be kings or princes; but oh how much greater cause of joy is it, to see them made the members of Christ, and quickened by his Spirit, and sealed up for life eternal!

2. When once your children are made the children of God, by the regeneration of the Spirit, you may be much more free from care and trouble for them than before. Now you may boldly trust them on the care of their heavenly Father, who is able to do more for them than you are able to desire. He loves them better than you can love them; he is bound by promise to protect them, and provide for them, and to see that all things work together for their good. He that clothes the lilies of the fields, and does not allow the young lions or ravens to be unprovided for, will provide convenient food for his own children (though he will have you also do your duty for them, as they are your children).

While they are the children of Satan, and the servants of sin, you have cause to fear, not only lest they be exposed to miseries in this world, but much more lest they be snatched away in their sin to hell. Your children, while they are ungodly, are worse than among wolves and tigers. But when once they are renewed by the Spirit of Christ, they are the charge of all the blessed Trinity, and under God the charge of angels. living or dying they are safe; for the eternal God is their portion and defense.

3. It may be a continual comfort to you to think what a deal of drudgery and calamity your child is freed from. To think how many oaths he would have sworn, and how many lies and curses he would have uttered, and how beastly and fleshly a life he would have lived, how much wrong he would have done to God and men, and how much he would have pleased the devil, and what torments in hell he must have endured as the reward of all; and then to think how mercifully God has prevented all this; and what service he may do God in the world, and finally live with Christ in glory. What a joy is this to a considering, believing parent, that takes the mercies of his children as his own!

4. Religion will teach your children to be more dutiful to yourselves, than nature can teach them. It will teach them to love you, even when you have no more to give them, as well as if you had the wealth of all the world. It will teach them to honor you, though you are poor and contemptible in the eyes of others. It will teach them to obey you, and if you fall into poverty, to relieve you according to their power. It will fit them to comfort you in the time of your sickness and distress; when ungodly children will be as thorns in your feet or eyes, and cut your hearts, and prove a greater grief than any enemies to you. A gracious child will bear with your weaknesses, when a Ham will not cover his father’s nakedness. A gracious child can pray for you, and pray with you, and be a blessing to your house; when an ungodly child is fitter to curse, and prove a curse, to those he lives with.

5. And is it not an exceeding joy to think of the everlasting happiness of your child? and that you may live together in heaven forever? when the foreseen misery of a graceless child may grieve you whenever you look him in the face.

6. Lastly, it will be a great addition to your joy, to think that God blessed your diligent instructions, and made you the instrument of all that good that is done upon your children, and of all that good that is done by them, and of all the happiness they have forever. To think that this was conveyed to them by your means, will give you a larger share in the delights of it.

Motive 6. Remember that your children’s original sin and misery is by you; and therefore, in justice, you that have undone them—are bound to do your best to save them. If you had but conveyed a

leprosy, or some hereditary disease, to their bodies, would you have not done your best to cure them? Oh that you could do them but as much good as you do them hurt! It is more than Adam's sin that runs down into the natures of your children, yes, and that brings judgments on them; and even Adam's sin comes not to them but by you.

Motive 7. Lastly, Consider what exceeding great need they have of the utmost help you can afford them. It is not a bodily disease, an easy enemy, a tolerable misery, that we call unto you for their help; but it is against sin, and Satan, and hellfire! It is against a body of sin; not one, but many; not small, but pernicious, having seized on the heart; deep-rooted sins, that are not easily plucked up. All the teaching, and diligence, and watchfulness that you can use, is little enough, and may prove too little. They have obstinate vices which have possessed them; they are not quickly nor easily cast out; and the remnants and roots are apt to be still springing up again, when you thought they had been quite destroyed. Oh then what wisdom and diligence is requisite to so great and necessary a work! And now let me seriously speak to the hearts of those careless and ungodly parents, who neglect the holy education of their children. Yes, and to those professors of godliness, that slubber over so great a work with a few customary formal duties and words, that are next to a total omission of it. Oh be not so unmerciful to the souls that you have helped to bring into the world! Think not so basely of them, as if they were not worth your labor. Make not your children so like your beasts, as to make no provision but only for their flesh. Remember still that it is not beasts, but men, that you have begotten and brought forth. Educate them then and use them as men, for the love and obedience of their Maker. Oh pity and help the souls that you have defiled and undone! Have mercy on the souls that must perish in hell, if they be not saved in this day of salvation! Oh help them that have so many enemies to assault them! Help them that have so many temptations to pass through; and so many difficulties to overcome; and so severe a judgment to undergo! Help them that are so weak, and so easily deceived and overthrown! Help them speedily while your advantages continue; before sin have hardened them, and grace have forsaken them, and Satan place a stronger garrison in their hearts. Help them while they are teachable, before they are grown up to despise your help; before you and they are separated asunder, and your opportunities be at an end.

You think not your pains from year to year too much to make provision for their bodies. Oh be not cruel to their souls! Do not sell them to Satan, and that for nothing! Betray them not by your ungodly negligence to hell. Or if any of them will perish, let it not be by you, that are so much bound to do them good. The undoing of your children's souls is a work much fitter for Satan, than for their parents.

Remember how comfortable a thing it is, to work with Christ for the saving of souls. You think the calling of ministers honorable and happy; and so it is, because they serve Christ in so high a work. but if you will not neglect it, you may do for your children more than any minister can do. The home is your preaching place; here God calls you to exercise your abilities, even in the holy instruction of your families. Your charge is small in comparison of the minister's—he has many hundred souls to watch over, that are scattered all abroad the parish; and will you think it much to instruct and watch over those few of your own that are under your roof? You can speak odiously of unfaithful, soul-betraying ministers; and do you not consider how odious a soul-betraying parent is? If God entrusted you but with earthly talents, take heed how you use them, for you must be accountable for your trust; and when he has entrusted you with souls, even your children's souls, will you

betray them?

If any rulers should but forbid you the instructing and well-governing of your families, and restrain you by a law, as they would have restrained Daniel from praying in his house, Daniel 6:1-28 then you would think them monsters of impiety and inhumanity; and you would cry out against this satanic persecution, that would make men traitors to their children's souls, and drive away all religion from the earth. And yet how easily can you neglect such duties, when none forbid them you, and never accuse yourselves of any such horrid impiety or inhumanity? What hypocrisy and blind partiality is this! Would it be so heinous a sin in another to restrain you? and is it not as heinous for you, that are so much obliged to it, voluntarily to restrain yourselves? O then deny not this necessary diligence to your necessitous children, as you love their souls, as you love the happiness of the church or commonwealth, as you love the honor and interest of Christ, and as you love your present and everlasting peace. Do not see your children the slaves of Satan here, and the firebrands of hell forever, if any diligence of yours may contribute to prevent it. Do not give conscience such matter of accusation against you, as to say, All this was long of you! If you had instructed them diligently, and watched over them, and corrected them, and done your part, it is like they had never come to this. You til your fields; you weed your gardens; what pains take you about your grounds and cattle! and will you not take more for your children's souls? Alas, what creatures will they be if you leave them to themselves! how ignorant, careless, crude, and beastly! Oh what a lamentable case have ungodly parents brought the world into! Ignorance and selfishness, beastly sensuality, and devilish malignity, have covered the face of the earth as a deluge, and driven away wisdom, and self-denial, and piety, and charity, and justice, and temperance almost out of the world, confining them to the bosoms of a few obscure, humble souls, who love virtue for virtue's sake, and look for their reward from God alone, and expect that by abstaining from iniquity they make themselves a prey to wolves, Isaiah 59:15. Wicked education has unmanned the world, and subdued it to Satan, and make it almost like to hell. O do not join with the devil in this unnatural, horrid wickedness!

Chapter 109

S. Quotes

Short pithy gems from the Puritan Richard Baxter!

(1615 – 1691)

~ ~ ~ ~ Nothing below Heaven is worth setting our hearts upon!

~ ~ ~ ~ Keep up a humble sense of your own faults—and that will make you compassionate to others.

~ ~ ~ ~ Unity in things necessary, Liberty in things unnecessary, and Charity in all things.

~ ~ ~ ~ Too many preachers are earthly, who seem to be heavenly.

Too many mind the things below, while they preach the things above.

Too many idolize the world, while they call men to condemn it.

~ ~ ~ ~ Speak to your people as to men who must be awakened—either here or in Hell!

We must screw the truth into men's minds!

~ ~ ~ ~ Does any man live more to himself, or less to God—than the proud man? Our very business is to teach the great lesson of self-denial and humility to our people—and how unfit is it then, that we should be proud ourselves!

We must study as hard how to live well—as how to preach well.

~ ~ ~ ~ What we most value—we shall think no pains too great to gain.

~ ~ ~ ~ Self is the most treacherous enemy, and the most insinuating deceiver in the world! Of all other vices—it is both the hardest to find out, and the hardest to cure.

~ ~ ~ ~ Be of good cheer, Christian, the time is near, when God and you shall be as near as you can desire. You shall dwell in His family! You shall then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness!

~ ~ ~ ~

Take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine—lest you unsay with your lives, what you say with your tongues, and be the greatest hinderers of the success of your own labors!

~ ~ ~ ~

Until men are deeply humbled for their sin—they can part with Christ and salvation for a lust, for a little worldly gain, for that which is less than nothing! But when God has enlightened their consciences, and broken their hearts—then they would give a world for Christ!

~ ~ ~ ~ Is it but right that our hearts should be on God—when the heart of God is so much on us!

Lord, I surrender—I am completely overcome by your love!

~ ~ ~ ~ I take the love of God and self-denial—to be the sum of all saving grace and religion.

~ ~ ~ ~ In our first paradise in Eden, there was a way to go out—but no way to go in again. But as for the Heavenly paradise, there is a way to go in—but no way to go out.

~ ~ ~ ~ Of all the preaching in the world—I hate that preaching most, which tends to make the hearers laugh, or to move their minds with tickling levity and affect them as stage play does—instead of affecting them with a holy reverence for God.

~ ~ ~ ~ See that your chief study is about your heart—that there . . .

God's image may be planted, and His interest advanced, and the flesh subdued, and the love of every sin cast out, and the love of holiness be nourished. The first and great work of a Christian is about his heart.

"Keep your heart with all diligence—for out of it spring the issues of life!" Proverbs 4:23

~ ~ ~ ~ If my life is short—then why should I be sad to welcome endless glory?

~ ~ ~ ~ It is a contradiction to be a true Christian—and not humble.

~ ~ ~ ~ I preached as never sure to preach again—as a dying man to dying men!

~ ~ ~ ~ Mere idleness and forgetting God, will keep a soul as certainly from Heaven, as a profane, licentious, fleshly life!

~ ~ ~ ~ Suffering so unbolts the door of the heart—that the Word has easier entrance.

~ ~ ~ ~ Do not content yourselves with being in a state of grace—but be also careful that your graces are kept in vigorous and lively exercise, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons which you study—before you preach them to others.

~ ~ ~ ~

One proud, ungracious word, one needless contention, one covetous action—may cut the throat of many a sermon, and blast the fruit of all that you have been doing!

~ ~ ~ ~

If you seek first to please God and are satisfied therein—you have but one to please instead of multitudes. A multitude of masters are harder to please than one.

~ ~ ~ ~

Love Christ—and you will hate that which caused His death. Love Him, and you will love to be made like Him—and hate that which is so contrary to Him.

~ ~ ~ ~

Parents! It is in your hands to do your children the greatest kindness, or cruelty, in all the world! Help them to know God and to be saved—and you do more for them than if you helped them to be kings or princes. If you neglect their souls, and breed them in ignorance, worldliness, ungodliness, and sin—you betray them to the devil, the enemy of souls, even as truly as if you sold them to him! You sell them to be slaves to Satan! You betray them to him who will deceive them and abuse them in this life, and torment them in eternity!

O what a blessed day that will be, when I shall stand on the shore and look back on the raging seas I have safely passed—when I shall review my pains and sorrows, my fears and tears—and possess the glory which was the end of all!

~ ~ ~ ~ Do not waste your time on light, weak, trivial books. Make careful choice of the books which you read—and let the holy Scriptures ever have the preeminence.

~ ~ ~ ~

Lay siege to your sins, and starve them out by keeping away the food and fuel which is their maintenance and life. The longer you delay, the more your sin gets strength and rooting. If you cannot bend the twig—how will you be able to bend it when it is a tree?

~ ~ ~ ~ Spend your time in nothing which . . . you know must be repented of; you might not pray for the blessing of God; you could not review with a quiet conscience on your dying bed; you might not safely and properly be found doing if death should surprise you in the act!

~ ~ ~ ~ O spend your time as you would account of it in the day of Judgment!

~ ~ ~ ~

Holiness is nothing else but the habitual and predominant devotion and dedication of soul, and body, and life, and all that we have to God; and esteeming, and loving, and serving, and seeking Him, before all the pleasures and prosperity of the flesh and the world.

~ ~ ~ ~

He is a foolish physician, and a most unfaithful friend—who will let a sick man die for fear of troubling him. In the same way, we are cruel wretches to our friends—if we will rather allow them to go quietly to Hell—than anger them, or hazard our friendship with them.

~ ~ ~ ~ Prayer is the vital breath of the Christian.

~ ~ ~ ~

Before and after you read the Scripture, pray earnestly that the Spirit who wrote it may interpret it for you, keep you from unbelief and error, and lead you into the truth.

~ ~ ~ ~

It is as hard a thing to maintain a sound understanding, a tender conscience, a lively, gracious, heavenly spirit, and an upright life—in this poor world—as to keep your candle lit in the midst of a great storm.

~ ~ ~ ~ It is not the reading of many books which is necessary to make a man wise or godly—but well reading of a few.

~ ~ ~ ~ The churchyard is the market place where all things are rated at their true value—and those who are approaching it, talk of the world and its vanities with a wisdom unknown before.

~ ~ ~ ~

Such is the depth of the Christian Scriptures, that even if I were attempting to study them and nothing else from early boyhood to decrepit old age, with the most unwearied zeal, and talents greater than I have—I would be still daily making progress in discovering their treasures!

~ ~ ~ ~ The devils never had a Savior offered to them—but you have; and do you yet make light of Him?

~ ~ ~ ~ Do not over-value the manner of your own worship. Do not over-vilify other men's worship of a different mode.

~ ~ ~ ~ Paganism attributes the creation and the sustaining of the world to blind chance.

~ ~ ~ ~

You little know what you have done, when you have first broken the bounds of modesty. You have opened the door of your imagination to the devil—so that he can, almost at his pleasure ever after, represent the same sinful pleasure to you anew.

~ ~ ~ ~ That which once was—will be no more. Yesterday will never come again. Today is passing away—and will not return. You may work while it is day; but when you have lost that day—it will not return for you to work in. While your candle burns, you may make use of its light—but when it is done, it is too late to use it.

~ ~ ~ ~ I am but a pen in God's hands—what praise is due to a pen?

~ ~ ~ ~ Heaven will pay for any loss we may suffer to gain it—but nothing can pay for the loss of Heaven!

~ ~ ~ ~

Every time we look upon our congregations—let us remember that they are the purchase of Christ's blood, and therefore should be regarded by us with the deepest interest and the most tender affection!

~ ~ ~ ~ God is the same God in heaven as on earth—but I shall not be the same man.

~ ~ ~ ~ This life was not intended to be the place of our perfection—but the preparation for it.

~ ~ ~ ~

I know that Christ is all in all--and that it is His presence which makes Heaven to be heaven. But yet it much sweetens the thoughts of that place to me, that there are there such a multitude of my most dear and precious friends in Christ.

~ ~ ~ ~

Doubtless, in Heaven we shall no more be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence. No pride, passion, slothfulness, senselessness, shall enter with us; no strangeness to God, and the things of God; no coldness of affections, nor imperfection in our love; no uneven walking, nor grieving of the Spirit; no scandalous action, or unholy living. We shall rest from all these forever!

~ ~ ~ ~ A good husband will either make a good wife—or profitably endure a bad one.

~ ~ ~ ~ In our first paradise in Eden there was one way to go out—but no way to go in again. But as for the heavenly paradise, there is one way to go in—but not way to go out.

~ ~ ~ ~ The differences among Christians, are nothing in comparison of the differences among heathen!

~ ~ ~ ~

If it is an intolerable thing to cast into a fire for a year or a day, or an hour—then what will it be to suffer ten thousand times more forever in the fires of Hell? What if you were to suffer the martyr Lawrence's death—to be roasted upon a gridiron; or to be scraped or pricked to death as other martyrs were; or if you were to feed upon toads for a whole year? If you could not endure such things as these—then how will you endure the eternal flames of Hell?

~ ~ ~ ~ Men think God's laws are too many and too strict.

Yet they make their own, and are precise for keeping them.

Chapter 110

S. Self-Denial

Self-Denial by Richard Baxter

You hear ministers tell you of the odiousness and danger and sad effects of sin; but of all the sins that you ever heard of, there is scarce any more odious and dangerous than selfishness, and yet I doubt there are many that never were much troubled at it, nor sensible of its malignity. My principal request therefore to you is, that as ever you would prove Christians indeed, and be saved from sin and the damnation which follows it, take heed of this deadly sin of selfishness, and be sure you are possessed with true self-denial; and if you have, see that you use and live upon it. And for your help herein, I shall tell you how your self-denial must be tried. I shall only tell you in a few words, how the least measure of true self-denial may be known. And in one word that is thus: Wherever the interest of carnal self is stronger and more predominant habitually than the interest of God, of Christ, of everlasting life, there is no true self-denial or saving grace; but where God's interest is strongest, there self-denial is sincere. If you further ask me how this may be known, briefly thus:

1. What is it that you live for? What is that good which your mind is principally set to obtain? And what is that end which you principally design and endeavor to obtain, and which you set your heart on, and lay out your hopes upon? Is it the pleasing and glorifying of God, and the everlasting fruition of Him? Or is it the pleasing of your fleshly mind in the fruition of any inferior thing? Know this, and you may know whether self or God have the greatest interest in you. For that is your God which you love most, and please best, and would do most for.

2. Which do you set most by, the means of your salvation and of the glory of God, or the means of providing for self and flesh? Do you set more by Christ and holiness, which are the way to God; or by riches, honor, and pleasures, which gratify the flesh? Know this, and you may know whether you have true self-denial.

3. If you are truly self-denying, you are ordinarily ruled by God, and His Word and Spirit, and not by the carnal self. Which is the rule and master of your lives? Whose word and will is it ordinarily that prevails? When God draws, and self draws, which do you follow in the tenor of your life? Know this, and you may know whether you have true self-denial.

4. If you have true self-denial, the drift of your lives is carried on in a successful opposition to your carnal self, so that you not only refuse to be ruled by it, and love it as your god, but you fight against it, and tread it down as your enemy. So that you go armed against self in the course of your lives, and are striving against self in every duty; and as others think, it then goes best with them, when self is highest and pleased best; so you will know that then it goes best with you, when self is lowest, and most effectually subdued.

5. If you have true self-denial, there is nothing in this world so dear to you, but on deliberation you would leave it for God. He that has anything which he loves so well that he cannot spare it for God, is a selfish and unsanctified wretch. And therefore God has still put men to it, in the trial of their sincerity, to part with that which was dearest to the flesh. Abraham must be tried by parting with

his only son. And Christ makes it His standing rule, "He who forsakes not all that he has, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

Yet it is true that flesh and blood may make much resistance in a gracious heart; and many a striving thought there may be, before with Abraham we part with a son, or before we can part with wealth or life; but yet on deliberation, self-denial will prevail, and there is nothing so dear to a gracious soul, which he cannot spare at the will of God, and the hope of everlasting life. If with Peter we would flinch in a temptation--we should return with Peter in weeping bitterly, and give Christ those lives that in a temptation we denied Him.

6. In a word, true self-denial is procured by the knowledge and love of God, advancing Him in the soul--to debasing of self. The illuminated soul is so much taken with the glory and goodness of the Lord, that it carries him out of himself to God, and as it were estranges him from himself, that he may have communion with God; and this makes him vile in his own eyes, and to abhor himself in dust and ashes; he is lost in himself, and seeking God, he finds himself again in God. It is not a stoical resolution, but the love of God and the hopes of glory, that make him throw away the world, and look contemptuously on all below, so far as they are mere provision for flesh.

Search now, and try your hearts by these evidences, whether you are possessed of this necessary grace of self-denial. O make not light of the matter! For I must tell you that self is the most treacherous enemy, and the most insinuating deceiver in the world. It will be within you when you are not aware of it and will conquer you when you perceive not yourselves much troubled with it; and of all other vices is both the hardest to find out and the hardest to cure. Be sure therefore in the first place, that you have self-denial; and then be sure you use it and live in the practice of it.

Chapter 111

S. Signs of Living to Please God

Signs of Living to Please God by Richard Baxter

See therefore that you live upon God's approval as that which you chiefly seek, and will suffice you: which you may discover by these signs.

1. You will be most careful to understand the Scripture, to know what doth please and displease God.

2. You will be more careful in the doing of every duty, to fit it to the pleasing of God than men.

3. You will look to your hearts, and not only to your actions; to your ends, and thoughts, and the inward manner and degree.

4. You will look to secret duties as well as public and to that which men see not, as well as unto that which they see.

5. You will reverence your consciences, and have much to do with them, and will not slight them: when they tell you of God's displeasure, it will disquiet you; when they tell you of his approval, it will comfort you.

6. Your pleasing men will be charitable for their good, and pious in order to the pleasing of God, and not proud and ambitious for your honour with them, nor impious against the pleasing of God.

7. Whether men be pleased or displeased, or how they judge of you, or what they call you, will seem a small matter to you, as their own interest, in comparison to God's judgment. You live not on them. You can bear their displeasure, censures, and reproaches, if God be but pleased. These will be your evidences.

Chapter 112

S. Special Directions for Christian Conference, Exhortation, and Reproof

Special Directions for Christian Conference, Exhortation, and Reproof by Richard Baxter Titus 1:1-16 Motives to Christian Conference and Exhortation. The right use of speech being a duty of so great importance, as I have before showed about the government of the tongue; and it being a way of communication, by which we are all obliged to exercise our love to one another, even in the greatest matter, the saving of souls; I shall first endeavour to persuade them to this duty, who make too little conscience of it; and that by these following considerations.

Motive I. Consider that it is the exercise of our humanity: reason and speech do difference us from brutes. If by being reasonable we are men, then by using reason we live as men; and the first communicative use of reason is by speech: by thinking, we exercise reason for ourselves; by speaking, we exercise it (first) for others. Therefore if our reason be given us for the highest uses to ourselves, (to know God and eternal life, and the means thereto,) then certainly our speech is also given us for the same highest uses, by way of communication unto others. Use therefore your tongues to those noble ends for which they were given you. Use them as the tongues of men, to the ends which human nature is created for.

Motive II. There is no subject so sublime and honourable for the tongue of man to be employed about, as the matters of God, and life eternal. Children will talk of childish toys, and countrymen talk of their corn and cattle, and princes and statesmen look down on these with contemptuous smiles, as much below them: but crowns and kingdoms are incomparably more below the business of a holy soul! The higher subjects philosophers treat of, the more honourable (if well done) are their discourses. But none is so high as God and glory.

Motive III. It is the most profitable subject to the hearers. A discourse of riches, at the most, can but direct them how to grow rich; a discourse of honours usually puffeth up the minds of the ambitious: and if it could advance the auditors to honour, the fruit would be a vanity little to be desired. But a discourse of God, and heaven, and holiness, doth tend to change the hearers' minds into the nature of the things discoursed of: it hath been the means of converting and sanctifying many a thousand souls. As learned discourses tend to make men learned in the things discoursed of, so holy discourses tend to make men holy. For as natural generation begetteth not gold or kingdoms, but a man; so speech is not made to communicate to others (directly) the wealth, or health, or honours, or an extrinsical things which the speaker hath; but to communicate those mental excellencies which he is possessed of. Proverbs 16:21-22, "The sweetness of the lips increaseth learning. Understanding is a well-spring of life to him that hath it." Proverbs 10:13, Proverbs 10:21, "In the lips of him that hath understanding, wisdom is found.—The lips of the righteous feed many." Proverbs 15:7, "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge; but the heart of the foolish doth not so." Proverbs 20:15, "There is gold, and a multitude of rubies; but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel." Proverbs 10:20, "The tongue of the just is as choice silver; the heart of the wicked is little worth."

Motive IV. Holy discourse is also most profitable to the speaker himself. Grace increaseth by the exercise. Even in instructing others and opening truth, we are ofttimes more powerfully led up to further truth ourselves, than by solitary studies. For speech doth awaken the intellectual faculty, and keepeth on the thoughts in order, and one truth oft inferreth others, to a thus excited and prepared mind. And the tongue bath a power of moving on our hearts; when we blow the fire to warm another, both the exercise and the fire warm ourselves: it kindleth the flames of holy love in us, to declare the praise of God to others; it increaseth a hatred of sin in us, to open its odiousness to others. We starve ourselves, when we starve the souls which we should cherish.

Motive V. Holy and heavenly discourse is the most delectable. I mean in its own aptitude, and to a mind that is not diseased by corruption. That which is most great, and good, and necessary, is most delectable. What should best please us, but that which is best for us? and best for others? and best in itself? The excellency of the subject maketh it delightful! And so doth the exercise of our graces upon it: and serious conference doth help down the truth into our hearts, where it is most sweet. Besides that nature and charity make it pleasant to do good to others. It can be nothing better than a subversion of the appetite by carnality and wickedness, that maketh any one think idle jests, or tales, or plays, to be more pleasant than spiritual, heavenly conference; and the talking of riches, or sports, or lusts, to be sweeter than to talk of God, and Christ, and grace, and glory. A holy mind hath a continual feast in itself in meditating on these things, and the communicating of such thoughts to others, is a more common, and so a more pleasant feast.

Motive VI. Our faithfulness to God obligeth us to speak his praise, and to promote his truth, and plead his cause against iniquity. Hath he given us tongues to magnify his name, and set before us the admirable frame of all the world, to declare his glory in? And shall we be backward to so sweet and great a work? How precious and useful is all his holy word! What light, and life, and comfort may it cause! And shall we bury it in silence? What company can we come into almost, where either the barefaced committing of sin, or the defending of it, or the opposition of truth or godliness, or the frigidity of men's hearts towards God, and supine neglect of holy things, do not call to us, if we are the servants of God, to take his part; and if we are the children of light, to bear our testimony against the darkness of the world; and if we love God, and truth, and the souls of men, to show it by our prudent, seasonable speech? Is he true to God, and to his cause, that will not open his mouth to speak for him?

Motive VII. And how precious a thing is an immortal soul, and therefore not to be neglected! Did Christ think souls to be worth his mediation, by such strange condescension, even to a shameful death? Did he think them worth his coming into flesh to be their teacher? And will you not think them worth the speaking to?

Motive VIII. See also the greatness of your sin, in the negligence of unfaithful ministers. It is easy to see the odiousness of their sin, who preach not the gospel, or do no more than by an hour's dry and dead discourse, shift off the serious work which they should do, and think they may be excused from all personal oversight and helping of the people's souls all the week after. And why should you not perceive that a dumb, private Christian is also to be condemned, as well as a dumb minister? Is not profitable conference your duty, as well as profitable preaching is his? How many persons condemn themselves, while they speak against unfaithful pastors! Being themselves as unfaithful to families and neighbours, as the other are to the flock!

Motive IX. And consider how the cheapness of the means, doth aggravate the sin of your neglect, and show much unmercifulness to souls. Words cost you little; indeed alone, without the company of good works, they are too cheap for God to accept of. But if a hypocrite may bring so cheap a sacrifice, who is rejected, what doth he deserve that thinketh it too dear? What will that man do for God, or for his neighbour's soul, who will not open his mouth to speak for them? He seemeth to have less love than that man in hell, Luke 16:1-31, who would so fain have had a messenger sent from another world, to have warned his brethren, and saved them from that place of torment.

Motive X. Your fruitful conference is a needful help to the ministerial work. When the preacher hath publicly delivered the word of God to the assembly, if you would so far second him, as in your daily converse to set it home on the hearts of those that you have opportunity to discourse with, how great an assistance would it be to his success! Though he must teach them publicly, and from house to house, Acts 20:20, yet is it not possible for him to be so frequent and familiar in daily conference with all the ignorant of the place, as those that are still with them may be. You are many, and he is but one, and can be but in one place at once. Your business bringeth you into their company, when he cannot be there. O happy is that minister who hath such a people, who will daily preach over the matter of his public sermons in their private conference with one another! Many hands make quick work. This would most effectually prevail against the powers of darkness, and cast out Satan from multitudes of miserable souls.

Motive XI. Yea, when ministers are absent, through scarcity, persecution, or unfaithfulness and negligence, the people's holy, profitable conference would do much towards the supplying of that need. There have few places and ages of the world been so happy, but that learned, able, faithful pastors have been so few, that we had need to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth more. And it is nothing unusual to have those few silenced or hindered from the preaching of the gospel, by the factions or the malignity of the world! And it is yet more common to have ignorant or ungodly persons in that office, who betray the people's souls by their usurpation, impiety, or slothfulness. But if in all such poverty, the people that fear God would do their part in private conference, it would be an excellent supply. Ministers may be silenced from public preaching, when you cannot be silenced from profitable discourse.

Motive XII. It is a duty that hath many great advantages for success. 1. You may choose your season; if one time be not fit, you may take another. 2 You may choose the person, whom you find to have the greatest necessity or capacity, and where your labour is likeliest to take. 3. You may choose your subject, and speak of that which you find most suitable. There is no restraint nor imposition upon you, to hinder your liberty in this. 4. You may choose your arguments by which you would enforce it. 5. The speaking and listening of conversation keeps your hearers attentive, and carrieth them on along with you as you go. And it maketh the application much more easy, by their nearness and the familiarity of the discourse; when sermons are usually heard but as an insignificant sound, or words of course. 6. You may at your pleasure go back and repeat those things which the hearer doth not understand, or doth forget; which a preacher in the pulpit cannot do without the censure of the more attentive listeners. 7. You may perceive by the answers of them whom you speak to, what particulars you need most to insist on, and what objections you should most carefully resolve; and when you have satisfied them, and may proceed. All which it is hard for a minister to do in public preaching; and is it not a great sin to neglect such an advantageous duty?

Motive XIII. And it should somewhat encourage you to it, that it is an unquestionable duty, when many other are brought into controversy. Ministers preach under the regulation of human laws and canons, and it is a great controversy with many, whether they shall preach, when they are silenced or forbidden by their superiors; but whether you may speak for God and for men's salvation in your familiar conference, no man questioneth, nor doth any law forbid it.

Motive XIV. Hath not the fruitful conference of others, in the days of your ignorance, done good to you? Have you not been instructed, convinced, persuaded, and comforted by it? What had become of you, if all men had let you alone, and passed you by, and left you to yourselves? And doth not justice require that you do good to others, as others have done to you, in the use of such a tried means?

Motive XV. Consider how forward the devil's servants are to plead his cause! How readily and fiercely will an ignorant, drunken sot pour out his reproaches and scorns against religion! and speak evil of the things which he never understood! How zealously will a papist, or heretic, or schismatic, promote the interest of his sect, and labour to proselyte others to his party! And shall we be less zealous and serviceable for Christ, than the devil's servants are for him? And do less to save souls, than they will do to damn them?

Motive XVI. Nay, in the time of your sin and ignorance, if you have not spoken against religion, nor taught others to curse, or swear, or speak in ribald, filthy language, yet, at least, you have spent many an hour in idle, fruitless talk? And doth not this now oblige you to show your repentance by more fruitful conference? Will you since your conversion speak as unprofitably as you did before?

Motive XVII. Holy conference will prevent the guilt of foolish, idle talk. Men will not be long silent, but will talk of somewhat, and if they have not profitable things to talk of, they will prate of vanity. All the foolish chat, and frothy jests, and scurrilous ribaldry, and envious backbiting, which taketh up men's time, and poisoneth the hearers, is caused by their lack of edifying discourse, which should keep it out. The most luxuriant wits and tongues will have most weeds, if they be not cultivated and taught to bear a better crop.

Motive XVIII. Your tongues will be instrumental to public good or public hurt. When filthy, vain, and impious language is grown common, it will bring down common plagues and judgments! And if you cross not the custom, you seem to be consenters, and harden men in their sin. But holy conference may, at least, show that some partake not of the evil, and may free them from the plague, if they prevail not with others so far as to prevent it.

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," Malachi 3:16-17.

Motive XIX. Consider what great necessity there is every where of fruitful, edifying speech. 1. In the multitude of the ignorant; and the greatness of their ignorance. 2. The numbers of the sensual and obstinate. 3. The power of blindness, and of every sin: what root it hath taken in the most of men. 4. The multitude of baits which are every where before them. 5. The subtilty of Satan and his instruments in tempting. 6. The weakness and unconstancy of man, that hath need of constant solicitation. 7. The lack of holy, faithful pastors, which maketh private men's diligence the more

necessary. And in such necessity to shut lip our mouths, is to shut up the bowels of our compassion, when we see our brother's need; and how then doth the love of God dwell in us? 1 John 3:17. To withhold our exhortation, is as the withholding of corn from the poor in a time of famine, which procureth a curse, Proverbs 11:26. And though in this case men are insensible of their need, and take it not ill to be passed by, yet Christ that died for them will take it ill.

Motive XX. Lastly, Consider how short a time you are like to speak; and how long you must be silent. Death will quickly stop your breath, and lay you in the dark, and tell you that all your opportunities are at an end. Speak now, for you have not long to speak. Your neighbours' lives are hastening to an end, and so are yours; they are dying and must hear no more, till they hear their doom, and you are dying and must speak no more; and they will be lost for ever if they have not help: pity them then, and call on them to foresee the final day; warn them now, for it must be now or never: there is no instructing and admonishing them in the grave. Those sculls which you see cast up; had once tongues which should have praised their Creator and Redeemer, and have helped to save each other's souls; but now they are tongueless. It is a great grief to us that are now here silenced, that we used not our ministry more laboriously and zealously while we had time. And will it not be so with you, when death shall silence you, that you spake not for God while you had a tongue to speak?

Let all these considerations stir up all that God hath taught a holy language, to use it for their Master's service while they may,and to repent of sinful silence.

Titus 2:1-15 Directions for Christian Conference and Edifying Speech.

Direct. I. The most necessary direction for a fruitful tongue is to get a well-furnished mind, and a holy heart, and to walk with God in holiness yourselves: for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. That which you are fullest of, is readiest to come forth. 1. Spare for no study or labour to get understanding in the things of God: it is a weariness to hear men talk foolishly of any thing, but no where so much as about divine and heavenly things. A wise Christian instructed to the kingdom of God, hath a treasury in his mind, out of which he can bring forth things new and old, Matthew 13:52. "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge," Proverbs 14:7. 2. Get all that holiness in yourselves, to which you would persuade another. There is a strange communicating power in the course of nature, for every thing to produce its like. Learning and good utterance is very helpful; but it is holiness that is aptest to beget holiness in others. Words which proceed from the love of God, and a truly heavenly mind, do most powerfully tend to breed in others that love of God and heavenly-mindedness. 3. Live in the practice of that which you would draw your neighbour to practice. A man that cometh warm from holy meditation, or fervent prayer, doth bring upon his heart a fullness of matter, and an earnest desire, and a fitness to communicate that good to others, which he himself hath felt.

Direct. II. Especially see that you soundly believe yourselves what you are to speak to others. He that hath secret infidelity at his heart, and is himself unsatisfied whether there be a heaven and hell, and whether sin be so bad and holiness so necessary as the Scripture speaks, will speak but heartlessly of them to another; but if we believe these things, as if we saw them with our eyes, how heartily shall we discourse of them!

Direct. III. Keep a compassionate sense of the misery of ignorant, ungodly, impenitent souls. Think what a miserable bondage of darkness and sensuality they are in; and that it is light that must recover them: think oft how quickly they must die, and what an appearance they must make before the Lord, and how miserable they must be for ever, if now they be not convinced and sanctified! And sure this will stir up your bowels to pity them, and make you speak.

Direct. IV. Subdue foolish shame or bashfulness, and get a holy fortitude of mind. Remember what a sin it is to be ashamed of such a Master, and such a cause and work, which all would be glad to own at last; and that when the wicked are not ashamed of the service of the devil, and the basest works. And remember that threatening, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels," Mark 8:38.

Direct. V. Be always furnished with those particular truths which may be most useful in this service. Study to do your work (in your degree) as ministers study to do theirs; who are not contented with the habitual furniture of their minds, but they also make particular preparations for their particular work. If you are to go into the field to your labour, you will take those tools with you by which it must he done: so do when you go abroad among any that you may do good to, and be not unfurnished for edifying discourse.

Direct. VI. Speak most of the greatest things, (the folly of sin, the vanity of the world, the certainty and nearness of death and judgment, the overwhelming weight of eternity, the necessity of holiness, the work of redemption, &c.) and choose not the smaller matters of religion to spend your time upon (unless upon some special reason). Among good men that will not lose their time on vanity, the devil too oft prevaileth, to make them lose it by such religious conference, as is little to edification, that greater matters may be thereby thrust out; such as Paul calleth "Vain janglings, and doting about questions which engender strife, and not godly edifying:" as about their several opinions or parties, or comparing one preacher or person with another, or such things as tend but little to make the hearers more wise, or holy, or heavenly.

Direct. VII. Suit all your discourse to the quality of your auditors. That which is best in itself, may not be best for every hearer. You must vary both your subject and manner of discourse, 1. According to the variety of men’s knowledge: the wise and the foolish must not be spoken to alike. 2. According to the variety of their moral qualities: one may be very pious, and another weak in grace, and another only teachable and tractable, and another wicked and impenitent, and another obstinate and scornful. These must not be talked to with the same manner of discourse. 3. According to the variety of particular sins which they are inclined to; which in some is pride, in some sensuality, lust, or idleness, in some covetousness, and in some an erroneous zeal against the church and cause of Christ. Every wise physician will vary his remedies, not only according to the kind of the disease, but according to its various accidents, and the complexion also of the patient.

Direct. VIII. Be sure to do most where you have most authority and obligation. He that will neglect and slight his family, relations, children, and servants, who are under him, and always with him, and yet be zealous for the conversion of strangers, doth reveal much hypocrisy, and showeth, that it is something else than the love of souls, or sense of duty, which carrieth him on.

Direct IX. Never speak of holy things, but with the greatest reverence and seriousness you can. The manner as well as the matter is needful to the effect. To talk of sin and conversion, of God and eternity, in a common, running, careless manner, as you speak of the men, and the matters of the world, is much worse than silence, and tendeth but to debauch the hearers, and bring them to a contempt of God and holiness. I remember myself, that when I was young, I had sometime the company of one ancient godly minister, who was of weaker parts than many others, but yet did profit me more than most; because he would never in prayer or conference speak of God, or the life to come, but with such marvelous seriousness and reverence, as if he had seen the majesty and glory which he talked of.

Direct. X. Take heed of inconsiderate, imprudent passages, which may mar all the rest, and give malignant auditors advantage of contempt and scorn. Many honest Christians, through their ignorance, thus greatly wrong the cause they manage (I would I might not say, many ministers). Too few words is not so bad, as one such imprudent, foolish word too much.

Direct. XI. Condescend to the weak, and bear with their infirmity. If they give you foolish answers, be not angry and impatient with them; yea, or if they perversely cavil and contradict. "For the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing opposers, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2 Timothy 2:24-25. He is a foolish physician that cannot bear the words of an excited or delirious patient.

Direct. XII. When you are among those that can teach you, be not so forward to teach as to learn. Be not eager to vent what you have to say, but desirous to hear what your betters have to say. Questions in such a case should be most of your part: it requireth great skill and diligence to draw that out of others, which may profit you; and be not impatient if they cross your opinions, or open your ignorance. Yea, those that you can teach in other things, yet in some things may be able to add much to your knowledge.

Titus 3:1-15. Special Directions for Reproof and Exhortation for the good of others. This duty is so great, that Satan hindereth it with all his power, and so hard, that most men quite omit it (unless an angry reproach may go for Christian exhortation) and some spoi1 it in the management; and some proud, censorious persons mistake the exercise of their pride and passion, for the exercise of a charitable Christian duty; and seem to be more sensible of their neighbour’s sin and misery, than of their own. Therefore that you miscarry not in so needful a work, I shall add these following directions.

Direct. I. Be sure first that your reproof have a right end; and then let the manner be suited to that end. If it be to convince and convert a soul, it must be done in a manner likely to prevail; if it be only to bear down the argument of a deceiver, to preserve the standers-by, to vindicate the honour of God and godliness, and to dishonour sin, and to disgrace an obstinate factor for the devil, then another course is fit. Therefore resolve first, by the quality of the cause and person, what must be your end.

Direct. II. Be sure that you reprove not that as a sin, which is no sin; either by mistaking the law or the fact. To make duties and sins of our own opinions and inventions, and then to lay out our zeal on these, and censure or reprove all that think not as hardly of such things as we; this is to make

ourselves the objects of the hearers' pity; and not to exercise just pity towards others! Such reproofs deserve reproof; for they reveal great ignorance, and pride, and self-conceitedness, and very much harden sinners in their way; and make them think that all reproof is but the vanity of fantastical hypocrites. In some cases with a child, or servant, or private friend, or for prevention, we may speak of faults upon hearsay or suspicion; but it must be as of things uncertain, and as a warning rather than a reproof. In ordinary reproof, you must understand the case before you speak; it is a shame to say after, I thought it had been otherwise. Such an erroneous reproof is worse than none.

Direct. III. Choose not the smallest sins to reprove, nor the smallest duties to exhort them to. For that will make them think that all your zeal is taken up with little matters, and that there is no great necessity of regarding you; and conscience will be but little moved by your speech: when greater things will greatly and more easily affect men.

Direct. IV. Stop not (with unregenerate men) in the mention of particular sins or duties; but make use of particulars to convince them of a state of sin and misery. It is easy to convince a man that he is a sinner; and when that is done, he is never the more humbled or converted: for he will tell you, that all are sinners; and therefore he hopeth to speed as well as you. But you must make him discern his sinful state, and show him the difference between a penitent sinner, and an impenitent; a converted sinner, and an unconverted; a justified, pardoned sinner, and an unjustified, unpardoned one; or else you will do him but little good.

Direct. V. Suit the manner of your reproof to the quality of the person. It is seldom that a parent, master, or superior, must be reproved by a private inferior; and when it is done, it must be done with great submission and respect. An angry, peevish person must he dealt with tenderly, as you handle thorns; but a duller, sottish person, must be more earnestly and warmly dealt with. So also a greater sin must be roughly handled, or with greater detestation, than a less.

Direct. VI. Take a fit season. Not when a man is in drink, or passion, or among others where the disgrace will vex and harden him; hut in secret between him and you (if his conversion be your end).

Direct. VII. Do all in love and tender pity. If you convince not the hearer that you do it in unfeigned love, you must (usually) expect to lose your labour; because you make not advantage of his self-love, to promote your exhortations: therefore the exhorting way should be more frequent than the reproving way; for reproof disgraceth and exasperateth, when the same thing contrived into an exhortation may prevail.(2 Thessalonians 3:15; 2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:25, 1 Thessalonians 5:13)

Direct. VIII. Therefore be as much or more in showing the good which you would draw them to, as the evil which you would turn them from. For they are never savingly converted, till they are won to the love of God and holiness; therefore the opening of the riches of the gospel, and the love of God, and the joys of heaven, must be the greatest part of your treaty with a sinner.

Direct. IX. And labour so to help him to a true understanding of the nature of religion, that he may perceive that it is not only a necessary but a pleasant thing. All love delights: it is the slander and misrepresentation of godliness by the devil, the world, and the flesh, which maketh mistaken sinners shun it. The way to convert them, and win their hearts to it, is to make them know how

good and pleasant it is, and to confute those calumnies.

Direct. X. Yet always insert the remembrance of death, and judgment, and hell. For the drowsy mind hath need to he awakened; and love worketh best when fear subserveth it. It is hard to procure a serious audience and consideration of things from hardened hearts, if the sight of death and hell do not help to make them serious. Danger which must he escaped, must be known and thought on. These things put weight and power into your speech.

Direct. XI. Do all as with divine authority; and therefore have ready some plain texts of Scripture for the duty and against the sin you speak of. (Colossians 3:16) Show them where God himself hath said it.

Direct. XII. Seasonable expostulations, putting themselves to judge themselves in their answer, hath a convincing and engaging force. As when you show them Scripture, ask them, Is not this the word of God? Do you not believe that it is true? Do you think he that wrote this, knoweth not better than you or I? &c.

Direct. XIII. Put them on speedy practice, and prudently engage them to it by their promise. As if you speak to a drunkard, draw him to promise you to come no more (at least, of so long a time) into an alehouse; or not drink ale or wine but by the consent of his wife, or some sober, household friend, who may watch over him. Engage the voluptuous, the unchaste, and gamester, to forsake the company which insnareth them. Engage the ungodly to read the Scripture, to frequent good company, to pray morning and night (with a book or without, as they are best able). Their promise may bring them to such a present change of practice, as may prepare for more.

Direct. XIV. If you know any near you, who are much fitter than yourselves, and liker to prevail, procure them to attempt that which you cannot do successfully.(Ezekiel 33:1-33, Ezekiel 34:1-31; Galatians 6:1; Titus 2:4) At least when sinners perceive that it is not only one man’s opinion, it may somewhat move them to reverence the reproof.

Direct. XV. Put some good book into their hands, which is fitted to the work which you would have done. And get them to promise you seriously to read it over, and consider it... ...Such books may speak more pertinently than you can; and be as constant food to their sober thoughts, and so may further what you have begun.

Direct. XVI. When you cannot speak, or where your speaking prevaileth not, mourn for them; and earnestly pray for their recovery.(Ezekiel 9:4; 2 Peter 2:7-8) A sad countenance of Nehemiah remembered Artaxerxes of his duty. A sigh or a tear for a miserable sinner, may move his heart, when exhortation will not. He hath a heart of stone, who will have no sense of his condition, when he seeth another weeping for him.

Quest. But is it always a duty to reprove or exhort a sinner? How shall I know when it is my duty, and when it is not?

Answer. It is no duty in any of these cases following:

1. In general, When you have sufficient reason to judge, that it will do more harm than good, and will not attain its proper end; for God hath not appointed us to do hurt under pretense of duty; it is no means which doth cross the end which it should attain. As prayer and preaching may be a sin,

when they are like to cross their proper end; so also may reproof be.

2. Therefore it must not be used when it apparently hindereth a greater good. As we may not pray or preach when we should be quenching a fire in the town, or saving a man's life: so when reproof doth exclude some greater duty or benefit, it is unseasonable, and no duty at that time. Christ alloweth us to forbear the casting of pearls before swine, or giving that which is holy to dogs, because of these two reasons forementioned, It is no means to the contemptuous, and they will turn again and all to rend us.(Proverbs 9:7-8; Matthew 7:6.) Much more, if he be some potent enemy of the church, who will not only rend us, but the church itself, if he be so provoked: reproving him then is not our duty.

3. Particularly, When a man is in a passion or drunk usually it is no season to reprove him.

4. Nor when you are among others, who should not be witnesses of the fault, or the reproof; or whose presence will shame him, and offend him (except it be only the shaming of an incorrigible or malicious sinner which you intend).

5. Nor when you are uncertain of the fact which you would reprove, or uncertain whether it be a sin.

6. Or when you have no witness of if, (though you are privately certain,) with some that will take advantage against you as slanderers, a reproof may be omitted.

7. And when the offenders are so much your superiors, that you are like to have no better success than to be accounted arrogant; a groan or tears is then the best reproof.

8. When you are so utterly unable to manage a reproof, that imprudence or lack of convincing reason, is likely to make it a means of greater hurt than good.

9. When you foresee a more advantageous season, if you delay.

10. When another may be procured to do it with much more advantage, which your doing it may rather hinder. In all these cases, that may be a sin, which at another time may be a duty. But still remember, first, That pride, and passion, and slothfulness, is wont to pretend such reasons falsely, upon some slight conjectures, to put by a duty. Secondly, That no man must account another a dog or swine, to excuse him from this duty, without cogent evidence. And it is not every wrangling opposition, nor reproach and scorn, which will warrant us to give a man up as remediless, and speak to him no more; but only such, 1. As showeth a heart utterly obdurate, after long means. 2. Or will procure more suffering to the reprover, than good to the offender. 3. That when the thing is ordinarily a duty, the reasons of our omission must be clear and sure, before they will excuse us.(Gen. 20:36; Job 13:13; Hebrews 13:22; 2 Peter 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:25-26) Quest. Must we reprove infidels or heathens? What have we to do to judge them that are without?

Answer. Not to the ends of excommunication, because they are not capable of it, (Deuteronomy 22:1) which is meant by 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. But we must reprove them, first, in common compassion to their souls. What were the apostles and other preachers sent for, but to call all men from their sins to God? Secondly, And for the defense of truth and godliness, against their words, or ill examples.

Chapter 113

S. THE MISERY OF THOSE WHO, BESIDES LOSING THE SAINTS' REST, ...

THE MISERY OF THOSE WHO, BESIDES LOSING THE SAINTS' REST, LOSE THE ENJOYMENTS OF TIME, AND SUFFER THE TORMENTS OF HELL.

1.The enjoyments of time which the damned lose:1. Their presumptuous belief of their interest in God and Christ:2. All their hopes; 3. All their peace of conscience; 4. All their carnal mirth; 5. All their sensual delights. II. The torments of the damned are exceedingly great:1. The principal Author of them is God himself. 2. The place or state of torment. 3. These torments are the effects of divine vengeance. 4. God will take pleasure in executing them. 5. Satan and sinners themselves will be God's executioners. 6. These torments will be universal; 7. Without any mitigation; 8. And eternal. The obstinate sinner convinced of his folly in venturing on these torments; and entreated to fly for safety to Christ. As "godliness hath a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" and if we "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," then all meaner "things shall be added unto us;" so also are the ungodly threatened with the loss both of spiritual and temporal blessings; and because they sought not first God's kingdom and righteousness, therefore shall they lose both it and that which they did seek, and there "shall be taken from them that little which they have." If they could but have kept their present enjoyments, they would not have much cared for the loss of heaven. If they had "lost and forsaken all for Christ," they would have found all again in him; for he would have been all in all to them. But, now they have forsaken Christ for other things, they shall lose Christ, and that also for which they forsook him, even the enjoyments of time, besides suffering the torments of hell.

1. They shall lose their presumptuous belief of their interest in the favor of God and the merits of Christ. This false belief now supports their spirits, and defends them from the terrors that would otherwise seize upon them. But what will ease their trouble when they can believe no longer, nor rejoice any longer? If a man be near to the greatest mischief, and yet strongly conceit that he is in safety, he may be as cheerful as if all were well. If there were no more to make a man happy but to believe that he is so, or shall be so, happiness would be far more common than it is like to be. As true faith is the leading grace in the regenerate, so is false faith the leading vice in the unregenerate. Why do such multitudes sit still when they might have pardon, but that they verily think they are pardoned already? If you could ask thousands in hell, what madness brought them thither? they would most of them answer, "We thought we were sure of being saved till we found ourselves damned. We would have been more earnest seekers of regeneration and the power of godliness, but we verily thought we were Christians already. We have flattered ourselves into these torments, and now there is no remedy." Reader, I must in faithfulness tell thee that the confident belief of their good state, which the careless, unholy, unhumbled multitude so commonly boast of; will prove in the end but a soul-damning delusion. There is none of this believing in hell. It was Satan's stratagem, that being blindfold, they might follow him the more boldly; but then he will uncover their eyes, and they shall see where they are.

2. They shall lose also all their hopes. In this life, though they were threatened with the wrath of God, yet their hope of escaping it bore up their hearts. We can now scarce speak with the vilest drunkard, or swearer, or scoffer, but he hopes to be saved, for all this. O happy world, if salvation were as common as this hope! Nay, so strong are men's hopes, that they will dispute the cause with Christ himself at the judgment, and plead their "having ate and drank in his presence, and prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils;" they will stiffly deny that ever they neglected Christ, in hunger, nakedness, or in prison, till he confutes them with the sentence of their condemnation. O the sad state of those men when they must bid farewell to all their hopes! "When a wicked man dieth his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth. The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." The giving up the ghost is a fit but terrible resemblance of a wicked man giving up his hopes. As the soul departeth not from the body without the greatest pain, so doth the hope of the wicked depart. The soul departs from the body suddenly, in a moment, which hath there delightfully continued so many years; just so doth the hope of the wicked depart. The soul will never more return to live with the body in this world; and the hope of the wicked takes an everlasting farewell of his soul. A miracle of resurrection shall again unite soul and body, but there shall be no such miraculous resurrection of the damned's hope. Methinks it is the most pitiable sight this world affords, to see such an ungodly person dying, and to think of his soul and his hopes departing together. With what a sad change he appears in another world! Then if a man could but ask that hopeless soul, "Are you as confident of salvation as you were wont to be?" what a sad answer would be returned! O that careless sinners would be awakened to think of this in time! Reader, rest not till thou canst give a reason of all thy hopes, grounded upon Scripture promises: that they purify thy heart; that they quicken thy endeavors in godliness; that the more thou hopest the less thou sinnest, and the more exact is thy obedience. If thy hopes be such as these, go on in the strength of the Lord, hold fast thy hope, and "never shall it make thee ashamed." But if thou hast not one sound evidence of a work of grace on thy soul, cast away thy hopes. Despair of ever being saved, "except thou be born again;" or of "seeing God, without holiness;" or of having part in Christ, except thou "love him above father, mother, or thy own life." This kind of despair is one of the first steps to heaven. If a man be quite out of his way, what must be the first means to bring him in again? He must despair of ever coming to his journey's end in the way that he is in. If his home be eastward and he is going westward, as long as he hopes he is right, he will go on and as long as he goes on hoping, he goes further amiss. When he despairs of coming home, except he turn back, then he will return, and then he may hope. Just so it is, sinner, with thy soul: thou art born out of the way to heaven, and hast proceeded many a year; thou goest on and hopest to be saved, because thou art not so bad as many others. Except thou throw away those hopes and see that thou hast all this while been quite out of the way to heaven, thou wilt never return and be saved. There is nothing in the world more likely to keep thy soul out of heaven than thy false hopes of being saved, while thou art out of the way to salvation. See then how it will aggravate the misery of the damned, that, with the loss of heaven, they shall lose all that hope of it which now supports them.

3. They will lose all that false peace of conscience which makes their present life so easy. Who would think, observing how quietly the multitude of the ungodly live, that they must very shortly lie down in everlasting flames? They are as free from the fears of hell as an obedient believer; and for the most part have less disquiet of mind than those who shall be saved. Happy men, if this peace

would prove lasting! "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." O cruel peace, which ends in such a war! The soul of every man by nature is Satan's garrison; all is at peace in such a man till Christ comes and gives it terrible alarms of judgment and hell, batters it with the ordnance of his threats and terrors, forces it to yield to his mere mercy, and take him for the governor; then doth he cast out Satan, "overcome him, take from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils," and then doth he establish a firm and lasting peace. If, therefore, thou art yet in that first peace, never think it will endure. Can thy soul have lasting peace in enmity with Christ? Can he have peace, against whom God proclaims war? I wish thee no greater good than that God break in upon thy careless heart, and shake thee out of thy false peace, and make thee lie down at the feet of Christ, and say, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" and so receive from him a better and surer peace, which will never be quite broken, but be the beginning of thy everlasting peace, and not perish in thy perishing, as the groundless peace of the world will do.

4. They shall lose all their carnal mirth. They will themselves say of their "laughter; it is mad; and of their mirth, what doeth it?" It was but "as the crackling of thorns under a pot." It made a blaze for a while, but it was presently gone, and returned no more. The talk of death and judgment was irksome to them, because it damped their mirth. They could not endure to think of their sin and danger, because these thoughts sunk their spirits. They knew not what it was to weep for sin, or to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. They could laugh away sorrow, and sing away cares, and drive away those melancholy thoughts. To meditate and pray, they fancied, would be enough to make them miserable, or run mad. Poor souls, what a misery will that life be, where you shall have nothing but sorrow-intense, heart piercing, multiplied sorrow; when you shall neither have the joys of saints nor your own former joys! Do you think there is one merry heart in hell? or one joyful countenance or jesting tongue? You now cry, "a little mirth is worth a great deal of sorrow." But surely a little godly sorrow, which would have ended in eternal joy, had been worth much more than all your foolish mirth; for the end of such mirth is sorrow.

5. They shall also lose all their sensual delights. That which they esteemed their chief good, their heaven, their god, must they lose, as well as God himself. What a fall will the proud ambitious man have from the height of his honors! As his dust and bones will not be known from the dust and bones of the poorest beggar, so neither will his soul be honored or favored more than theirs. What a number of the great, noble, and learned will be shut out from the presence of Christ! They shall not find their magnificent buildings, soft beds, and easy couches. They shall not view their curious gardens, their pleasant meadows, and plenteous harvests. Their tables will not be so furnished nor attended. The rich man is there no more "clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day." There is no expecting the admiration of beholders. They shall spend their time in sadness, and not in sports and pastimes. What an alteration will they then find! The heat of their lust will be then abated. How will it even cut them to the heart to look each other in the face! What an interview will there then be, cursing the day that ever they saw one another! O that sinners would now remember and say, "Will these delights accompany us into the other world? Will not the remembrance of them be then our torment? Shall we then take this partnership in vice for true friendship? Why should we sell such lasting incomprehensible joys for a taste of seeming pleasure? Come, as we have sinned together, let us pray together that God would pardon us; and let us help one another toward heaven, instead of helping to deceive and destroy each other." O

that men but knew what they desire, when they would so earnestly have all things suited to the desires of the flesh! It is but to desire their temptations to be increased and their snares strengthened.

II. As the loss of the saints' rest will be aggravated by losing the enjoyments of time, it will be much more so by suffering the torments of hell. The exceeding greatness of such torments may appear, by considering,

1. The principal author of hell-torments is God himself. As it was no less than God whom sinners had offended, so it is no less than God who will punish them for their offences. He hath prepared those torments for his enemies. His continued anger will still be devouring them. His breath of indignation will kindle the flames. His wrath will be an intolerable burden to their souls. If it were but a creature they had to do with, they might better bear it. Wo to him that falls under the strokes of the Almighty! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It were nothing in comparison to this, if all the world were against them, or if the strength of all creatures were united in one to inflict their penalty. They had now rather venture to displease God than displease a landlord, a customer, a master, a friend, a neighbor, or their own flesh; but then they will wish a thousand times, in vain, that they had been hated of all the world, rather than have lost the favor of God. What a consuming fire is his wrath! If it be kindled here but a little, how do we "wither like grass!" How soon doth our strength decay and turn to weakness, and our beauty to deformity! The flames do not so easily run through the dry stubble, as the wrath of God will consume these wretches. They that could not bear a prison, or a gibbet, or a fire for Christ, or scarcely a few scoffs, how will they now bear the devouring flames of Divine wrath?

2. The place or state of torment is purposely ordained to glorify the justice of God. When God would glorify his power, he made the worlds. The comely order of all his creatures declareth his wisdom. His providence is shown in sustaining all things. When a spark of his wrath kindles upon the earth, the whole world, except only eight persons, are drowned; Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim are burnt with fire from heaven, the sea shuts her mouth upon some, the earth opens and swallows up others; the pestilence destroys by thousands. What a standing witness of the wrath of God is the present deplorable state of the Jews! Yet the glorifying of the mercy and justice of God is intended most eminently for the life to come. As God will then glorify his mercy in a way that is now beyond the comprehension of the saints who must enjoy it, so also will he manifest his justice to be indeed the justice of God. The everlasting flames of hell will not be thought too hot for the rebellious; and, when they have there burned through millions of ages, he will not repent him of the evil which has befallen them. Wo to the soul that is thus the object of the wrath of the Almighty, as a bush that must burn in the flames of his jealousy and never be consumed! The torments of the damned must be extreme, because they are the effect of divine vengeance. Wrath is terrible, but vengeance is implacable. When the great God shall say, "My rebellious creature shall now pay for all the abuse of my patience; remember how I waited your leisure in vain, how I stooped to persuade and entreat you: did you think I would always be so slighted?" Then will he be avenged for every abused mercy, and for all their neglects of Christ and grace. O that men would foresee this, and please God better in preventing their wo!

4. Consider also, that though God had rather men would accept of Christ and mercy, yet, when they persist in rebellion, he will take pleasure in their execution. He tells us, "Fury is not in me;" yet

he adds, "Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." Wretched creatures, when "he that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favor. As the Lord rejoiced over them to do them good; so the Lord will rejoice over them to destroy them, and bring them to nought." Wo to the souls whom God rejoiceth to punish: "He will laugh at their calamity, he will mock when their fear cometh; when their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon them." Terrible thing, when none in heaven or earth can help them but God, and he shall rejoice in their calamity! Though Scripture speaks of God's laughing and mocking, not literally, but after the manner of men; yet it is an act of God in tormenting the sinner, which cannot otherwise be more fitly expressed.

5. Consider that Satan and themselves shall be God's executioners. He that was here so successful in drawing them from Christ, will then be the instrument of their punishment for yielding to his temptations. That is the reward he will give them for all their service; for their rejecting the commands of God, forsaking Christ, and neglecting their souls at his persuasion. If they had served Christ as faithfully as they did Satan, he would have given them a better reward. It is also most just that they should be their own tormentors; that they may see their whole destruction is of themselves and then, whom can they complain of but themselves?

6. Consider also that their torment will be universal. As all parts have joined in sin, so must they all partake in the torment. The soul, as it was the chief in sinning, shall be the chief in suffering; and as it is of a more excellent nature than the body, so will its torments far exceed bodily torments; and as its joys far surpass all sensual pleasures, so the pains of the soul exceed corporeal pains. It is not only a soul, but a sinful soul that must suffer. Fire will not burn except the fuel be combustible; but if the wood be dry, how fiercely will it burn! The guilt of their sins will be to damned souls like tinder to gunpowder, to make the flames of hell take hold upon them with fury. The body must also bear its part. The body which was so carefully looked to, so tenderly cherished, so curiously dressed, what must it now endure! How are its haughty looks now brought down! How little will those flames regard its comeliness and beauty! Those eyes which were wont to be delighted with curious sights, must then see nothing but what shall terrify them! an angry God above them, with those saints whom they scorned enjoying the glory which they have lost; and about them will be only devils and damned souls. How will they look back and say, "Are all our feasts, and games, and revels come to this?" Those ears, which were accustomed to music and songs, shall hear the shrieks and cries of their damned companions; children crying out against their parents, who gave them encouragement and example in evil; husbands and wives, masters and servants, ministers and people, magistrates and subjects, charging their misery upon one another, for discouraging in duty, conniving at sin, and being silent when they should have plainly foretold the danger. Thus will soul and body be companions in wo.

7. Far greater will these torments be, because without mitigation. In this life, when told of hell, or if conscience troubled their peace, they had comforters at hand; their carnal friends, their business, their company, their mirth. They could drink, play, or sleep away their sorrows. But now all these remedies are vanished. Their hard, presumptuous, unbelieving heart was a wall to defend them against trouble of mind. Satan was himself their comforter, as he was to our first mother. "Hath God said, ye shall not eat? Ye shall not surely die. Doth God tell you that you shall die in hell? There is no such matter; God is more merciful. Or, if there be a hell, what need you fear it? Are not

you Christians? Was not the blood of Christ shed for you?" Thus as the Spirit of Christ is the Comforter of the saints, so Satan is the comforter of the wicked. Never was a thief more careful lest he should awake the people when he is robbing a house, than Satan is not to awaken a sinner. But when the sinner is dead, then Satan hath done flattering and comforting. Which way, then, will the forlorn sinner look for comfort? They that drew him into the snare, and promised him safety, now forsake him, and are forsaken themselves. His comforts are gone, and the righteous God, whose forewarnings he made light of; will now make good his word against him to the last tittle.

8. But the greatest aggravation of these torments will be their eternity. When a thousand millions of ages are past, they are as fresh to begin as the first day. If there were any hope of an end, it would ease the damned to foresee it; but For ever is an intolerable thought! They were never weary of sinning, nor will God be weary of punishing. They never heartily repented of sin, nor will God repent of their suffering. They broke the laws of the eternal God, and therefore shall suffer eternal punishment. They knew it was an everlasting kingdom which they refused, and what wonder if they are everlastingly shut out of it? Their immortal souls were guilty of the trespass, and therefore must immortally suffer the pains. What happy men would they think themselves, if they might have lain still in their graves, or might but there lie down again! How will they call and cry, "O death, whither art thou now gone? Now come and cut off this doleful life. O that these pains would break my heart, and end my being! O that I might once at last die! O that I had never had a being!" These groans will the thoughts of eternity wring from their hearts. They were wont to think sermons and prayers long; how long then will they think these endless torments! What difference is there betwixt the length of their pleasures and their pains! The one continued but a moment, the other endure through all eternity. Sinner, remember how time is almost gone. Thou art standing at the door of eternity; and death is waiting to open the door, and put thee i., Go, sleep out a few more nights, and stir about a few more days on earth, and then thy nights and days shall end: thy thoughts, and cares, and pleasures shall all be devoured by eternity; thou must enter upon the state which shall never be changed. As the joys of heaven are beyond our conception, so are the pains of hell. Everlasting torment is inconceivable torment. But methinks I see the obstinate sinner desperately resolving, "If I must be damned, there is no remedy. Rather than I will live as the Scripture requires, I will put it to the venture; I shall escape as well as others, and we will even bear it as well as we can." Alas poor creature, let me beg this of thee, before thou dost so resolve, that thou wouldst lend me thy attention to a few questions, and weigh them with the reason of a man. Who art thou, that thou shouldst bear the wrath of God? What is thy strength? Is it not as the strength of wax or stubble to resist the fire or as chaff to the wind or as dust before the fierce whirlwind? If thy strength were as iron, and thy bones as brass; if thy foundation were as the earth, and thy power as the heavens, yet shouldst thou perish at the breath of his indignation. How much more, when thou art but a piece of breathing clay, kept a few days from being eaten with worms, by the mere support and favor of Him whom thou art thus resisting! Why dost thou tremble at the signs of almighty power and wrath? at peals of thunder or flashes of lightning or that unseen power which rends in pieces the mighty oaks, and tears down the strongest buildings; or at the plague, when it rageth around thee? If thou hadst seen the plagues of Egypt, or the earth swallow up Dathan and Abiram, or Elijah bring fire from heaven to destroy the captains and their companies, would not any of these sights have daunted thy spirit? How then canst thou bear the plagues of hell? Why art thou dismayed with such small sufferings as befall thee here: a tooth-ache, a fit of the gout or

stone, the loss of a limb, or falling into beggary and disgrace? And yet all these laid together will be one day accounted a happy state, in comparison of that which is suffered in hell. Why does the approach of death so much affright thee? O how cold it strikes to thy heart! And would not the grave be accounted a paradise, compared with that place of torment which thou slightest? Is it an intolerable thing to burn part of thy body by holding it in the fire? What, then, will it be to suffer ten thousand times more for ever in hell! The thought or mention of hell occasions disquiet in thy spirit; and canst thou endure the torments themselves? Why doth the rich man complain to Abraham of his torments in hell? or thy dying companions lose their courage, and change their haughty language? Why cannot these make as light of hell as thyself? Didst thou never see or speak with a man in despair? How uncomfortable was his talk! how burdensome his life! Nothing he possessed did him good: he had no sweetness in meat or drink; the sight of friends troubled him; he was weary of life, and fearful of death. If the misery of the damned can be endured, why cannot a man more easily endure these foretastes of hell? What if thou shouldst see the devil appear to thee in some terrible shape! Would not thy heart fail thee, and thy hair stand on an end? And how wilt thou endure to live for ever where thou shalt have no other company but devils and the damned, and shalt not only see them, but be tormented with them and by them? Let me once more ask, if the wrath of God be so light, why did the Son of God himself make so great a matter of it? It caused "his sweat to be, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." The Lord of life cried, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Surely if any one could have borne these sufferings easily, it would have been Jesus Christ. He had another measure of strength to bear it than thou hast. Wo to thee, sinner, for thy mad security! Dost thou think to find that tolerable to thee, which was so heavy to Christ? Nay, the Son of God is cast into a bitter agony and bloody sweat, only under the curse of the law and yet thou, feeble, foolish creature, fearest not to bear also the curse of the Gospel, which requires a "much sorer punishment." The good Lord bring thee to thy right mind by repentance, lest thou buy thy wit at too dear a rate! And now, reader, I demand thy resolution. What use wilt thou make of all this? Shall it be lost to thee? or wilt thou consider it in good earnest? Thou hast cast away many a warning of God; wilt thou do so by this also? Take heed; God will not always stand warning and threatening. The hand of vengeance is lifted up, the blow is coming, and wo to him on whom it lighteth! Dost thou throw away the book, and say it speaks of nothing but hell and damnation? Thus thou usedst also to complain of the preacher. But wouldst thou not have us tell thee of these things? Should we be guilty of the blood of thy soul, by keeping silent that which God hath charged us to make known? Wouldst thou perish in ease and silence, and have us perish with thee, rather than displease thee by speaking the truth? If thou wilt be guilty of such inhuman cruelty, God forbid we should be guilty of such sottish folly! This kind of preaching or writing is the ready way to be hated; and the desire of applause is so natural, that few delight in such a displeasing way. But consider, are these things true, or are they not? If they were not true, I would heartily join with thee against any that fright people without a cause. But if these threatenings be the word of God, what a wretch art thou, that wilt not hear it and consider it! If thou art one of the people of God, this doctrine will be a comfort to thee, and not a terror. If thou art yet unregenerate, methinks thou shouldst be as fearful to hear of heaven as hell, except the bare name of heaven or salvation be sufficient. Preaching heaven and mercy to thee, is entreating thee to seek them, and not reject them; and preaching hell, is but to persuade thee to avoid it. If thou wert quite past hope of escaping it, then it were in vain to tell thee of hell; but as long as thou art alive there is hope of thy

recovery, and therefore all means must be used to awake thee from thy lethargy. Alas! what heart can now possibly conceive, or what tongue express, the pains of those souls that are under the wrath of God! Then, sinners, you will be crying to Jesus Christ, "O mercy! O pity, pity on a poor soul!" Why, I do now, in the name of The Lord Jesus, cry to thee. "O have mercy, have pity, man, upon thy own soul!" Shall God pity thee, who wilt not be entreated to pity thyself? If thy horse see but a pit before him, thou canst scarcely force him in; and wilt thou so obstinately cast thyself into hell, when the danger is foretold thee? "Who can stand before the indignation of the Lord? and who can abide the fierceness of his anger?" Methinks thou shouldst need no more words, but presently cast away thy soul-damning sins, and wholly deliver up thyself to Christ. Resolve on it immediately, and let it be done, that I may see thy face in rest among the saints. May the Lord persuade thy heart to strike this covenant without any longer delay! But if thou be hardened unto death, and there be no remedy, yet say not another day but that thou wast faithfully warned, and hadst a friend that would fain have prevented thy damnation.

Chapter 114

S. The Advantages of Pleasing God Rather than Men

The Advantages of Pleasing God Rather than Men by Richard Baxter

1. If you seek first to please God and are satisfied therein, you have but one to please instead of multitudes; and a multitude of masters are hardlier pleased than one.

2. And it is one that putteth upon you nothing that is unreasonable, for quantity or quality.

3. And one that is perfectly wise and good, not liable to misunderstand your case and actions.

4. And one that is most holy, and is not pleased in iniquity or dishonesty.

5. And he is one that is impartial and most just, and is no respecter of persons, Acts x. 34.

6. And he is one that is a competent judge, that hath fitness and authority, and is acquainted with your hearts, and every circumstance and reason of your actions.

7. And he is one that perfectly agreeth with himself, and putteth you not upon contradictions or impossibilities.

8. And he is one that is constant and unchangeable; and is not pleased with one thing to-day, and another contrary to-morrow; nor with one person this year, whom he will be weary of the next.

9. And he is one that is merciful, and requireth you not to hurt yourselves to please him: nay, he is pleased with nothing of thine but that which tendeth to thy happiness, and displeased with nothing but that which hurts thyself or others, as a father that is displeased with his children when they defile or hurt themselves.

10. He is gentle, though just, in his censures of thee; judging truly, but not with unjust rigour, nor making your actions worse than they are.

11. He is one that is not subject to the passions of men, which blind their minds, and carry them to injustice.

12. He is one that will not be moved by tale-bearers, whisperers, or false accusers, nor can be perverted by any misinformation.

S. The Church

The Church Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

Baxter's importance as a writer rests in ecclesiology and practical devotion. In the following excerpt he discusses the true nature of the church and defines the true Christian. He contrasts the Puritan concept of the church with the Catholic and Anabaptist concepts of a "pure church," pointing out that the visible and invisible church are never in fact identical, but that this must remain the goal. Thus, one must never assume that all church members are true Christians simply because they are members, or have been baptized, or have responded to an altar call.

1 Corinthians 12:12—For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

It is a pitiful case with the poor afflicted church of Christ, that almost all the members cry out against division, and yet cause and increase it, while they speak against it. And that all cry up unity, and yet very few do any thing that is very considerable to promote it; but multitudes are destroying unity, while they commend it: and those few that would heal and close the wounds, are not able by the clearest reasons, and most importunate requests, to hold the hands of others from opposing it; and to get leave of the rest to do that work, which they will not do themselves while they extol it. You would think this were rather the description of a bedlam, than of a Christian! to set all on fire, and furiously to rail at all that would quench it, and at the same time to rail as much at incendiaries, and cry out for concord, and against division, and call other men all that is naught, for doing that which they do themselves, and will not be persuaded from! But to the injurious dishonour of Christianity itself it is thus with millions of professed Christians! thus is the church used: the sin and shame is made so public, that no charity can much excuse it, and no shift can cover it from the reproachful observation of those that are without. Alas, our flames do rise so high, that Turks, and Jews, and Heathens stand looking on them, and ask, "What is the matter that these Christians thus irreconcileably worry one another?" Do we need any proof, when we feel the smart? When we see the blood? When we hear the noise of revilers at home, and see the scornful laughters of those abroad? When almost all Christendom is up in arms? When the churches are so many by-names, and broken into so many odious fractions; and so many volumes fly abroad, containing the reproaches and condemnations of each other? And (which is enough to break an honest heart to think or speak of) that all this hath continued so long a time! And they be not so wise as the passionate, or the drunken, that in time will come to themselves again; and that it hath continued notwithstanding the greatest means that are used for the cure: Mediation prevaileth not: pacificatory endeavours have done almost nothing: nay, sin gets advantage in point of reputation, and dividing is counted a work of zeal, and ministers themselves are the principal leaders of it; yea, and ministers of eminent parts and piety; and piety itself is pretended for this, which is the poison of piety; and pacification is become a suspected or derided work; and the peace-makers are presently suspected of some heresy; and perhaps called dividers for seeking reconciliation. It made my heart ache with grief, the other day, to read over the narrative of the endeavours of one

man (Mr. John Dury), to heal the Protestant churches themselves, and to think that so much ado should be necessary to make even the leaders of the Christian flocks to be willing to cease so odious a sin, and come out of so long and doleful a misery; yea, and that all should do so little good, and get from men but a few good words, while they sit still and suffer the flames to consume the deplorable remnant: yea, such havock hath division made, and cut the church into so many pieces, that it is become one of the commonest questions among us, which of these pieces it is that is the Church; one saith, “We are the catholic church”; and another saith, “No, but it is we!” and a third contendeth that it is “only they”: and thus men seem to be at a loss; and when they believe the holy catholic church, they know not what it is, which they say, they believe. Though I dare not presume to hope of much success in any attempts against this distraction, after the frustration of the far greater endeavours of multitudes that have attempted it with far greater advantage, yet I have resolved by the help of Christ to bear witness against the sin of the dividers, and leave my testimony on record to posterity, that if it may not excite some others to the work, yet at least it may let them know, that all were not void of desires for peace in this contentious age. To which purpose I intend, 1. To speak of the unity and concord of the catholic church. 2. Of the unity and concord of Christians in their particular churches, and in their individual state. And the first discourse I shall ground upon this text, which from the similitude of a natural body doth assert, 1. The multiplicity of the members: and 2. The unity of the body or church of Christ, notwithstanding the multiplicity of the members. The members are here said to be many for number, and it is intimated (which after is more fully expressed) that they are divers for office, and use, and gifts. The church here spoken of is the universal church, as it is both in its visible and mystical state: It is not only a particular church that is here meant; nor is it the catholic church only as mystical, or only as visible, but as it containeth professors and believers, the body and soul, which make up the man, having both ordinances and spirit in their possession. That it is the catholic church is apparent: 1. In that it is denominated in the text from Christ himself, “So also is Christ.” And the universal church is more fitly denominated from Christ as the Head, than a particular church. It is not easy to find any text of Scripture that calleth Christ the Head of a particular congregation (as we use not to call the king the head of this, or that corporation, but of the commonwealth), though he may be so called, as a head hath respect to the several members: but he is oft called the Head of the catholic church. (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 1:18; Colossians 2:19; Ephesians 5:23) The head of such a body is a commoner phrase than the head of the hand or foot. 2. Because it is expressly called “the body of Christ,” which title is not given to any particular church, it being but part of the body, verse 27. 3. It is such a church that is here spoken of, to which was given apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healings, helps, governments, tongues, &c. verse 28, 8, 9, 10. But all particular churches had not all these; and it is doubtful whether Corinth had all that is here mentioned. 4. It is that church which all are baptized into, Jews and Gentiles, bond and free: but that is only into the universal church. The Spirit doth not baptize, or enter men first or directly into a particular church; no, nor the baptism of water neither always, nor primarily. The scope of the chapter, and of the like discourse of the same apostle (Ephesians 4:1-32), do shew that it is the catholic church that is here spoken of. The sense of the text then lyeth in this doctrine.

Doct. The universal church being the body of Christ is but one, and all true Christians are the members of which it doth consist.

Here are two propositions; first, that the catholic church is but one. Secondly, that all Christians are members of it, even all that by the one spirit are baptized into it. These are both so plain in the text, that were not men perverse or very blind, it were superfluous to say any more to prove them. And for the former propositions, that the catholic church is but one, we are all agreed in it. And therefore I will not needlessly trouble you with answering such objections as trouble not the church, which are fetched from the difference of the Jewish church, and the Gentile church, (or strictly catholic) or between the called (the true members) and the elect uncalled; or between the church militant and triumphant. And as for the second proposition, that the catholic church consisteth of all Christians, as its members, it is plain in this text, and many more. It is all that (heartily) say “Jesus is the Lord” (Ephesians 4:3), and all that “are baptized by one Spirit into the body” (Ephesians 4:13), and all that Paul wrote to, and such as they: and yet some of them were guilty of division, or schism itself, and many errors and crimes, which Paul at large reprehendeth them for. The Galatians were members of this church (Galatians 3:26-29); for all their legal conceits and errors, and for all that they dealt with Paul as an enemy for telling them the truth. This church consisteth of all that have the “one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, &c.” and of all that “have so learned Christ, as to put off the old man, and to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Ephesians 4:4-6, Ephesians 4:20-24) This church consisteth of all that “Christ is a Saviour of,” and that are “subject” unto Christ, and for “whom he gave himself, that he might sanctify and cleanse them by the washing of water by the word.” (Ephesians 5:23-26) It containeth all such as the Romans then were to whom Paul wrote (Romans 12:4, Romans 12:5), however differing among themselves to the censuring of each other. It containeth in it all “such as shall be saved.” (Acts 2:47) These things are beyond all just dispute. When I say, that all Christians are members of the catholic church, I must further tell you that men are called Christians, either because they are truly and heartily the disciples of Christ; or else because they seem so to be by their profession. The first are such Christians as are justified and sanctified, and these constitute the mystical body of Christ, or the church as invisible: professors of this inward true Christianity doth constitute the church as visible to men. Professors of some pieces only of Christianity, leaving out or denying any essential part of it, are not professors of Christianity truly, and therefore are no members of the visible church: and therefore we justly exclude the Mahometans. And whereas it is a great question, Whether heretics are members of the catholic church? The answer is easy: contend not about a word. If by a heretic you mean a man that denieth or leaves out any essential part of Christianity, he is no member of the church: but if you extend the word so far as to apply it to those that deny not, or leave not out any essential part of Christianity, then such heretics are members of the church. It is but the perverseness of men’s spirits, exasperated by disputation, that makes the Papists so much oppose our distinction of the fundamentals of religion from the rest: when at other times they confess the thing in other words themselves. By the fundamentals we mean the essentials of the Christian faith, or religion: And do they think indeed that Christianity hath not its essential parts? Sure they dare not deny it, till they say, “it hath no essence, and so is nothing, which an infidel will not say?” Or do they think that every revealed truth, which we are bound to believe, is essential to our Christianity? Sure they dare not say so, till they either think that no Christian is bound to believe any more than he doth believe, or that he is a Christian that wants an essential part of Christianity, or that Christianity is as many several things, as there be persons that have several degrees of faith or knowledge in all the world. For shame therefore, lay

by this senseless cavil, and quarrel not with the light by partial zeal, lest you prove your cause thereby to be darkness. But if you perceive a difficulty (as who doth not, though it be not so great as some would make it) in discerning the essential parts from the integrals, do not therefore deny the unquestionable distinction, but join with us for a more full discovery of the difference. In a few words, every man that doth heartily believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by a faith that worketh by love, is a true Christian. Or every one that taketh God for his only God, that is his Creator, Lord, Ruler, and felicity, or end, and Jesus Christ for his only Redeemer, that is, God and man; that hath fulfilled all righteousness, and given up himself to death on the cross in sacrifice for our sins, and hath purchased and promised us pardon, and grace, and everlasting life; and hath risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, where he is Lord of the church, and intercessor with the Father, whose laws we must obey, and who will come again at last to raise and judge the world, the righteous to everlasting life, and the rest to everlasting punishment: and that taketh the Holy Ghost for his Sanctifier, and believeth the Scriptures given by his inspiration, and sealed by his work, to be the certain word of God. This man is a true Christian, and a member of the catholic church; which will be manifested when he adjoineth a holy, sober and righteous life, using all known means and duties, especially baptism at first, the Lord's-supper afterward, prayer, confession, praise, meditation, and hearing the word of God, with a desire to know more, that his obedience may be full: living under Christ's ministers, and in communion of saints, denying himself, mortifying the flesh and world, living in charity and justice to man; he that doth this is a true Christian, and shall be saved, and therefore a member of the catholic church as invisible; and he that professeth all this, doth profess himself a true Christian, and if he null not that profession, is a member of the catholic church as visible. These things are plain, and in better days were thought sufficient.

He that hath all that is contained but in the ancient Creed, the Lord's-prayer and Ten Commandments, with baptism and the Lord's-supper, in his head, and heart, and life, is certainly a member of the catholic church. In a word, it is no harder to know who is a member of this church, than it is to know who is a Christian. Tell me but what Christianity is, and I will soon tell you how a Church member may be known. But because it will tend both to the further clearing of this, and the text itself, I shall next shew you in what respects the members of the church are divers, and then in what respects they are all one, or in what they are united. The Diversity of the Church And as the text tells you, that the members are many numerically, so they are divers in their respects.

1. They are not of the same age or standing in Christ. Some are babes, and some are young men, and some are fathers. (1 John 2:12-14) Some are novices, or late converts, and raw Christians (1 Timothy 3:6), and some are of longer standing, that have "borne the burden and heat of the day." (Matthew 20:12)

2. The members are not all of the same degree of strength. Some are of small understanding, that reach little further than the principles of holy doctrine, and have need to be fed with milk, being unskilful in the word of righteousness: Yea, they have need to be taught the very principles again, not as being without a saving knowledge of them (for they are all taught of God, and these laws and principles are written in their hearts); but that they may have a clearer, more distinct and practical knowledge of them, who have but a darker, general, less effectual apprehension. (Hebrews 5:11-13; Hebrews 6:1) And some being at full age, are & for "stronger meat," that is harder of digestion. (Hebrews 5:14) Who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern

both good and evil. Some have faith and other graces but as a “grain of mustard-seed,” and some are thriven to a greater strength. (Matthew 18:20; Matthew 12:31) Some grow in grace, and are able to resist a temptation, and do or suffer what they are called to (2 Peter 3:18), being “strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, according to the glorious power of grace” (Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 1:11), being “strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Romans 4:20), having accordingly “strong consolation.” (Hebrews 6:18) And some are “weak in the faith,” apt to be offended, and their consciences to be wounded, and themselves in greater danger by temptations, whom the stronger must receive, and take heed of offending, and must support them, and bear their infirmities. (Romans 14:1, Romans 14:2, Romans 14:21; Romans 15:1; 1 Corinthians 8:7, 1 Corinthians 8:10-12; 1 Corinthians 9:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Acts 20:35)

3. Moreover the members have not all the same stature or degree of gifts; nor in all things the same sort of gifts; some excel in knowledge, and some in utterance; some in one sort of knowledge, and some in another; and some are weak in all. But of this the chapter speaks so fully, that I need say no more but refer you thither.

4. The members are not altogether of the same complexion. Though all God’s children be like the Father, being holy as he is holy, yet they may be known from one another. Some are naturally more mild, and some more passionate: some of colder and calmer temper, and some so hot, that they seem more zealous in all that they say or do: some of more orderly, exact apprehensions, and some of more confused: some of quick understanding, and some dull. (Hebrews 5:11)

5. The members are not all of the same degree of spiritual health. Some have much quicker and sharper appetites to the bread of life than others have: some are fain to strive with their backward hearts before they can go to secret duties, or hold on in them, and before they can get down the food of their souls: and some go with cheerfulness, and find much sweetness in all that they receive: some are of sounder understandings, and others tainted with many errors and corrupt opinions: as appears in Paul’s writings to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, and others. Some relish only the food that is wholesome, and some have a mind of novelties, and vain janglings, and contentions, needless disputes, like stomachs that desire coals and ashes, or hurtful things. Some in their conversations maintain their integrity, and walk blamelessly, and without offence. (Luke 1:6; Php 2:15) And some are overcome by temptations, and give offence to others and grievously wound themselves. . . .

6. Hence also it follows, that the members are not all of the same usefulness and seviceableness to the church and cause of Christ. Some are as pillars to support the rest (Galatians 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:14), and some are a trouble to others, and can scarce go any further than they are guided and supported by others. Some lay out themselves in the helping of others: and some are as the sick, that cannot help themselves, but trouble the house with their complaints and necessities, which call for great and continual attendance. Some are fit to be teachers of others, and to be pastors of the flock, and guide the Lord’s people in the way of life, and give the children their meat in season, rightly dividing the word of truth. And some are still learning, and never come to much knowledge of the truth, and do no great service to God in their generations: yea, too many weary their teachers and brethren by their frowardness and unfruitfulness: and too many do abundance of wrong to the church, and Gospel, and the world by their offensive miscarriages: yea, too many prove as thorns in our sides, and by some error in their understandings, cherished and

used by the too great remnant of pride, self-conceitedness, passion and carnality, are grievous afflicters of the church of Christ, and causes of dissention; one saying I am of Paul, and another I am of Apollos, and another I am of Christ, as if Christ were divided, or else appropriated to them, and Paul or Apollos had been their saviours. (1 Corinthians 3:1-5) Some live so as that the church hath much benefit by their lives, and much loss by their death: and some are such troublers of it, by their weakness and corrupt distempers, that their death is some ease to the places where they lived. And yet all these may be truly godly, and living members of the catholic church.

7. Moreover, the members are not all the same in regard of office. Some are appointed to be pastors, teachers, elders, overseers, to be stewards of God's mysteries, and to feed the flock, taking heed to them all, as being over them in the Lord, as their rulers in spiritual things. (Ephesians 4:11; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Corinthians 4:1; Acts 20:17, Acts 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:7, Hebrews 13:17) And some are the flock, commanded to learn of them, to have them in "honour, and highly esteem them for their work sake, and to obey them." (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17) In this chapter saith Paul, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?" (1 Corinthians 12:17, 1 Corinthians 12:29) As there are diversity of gifts, so also of offices: for God hath designed men to use the gifts they have in such order and manner as may edify the church. All the body is not the bonds, or nerves, and ligaments, by which the parts are joined together. (Ephesians 4:16) All are not "pastors and teachers, given for perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13) . . .

10. To conclude, from all this imparity it will follow, that the members will not have an equal degree of glory, as not having an equal preparation and capacity. All are not in Abraham's bosom, as Lazarus was. "To sit on Christ's right hand and left in his kingdom will not be the lot of all, but of those to whom the Father will give it." (Matthew 20:23) All are not to sit on thrones, in full equality with the apostles. (Luke 20:30) There are of the first for time of coming in, that shall be last of dignity, and of the last that shall be first. (Matthew 19:30; Matthew 20:16) All shall not be rulers of five cities, but only they that have double five talents. (Matthew 25:1-46) And thus I have shewed you the disparity of the members, wherein they differ. The Unity of the Church

Secondly, I am now to shew you the unity of them, and of the body which they constitue. The members of the catholic church are united in all these following respects:

1. They have all but one God, the fountain of their being and felicity, and are all related to him as children to one Father, reconciled to them, and adopting them in Jesus Christ. (John 1:12) "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26) "There is one God and Father of all," &c. (Galatians 4:5, Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6)

2. The members of the church have all one Head, the Redeemer, Saviour, Mediator, Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 4:5) As the commonwealth is denominated from the unity of the sovereign power that heads it; so the church is hence principally denominated one from Christ, who is the Head, the Sovereign, and the Centre of it. And therefore it is called frequently his body, and he the Head of it. (Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18; Colossians 2:19; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 3:15; Romans 12:4, Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; Ephesians 2:16) He is the foundation, and the church is the building that is erected upon him, "and other foundation can no man lay." (1

Corinthians 3:11, 1 Corinthians 3:12) “From this head the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:16) All therefore are members of the catholic church that are members of Christ. He is “the chief cornerstone that is laid in Zion, elect and precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded; to whom coming as to a living stone, we also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house.” (1 Peter 2:4-6) As this “One died for all” (2 Corinthians 5:14), because all were dead, so by the righteousness of this One, the free gift cometh on all to justification of life, and by the obedience of this One shall many be made righteous.” (Romans 5:18, Romans 5:19) “And by one Jesus Christ we shall reign in life.” (Romans 5:17) “In him the church of Jews and Gentiles are made one.” (Ephesians 2:14, Ephesians 2:15) “To this one Husband we are all espoused.” (2 Corinthians 11:2) So that we “are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28) And “to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we in him.” (1 Corinthians 8:6)

3. The whole catholic church (strictly taken, as comprehending only the living members) have only one Holy Ghost dwelling in them, illuminating, sanctifying and guiding them, and are animated as it were by this one Spirit. “By this one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:13) And “whoever hath not this Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his.” (Romans 8:9) “By this one Spirit we have all access to the Father.” (Ephesians 2:18) And through this Spirit we are “one habitation of God.” (Ephesians 2:22) And therefore, “he that is joined to the Lord is called one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 6:17) And it is said of Christ, so may it be of the Spirit in a sort, “He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified are all one.” (Hebrews 2:11) This is the scope of the chapter that my text is in.

4. The church is one as to their principal, ultimate end. The same God is their end who is their beginning. The same eternal glory with him, is purchased and prepared for them, and intended by them through their Christian course. The wicked have a lower end, even flesh and self: but all the members of Christ are united in the true intention of this end. They are all the “heirs of life, and partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and have all lain up their treasure in heaven.” (Matthew 6:20, Matthew 6:21; Colossians 1:12; Galatians 4:7; Romans 8:17; 1 Peter 3:7; Titus 3:7; Galatians 3:29; Hebrews 1:14; Ephesians 3:6) “All that are risen with Christ, do seek the things that are above” (Colossians 3:1), “and have their conversation with him in heaven.” (Php 3:20, Php 3:21)

5. All the members of the catholic Gospel-church have one Gospel to teach them the knowledge of Christ. (Galatians 1:10, Galatians 1:11) And one word of promise to be the charter of their inheritance (1 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 9:15; Galatians 3:22, Galatians 3:29), and one holy doctrine to be the instrument of their regeneration, and the “seed of God abiding in them.” (1 Peter 1:23, 1 Peter 1:25; Luke 8:11) It is but one that God hath appointed for them; and it is one in the substance that is the instrument of their change.

6. It is one kind of faith, that by this one holy doctrine is wrought upon their souls. Though the degrees be various, yet all believe the same essential points of faith, with a belief of the same nature. There is “one faith” (Ephesians 4:5); and in all these essentials the church is of “one mind” (John 17:21; Acts 4:32; 1 Peter 3:8; 1 Corinthians 15:2-4), though in lesser things there be

exceeding great diversity.

7. There is one new disposition, or holy nature wrought by the Spirit of God in every member of the catholic church. This is called their holiness, and the new creature, and the divine nature, and the image of God. (1 Peter 1:16; 2 Peter 1:4; John 3:6) “That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.” (Colossians 3:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

8. The affections which are predominant in all the members of the church, have one and the same object. Sin is the chiefest thing that all of them hate, and the displeasure of God the chief thing they fear, and God in Christ is the prime object of their love; and they have all the same object of their desires and hopes, even the favour of God, and everlasting life: and they all chiefly rejoice in the same hopes and felicity; as were easy to manifest and prove in the particulars, as to all the essentials of Christianity that are the objects of the will. (Php 1:27; Php 2:3; Ephesians 4:4; Matthew 22:37, Matthew 22:38; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 2:9) And thus they are all of one heart and soul, as uniting in the same objects.

9. They have also one rule or law to live by, which is the law of faith, of grace, of liberty, of Christ. (Romans 3:27; Romans 8:2; James 1:25; Galatians 6:2) And as one law is appointed for them all, so one law in the points of absolute necessity is received by them all; for “it is written in their hearts,” and put into “their inward parts.” (Jeremiah 31:32; Hebrews 8:10, Hebrews 8:16) Though in the other points of the law of Christ there be much diversity in their reception and obedience. All of them are sincerely obedient to what they know, and all of them know that which God hath made of necessity to life.

10. Every member of the church is devoted to God in one and the same covenant. As the covenant on Christ’s part is one to them all; so is it one on their part. They all renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, and give up themselves to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And this being used by God’s appointment, to be solemnly done in baptism, therefore baptism is called the principle or foundation. (Hebrews 6:1) And there is said to be one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), and baptism is said to save us; “Not the putting away the filth of the flesh (that is, not the outward washing), but the answer of a good conscience to God” (1 Peter 3:21), that is, the sincere, internal covenant of the heart, and delivering up ourselves to Christ. So also the fathers, when they (usually) speak of the necessity of baptism, they mean principally our becoming Christians, and entering into the holy covenant, which was done by baptism. Though if any be so weak as to think that this outward baptism is to be delayed (as Constantine and many of the fathers did), if in the meantime he make and profess his covenant with Christ, he is to be taken as a Christian and church-member: but as a soldier without colours, or a king not crowned; he is a Christian not orderly admitted, which is his sin. . . .

13. Every member of the church hath an habitual love to each particular member of the same church. Though mistakes and infirmities may occasion fallings out, even as with Paul and Barnabas, to a parting; and there may be dislikes and bitterness against one another upon misunderstandings, and not discerning God’s graces in each other; yet still, as Christians, they are heartily loved by each other; and did they know more of the truth of each other’s Christianity, they would love each other more. Every member is united by love to the rest; for this is a lesson that is taught us inwardly of God: “And by this we know that we are translated from death to life” (1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 1 John 3:14, 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:12, 1 John 4:20, 1 John 4:21, 1 John 4:8: 1

Thessalonians 4:9; John 13:34, John 13:35). . . .

16. All members have an inward inclination to hold communion with fellow members, so far as they discern them to be members indeed. As fire would to fire, and water would to water, and earth to earth, and every thing to its like; so Christians would have actual communion with Christians, as delighting in each other, and loving Christ in each other, and finding benefit by each other's communion. Though I know that this inclination may be much kept from execution, and communion much hindered, by mistakes about the nature, and manner, and requisites of it, and by infirmities and passions of our own. Brethren may fall out, but there is naturally in them a brotherly love, and when the mistake or passion is over, they will get together again (Acts 9:32, Acts 9:33; Acts 2:42, Acts 2:44; Hebrews 10:25; Psalms 16:3). . . .

19. And every member hath an inward enmity to that which is destructive to itself, or to the body, so far as he knoweth it, that Isaiah 1:1-31. To sin in general. 2. To all known sin in particular. And, 3. Specially to divisions, distractions, and diminution of the church. These things their inward disposition is against; and when they are led to them, it is by temptation producing mistakes and passions against the bent of their hearts and lives. They abhor that which is destructive to the body, as such.

20. Lastly. They shall all at the end of their course obtain the same crown of glory, and see and enjoy the same blessed God and glorified Redeemer, and be members of the same celestial Jerusalem, and be employed everlastingly in the same holy love, and joy, and praise, and glorify and please the Lord in all, and centre, and be united perfectly in him. (John 17:21, John 17:23, John 17:24) "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen." (Romans 11:36) And thus I have shewed you in twenty particulars the unity of the saints; though it is not from every one of these that they are called one church, yet all these are inseparable as to possession from the true members, and as to profession from the seeming members that are adult. . . .

I beseech you therefore, poor, peevish, quarrelsome souls, give others leave to live in the same house with you: Do not disown your brethren, and say, they are bastards, because they somewhat differ from you in complexion, in age, in strength, in health, in stature, or any of the points wherein I told you a little before that the members of the church do usually differ in. Shew not yourselves so ignorant or froward as to make a wonder of it, that God should be the Father both of infants, and men at age, of weak and strong, and that the sick and sound should both be in his family. Doth such cruelty beseem the breast of a Christian, as to wish God to cast out all his children from his family that are weak and sick? Do not make it such a matter of wonder, that God's house should have so many rooms in it; and think it not a reproach to it, that the kitchen or the coal-house is a part of the house. Wonder not at it as a strange thing, that all the body is not a hand or eye; and that some parts have less honour and comeliness than the rest. Hath God told you so plainly and fully of these matters, and yet will you not understand, but remain so perverse? I pray hereafter remember better that the catholic church is one, consisting of all true Christians as the members. . . .

Author

Richard Baxter, the most voluminous writer of his era, had no formal university education. Born in Rowton (near Shrewsbury), England, he studied under a John Owen and Richard Wickstead. In his early years he was greatly influenced by Richard Sibbes's Bruised Reed and William Perkins's Repentance. After the death of his mother in 1634, Richard pursued four years of private study and was ordained to the Anglican ministry at the age of twenty-three. In 1640 Baxter became vicar of Kidderminster. For fourteen years there he enjoyed a very fruitful ministry, which led to his writing The Reformed Pastor. When the Restoration came, he left Kidderminster and went to London, preaching at St. Dunstans, Pinners Hall, and Fetter Lane. His ministry flourished there after the Act of Uniformity of 1662. At this point, he married Margaret Charlton and ministered at Acton until, after an imprisonment, he fled to Totteridge. When James II came to the throne in 1685, Baxter was charged with heresy and again imprisoned; he was released by pardon from the king. His final years were spent quietly at Charterhouse Square, preaching occasionally and finishing his literary works.

Baxter published 168 separate titles. His Practical Works were published in 1707 in four folio volumes and reprinted in 1830 in twenty-three regular volumes. He also wrote several controversial volumes in Latin. His main English works were The Saint's Everlasting Rest (1650), The Reformed Pastor (1657), A Call to the Unconverted (1658), Reasons for the Christian Religion (1672), A Christian Directory (1673), Autobiography (1696), A Paraphrase on the New Testament (1685), and Dying Thoughts (1687).

Chapter 116

S. The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow, by Faith

The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow, by Faith by Richard Baxter Contributed by Steve Doan When Sorrow Is Overmuch How Overmuch Sorrow Swallows Us Up The Causes and Cure of Melancholy Demonic Causes of Depression More Usual Causes of Depression Depression and Sin For Christians Ten Rules for Settling the Heart Truths to Apply to the Heart Helps for Those Who are Depressed Duties of Friends and Relatives of the Depressed Medical Care for those with Depression An Editorial Comment on Baxter's view of Medical Care Question.—What are the best preservatives against melancholy and overmuch sorrow?

"Lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow."—2 Corinthians 2:7 The brevity of a sermon not allowing me time for any unnecessary work, I shall not stay to open the context, nor to inquire whether the person here spoken of be the same that is condemned for incest in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 or some other; nor whether Chrysostom had good tradition for it, that it was a doctor of the church, or made such after his sin? Nor whether the late expositor (Dr. Hammond) be in the right, who thence gathers that he was one of the bishops of Achaia; and that it was a synod of bishops that were to excommunicate him; who yet held that every congregation then had a bishop, and that he was to be excommunicated in the congregation; and that the people should not have followed or favoured such a teacher; it would have been no schism, or sinful separation, to have forsaken him? All that I now intend is, to open this last clause of the verse, which gives the reason why the censured sinner, being penitent, should be forgiven and comforted; viz. Lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow; as it includeth these three doctrines, which I shall handle all together, viz.

1. That sorrow, even for sin, may be overmuch.

2. That overmuch sorrow swalloweth one up.

3. Therefore it must be resisted and assuaged by necessary comfort, both by others, and by ourselves. In handling these, I shall observe this order:

1. I shall show you when sorrow is overmuch.

2. How overmuch sorrow doth swallow a man up.

3. What are the causes of it.

4. What is the cure.

I. It is too notorious that overmuch sorrow for sin is not the ordinary case of the world. A stupid, blockish disposition is the common cause of men's perdition. The plague of a hard heart, and seared conscience, keeps most from all due sense of sin, or danger, or misery, and of all the great and everlasting concerns of their guilty souls. A dead sleep in sin doth deprive most of the use of sense and understanding; they do some of the outward acts of religion as in a dream; they are vowed to God in baptism by others, and they profess to stand to it themselves; they go to church,

and say over the words of the creed, and Lord's prayer, and commandments, they receive the Lord's Supper, and all as in a dream! They take on them to believe that sin is the most hateful thing to God, and hurtful to man, and yet they live in it with delight and obstinacy; they dream that they repent of it, when no persuasion will draw them to forsake it, and while they hate them that would cure them, and will not be as bad and mad as they who feel in them any effectual sorrow for what is past, or effectual sense of their present badness, or effectual resolution for a new and holy life. They dream that there is a judgment, a heaven, and a hell, but would they not be more affected with things of such unspeakable consequence if they were awake? Would they be wholly taken up with the matters of the flesh and world, and scarce have a serious thought or word of eternity, if they were awake? Oh how sleepily and senselessly do they think, and talk, and bear of the great work of man's redemption by Christ, and of the need of justifying and sanctifying grace, and of the joys and miseries of the next life; and yet they say that they believe them! When we preach or talk to them of the greatest things, with the greatest evidence, and plainness, and earnestness that we can, we speak as to the dead, or to men asleep; they have ears, and hear not, nothing goeth to their hearts. One would think that a man that reads in Scripture, and believes the everlasting glory offered, and the dreadful punishment threatened, and the necessity of holiness to salvation, and of a Saviour to deliver us from sin and hell, and how sure and near such a passage into the unseen world is to us all, should have much ado to moderate and bear the sense of such overwhelming things. But most men so\cf2Daniel 6 little regard or feel them, that they have neither time nor heart to think of them as their concern, but hear of them as of some foreign land, where they have no interest, and which they never think to see. Yea, one would think by their senseless neglect of preparation, and their worldly minds and lives, that they were asleep, or in jest, when they confess that they must die; and that when they lay their friends in the grave, and see the skulls and bones cast up, they were but all this while in a dream, or did not believe that their turn is near. Could we tell how to awaken sinners, they would come to themselves, and have other thoughts of these great things, and show it quickly by another kind of life. Awakened reason could never be so befooled and besotted as we see the wicked world to be. But God hath an awakening day for all, and he will make the most senseless soul to feel, by grace or punishment. And because a hardened heart is so great a part of the malady and misery of the unregenerate, and a soft and tender heart is much of the new nature promised by Christ, many awakened souls under the work of conversion think they can never have sorrow enough, and that their danger lies in hard-heartedness, and they never fear overmuch sorrow till it hath swallowed them up; yea, though there be too much of other causes in it, yet if any of it be for sin, they then cherish it as a necessary duty, or at least perceive not the danger of excess: and some think those to be the best Christians who are most in doubts, and fears, and sorrows, and speak almost nothing but uncomfortable complaints; but this is a great mistake.

When Sorrow Is Overmuch

1. Sorrow is overmuch when it is fed by a mistaken cause. All is too much where none is due, and great sorrow is too much when the cause requireth but less.

If a man thinketh that somewhat is a duty, which is no duty, and then sorrow for omitting it, such sorrow is all too much, because it is undue, and caused by error. Many I have known who have been greatly troubled, because they could not bring themselves to that length or order of meditation, for which they had neither ability nor time; and many, because they could not reprove

sin in others, when prudent instruction and intimation was more suitable than reproof. And many are troubled, because in their shops and callings they think of anything but God, as if our outward business must have no thoughts.

Superstition always breeds such sorrows, when men make themselves religious duties which God never made them, and then come short in the performance of them. Many dark souls are assaulted by the erroneous, and told that they are in a wrong way; and they must take up some error as a necessary truth, and so are cast into perplexing difficulties, and perhaps repent of the truth which they before owned. Many fearful Christians are troubled about every meal that they eat, about their clothes, their thoughts, and word, thinking or fearing that all is sinful which is lawful, and that unavoidable infirmities are heinous sins. All such as these are troubles and sorrows without cause, and therefore overmuch.

2. Sorrow is overmuch when it hurteth and overwhelmeth nature itself, and destroyeth bodily health or understanding. Grace is the due qualification of nature, and duty is the right employment of it, but neither of them must destroy it. As civil, and ecclesiastic, and domestic government are for edification and not for destruction, so also is personal self government. God will have mercy and not sacrifice; and he that would not have us kill or hurt our neighbour on pretense of religion, would not have us destroy or hurt ourselves, being bound to love our neighbour but as ourselves. As fasting is a duty no further than it tendeth to some good, as to express or exercise true humiliation, or to mortify some fleshly lust, &c. so is it with sorrow for sin: it is too much when it doth more hurt than good. But of this next.

How Overmuch Sorrow Swallows Us Up II. When sorrow swalloweth up the sinner, it is overmuch, and to be restrained. As,

1. The passions of grief and trouble of mind do oft overthrow the sober and sound use of reason, so that a man’s judgment is corrupted and perverted by it, and is not in that case to be trusted. As a man in raging anger, so one in fear or great trouble of mind, thinks not of things as they are, but as his passion represents them; about God and religion, and about his own soul, and his actions, or about his friends or enemies, his judgment is perverted, and usually false, and, like an inflamed eye, thinks all things of the color which is like itself. When it perverteth reason it is overmuch.

2. Overmuch sorrow disableth a man to govern his thoughts; and ungoverned thoughts must needs be both sinful and very troublesome: grief carrieth them a torrent. You may almost as easily keep the leaves of trees in quietness and order in a blustering wind, as the thoughts of one in troubling passions. If reason would stop them from perplexing subjects, or turn them to better and sweeter things, it cannot do it; it hath no power against the stream of troubling passions.

3. Overmuch sorrow would swallow up faith itself, and greatly hindereth its exercise. They are matters of unspeakable joy which the gospel calleth us to believe: and it is wonderful hard for a grieved, troubled soul to believe any thing that is matter of joy, much less of so great joy as pardon and salvation are. Though it dare not flatly give God the lie, it hardly believes his free and full promises, and the expressions of his readiness to receive all penitent, returning sinners. Passionate grief serveth to feel somewhat contrary to the grace and promises of the gospel, and that feeling hinders faith.

4. Overmuch sorrow yet more hindereth hope; when men think that they do believe God's word, and that his promises are all true to others, yet cannot they hope for the promised blessings to themselves. Hope is that grace by which a soul that believeth the gospel to be true, doth comfortably expect that the benefits promised shall be its own; it is an applying act. The first act of faith saith the gospel is true, which promiseth grace and glory through Christ. The next act of faith saith, I will trust my soul and all upon it, and take Christ for my Saviour and help: and then hope saith, I hope for this salvation by him: but melancholy, overwhelming sorrow and trouble is as great an adversary to this hope as water is to fire, or snow to heat. Despair is its very pulse and breath. Fain such would have hope, but they cannot. All their thoughts are suspicious and misgiving, and they can see nothing but danger and misery, and a helpless state. And when hope, which is the anchor of the soul, is gone, what wonder if they be continually tossed with storms.

5. Overmuch sorrow swalloweth up all comfortable sense of the infinite goodness and love of God, and thereby hindereth the soul from loving him; and in this it is an adversary to the very life of holiness. It is exceeding hard for such a troubled soul to apprehend the goodness of God at all, but much harder to judge that he is good and amiable to him: but as a man that in the deserts of Libya is scorched with the violent heats of the sun, and is ready to die with drought and faintness, may confess that the sun is the life of the earth and a blessing to mankind, but it is misery and death to him; even so, these souls, overwhelmed with grief, may say that God is good to others, but he seems an enemy to them, and to seek their destruction. They think he hateth them, and hath forsaken them; and how can they love such a God who they think doth hate them, and resolve to damn them, and hath decreed them to it from eternity, and brought them into the world for no other end? They that can hardly love an enemy that doth but defame them, or oppress and wrong them, will more hardly love a God that they believe will damn them, and hath remedilessly appointed them thereto.

6. And then it must needs follow that this distemper is a false and injurious judge of all the word and works of God, and of all his mercies and corrections. Whatever such a one reads or hears, he thinks it all makes against him: every sad word and threatening in Scripture he thinks meaneth him, as if it named him. But the promises and comforts he hath no part in, as if he had been by name excepted. All God's mercies are extenuated, and taken for no mercies, as if God intended them all but to make his sin the greater, and to increase his heavy reckoning and further Iris damnation. He thinks God doth but sugar over poison to him, and give him all in hatred, and not in any love, with a design to sink him the deeper in hell: and if God correct him, he supposeth that it is but the beginning of his misery, and God doth torment him before the time.

7. And by this you see that it is an enemy to thankfulness. It rather reproacheth God for his mercies, as if they were injuries, than giveth him any hearty thanks.

8. And by this you may see that this distemper is quite contrary to the joy in the Holy Ghost, yea, and the peace in which God's kingdom much consisteth: nothing seemeth joyful unto such distressed souls. Delighting in God, and in his word and ways, is the flower and life of true religion. But these that I speak of can delight in nothing; neither in God, nor in his word, nor any duty. They do it as a sick man eateth his meat, for mere necessity, and with some loathing and averseness.

9. And all this showeth us that this disease is much contrary to the very prevailing course of the gospel. Christ came as a deliverer of the captives, a Saviour to reconcile us to God, and bring us

glad tidings of pardon and everlasting joy: where the gospel was received it was great rejoicing, and so proclaimed by angels and by men. But all that Christ hath done, and purchased, and offered, and promised, seems nothing but matter of doubt and sadness to this disease.

10. Yea, it is a distemper which greatly advantageth Satan to cast in blasphemous thoughts of God, as if he were bad, and a hater and destroyer even of such as fain would please him. The design of the devil is to describe God to us as like himself; who is a malicious enemy, and delighteth to do hurt: and if all men hate the devil for his hurtfulness, would he not draw men to hate and blaspheme God, if he could make men believe that he is more hurtful? The worshipping of God, as represented by an image is odious to him, because it seems to make him like such a creature as that image representeth. How much more blasphemous is it to feign him to be like the malicious devils! Diminutive, low thoughts of his goodness, as well as of his greatness, is a sin which greatly injureth God: as if you should think that he is no better or trustier than a father or a friend, much more to think him such as distempered souls imagine him. You would wrong his ministers if you should describe them as Christ doth the false prophets, as hurtful thorns, and thistles, and wolves. And is it not worse to think far worse than this of God?

11. This overmuch sorrow doth unfit men for all profitable meditation; it confounds their thoughts, and turneth them to hurtful distractions and temptations; and the more they muse, the more they are overwhelmed. And it turneth prayer into mere complaint, instead of child-like believing supplications. It quite undisposeth the soul to God's feeding, and especially to a comfortable sacramental communion, and fetcheth greater terror from it, lest unworthy receiving will but hasten and increase their damnation. And it rendereth preaching and counsel too oft unprofitable: say what you will that is never so convincing, either it doth not change them, or is presently lost.

12. And it is a distemper which maketh all sufferings more heavy, as facing upon a poor diseased soul, and having no comfort to set against it: and it maketh death exceeding terrible, because they think it will be the gate of hell; so that life seemeth burdensome to them, and death terrible; they are weary of living, and afraid of dying. Thus overmuch sorrow swalloweth up.

The Causes and Cure of Melancholy III. Quest. What are the causes and cure of it?

Answer. With very many there is a great part of the cause in distemper, weakness, and diseasedness of the body, and by it the soul is greatly disabled to any comfortable sense. But the more it ariseth from such natural necessity, it is the less sinful, and less dangerous to the soul, but never the less troublesome, but the more.

Three diseases cause overmuch sorrow.

1. Those that consist in such violent pain as natural strength is unable to bear; but this being usually not very long, is not now to be chiefly spoken of.

2. A natural passionateness, and weakness of that reason that should quiet passion. It is too frequent a case with aged persons that are much debilitated, to be very apt to offense and; and children cannot choose but cry when they are hurt; but it is most troublesome and hurtful to many women, (and some men,) who are so easily troubled, and hardly quieted, that they have very little power on themselves; even many who fear God, and who have very sound understandings, and quick wits, have almost no more power against troubling passions, anger, and grief, but especially

fear, than they have of any other persons. Their very natural temper is a strong disease of troubling, sorrow, fear, and displeasedness. They that are not melancholy, are yet of so childish, and sick, and impatient a temper, that one thing or other is still either discontenting, grieving, or affrighting them. They are like an aspen leaf, still shaking with the least motion of the air. The wisest and most patient man cannot please and justify such a one; a word, yea, or a look, offendeth them; every sad story, or news, or noise, affrighteth them; and as children must have all that they cry for before they will be quiet, so is it with too many such. The case is very sad to those about them, but much more to themselves. To dwell with the sick in the house of mourning is less uncomfortable. But yet while reason is not overthrown, the case is not remediless, nor wholly excusable.

3. But when the brain and imagination are impaired, and reason partly overthrown by the disease called melancholy, this maketh the cure yet more difficult; for commonly it is the foresaid persons, whose natural temper is timorous and passionate, and apt to discontent and grief, who fall into infirmity and melancholy; and the conjunction of both the natural temper and the disease does increase the misery. The signs of such diseasing melancholy I have often elsewhere described. As,

I. The trouble and disquiet of the mind doth then become a settled habit; they can see nothing but matter of fear and trouble. All that they hear or do doth feed it; danger is still before their eyes; all that they read and hear makes against them; they can delight in nothing; fearful dreams trouble them when they sleep, and distracted thoughts do keep them long waking; it offends them to see another laugh, or be merry; they think that every beggars case is happier than theirs; they will hardly believe that any one else is in their case, when some two or three in a week, or a day, come to me in the same case, so like, that you would think it were the same person’s case which they all express; they have no pleasure in relations, friends, estate, or any thing; they think that God hath forsaken them, and that the day of grace is past, and there is no more hope; they say they cannot pray, but howl, and groan, and God will not hear them; they will not believe that they have any sincerity and grace; they say they cannot repent, they cannot believe, but that their hearts are utterly hardened; usually they are afraid lest they have committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost: in a word, fears, and troubles, and almost despair, are the constant temper of their minds.

2. If you convince them that they have some evidences of sincerity, and that their fears are causeless, and injurious to themselves, and unto God, and they have nothing to say against it, yet either it takes off none of their trouble, or else it returneth the next day; for the cause remaineth in their bodily disease; quiet them a hundred times, and their fears a hundred times return.

3. Their misery is, that what they think they cannot choose but think. You may almost as well persuade a man not to shake in an fever, or not to feel when he is pained, as persuade them to cast away their self-troubling thoughts, or not to think all the enormous, confounding thoughts as they do, they cannot get them out of their heads night or day. Tell them that they must forbear long musings, which disturb them, and they cannot. Tell them that they must cast out false imaginations out of their minds, when Satan casts them in, and must turn their thoughts to something else, and they can not do it. Their thoughts. and troubles, and fears, are gone out of their power, and the more, by how much the more melancholy and impaired they are.

4. And when they are grown to this, usually they seem to feel something besides themselves, as it were, speak in them, and saying this and that to them, and bidding them to do this or that; and they will tell you now it saith this or that, and tell you when and what it hath said to them, and they will hardly believe how much of it is the disease of their own imagination.

5. In this case they are exceeding prone to think they have revelations; and whatever comes into their minds they think some revelation brought it thither. They use to say, this text of Scripture at such a time was set upon my mind, and that text at another time was set on my mind; when oft the sense that they took them in was false, or a false application of it made to themselves, and perhaps several texts applied to contrary conclusions, as if one gave them hope, and another contradicted it. And some of them hereupon are very prone to prophecies, and verily believe that God hath foretold them this or that, till they see that it cometh not to pass, and then they are ashamed. And many of them turn heretics, and take up errors in religion, believing verily that God believed them, and set such things upon their minds: and some of them that were long troubled, get quietness and joy by such changes of their opinions, thinking that now they are in God's way, which they were out of all this while, and therefore it was that they had no comfort. Of these I have known divers persons comforted that have fallen into the clean contrary opinions; some have turned papists and superstitious, and some have run too far from papists, and some have had comfort by turning Anabaptists, some antinomians, some contrarily called Arminians, some perfectionists, some Quakers; and some have turned from Christianity itself to infidelity, and denied the life to come, and have lived in licentious uncleanness. But these melancholy heretics and apostates usually by this cast off their sadness, and are not the sort that I have now to deal with.

6. But the sadder, better sort, feeling this talk and stir within them, are oft apt to be confident that they are possessed by the devil, or at least bewitched, of which I will say more anon.

7 And most of them are violently haunted with blasphemous suggestions of ideas, at which they tremble, and yet cannot keep them out of their mind; either they are tempted and haunted to doubt of the Scripture, or Christianity, or the life to come, or to think some ill of God; and oftentimes they are strangely urged, as by something in them, to speak some blasphemous word of God, or to renounce him, and they tremble at the suggestion, and yet it still followeth them, and some poor souls yield to it, and say some bad word against God, and then, as soon as it is spoken, somewhat within them saith, Now thy damnation is sealed, thou hast sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no hope.

8. When it is far gone, they are tempted to lay some law upon themselves never to speak more, or not to eat, and some of them have famished themselves to death.

9. And when it is far gone, they often think that they have apparitions, and this and that likeness appeareth to them, especially lights in the night about their beds. And sometimes they are confident that they hear voices, and feel something touch or hurt them.

10. They fly from company, and can do nothing but sit alone and muse.

11. They cast off all business, and will not be brought to any diligent labour in their callings.

12. And when it cometh to extremity, they are weary of their lives, and strongly followed with temptations to make away themselves, as if something within them were urging them either to drown themselves, or cut their own throats, or hang themselves, or cast themselves headlong, which, alas! Too many have done.

13. And if they escape this, when it is ripe, they become quite distracted.

These are the doleful symptoms and effects of melancholy; and therefore how desirable is it to prevent them, or to be cured while it is but beginning, before they fall into so sad a state! And here it is necessary that I answer the doubt whether such persons be possessed with the devil, or not? And how much of all this aforesaid is from him? And I must tell the melancholy person that is sincere, that the knowledge of the devil's agency in his case, may be more to his comfort than to his despair. And first, we must know what is meant by Satan's possession, either of the body or the soul? It is not merely his local presence and abode in a man that is called his possession, for we know little of that, how far he is more present with a bad man than a good, but it is his exercising power on a man by such a stated, effectual operation. As the Spirit of God is present with the worst, and maketh many holy motions to the souls of the impenitent, but he is a settled powerful agent in the soul of a believer, and so is said to dwell in such, and to possess them, by the habit of holiness and love; even so Satan maketh too frequent motions to the faithful, but he possesseth only the souls of the ungodly by predominant habits of unbelief and sensuality. And so also he is permitted by God to inflict persecutions, and crosses, and ordinary diseases, on the just; but when he is God's executioner of extraordinary plagues, especially on the head, depriving men of sense and understanding, and working above the bare nature of the disease, this is called his possession. And as most evil notions on the soul have Satan for their father, and our own hearts as the mothers, so most or many bodily diseases are by Satan, permitted by God, though there be causes of them also in the body itself And when our own miscarriages, and humours, and the season, weather, and accidents, may be causes, yet Satan may, by these, be a superior cause. And when his operations are such as we call a possession, yet he may work by means and bodily dispositions, and sometimes he worketh quite above the power of the disease itself, as when the unlearned speak in strange languages, and when bewitched persons vomit iron, glass, &c. And sometimes he doth only work by the disease itself as in epilepsies, madness, &c.

Demonic Causes of Depression From all this it is easy to gather, 1. That for Satan to possess the body is no certain sign of a graceless state, nor will this condemn the soul of any, if the soul itself be not possessed. Nay, there are few of God's children but it is like are sometimes afflicted by Satan, as the executioner of God's correcting them, and sometimes of God's trials, as in the case of Job; whatsoever some say to the contrary, it is likely that the prick in the flesh, which was Satan's messenger to buffet Paul, was some such pain as the stone, which yet was not removed, that we find, after thrice praying, but only he had a promise of sufficient grace.

2. Satan's possession of an ungodly soul is the miserable case, which is a thousand times worse than his possessing of the body; but every corruption or sin is not such a possession, for no man is perfect without sin.

3. No sin proveth Satan's damnable possession of a man but that which he loveth more than he hateth it, and which he had rather keep than leave, and willfully keepeth.

4. And this is matter of great comfort to such melancholy, honest souls, if they have but understanding to receive it, that of all men none love their sin which they groan under so little as they; yea, it is the heavy burden of their souls. Do you love your unbelief, your fears, your distracted thoughts, your temptations to blasphemy? Had you rather keep them than be delivered from them? The proud man, the ambitious, the fornicator, the drunkard, the gamester, the time-wasting gallants that sit out hours at cards, and plays, and idle chats, the gluttonous pleasers of the appetite, all these love their sins, and would not leave them; as Esau sold his birthright for one morsel, they will venture the loss of God, of Christ, and soul, and heaven, rather than leave a swinish sin. But is this your case? Do you so love your sad condition? You are weary of it, and heavy laden, and therefore are called to come to Christ for ease, Matthew 11:28-29.

5. And it is the devil's way, if he can, to haunt those with troubling temptations whom he cannot overcome with alluring and damning temptations. As he raiseth storms of persecution against them without, as soon as they are escaping from his deceits, so doth he trouble them within, as far as God permitteth him.

We deny not but Satan hath a great hand in the case of such melancholy persons; for, 1. His temptations caused the sin which God corrects them for.

2. His execution usually is a cause of the distemper of the body.

3. And, as a tempter, he is the cause of the sinful and troublesome thoughts, and doubts, and fears, and passions, which the melancholy causeth. The devil cannot do what he will with us, but what we give him advantage to do. He cannot break open our doors, but he can enter if we leave them open. He can easily tempt a heavy, phlegmatic body to sloth, a weak and choleric person to anger, a strong and sanguine man to lust, and one of a strong appetite to gluttony or to drunkenness, and vain, sportful youth to idle plays, and gaming, and voluptuousness, when to others such temptations would have small strength. And so, if he can cast you into melancholy, he can easily tempt you to overmuch sorrow and fear, and to distracting doubts and thoughts, and to murmur against God, and to despair, and still think that you are undone, undone; and even to blasphemous thoughts of God; or, if it take not this way, then to fanatic conceits of revelation, and a prophesying spirit.

6. But I add, that God will not impute his mere temptations to you, but to himself, be they never so bad, as long as you receive them not by the will, but hate them; nor will he condemn you for those ill effects which are unavoidable from the power of a bodily disease, any more than he will condemn a man for raving thoughts, or words in a fever, frenzy, or utter madness. But so far as reason yet hath power, and the will can govern passions, it is your fault if you use not the power, though the difficulty make the fault the less.

More Usual Causes of Depression

II. But usually other causes go before this disease of melancholy, (except in some bodies naturally prone to it,) and therefore, before I speak of the cure of it, I will briefly touch them. And one of the most common causes is sinful impatience, discontents, and cares, proceeding from a sinful love of some bodily interest, and from a lack of sufficient submission to the will of God, and trust in him, and taking heaven for a satisfying portion.

I must necessarily use all these words to show the true nature of this complicated disease of souls. The names tell you that it is a conjunction of many sins, which in themselves are of no small malignity, and were they the predominant bent and habit of heart and life, they would be the signs of a graceless state; but while they are hated, and overcome not grace, but our heavenly portion is more esteemed, and chosen, and sought than earthly prosperity, the mercy of God, through Christ, doth pardon it, and will at last deliver us from all. But yet it beseemeth even a pardoned sinner to know the greatness of his sin, that he may not favour it, nor be unthankful for forgiveness.

I will therefore distinctly open the parts of this sin which bringeth many into dismal melancholy.

It is presupposed that God trieth his servants in this life with manifold afflictions, and Christ will have us bear the cross, and follow him in submissive patience. Some are tried with painful diseases, and some with wrong by enemies, and some with the unkindness of friends, and some with froward, provoking relatives and company, and some with slanders, and some with persecution, and many with losses, disappointments, and poverty.

1. And here impatience is the beginning of the working of the sinful malady. Our natures are all too regardful of the interest of the flesh, and too weak in bearing heavy burdens; and poverty hath those trials which full and wealthy persons, that feel them not, too little pity, especially in two cases.

1. When men have not themselves only, but wives and children in want, to quiet. When they are in debt to others, which is a heavy burden to an candid mind, though thievish borrowers make too light of it. In these straits and trials, men are apt to be too sensible and impatient. When they and their families need food, and raiment, and fire, and other necessaries to the body, and know not which way to get supply; when landlords, and butchers, and bakers, and other creditors, are calling for their debts, and they have it not to pay them; it is hard to keep all this from going too near the heart, and hard to bear it with obedient, quiet submission to God, especially for women, whose nature is weak, and liable to too much passion.

2. And this impatience turneth to a settled discontent and unquietness of spirit, which affecteth the body itself, and lieth all day as a load, or continual trouble at the heart.

3. And impatience and discontent do set the thoughts on the rack with grief and continual cares how to be eased of the troubling cause; they can scarce think of any thing else, and these cares do even feed upon the heart, and are, to the mind, as a consuming fever to the body.

4. And the secret root or cause of all this is the worst part of the sin, which is, too much love to the body, and this world. Were nothing overloved, it would have no power to torment us. If ease and health were not overloved, pain and sickness would be the more tolerable; if children and friends were not overloved, the death of them would not overwhelm us with inordinate sorrow; if the body were not overloved, and worldly wealth and prosperity overvalued, it were easy to endure hard fare, and labour, and lack, not only of superfluities and conveniences, but even of that which is necessary to health, yea, or life itself, if God will have it so, at least, to avoid vexations, discontents, and cares, and inordinate grief and trouble of mind.

5. There is yet more sin in the root of all, and that is, it showeth that our wills are yet too selfish, and not subdued to a due submission to the will of God, but we would be as gods to ourselves, and be at our own choosing, and must needs have what the flesh desireth. We need a due resignation of ourselves and all our concerns to God, and live not as children, in due dependence on him for our daily bread, but must needs be the keepers of our own provision.

6. And this showeth that we be not sufficiently humbled for our sin, or else we should be thankful for the lowest state, as being much better than that which we deserved.

7. And there is apparently much distrust of God and unbelief in these troubling discontents and cares. Could we trust God as well as ourselves, or as we could trust a faithful friend, or as a child can trust his father, how quiet would our minds be in the sense of his wisdom, all-sufficiency, and love!

8. And this unbelief yet hath a worse effect than worldly trouble: it showeth that men take not the love of God and the heavenly glory for their sufficient portion; unless they may have what they lack, or would have, for the body in this world, unless they may be free from poverty, and crosses, and provocations, and injuries, and pains, all that God hath promised them here or hereafter, even everlasting glory, will not satisfy them; and when God, and Christ, and heaven, are not enough to quiet a man's mind, he is in great need of faith, hope, and love, which are far greater matters than food and raiment.

III. Another great cause of such trouble of mind is the guilt of some great and willful sin; when conscience is convinced, and yet the soul is not converted; sin is beloved, and yet feared; God's wrath doth terrify them, and yet not enough to overcome their sin. Some live in secret fraud and robbery, and many in drunkenness, in secret fleshly lusts, either self-pollution or fornication, and they know that for such things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; and yet the rage of appetite and lust prevaileth, and they despair and sin; and while the sparks of hell fall on their consciences, it changeth neither heart nor life: there is some more hope of the recovery of these than of dead-hearted or unbelieving sinners, who work uncleanness with greediness, as being past feeling, and blinded to defend their sins, and plead against holy obedience to God. Brutishness is not so bad as diabolism and malignity. But none of these are the persons spoken of in my text; their sorrow is not overmuch, but too little, as long as it will not restrain them from their sin. But yet, if God convert these persons, the sins which they now live in may possibly hereafter plunge their souls into such depths of sorrow in the review as may swallow them up. And when men truly converted yet dally with the bait, and renew the wounds of their consciences by their lapses, it is no wonder if their sorrow and terrors are renewed. Grievous sins have fastened so on the conscience of many, as have cast them into incurable melancholy and distraction.

Depression and Sin For Christians

IV. But, among people fearing God, there is yet another cause of melancholy, and of sorrowing overmuch, and that is, ignorance and mistakes in matters which their peace and comfort are concerned in. I will name some particulars.

1. One is, ignorance of the prevailing course of the gospel or covenant of grace, as some libertines, called antinomians, more dangerously mistake it, who tell men that Christ hath repented and believed them, and that they must no more question their faith and repentance, than they

must question the righteousness of Christ: so many better Christians understand not that the gospel is tidings of unspeakable joy to all that will believe it; and that Christ and life are offered freely to them that will accept him, and that no sins, however great or many soever, are excepted from pardon, to the soul that unfeignedly turneth to God by faith in Christ; and that whoever will may freely take the water of life, and all that are weary and athirst are invited to come to him for ease and rest. And they seem not to understand the conditions of forgiveness, which is but true consent to the pardoning, saving covenant.

2. And many of them are mistaken about the use of sorrow for sin, and about the nature of hardness of heart: they think that if their sorrow be not so passionate as to bring forth tears, and greatly to afflict them, they are not capable of pardon, though they should consent to all the pardoning covenant; and they consider not that it is not our sorrow for itself that God delighteth in\cf2Daniel 6 but it is the taking down of pride, and that so much humbling sense of sin, danger, and misery, as may make us feel the need of Christ and mercy, and bring us unfeignedly to consent to be his disciples, and to be saved upon his covenant terms. Be sorrow much or little, if it do this much the sinner shall be saved. And as to the length of God's sorrow, some think that the pangs of the new birth must be a long-continued state; whereas we read in the Scripture, that, by the penitent sinners the gospel was still received speedily with joy, as being the gift of Christ, and pardon, and everlasting life: humility and loathing must continue and increase, but our first great sorrows may be swallowed up with holy thankfulness and joy. And as for hardness of heart, in Scripture, it is taken for such a stiff, rebellious obstinacy, as will not be moved from their sins to obedience by any of God's commands or threats, and is called oft an iron sinew, a stiff neck, &c.; but it is never taken for the mere absence of tears or passionate sorrow in a man that is willing to obey: the hard-hearted are the rebellious. Sorrow, even for sin, may be overmuch, and a passionate woman or man may easily grieve and weep for the sin which they will not leave; but obedience cannot be too much.

3. And very many are cast down by ignorance of themselves, not knowing the sincerity which God hath given them. Grace is weak in the best of us here, and little and weak grace is not very easily perceived, for it acteth weakly and unconstantly, and it is known but by its acts; and weak grace is always joined with too strong corruption; and all sin in heart and life is contrary to grace, and doth obscure it; and such persons usually have too little knowledge, and are too strange at home, and unskillful in examining and watching their heart\cf2Daniel 6 and keeping its accounts: and how can any, under all these hinderances, yet keep any full assurance of their own sincerity. If, with much ado, they get some assurances, neglect of duty, or coldness in it, or yielding to temptation, or unconstancy in close obedience, will make them question all again, and ready to say it was all but hypocrisy. And a sad and melancholy frame of mind is always apt to conclude the worst, and hardly brought to see any thing that is good, and tends to comfort.

4. And in such a case there are too few that know how to fetch comfort from bare probabilities, when they get not certainty, much less from the mere offers of grace and salvation, even when they cannot deny but they are willing to accept them; and if none should have comfort but those that have assurance of their sincerity and salvation, despair would swallow up the souls of most, even of true believers.

5. And ignorance of other men increaseth the fears and sorrows of some. They think, by our preaching and writing, that we are much better than we are; and then they think that they are graceless, because they come short of our supposed measures; whereas if they dwelt with us, and saw our failings, or knew us as well as we know ourselves, or saw all our sinful thoughts and vicious dispositions written in our foreheads, they would be cured of this error.

6. And unskillful teachers do cause the griefs and perplexities of very many. Some cannot open to them clearly the prevailing course of the covenant of grace: some are themselves unacquainted with any spiritual, heavenly consolations; and many have no experience of any inward holiness, and renewal by the Holy Ghost, and know not what sincerity is, nor wherein a saint doth differ from an ungodly sinner, as wicked deceivers make good and bad to differ but a little, if not the best to be taken for the worst; so some unskillful men do place sincerity in such things as are not so much as duty, as the papists in their manifold inventions and superstitions, and many sects in their unsound opinions. And some unskillfully and unsoundly describe the state of grace, and tell you how far a hypocrite may go, so as unjustly discourageth and confoundeth the weaker sort of Christians, and cannot amend the misexpression of their books or teachers; and too many teachers lay men's comforts, if not salvation, on controversies which are past their reach, and pronounce heresy and damnation against that which they themselves understand not. Even the Christian world, these one thousand three hundred, or one thousand two hundred years, is divided into parties by the teachers' unskillful quarrels about words which they took in several senses. Is it any wonder if the hearers of such are distracted?

IV. I have told you the causes of distracted sorrows, I am now to tell you what is the cure; but, alas! It is not so soon done as told; and I shall begin where the disease beginneth, and tell you both what the patient himself must do, and what must be done by his friends and teachers.

I. Look not on the sinful part of your troubles, either as better or worse than indeed it is.

1. Too many persons in their sufferings and sorrows think they are only to be pitied, and take little notice of the sin that caused them, or that they still continue to commit; and too many unskillful friends and ministers do only comfort them, when a round chiding and discovery of their sin should be the better part of the cure; and if they were more sensible how much sin there is, in their overvaluing the world, and not trusting God, and in their hard thoughts of him, and their poor, unholy thoughts of his goodness, and in their undervaluing the heavenly glory, which should satisfy them in the most afflicted state, and in their daily impatiences, cares, and discontents, and in denying the mercies or graces received, this would do more to cure some than words of comfort, when they say as Jonah, "I do well to be angry," and think that all their denials of grace, and distracting sorrows and wrangling against God's love and mercy, are their duties, it is time to make them know how great sinners they are.

2. And yet when as foolishly they think that all these sins are marks of a graceless state, and that God will take the devil's temptations for sins, and condemn them for that which they abhor, and take their very disease of melancholy for a crime, this also needs confutation and reprehension, that they may not by error cherish their passions or distress.

II. Particularly, give not way to a habit of peevish impatience: though it is carnal love to somewhat more than to God and glory which is the damning sin, yet impatience must not pass for innocence.

Did you not reckon upon sufferings, and of bearing the cross, when you first gave up yourselves to Christ? And do you think it strange? Look for it, and make it your daily study to prepare for any trial that God may bring you to, and then it will not surprise you, and overwhelm you. Prepare for the loss of children and friends, for the loss of goods, and for poverty and want; prepare for slanders, injuries, or poisons, for sickness, pain, and death. It is your unpreparedness that maketh it seem unsufferable. And remember that it is but a vile body that suffereth, which you always knew must suffer death, and rot to dust: and whoever is the instrument of your sufferings, it is God that trieth you by it; and when you think that you are only displeased with men, you are not guiltless of murmuring against God, or else his overruling hand would persuade you to submissive patience.

Especially make conscience of a settled discontent of mind. Have you not yet much better than you deserve? And do you forget how many years you have enjoyed undeserving mercy? Discontent is a continued resistance of God's disposing will, that I say not some rebellion against it. Your own wills rise up against the will of God. It is atheistical to think that your sufferings are not by his providence; and dare you repine against God, and continue in such repining? To whom else doth it belong to dispose of you and all the world? And when you feel distracting cares for your deliverances, remember that this is not trusting God. Care for your own duty, and obey his command, but leave it to him what you shall have; tormenting cares do but add to your afflictions; it is a great mercy of God that he forbiddeth you these cares, and promiseth to care for you. Your Saviour himself hath largely, though gently, reprehended them, (Matthew 6:1-34) and told you how sinful and unprofitable they are, and that your Father knoweth what you need; and if he deny it you, it is for just cause, and if it be to correct you, it is yet to profit you; and if you submit to him, and accept his gift, he will give you much better than he taketh from you, even Christ and everlasting life.

III. Set yourselves more diligently than ever to overcome the inordinate love of the world. It will be a happy use of all your troubles if you can follow them up to the fountain, and find out what it is that you cannot bear the absence or loss of, and consequently what is it that you overlove. God is very jealous, even when he loveth, against every idol that is loved too much, and with any of that love which is due to him. And if he take them all away, and tear them out of our hands and hearts, it is merciful as well as just. I speak not this to those that are troubled only for need of more faith, and holiness, and communion with God, and assurance of salvation. These troubles might give them much comfort if they understood aright from whence they come, and what they signify. For as impatient trouble under worldly crosses doth prove that a man loveth the world too much, so impatient trouble, for need of more holiness and communion with God, doth show that such are lovers of holiness and of God. Love goeth before desire and grief. That which men love they delight in if they have it, and mourn for absence of it, and desire to obtain it. The will is the love; and no man is troubled for lack of that which he would not have. But the commonest cause of passionate melancholy is at first some worldly discontent and care; either hardships or crosses, or the fear of suffering, or the unsuitableness and provocation of some related to them, or disgrace, or contempt, do cast them into passionate discontent, and self-will cannot bear the denial of something which they would have, and then when the discontent hath muddied and diseased a man's mind, temptations about his soul do come in afterwards; and that which begun only with worldly crosses, doth after seem to be all about religion, conscience, or merely for sin and lack of grace.

Why could you not patiently bear the words, the wrongs, the losses, the crosses, that did befall you? Why made you so great a matter of these bodily, transitory things? Is it not because you overloved them? Were you not in good earnest when you called them vanity, and covenanted to leave them to the will of God? Would you have God let you alone in so great a sin as the love of the world, or giving any of his due to creatures. If God should not teach you what to love, and what to set light by, and cure you of so dangerous a disease as a fleshly, earthly mind, he should not sanctify you, and fit you for heaven. Souls go not to heaven as an arrow is shot upward, against their inclination; but as fire naturally tendeth upward, and earth downward, to their like; so when holy men are dead, their souls have a natural inclination upward; and it is their love that is their inclination; they love God, and heaven, and holy company, and their old godly friends, and holy works, even mutual love, and the joyful praises of Jehovah. And this spirit and love is as a fiery nature, which carrieth them heavenward; and angels convey them not thither by force, but conduct them as a bride to her marriage, who is carried all the way by love. And on the other side, the souls of wicked men are of a fleshly, worldly inclination, and love not heavenly works and company, and have nothing in them to carry them to God; but they love worldly trash, and sensual, bestial delights, though they cannot enjoy them; and as poor men love riches, and are vexed for the absence of what they love; and therefore it is no wonder if wicked souls do dwell with devils in the lower regions, and that they make apparitions here when God permits them, and if holy souls be liable to no such descent. Love is the soul's poise and spring, and carrieth souls downward or upward accordingly.

Away, then, with the earthly, fleshly love. How long will you stay here; and what will earth and flesh do for you? So far as it may be helpful to holiness and heaven, God will not deny it to submissive children; but to overlove is to turn from God, and is the dangerous malady of souls, and the poise that sinks them down from heaven. Had you learnt better to forsake all for Christ, and to account all but as loss and dung, as Paul did, (Php 3:8,) you could more easily bear the lack of it. When did you see any live in discontent, and distracted with melancholy, grief, and cares, for lack of dung, or a bubble, a shadow, or a merry dream? If you will not otherwise know the world, God will otherwise make you know it to your sorrow.

IV. If you are not satisfied that God alone, Christ alone, heaven alone, is enough for you, as matter of felicity and full content, go, study the case better, and you may be convinced. Go, learn better your catechism, and the principles of religion, and then you will learn to lay up a treasure in heaven, and not on earth, and to know that it is best to be with Christ; and that death, which blasteth all the glory of the world, and equalleth rich and poor, is the common door to heaven or hell: and then conscience will not ask you whether you have lived in pleasure or in pain, in riches or in poverty; but whether you have lived to God or to the flesh; for heaven or for earth? and what hath had the pre-eminence in your hearts and lives? If there be shame in heaven, you will be ashamed when you are there, that you whined and murmured for the lack of any thing that the flesh desired upon earth, and went thither grieving because our bodies suffered here. Study more to live by faith and hope, on the unseen promised glory with Christ, and you will patiently endure any sufferings in the way.

V. And study better how great a sin it is to set our own wills and desires in a discontented opposition to the wisdom, will, and providence of God; and to make our wills instead of his, as gods to ourselves. Does not a murmuring heart secretly accuse God? All accusation of God hath

some degree of blasphemy in it. For the accuser supposeth that somewhat of God is to be blamed, and if you dare not open your mouths to accuse him, let not the repinings of your hearts accuse him; know how much of religion and holiness consisteth in bringing this rebellious self-will to a full resignation, submission, and conformity to the will of God. Till you can rest in God's will you will never have rest.

VI. And study well how great a duty it is wholly to trust God, and our blessed Redeemer, both with soul and body, and all we have. Is not infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, to be trusted? Is not a Saviour, who came from heaven into flesh, to save sinners by such incomprehensible ways of love, to be trusted with that which he hath so dearly bought? To whom else will you trust? Is it yourselves, or your friends? Who is it that hath kept you all your lives, and done all for you that is done? Who is it that hath saved all the souls that are now in heaven? What is our Christianity but a life of faith? And is this your faith, to distract yourselves with care and troubles, if God do not fit all his providences to your wills? Seek first his kingdom and righteousness, and he hath promised that all other thin shall be added to you, and not a hair of your head shall perish, for they are all, as it were, numbered. A sparrow falls not to the ground without his providence, and doth he set less by those that fain would please him? Believe God, and trust him, and your cares, and fears, and griefs will vanish. Oh that you knew what a mercy and comfort it is for God to make it your duty to trust him! If he had made you no promise, this is equal to a promise. If he does but bid you trust him, you may be sure he will not deceive your trust. If a faithful friend that is able to relieve you, do but bid you trust him for your relief, you will not think that he will deceive you. Alas! I have friends that durst trust me with their estates, and lives, and souls, if they were in my power, and would not fear that I would destroy or hurt them, that yet cannot trust the God of infinite goodness with them, though he both commands them to trust him, and promise them he will never fail them nor forsake them. It is the refuge of my soul, that quieteth me in my fears, that God, my Father and Redeemer, hath commanded me to trust him with my body, my health, my liberty, my estate, and when eternity seemeth strange and dreadful to me, that he bids me trust him with my departing soul! Heaven and earth are upheld and maintained by him, and shall I distrust him?

Object. But it is none but his children that he will save.

Answer. True; and all are his children that are truly willing to obey and please him. If you are truly willing to be holy, and to obey his commanding will, in a godly, righteous, and sober life, you may boldly rest in his disposing will, and rejoice in his rewarding and accepting will, for he will pardon all our infirmities through the merits and intercession of Christ.

VII. If you would not be swallowed up with sorrow, swallow not the baits of sinful pleasure. Passions, and dullness, and defective duties have their degrees of guilt, but it is pleasing sin that is the dangerous and deep-wounding sin. O fly from the baits of lust, and pride, and ambition, and covetousness, and an unruly appetite to drink or meat, as you would fly from guilt, and grief, and terror. The more pleasure you have in sin, usually the more sorrow it will bring you; and the more you know it to be sin, and conscience tells you that God is against it, and yet you will go on, and bear down conscience, the sharper will conscience afterwards afflict you, and the less will it be quieted when it is awakened to repentance. Yea, when a humbled soul is pardoned by grace, and believeth that he is pardoned, he will not easily forgive himself. The remembrance of the willfulness of sinning, and how base a temptation prevailed with us, and what mercies and motives

we bore down, will make us so displeased and angry with ourselves, and so to loathe such naughty hearts, as will not admit a speedy or easy reconciliation. Yea, when we remember that we sinned against knowledge, even when we remembered that God did see us, and that we offended him, it will keep up long doubts of our sincerity in the soul, and make us afraid lest still we have the same hearts, and should again do the same if we had the same temptations. Never look for joy or peace as long as you live in willful and beloved sin. This thorn must be taken out of your hearts before you will be eased of the pain, unless God leave you to a senseless heart, and Satan give you a deceitful peace, which doth but prepare for greater sorrow.

VIII. But if none of the forementioned sins cause your sorrows, but they come from the mere perplexities of your mind about religion, or the state of your souls, as fearing God's wrath for your former sins, or doubting of your sincerity and salvation, then these foregoing reproofs are not meant to such as you; but I shall now lay you down your proper remedy, and that is, the cure of that ignorance and those errors which cause your troubles.

1. Many are perplexed about controversies in religion, while every contending party is confident, and hath a great deal to say, which to the ignorant seemeth like to truth, and which the hearer cannot answer, and when each party tells them that their way is the only way, and threateneth damnation to them if they turn not to them. The papists say, There is no salvation out of our church; that is, to none but the subjects of the bishop of Rome. The Greeks condemn them, and extol their church, and every party extols their own. Yea, some will convert them with fire and sword, and say, Be of our church, or lie in gaol; or make their church itself a prison, by driving in the uncapable and unwilling.

Quest. Among all these, how shall the ignorant know what to choose?

Answer. The case is sad, and yet not so sad as the case of the far greatest part of the world, who are quiet in heathenism, or infidelity, or never trouble themselves about religion, but follow the customs of their countries, and the prince's laws, that they may not suffer. It is some sign of a regard to God and your salvation, that you are troubled about religion, and careful to know which is the right; even controversy is better than atheistical indifference, that will be on the upper side, be it what will. If you cast acorns or pulse among them, swine will strive for it; or if it be carrion, dogs will fight for it; but if it be gold or jewels, dogs and swine will never strive for them, but tread them in the dirt. But cast them before men, and they will be all together by the ears for them. Lawyers contend about law, and princes about dominion, which others mind not; and religious persons strive about religions; and what wonder is this? It doth but show that they value their souls and religion, and that their understandings are yet imperfect. But if you will follow these plain directions, controversies need not break your peace.

Ten Rules for Settling the Heart

I. See that you be true to the light and law of nature, which all mankind is obliged to observe. If you had no Scripture nor Christianity, nature (that is, the works of God) do tell you that there is a God, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. It tells you that God is absolutely perfect in power, knowledge, and goodness, and that man is a reasonable, free agent made by him, and therefore is his own, and at his will and government. It tells you that a man's actions are not indifferent, but some things we ought to do, and some things we ought not to do; and that

virtue and vice, moral good and evil, do greatly differ; and therefore that there is some universal law which obligeth us to the good, and forbids the evil, and that this can be none but the law of the universal Governor, which is God. It tells all men that they owe this God their absolute obedience, because he is their most wise and absolute Ruler; and that they owe him their chiefest love, because he is not only the chief Benefactor, but also most perfectly amiable in himself. It tells us that he hath made us all sociable members of one world, and that we owe love and help to one another. It tells us that all this obedience to God can never be in vain, nor to our loss; and it tells us that we must all die, and that fleshly pleasures and this transitory world will quickly leave us. There is no more cause to doubt of all or any of this, than whether man he man. Be true to this much, and it will be a great help to all the rest.

II. And as to God's supernatural revelation, hold to God's word, the sacred Bible, written by the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as the sufficient records of it.

It is not divine faith if it rest not on divine revelation, nor is it divine obedience which is not given to divine government or command. Man's word is to be believed but as it deserveth, with a human faith, and man's law must be obeyed according to the measure of his authority, with a human obedience; but these are far different from a divine. There is no universal ruler of all the world or church but God; no man is capable of it, nor any council of men. God's law is only in nature, and in the holy Scripture; and that being the law by which he will judge us, it is the law which is the only divine rule of our faith or judgment, our hearts and lives. Though all in the Scripture is not of equal clearness or necessity, but a man may be saved that understandeth not a thousand sentences therein, yet all that is necessary to salvation is plainly there contained, and God's law is perfect to its designed use, and needeth no supplement of man's. Hold close to Scripture sufficiency, or you will never know what to hold to. Councils and canons are far more uncertain, and there is no agreement among their subjects which of them are obligatory, and which not, nor any possible way to come to an agreement.

III. Yet use with thankfulness the help of men, for the understanding and obeying the word of God.

Though lawyers, as such, have none of the legislative power, you need their help to understand the use of the law aright. And though no men have power to make laws for the church universal, yet men must be our teachers to understand and use the laws of God. We are not born with faith or knowledge; we know nothing but what is taught us, except what sense or intuition perceiveth, or reason gathereth from thence.

If you ask, Who must we learn of? I answer, of those that know, and have learned themselves. No name, or title, or relation, or habit, will enable any man to teach you that which he knoweth not himself.

1. Children must learn of their parents and tutors.

2. People must learn of their able, faithful pastors and catechisers.

3. All Christians must be teachers by charitable helps to one another. But teaching and law-making are two things. To teach another is but to show him that same scientific evidence of truth, by which the teacher knoweth it himself, that the learner may know it as he doth. To say, You shall believe that is true which I say is true, and that this is the meaning of it, is not teaching, but law-giving; and

to believe such a one, is not to learn or know, though some human belief of our teachers is necessary to learners.

IV. Take nothing as necessary to the being of Christianity and to salvation, which is not recorded in the Scripture, and hath not been held necessary by all true Christians in every age and place. Not that we must know men first to be true Christians, that by them we may know what Christian truth is, but the plain Scripture tells all men what Christianity is, and by that we know whom to take for Christians. But if any thing be new, and risen since the apostles' writing of the Scripture, that can be no point essential to Christianity, else Christianity must be a mutable thing, and not the same now as it was heretofore, or else there were no Christians before this novelty in the world. The church were not the church, nor were any man a Christian, if they lacked any essential part of faith or practice. But here take heed of sophisters' deceit; though nothing is necessary to salvation but all sound Christians have still believed, yet all is not necessary, or true, or good, which all good Christians have believed or done; much less all which the tempted worse part have held: for though the essence of Christianity has been ever and every where the same, yet the opinions of Christians, and their mistakes and faults, have been none of their imitable faith or practice. Human nature is essentially the same in Adam, and in all men, but the diseases of nature are another thing. If all men have sin and error, so have all churches; their Christianity is of God, but the corruptions and maladies of Christians are not. You must hold nothing but what Christians of old have held as received from God's word; but because they have all some faults and errors, you must not hold and do all those.

V. Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace with all true Christians as such, and live in love in the communion of saints. That is, with them that live in the belief, and in holy obedience to the Christian faith and law. By their fruits you shall know them. The societies of malignants, who suppress true practical knowledge and piety, and hate the best men, and cherish wickedness, and bloodily persecute those that in conscience obey not their usurpations and inventions, are not the communion of saints; wolves, thorns, and thistles, are not the sheep or vines of Christ.

VI. Prefer not any odd or singular sect before the universal consent of the faithful in your learning or communion, so far as the judgment of men is to be regarded.

Though we take not our faith from the number of believers, and though the most be usually none of the best, and some few are much wiser than the most, and in a controversy a few men of such knowledge are to be believed before the multitude of less knowledge, yet Christ is the head of all true Christians, and not of an odd sect or party only; and he hath commanded them all to live as brethren, in love and holy communion; and in all sciences, the greater number of agreeing men are liker to be in the right, than some straggling persons, who show otherwise no more ability than they: at least, which side soever you like best in less necessary points, you must always be in unity with all true Christians, and not unnecessarily differ from them.

VII. Never set a doubtful opinion against a certain truth or duty; reduce not things certain to things uncertain; but contrarily, uncertain things to certain: for instance, it is certain that you ought to live in love and peace with all that are true Christians, and to do good to all, and wrong to none; let not any doubtful difference make you violate this rule, and hate, and slander, and backbite, and hurt them for a doubtful, indifferent, or unnecessary thing; set not our mint or cummin, tithes or ceremonies, against love and justice, and the great and certain things of the law; it is an ill sect or

opinion that is against the nature and common duty of Christianity and humanity.

VIII. Faithfully serve Christ as far as you have attained, and be true to all the truth that you know; sin not by omission or practice against the knowledge which you have, lest God in justice give up your understanding to believe a lie.

IX. Remember that all men on earth are ignorant, and know but as in a glass, and in part, and therefore the best have many errors; no man knoweth the smallest grass or worm with an adequate perfect knowledge. And if God bear with multitudes of errors in us all, we must bear with such as are tolerable in each other; it is well if men be humble, and teachable, and willing to know. As we have seen few more imperfect than the sects that have asserted sinless perfection, so we see few so fallible and erroneous as the Roman sect, which pleadeth their infallibility: when they tell you that you must believe their popes and councils, that you may come to an end of controversy, ask them whether we may here hope for any end of ignorance, error, and sin; if not, what hope of ending all controversies before we come to heaven, where ignorance is ended? The controversies against the essentials of Christianity were ended with us all when we became true and adult Christians, and the rest will be lessened as we grow in knowledge. Divinity is not less mysterious than law and science, &c. where controversies abound.

X. Yet stint not yourselves in knowledge, nor say, We have learned enough, but continue as Christ's scholars in learning more and more to the death: the wisest know little and may still increase. There is a great difference in excellency, usefulness, and comfort, between men of clear, digested knowledge, and confused, undigested apprehensions.

These ten rules practiced, will save you from being perplexed with doubts and controversies of all pretenders in religion.

Truths to Apply to the Heart

II. But if your trouble be not about doctrinal controversies, but about your sins, or poverty of grace, and spiritual state, digest well these following truths and counsels, and it will cure you.

I. God's goodness is equal to his greatness; even to that power that ruleth heaven and earth. His attributes are commensurate; and goodness will do good to capable receivers. He loved us when we were enemies; and he is, essentially, love itself.

II. Christ hath freely taken human nature, and made satisfaction for the sins of the world, as full as answereth his ends, and so full that none shall perish for lack of sufficiency in his sacrifice and merits.

III. Upon these merits Christ hath made a law, or covenant of grace, forgiving all sin, and giving freely everlasting life to all that will believingly accept it....

IV. The condition of pardon and life is not that we sin no more, or that by any price we purchase it of God, or by our own works do benefit him, or buy his grace; but only that we believe him, and willingly accept of the mercy which he freely giveth us, according to the nature of the gift; that is, that we accept of Christ as Christ, to justify, sanctify, rule, and save us.

V. God hath commissioned his ministers to proclaim and offer this covenant and grace to all, and earnestly entreat them in his name to accept it, and be reconciled to him; he hath excepted none.

VI. No man that hath this offer is damned, but only those that obstinately refuse it to the last breath.

VII. The day of grace is never so passed to any sinner but still he may have Christ and pardon if he will; and if he have it not, it is because he will not. And the day of grace is so far from being passed, that it is savingly come to all that are so willing; and grace is still offered urgently to all.

VIII. The will is the man in God's account, and what a man truly would be and have, he is, and shall have: consent to the covenant is true grace and conversion, and such have right to Christ and life.

IX. The number and greatness of former sins is no exception against the pardon of any penitent, converted sinner: God pardoneth great and small to such; where sin aboundeth, grace superaboundeth; and much is forgiven, that men may be thankful, and love much.

X. Repentance is true, though tears and passionate sorrow be defective, when a man had rather leave his sin than keep it, and sincerely, though imperfectly, endeavoureth fully to overcome it; no sin shall damn a man which he more hateth than loveth, and had truly rather leave than keep, and showeth this by true endeavour.

XI. The best man hath much evil, and the worst have some good; but it is that which is preferred, and predominant in the will, which differenceth the godly and the wicked. He that in estimation, choice, and life preferreth God, and heaven, and holiness, before the world, and the pleasure of sin, is a true, godly man, and shall be saved.

XII. The best have daily need of pardon, even for the faultiness of their holiest duties, and must daily live on Christ for pardon.

XIII. Even sins against knowledge and conscience are too oft committed by regenerate men; for they know more than others do, and their consciences are more active: happy were they indeed if they could be as good as they know they should be, and love God as much as they know they should love him, and were clear from all the relicts of passion and unbelief, which conscience tells them are their sins.

XIV. God will not take Satan's temptations to be our sins, but only our not resisting them. Christ himself was tempted to the most heinous sin, even to fall down to the devil and worship him. God will charge Satan's blasphemous temptations on himself alone.

XV. The thoughts, and fears, and troubles, which melancholy, and natural weakness and distemper irresistibly cause, hath much more of bodily disease than of sin, and, therefore, is of the least of sins; and, indeed, no more sin than to burn or be thirsty in a fever, further than as some sin did cause the disease that causeth it, or further than there is left some power in reason to resist them.

XVI. Certainty of our faith and sincerity is not necessary to salvation, but the sincerity of faith itself is necessary. He shall be saved that giveth up himself to Christ, though he know not that he is

sincere in doing it. Christ knoweth his own grace, when they that have it know not that it is sound. It is but few true Christians that attain to certainty of salvation; for weak grace clogged with much corruption is hardly known, and usually joined with fear and doubting.

XVII. Probability of sincerity and trust in Christ may cause a man, justly, to live and die in peace and comfort, without proper certainty; else few Christians should live and die in peace; and yet we see by experience that many do so. The common opinion of most church Writers for four hundred years after Christ, was, that the uncontinued sort of Christians might fall from a state of grace, in which, had they continued, they had been saved, and, therefore, that none but strong, confirmed Christians, at most, could be certain of salvation; and many Protestant churches still are of that mind, and yet they live not in despair or terror. No man is certain that he shall not fall as heinously as David and Peter did; and yet while they have no cause to think it likely, they need not live in terror for the uncertainty. No wife or child is certain that the husband or father will not murder them, and yet they may live comfortably, and not fear it.

XVIII. Though faith be so weak, as to be assaulted with doubts whether the gospel be true, and there be any life to come; and though our trust in Christ be not strong enough to banish our fears and troubles; yet if we see so much evidence of credibility in the gospel, and probability of a better life hereafter, as causeth us here to fix our hopes and choice, and to resolve for those hopes to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and let go all the world rather than sell those hopes, and live a holy life to obtain it, this faith will save us.

XIX. But God's love and promise through Christ so sure a ground for faith and comfort, that it is the great duty and interest of all men, confidently and quietly, to trust him, and then to live in the joy of holy trust and hope.

XX. If any man doubt of his salvation because of the greatness of his sins, the way to quietness is presently to be willing to forsake them. Either he that complaineth is willing to be holy and forsake his sins, or not. If you be not willing to leave them, but love them, and would keep them, why do you complain of them, and mourn for that which you so much love? If your child should cry and roar because his apple is sour, and yet will not be persuaded to forbear to eat it, you would not pity him, but whip him, as perverse. But if you are truly willing to leave it, you are already saved from its damning guilt.

XXI. If you are in doubt of the sincerity of your faith, and other graces, and all your examination leaveth you uncertain, the way is presently to end your doubt by actual giving up yourself to Christ. Do you not know whether you have been hitherto a true believer? You may know that Christ is now offered to you; consent but to the covenant, and accept the offer, and you may be sure that he is yours.

XXII. Bare examining is not always to be done for assurance, but labour to excite and exercise much the grace that you would be assured of; the way to be sure that you believe and love God, is to study the promises and goodness of God, till active faith assure you that you believe, and you love God and glory, till you are assured that you love them.

XXIII. It is not by some extraordinary act, good or bad, that we may be sure what state the soul is in, but by the predominant bent, and drift, and tenor of heart and life.

XXIV. Though we cry out that we cannot believe, and we cannot love God, and we cannot pray aright, Christ can help us; without his grace we can do nothing; but his grace is sufficient for us, and he denieth not his further help when once he hath but made us willing, but hath bid us ask and have; and if any lack wisdom let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not with former folly, but gives his Spirit to them that ask him.

XXV. This sin, called the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, is the sin of no one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, nor of any that fear it, no, nor of every infidel, but only of some few obstinate, unbelieving enemies, for it is only this: when men see such miracles of Christ and his Spirit as should or could convince them that he is of God, and when they have no other shift, they will rather maintain that he is a conjurer, and wrought them by the devil.

XXVI. Though sinful fear is very troublesome, and not to be cherished, God often permitteth and useth it to good, to keep us from being bold with sin, and from those sinful pleasures and love of the world, and presumption, and security, which are far more dangerous, and to take down pride, and keep us in a sensible, watchful state; for just fear is made to preserve us from the hurt and danger feared.

XXVII. He that goeth fearing and trembling to heaven, will there quickly be past all fear, and doubts, and heaviness, for ever.

XXVIII. When Christ for our sins was in his agony, and when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he was then nevertheless beloved of his Father; and he was tempted that he might succour them that are tempted, and suffered such derision that he might be a compassionate High Priest to sufferers.

XXIX. By how much the more the troubles, and blasphemous temptations, and doubts, and fears of a man are grievous, displeasing, and hateful to him, by so much the more he may be assured that they shall not condemn him, because they are not beloved sins.

XXX. All our troubles are overruled by God; and it is far better for us to be at his choice and disposal than our own, or our dearest friend’s; and he hath promised that all things shall work together for our good, Romans 8:28.

XXXI. A delight in God and goodness, and a joyful, praising frame of soul, from the belief of the love of God through Christ, is far more to be desired than grief and tears, which do but sweep away some dirt, that love, joy, and thankfulness may enter, which are the true evangelical, Christian temper, and likest to the heavenly state.

Digest these truths, and they will cure you.

Helps for Those Who are Depressed

III. But if melancholy have got head already, there must be, besides what is said, some other and proper remedies used; and the difficulty is great, because the disease makes them self-conceited, unreasonable, willful, and unruly, and they will hardly be persuaded that the disease is in their bodies, but only in the souls, and will not believe but they have reason for all what they think and do; or if they confess the contrary, they plead disability, and say, We can think and do no otherwise than we do. But supposing that there is some use of reason left, I will give them yet

some further counsel; and what they cannot do, their friends must help them to their power, which I shall add.

1. Consider that it should be easy for you in your confounding, troubling thoughts, to perceive that your understandings are not now so sound and strong as other men's; and therefore be not willful and self-conceited, and think not that your thoughts are righter than theirs, but believe wiser men, and be ruled by them.

Answer me this question, Do you know any minister, or friend, that is wiser than yourself? If you say no, how foolishly proud are you? If you say yea, then ask the minister, or friend, what he thinketh of your condition, and believe him, and be ruled by him rather than by your infirm self.

2. Do you find that your troubles do you more good or hurt? Do they make you fitter or unfitter to believe and love God, and rejoice in him and praise him? If you feel that they are against all that is good, you may be sure that they are so far from the devil's temptations, and are pleasing to him; and will you cherish or plead for the work of Satan, which you find is against yourselves and God?

3. Avoid your musings, and exercise not your thoughts now too deeply, nor too much. Long meditation is a duty to some, but not to you, no more than it is a man's duty to go to church that hath his leg broken, or his foot out of joint: he must rest and ease it till it be set again, and strengthened. You may live in the faith and fear of God, without setting yourself to deep, disturbing thoughts.

Those that will not obey this counsel, their friends must rouse them from their musings, and call them off to something else.

4. Therefore you must not be much alone, but always in some pleasing, cheerful company: solitariness doth but cherish musings. Nor must such be long in secret prayer, but more in public prayer with others.

5. Let those thoughts which you have be laid out on the most excellent things: pore not all on yourselves, and on your distempered hearts; the best may find there much matter of trouble. As millstones wear themselves if they go when they have no corn, so do the thoughts of such as think not of better things than their own hearts. If you have any power of your own thoughts, force them to think most of these four things:

1. The infinite goodness of God, who is fuller of love than the sun is of light.

2. Of the unmeasurable love of Christ in man's redemption, and of the sufficiency of his sacrifice and merits.

3. Of the free covenant and offer of grace, which giveth pardon and life to all that do not prefer the pleasure of sin before it, and obstinately refuse it to the last.

4. Of the unconceivable glory and joy which all the blessed have with Christ, and which God hath promised with his oath and seal, to all that consent to the covenant of grace, and are willing to be saved and ruled by Christ. These thoughts will cure melancholy fears.

5. Do not yourselves often to a complaining talk, but talk most of the great mercies of God which you have received. Dare you deny them? If not, are they not worthier of your discourse than your

present sufferings? Let not all men know that you are in your troubles: complaining doth but feed them, and it discourageth them to none but your secret counselors and friends. Use much to speak of the love of God, and the riches of grace, and it will divert and sweeten your sourer thoughts.

6. Especially, when you pray, resolve to spend most of your time in thanksgiving and praising God. If you cannot do it with the joy that you should, yet do it as you can. You have not the power of your comforts; but have you no power of your tongues? Say not that you are unfit for thanks and praises, unless you had a praising heart, and were the children of God; for every man, good and bad, is bound to praise God, and to be thankful for all that he hath received, and to do it as well as he can, rather than leave it undone: and most Christians are without assurance of their adoption; and must they, therefore, forbear all praise and thanksgiving to God? Doing it as you can is the way to be able to do it better. Thanksgiving stirreth up thankfulness in the heart, but by your objection you may perceive what the devil driveth at, and gets by your melancholy. He would turn you off from all thankfulness to God, and from the very mention of his love and goodness in your praises.

7. When vexatious or blasphemous thoughts are thrust into your mind by Satan, neither give them entertainment, nor yet be overmuch troubled at them: first, use that reason and power that is left you resolutely to cast them out, and turn your thoughts to somewhat else; do not say, I cannot. If you can no otherwise command and turn away your thoughts, rise up and go into some company or to some employment which will divert you, and take them up. Tell me what you would do if you heard a grumbling woman in the street reviling you, or heard an atheist there talk against God? Would you stand still to hear them, or would you talk it out again with them, or rather go from them, and disdain to hear them, or debate the case with such as they? Do you, in your case, when Satan casts in ugly, or despairing, or murmuring thoughts, go away from them to some other thoughts or business.

If you cannot do this of yourself, tell your friend when the temptation cometh; and it is his duty who hath the care of you to divert you with some other talk or words, or force you into diverting company.

Yet be not too much troubled at the temptation, for trouble of mind doth keep the evil matter in your memory, and so increase it, as pain of a sore draws the blood and spirits to the place. And this is the design of Satan, to give you troubling thoughts, and then to cause more by being troubled at those; and so, for one thought, and trouble to cause another, and that another, and so on, as waves in the sea do follow each other. To be tempted is common to the best. I told you to what idolatry Christ was tempted. When you feel such thoughts, thank God, that Satan cannot force you to love them, or consent.

8. Again, still remember what a comfortable evidence you carry about with you that your sin is not damning, while you feel that you love it not, but hate it, and are weary of it. Scarce any sort of sinners have so little pleasure in their sins as the melancholy, nor so little desire to keep them; and only beloved sins undo men. Be sure that you live not idly, but in some constant business of a lawful calling, so far as you have bodily strength. Idleness is a constant sin, and labour is a duty. Idleness is but the devil’s home for temptation, and for unprofitable, distracting musings. Labour profiteth others, and ourselves: both soul and body need it. Six days must you labour, and must

not eat the bread of idleness, Proverbs 31. God hath made it our duty, and will bless us in his appointed way. I have known grievous, despairing melancholy cured, and turned into a life of godly cheerfulness, principally by setting upon constancy and diligence in the business of families and callings. It turns the thoughts from temptations, and leaveth the devil no opportunity: it pleaseth God if done in obedience, and it purifieth the distempered blood. Though thousands of poor people that live in penury, and have wives and children that must also feel it, one would think should be distracted with griefs and cares, yet few of them fall into the disease of melancholy, because labour keepeth the body sound, and leaveth them no leisure for melancholy musings: whereas, in London, and great towns, abundance of women that never sweat with bodily work, but live in idleness, especially when from fullness they fall into poverty, are miserable objects, continually vexed, and near distraction with discontent and a restless mind.

If you will not be persuaded to business, your friends, if they can, should force you to it. And if the devil turn religious as an angel of light, and tell you that this is but turning away your thoughts from God, and that worldly thoughts and business are unholy, and fit for worldly men; tell him that Adam was in innocency to dress and keep his garden, and Noah that had all the world was to be husbandman, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob kept sheep and cattle, and Paul was a tent-maker, and Christ himself is justly supposed to have worked at his supposed father's trade, as he went on fishing with his disciples. And Paul saith, idleness is disorderly walking, and he that will not work let him not eat. God made soul and body, and hath commanded work to both. And if Satan would drive you unseasonably upon longer secret prayer than you can bear, remember that even sickness will excuse the sick from that sort of duty which they are unable for, and so will your disease; and the unutterable groans of the spirit are accepted.

If you have privacy out of hearing, I would give you this advice, that instead of long meditation, or long secret prayer, you will sing a psalm of praise to God, such as the twenty-third, or the one hundred and thirty-third, &c. This will excite your spirit to that sort of holy affection which is much more acceptable to God, and suitable to the hopes of a believer, than your repining troubles are.

Duties of Friends and Relatives of the Depressed

IV. But yet I have not done with the duty of those that take care of distressed, melancholy persons, especially husbands to their wives, (for it is much more frequently the disease of women than of men,) when the disease disableth them to help themselves, the most of their helps, under God, must be from others; and this is of two sorts: 1. In prudent carriage to them; 2. In medicine and diet; a little of both.

1. A great part of their cure lieth in pleasing them, and avoiding all displeasing things, as far as lawfully can be done. Displeasedness is much of the disease; and a husband that hath such a wife is obliged to do his best to cure her, both in charity, and by his relative bond, and for his own peace. It is a great weakness in some men, that if they have wives, who by natural passionate weakness, or by melancholy or infirmity, are willful and will not yield to reason, they show their anger at them to their further provocation. You took her in marriage for better and for worse, for sickness and health. If you have chosen one that, as a child, must have every thing that she crieth for, and must be spoken fair, and as it was rocked in the cradle, or else it will be worse, you must condescend to do it, and so bear the burden which you have chosen, as may not make it heavier to you. Your passion and sourness towards a person that cannot cure her own unpleasing

carriage, is a more unexcusable fault and folly than hers, who hath not the power of reason as you have.

If you know any lawful thing that will please them in speech, in company, in apparel, in rooms, in attendance, give it them: if you know at what they are displeased, remove it. I speak not of the distracted, that must be mastered by force, but of the sad and melancholy: could you devise how to put them in a pleased condition you might cure them.

2. As much as you can, divert them from the thoughts which are their trouble; keep them on some other talks and business; break in upon them, and interrupt their musings; rouse them out of it, but with loving importunity; suffer them not to be long alone; get fit company to them, or them to it; especially, suffer them not to be idle, but drive or draw them to some pleasing works which may stir the body, and employ the thoughts. If they are addicted to reading, let it not be too long, nor any books that are unfit for them; and rather let another read to them than themselves. Dr. Sibbes's books, and some useful, pleasing history or chronicles, or news of great matters abroad in the world, may do somewhat to divert them.

3. Often set before them the great truths of the gospel which are fittest to comfort them; and read them informing, comforting books; and live in a loving, cheerful manner with them.

4. Choose for them a skillful, prudent minister of Christ, both for their secret counsel and public audience; one that is skilled in such cases, and one that is peaceable, and not contentious, erroneous, or fond of odd opinions; one that is rather judicious in his preaching and praying than passionate, except when he urgeth the gospel doctrines of consolation, and then the more fervently the better; and one that they much esteem and reverence, and will regardfully hear.

5. Labour to convince them frequently how great a wrong it is to the God of infinite love and mercy, and to a Saviour who hath so wonderfully expressed his love, to think hardlier of him than they would do of a friend, yea, or of a moderate enemy; and so hardly to be persuaded of that love which hath been manifested by the most stupendous miracle. Had they but a father, husband, or friend, that had ventured his life for them, and given them all that ever they had, were it not a shameful ingratitude and injury to suspect still that they intended all against them, and designed mischief to them, and did not love them? How hath God and our Saviour deserved this? And many that say it is not God that they suspect, but themselves, do but hide their misery this mistake, while they deny God's greatest mercies; and though they would fain have Christ and grace, will not believe that God who offereth it them will give it them, but think he is one that will remedilessly damn a poor soul that desireth to please him, and had rather have his grace than all the sinful pleasures of the world.

6. Carry them oft abroad into strange company. Usually they reverence strangers, and strange faces do divert them, especially traveling into other parts, if they can hear the motion.

7. It is a useful way, if you can, to engage them in comforting others that are deeper in distresses than they; for this will tell them that their case is not singular, and they will speak to themselves while they speak to others. One of the chief means which cured my fears of my soul's condition, about forty-eight years ago, was oft comforting others that had the same doubts, whose lives persuaded me of their sincerity. And it would be a pretty diversion to send to them some person that is in some error, which they are most against, to dispute it with them, that, while they whet

their wits to convince them, and confute them, it may turn their thoughts from their own distress. Forester tells us that a melancholy patient of his, who was a papist, was cured when the Reformation came into the country, by eager and oft disputing against it. A better cause may better do it.

Medical Care for those with Depression

8. If other means will not do, neglect not medicine; and though they will be averse to it, as believing that the disease is only in the mind, they must be persuaded or forced to it. I have known the lady deep in melancholy, who a long time would neither speak, nor take physic, nor endure her husband to go out of the room, and with the restraint and grief he died, and she was cured by physic put down her throat with a pipe by force.

If it were, as some of them fancy, a possession of the devil, it is possible physic might cast him out, for if you cure the melancholy, his bed is taken away, and the advantage gone by which he worketh. Cure the choler, and the choleric operations of the devil cease. It is by means and humours in us that he worketh. But choose a physician who is specially skilled in this disease, and hath cured many others. Meddle not with women, and ignorant boasters, nor with young, unexperienced men, nor with hasty, busy, over-doing, venturous men, who cannot have time to study the patient's temper and disease, but choose experienced, cautious men.

Medicinal remedies and theological are not often to be given together by the same hand; but in this case of perfect complication of the maladies of mind and body, I think it not unfit, if I do it not unskillfully. My advice is, that they that can have an ancient, skillful, experienced, honest, careful, circumspect physician, neglect not to use him. The disease called melancholy is formally in the spirits, whose distemper unfits them for their office, in serving the imagination, understanding, memory, and affections; so, by their distemper, the thinking faculty is diseased and become like an inflamed eye, or a foot that is sprained or out of joint, disabled for its proper work. The matter which is the root and foundation is usually a depravation of the mass of blood, which is the vehicle of the spirits; and that is usually accompanied with some diseases of the stomach, spleen, liver, or other parts, which are for the due concoction, motion, and purification of the blood; which diseases are so various, that they are seldom the same in many persons, and hardly known to the wisest physicians. The spleen is most commonly accused, and often guilty, and the stomach, pancreas, mesentery, omentum, liver, yea, and reins, not rarely are the root, sometimes by obstructing humours, and that of several qualities, and sometimes by stones, and sometimes by various sorts of humours, and sometimes by vesicles; but obstructed, if not tumefied, spleens, are most suspected.

Such a black, distinct humour called melancholy, which hath oft of old been accused, is rarely, if ever, found in any, unless you will call either blood or excrementitious humours by that name, which are grown black by mortification, for lack of motion and spirits. But the blood itself may be called melancholy blood, when it hath contracted that distemper and privaty by feculency, sluggishness, or adustion, melancholy effects. But sometimes persons that are sound, are suddenly cast into melancholy by a fright, or by the death of a friend, or by some great loss or cross, or some sad tidings, even in an hour, which shows that it cometh not always from any humour called melancholy, nor for any foregoing disease at all. But the very act of the mind doth suddenly disorder the passions, and perturb the spirits; and the disturbed spirits, in time, vitiate the

blood which containeth them; and the vitiated blood doth, in time, vitiate the viscera and parts which it passeth through; and so the disease beginning in the senses and soul, doth draw first the spirits, and then the humours, and then the parts, into the fellowship, and soul and body are sick together. And it is of great use to the physician to know where the depravation did begin, whether in the mind or in the body; and if in the body, whether in the blood, or in the viscera, for the cure must be fitted accordingly. **** And yet the melancholy brains may be eased, and the mental depravation much kept under, though an obstructed, yea, a scarified spleen, continue uncured many years. And though the disease begin in the mind and spirits, and the body be yet sound, yet physic, even purging, often cureth it, though the patient say that drugs cannot cure souls, for the soul and body are wonderfully co-partners in their diseases and cure; and if we know not how it doth it, yet when experience telleth us that it doth it, we have reason to use such means. The devil hath another cure for the sad and melancholy than such as I have here prescribed, which is to cast away all belief of the immortality of the soul and the life to come, or at least not to think of it; and for to take religion to be a superstitious, needless fancy; and for to laugh at the threatenings of the Scripture, and to go to play-houses, and cards, and dice, and to drink and play away melancholy: honest recreations are very good for melancholy persons, if we could get them to use them; but, alas! This satanical cure is but like the witches' bargain with the devil, who promiseth them much, but payeth them with shame and utter misery. The end of that mirth is uncurable sorrow, if timely repentance cure not the cause. The garrison of Satan in the hearts of sinners is strongly kept when they are in peace, but when they have fooled away time, and mercy, and hope, die they must, there is no remedy; and to go merrily and unbelievingly to hell, after all God's calls and warnings, will be no abatement of their torment; to go out of the world in the guilt of sin, and to end life before they would know the use of it, and to undergo God's justice for the mad contempt of Christ and grace, will put a sad end to all their mirth, for "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God," Isaiah 48:22; Isaiah 57:21. But Christ saith to his mourners, (Matthew 5:4,) "Blessed are you that mourn, for you shall be comforted:" and, (John 16:20) "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." And Solomon knew that the house of mourning was better than the house of feasting; and that the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth, Ecclesiastes 7:2-4; but holy joy of faith and hope is best of all.

****[Of course Baxter was as unaware of modern biochemisty and physiology as he is of modern pharmacology. Nevertheless his insights are still valuable today. In Baxter's time, it was thought that health depended upon the proper balance of certain fluids, or "humours" in the body. Melancholy, or depression, was attributed to the presence of a "black humour," as Baxter alludes above. It is interesting to read Baxter's evaluation of this theory, and his observation that some cases of depression are exogenous, i.e. caused by shock or grief, and some are endogenous, i.e. with no apparent cause. Furthermore, Baxter's observation that some depression is spiritual in nature, and in other cases is caused by somatic illness, is important.

It may be appropriate to summarize this section of Baxter's work as follows: those with depression of a spiritual nature, require spiritual counsel. Those whose depression is a result of somatic illness need medical care to correct that cause. People who suffer from endogenous depression may require both spiritual and medical treatment, depending on their case. Baxter's advice about physicians is pertinent at this point. (WC)]

Chapter 117

S. The Duties of Parents for their Children

The Duties of Parents for their Children By Richard Baxter From Baxter's Practical Works, Vol. 1, A Christian Directory, Part II, Christian Economics, Chapter X. OF HOW GREAT IMPORTANCE the wise and holy education of children is, to the saving of their souls, and the comfort of their parents, and the good of church and state, and the happiness of the world, I have partly told you before; but no man is able fully to express. And how great that calamity is, which the world is fallen into through the neglect of that duty, no heart can conceive; but they that think what a case the heathen, infidel, and ungodly nations are in, and how rare true piety is grown, and how many millions must lie in hell for ever, will know so much of this inhuman negligence, as to abhor it.

Direct. I. Understand and lament the corrupted and miserable state of your children, which they have derived from you, and thankfully accept the offers of a Saviour for yourselves and them, and absolutely resign, and dedicate them to God in Christ in the sacred covenant, and solemnize this dedication and covenant by their baptism.

1 You cannot sincerely dedicate yourselves to God, but you must dedicate to him all that is yours, and in your power; and therefore your children, as far as they are in your power. And as nature hath taught you your power and your duty to enter them in their infancy into any covenant with man, which is certainly for their good; (and if they refuse the conditions when they come to age, they forfeit the benefit;) so nature teacheth you much more to oblige them to God And to this end understand the command of God for entering your children solemnly into covenant with him, and the covenant mercies belonging to them thereupon. Romans 5:12, Romans 5:16-18; Ephesians 2:1, Ephesians 2:3; Genesis 17:4, Genesis 17:13-14; Deuteronomy 29:10-12; Romans 11:17, Romans 11:20; John 3:3, John 3:5; Matthew 19:13-14.

1 See my Treatise for Infant Baptism for their far greater good, in case he will admit them into covenant with him. And that he will admit them into his covenant, (and that you ought to enter them into it,) is past doubt, in the evidence which the Scripture giveth us, that from Abraham's time till Christ it was so with all the children of his people; nay, no man can prove that before Abraham's time, or since, God had ever a church on earth, of which the infants of his servants (if they had any) were not members dedicated in covenant to God, till of late times that a few began to scruple the lawfulness of this. As it is a comfort to you, if the king would bestow upon your infant children, (who were tainted by their father's treason,) not only a full discharge from the blot of the offence, but also the titles and estates of lords, though they understand none of this till they come to age; so is it much more matter of comfort to you, on their behalf, that God in Christ will pardon their original sin, and take them as his children, and give them title to everlasting life; which are the mercies of his covenant.

Direct. II. As soon as they are capable, teach them what a covenant they are in, and what are the benefits, and what the conditions, that their souls may gladly consent to it when they understand it; and you may bring them seriously to renew their covenant with God in their own persons. But the whole order of teaching both children and servants, I shall give you after by itself; and therefore

shall here pass by all that, except that which is to be done more by your familiar converse, than by more solemn teaching.

Direct. III. Train them up in exact obedience to yourselves, and break them of their own wills. To that end, suffer them not to carry themselves unreverently or contemptuously towards you; but to keep their distance. For too much familiarity breedeth contempt, and imboldeneth to disobedience. The common course of parents is to please their children so long, by letting them have what they crave, and what they will, till their wills are so used to be fulfilled, that they cannot endure to have them denied; and so can endure no government, because they endure no crossing of their wills. To be obedient, is to renounce their own wills, and be ruled by their parents' or governor's wills; to use them therefore to have their own wills, is to teach them disobedience, and harden and use them to a hind of impossibility of obeying. Tell them oft familiarly and lovingly of the excellency of obedience, and how it pleaseth God, and what need they have of government, and how unfit they are to govern themselves, and how dangerous it is to children to have their own wills; speak often with great disgrace of self-willedness and stubbornness, and tell others in their hearing what hath befallen selfwilled children.

Direct. IV. Make them neither too bold with you, nor too strange or fearful; and govern them not as servants, but as children, making them perceive that you dearly love them, and that all your commands, restraints, and corrections tire for their good, and not merely because you will have it so. They must be ruled as rational creatures, that love themselves, and those that love them. If they perceive that you dearly love them, they will obey you the more willingly, and the easier be brought to repent of their disobedience, and they will as well obey you in heart as in outward actions, and behind your back as before your face. And the love of you (which must be caused by your love to them) must be one of the chiefest means to bring them to the love of all that good which you commend to them; and so to form their wills sincerely to the will of God, and make them holy. For if you are too strange to them, and too terrible, they will fear you only, and not much love you; and then they will love no books, no practices, that you commend to them, but like hypocrites they will seek to please you to your face, and care not what they are in secret and behind your backs. Nay, it will tempt them to loathe your government, and all that good which you persuade them to, and make them like birds in a cage, that watch for an opportunity to get away and get their liberty. They will be the more in the company of servants and idle children, because your terror and strangeness maketh them take no delight in yours. And fear will make them liars, as oft as a lie seemeth necessary to their escape. Parents that show much love to their children, may safely show severity when they commit a fault. For then they will see, that it is their fault only that displeaseth you, and not their persons; and your love reconcileth them to you when they are corrected; when less correction from parents that are always strange or angry, and show no tender love to their children, will alienate them, and do no good. Too much boldness of children leadeth them, before you are aware, to contempt of parents and all disobedience; and too much fear and strangeness depriveth them of most of the benefits of your care and government: but tender love, with severity only when they do amiss, and this at a reverent, convenient distance, is the only way to do them good.

Direct. V. Labour much to possess their hearts with the fear of God, and a reverence of the holy Scriptures; and then whatsoever duty you command them, or whatsoever sin you forbid them, show them some plain and urgent texts of Scripture for it; and cause them to learn them and oft

repeat them; that so they may find reason and divine authority in your commands; till their obedience begin to be rational and divine, it will be but formal and hypocritical. It is conscience that must watch them in private, when you see them not; and conscience is God's officer and not yours; and will say nothing to them, till it speak in the name of God. This is the way to bring the heart itself into subjection; and also to reconcile them to all your commands, when they see that they are first the commands of God (of which more anon).

Direct. VI. In all your speeches of God and of Jesus Christ, and of the holy Scripture, or the life to come, or of any holy duty, speak always with gravity, seriousness, and reverence, as of the most great and dreadful and most Sacred things: for before children come to have any distinct understanding of particulars, it is a hopeful beginning to have their hearts possessed with a general reverence and high esteem of holy matters; for that will continually awe their consciences, and help their judgments, and settle them against prejudice and profane contempt, and be as a seed of holiness in them. For the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, Psalms 111:10; Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 1:7. And the very manner of the parents' speech and carriage, expressing great reverence to the things of God, hath a very great power to leave the like impression on a child: most children of godly parents that ever came to good, I am persuaded, can tell you this by experience, (if their parents did their duty in this point,) that the first good that ever they felt upon their hearts, was a reverence to holy things, which the speech and carriage of their parents taught them.

Direct. VII. Speak always before them with great honour and praise of holy ministers and people, and with dispraise and loathing of every sin, and of ungodly men.

1 1 Isaiah 3:7-9, Isaiah 3:11; Psalms 15:4; Psalms 101:1-8; Psalms 10:2-4. For this also is a thing that children will quickly and easily receive from their parents. Before they can understand particular doctrines, they can learn in general what kind of persons are most happy or most miserable, and they are very apt to receive such a liking or disliking from their parents' judgment, which hath a great hand in all the following good or evil of their lives.

If you possess them with good and honourable thoughts of them that fear God, they will ever after be inclined to think well of them, and to dislike those that speak evil of them and to hear such preachers, and to wish themselves such Christians; so that in this and the foregoing point it is that the first stirrings of grace in children are ordinarily felt. And therefore on the other side, it is a most pernicious thing to children, when they hear their parents speak contemptuously or lightly of holy things and persons, and irreverently talk of God, and Scripture, and the life to come, or speak dispraisingly or scornfully of godly ministers or people, or make a jest of the particular duties of a religious life: these children are like to receive that prejudice or profane contempt into their hearts betimes, which may bolt the doors against the love of God and holiness, and make their salvation a work of much greater difficulty, and much smaller hope. And therefore still I say, that wicked parents are the most notable servants of the devil in all the world, and the bloodiest enemies to their children's souls.

More souls are damned by ungodly parents (and next them by ungodly ministers and magistrates) than by any instruments in the world besides. And hence it is also, that whole nations are so generally carried away with enmity against the ways of God; the heathen nations against the true God, and the infidel nations against Christ, and the papist nations against reformation and spiritual

worshippers: because the parents speak evil to the children of all that they themselves dislike; and so possess them with the same dislike from generation to generation. “Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter,” Isaiah 5:20.

Direct. VIII. Let it be the principal part of your care and labour in all their education, to make holiness appear to them the most necessary, honourable, gainful, pleasant, delightful, amiable state of life; and to keep them from apprehending it either as needless, dishonourable, hurtful, or uncomfortable. Especially draw them to the love of it, by representing it as lovely. And therefore begin with that which is easiest and most grateful to them (as the history of the Scripture, and the lives of the martyrs, and other good men, and some short, familiar lessons). For though in restraining them from sin, you must go to the highest step at first, and not think to draw them from it by allowing them the least degree; (for every degree disposeth to more, and none is to be allowed, and a general reformation is the easiest as well as absolutely necessary;) yet in putting them upon the practice of religious duties, you must carry them on by degrees, and put them at first upon no more than they can bear; either upon the learning of doctrines too high and spiritual for them, or upon such duty for quality or quantity as is overburdensome to them; for if you once turn their hearts against religion, and make it seem a slavery and a tedious life to them, you take the course to harden them against it. And therefore all children must not be used alike; as all stomachs must not be forced to eat alike. If you force some to take so much as to become a surfeit, they will loathe that sort of meat as long as they live. I know that nature itself, as corrupt, hath already an enmity to holiness, and I know that this enmity is not to be indulged in children at all; but withal I know that misrepresentations of religion, and imprudent education, is the way to increase it, and that the enmity being in the heart, it is the change of the mind and love that is the overcoming of it, and not any such constraint as tendeth not to reconcile the mind by love. The whole skill of parents for the holy education of their children, doth consist in this, to make them conceive of holiness as the most amiable and desirable life; which is by representing it to them in words and practice, not only as most necessary, but also as most profitable, honourable, and delightful. Proverbs 3:17, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,” &c.

Direct. IX. Speak often to them of the brutish baseness and sinfulness of flesh-pleasing sensuality, and of the greater excellency of the pleasures of the mind, which consist in wisdom, and in doing good. For your chiefest care must be to save them from fleshpleasing; which is not only in general the sum of all iniquity whatsoever, but that which in special children are most prone to. For their flesh and sense is as quick as others; and they want not only faith, but clear reason to resist it; and so (besides their natural pravity) the custom of obeying sense (which is in strength) without reason (which is in infancy and almost useless) doth much increase this pernicious sin. And therefore still labour to imprint in their minds an odious conceit of a fleshpleasing life; speak bitterly to them against gluttony, and drunkenness, and excess of sport; and let them often hear or read the parable of the glutton and Lazarus in the sixteenth of Luke; and let them learn without book, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:5-9, Romans 8:13; Romans 13:13-14, and oft repeat them.

Direct. X. To this end, and also for the health of their bodies, keep a strict guard upon their appetites (which they are not able to guard themselves): keep them as exactly as you can to the rules of reason, both in the quantity and quality of their food. Yet tell them the reason of your restraint, or else they will secretly strive the more to break their bounds. Most parents that ever I

knew, or had any good account of in that point, are guilty of the great hurt and danger of their children's health and souls, by pleasing and glutting them with meat and drink. If I should call them devils and murderers to their own children, they would think I spake too harshly; but I would not have them give so great occasion for it, as by destroying (as far as lieth in them) the souls and bodies of their children. They destroy their souls by accustoming them to gluttony, and to be ruled by their appetites; which all the teaching in the world will hardly ever after overcome, without the special grace of God. What is all the vice and villany in the world, but the pleasing of the desires of the flesh? And when they are habituated to this, they are rooted in their sin and misery. And they destroy their bodies, by suffering them to please their appetites, with raw fruits and other hurtful things; but especially by drowning and overwhelming nature by excess; and all this is through that beastly ignorance, joined with self-conceitedness, which maketh them also overthrow themselves. They think that their appetite is the measure of their eating and drinking, and that if they drink but when they are thirsty, (as some drunkards are continually,) and eat but when they are hungry, it is no excess; and because they are not presently sick, or vomit it not up again, the beasts think it doth them no harm, but good. You shall hear them like mad people say, I warrant them, it will do them no harm to eat and drink when they have list, it will make them strong and healthful; I see not that those that are dieted so strictly are any healthfuller than others.

Whenas all this while they are burdening nature, and destroying digestion, and vitiating all the humours of the body, and turning them into a dunghill of phlegm and filth; which is the fuel that breedeth and feedeth almost all the diseases that after seize upon them while they live; and usually bringeth them to an untimely end (us I have fullier opened before, part i. in the directions against gluttony). If therefore you love either the souls or bodies of your children, use them to temperance from their infancy, and let not their appetites or craving wills, but your own reason, be the chooser and the measure of their diet. Use them to eat sparingly, and (so it moderately please their appetite, or be not such as nature loatheth) let it be rather of the coarser than the finer sort of diet; see it measured to them yourselves, and suffer no servant to give them more, nor to let them eat or drink between meals and out of season; and so you will help to overcome their sensual inclinations, and give reason the mastery of their lives; and you will, under God, do as much as any one thing can do to help them to a healthful temper of body, which will be a very great mercy to them, and fit them for their duty all their lives.

Direct. XI. For sports and recreations, let them be such, and so much, as may be needful to their health and cheerfulness; but not so much as may carry away their minds from better things, and draw them from their books or other duties, nor such as may tempt them to gaming or covetousness. Children must have convenient sport for the health of the body and alacrity of the mind; such as well exerciseth their bodies is best, and not such as little stirreth them.

Cards and dice, and such idle sports, are every way most unfit, as tending to hurt both body and mind. Their time also must be limited them, that their play may not be their work; as soon as ever they have the use of any reason and speech, they should be taught some better things, and not left till they are five or six years of age, to do nothing, but get a custom of wasting all their time in play. Children are very early capable of learning something which may prepare them for more.

Direct. XII. Use all your wisdom and diligence to root out the sin of pride. And to that end, do not (as is usual with foolish parents, that) please them with making them fine, and then by telling them

how fine they are; but use to commend humility and plainness to them, and speak disgracefully of pride and fineness, to breed an averseness to it in their minds. Cause them to learn such texts of Scripture as speak of God's abhorring and resisting the proud, and of his loving and honouring the humble: when they see other children that are finely clothed, speak of it to them as their shame, that they may not desire to be like them. Speak against boasting, and every other way of pride which they are liable to: and yet give them the praise of all that is well, for that is but their due encouragement.

Direct. XIII. Speak to them disgracefully of the gallantry, and pomp, and riches of the world, and of the sin of selfishness and covetousness, and diligently watch against it, and all that may tempt them to it. When they see great houses, and attendance, and gallantry, tell them that these are the devil's baits, to entice poor sinners to love this world, that they may lose their souls, and the world to come. Tell them how much heaven excelleth all this; and that the lovers of the world must never come thither, but the humble, and meek, and poor in spirit. Tell them of the rich glutton in Luke 16:1-31, that was thus clothed in purple and silk, and fared deliciously every day; but when he came to hell, could not get a drop of water to cool his tongue, when Lazarus was in the joys of paradise. Do not as the wicked, that entice their children to worldliness and covetousness, by giving them money, and letting them game and play for money, and promising them to make them fine or rich, and speaking highly of all that are rich and great in the world; but tell them how much happier a poor believer is, and withdraw all that may tempt their minds to covetousness. Teach them how good it is to love their brethren as themselves, and to give them part of what they have, and praise them for it; and dispraise them when they are greedy to keep or heap up all to themselves: and all will be little enough to cure this pernicious sin.

Teach them such texts as Psalms 10:3, "They bless the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth."

Direct. XIV. Narrowly watch their tongues, especially against lying, railing, ribald talk, and taking the name of God in vain. And pardon them many lighter faults about common matters, sooner than one such sin against God. Tell them of the odiousness of all these sins, and teach them such texts as most expressly condemn them; and never pass it by or make light of it, when you find them guilty.

Direct. XV. Keep them as much as may be from ill company, especially of ungodly play-fellows. It is one of the greatest dangers for the undoing of children in the world; especially when they are sent to common schools: for there is scarce any of those schools so good, but hath many rude and ungodly ill-taught children in it; that will speak profanely, and filthily, and make their ribald and railing speeches a matter of boasting; besides fighting, and gaming and scorning, and neglecting their lessons; and they will make a scorn of him that will not do as they, if not beat and abuse him. And there is such tinder in nature for these sparks to catch upon, that there are very few children, but when they hear others take God's name in vain, or sing wanton songs, or talk filthy words, or call one another by reproachful names, do quickly imitate them: and when you have watched over them at home as narrowly as you can, they are infected abroad with such beastly vices, as they are hardly ever after cured of.

Therefore let those that are able, either educate their children most at home, or in private and well ordered schools; and those that cannot do so, must be the more exceeding watchful over them, and charge them to associate with the best; and speak to them of the odiousness of these

practices, and the wickedness of those that use them; and speak very disgracefully of such ungodly children: and when all is done, it is a great mercy of God, if they be not undone by the force of the contagion, notwithstanding all your antidotes. Those therefore that venture their children into the rudest schools and company, and after that to Rome, and other profane or popish countries, to learn the fashions and customs of the world, upon pretence, that else they will be ignorant of the course of the world, and ill-bred, and not like others of their rank, may think of themselves and their own reasonings as well as they please: for my part, I had rather make a chimney-sweeper of my son, (if I had any,) than be guilty of doing so much to sell or betray him to the devil.

Quest. But is it not lawful for a man to send his son to travel?

Answ. Yes, in these cases, 1. In case he be a ripe, confirmed Christian, that is, not in danger of being perverted, but able to resist the enemies of the truth, and to preach the gospel, or to do good to others; and withal have sufficient business to invite him. Or if he go in the company of wise and godly persons, and such be his companions, and the probability of his gain be greater, than of his loss and danger.

3. Or if he go only into religious countries, among more wise and learned men than he converseth with at home, and have sufficient motives for his course. But to send young, raw, unsettled persons among papists, and profane, licentious people, (though perhaps some sober person be in company with them,) and this only to see the counties and fashions of the world, is an action unbeseeming any Christian that knoweth the pravity of human nature, and the mutability of young, unfurnished heads, and the subtlety of deceivers, and the contagiousness of sin and error, and the worth of a soul, and will not do as some conjurers or witches, even sell a soul to the devil, on condition he may see and know the fashions of the world; which alas, I can quickly know enough of to grieve my heart, without travelling so far to see them. If another country have more of Christ, and be nearer heaven, the invitation is great; but if it have more of sin and hell, I had rather know hell, and the suburbs of it too, by the map of the word of God, than by going thither. And if such children return not the confirmed children of the devil, and prove riot the calamity of their country and the church, let them thank special grace, and not their parents or themselves. They overvalue that vanity which they call breeding, who will hazard the substance, (even heavenly wisdom, holiness, and salvation,) to go so far for so vain a shadow.

Direct. XVI. Teach your children to know the preciousness of time, and suffer them not to mispend an hour. Be often speaking to them how precious a thing time is, and how short man's life is, and how great his work, and bow our endless life of joy or misery dependeth on this little time: speak odiously to them of the sin of those that play and idle away their time; and keep account of all their hours, and suffer them not to lose any by excess of sleep, or excess of play, or any other way; but engage them still in some employment that is worth their time. Train up your children in a life of diligence and labour, and use them not to ease and idleness when they are young.

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1 It was one of the Roman laws of the twelve tables, Filius arte carens, patris incuria, eidem vilæ necessaria De præstato. Alioqui parentes nutrire cogitor. A son that is taught no trade to live by, shall not be bound to keep his parents in want, but others shall.

Ezekiel 16:49. Our wandering beggars, and too in many of the gentry, utterly undo their children by this means, especially the female sex. They are taught no calling, nor exercised in my employment, but only such as is meet for nothing but ornament and recreation at the best; and therefore should have but recreation hours, which is but a small proportion of their time. So that by the sin of their parents, the), are betimes engaged in a life of idleness, which afterward it is wondrous hard for them to overcome; and they are taught to live like swine or vermin, that live only to live, and do small good in the world by living: to rise, and dress, and adorn themselves, and take it walk, and so to dinner, and thence to cards or dice, or chat and idle talk, or some play, or visit, or recreation, and so to supper, and to chat again, and to bed, is the lamentable life of too many that have great obligations to God, and greater matters to do, if they were acquainted with them. And if they do but interpose a few hypocritical, heartless words of prayer, they think they have piously spent the day; yea, the health of many is utterly ruined, by such idle, fleshly education. So that disuse doth disable them from any considerable motion or exercise, which is necessary to preserve their health. It would move one's heart with pity, to see how the houses of some of the higher sort are like hospitals; and education hath made, especially, the females like the lame, or sick, or bedrid; so that one part of the day that should be spent in some profitable employment, is spent in bed, and the rest in doing nothing, or worse than nothing; and most of their life is made miserable by diseases, so that if their legs be but used to carry them about, they are presently out of breath, and are a burden to themselves, and few of them live out little more than half their days.

Whereas, poor creatures, if their own parents had not betrayed them into the sins of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, they might have been in health, and lived like honest Christian people, and their legs and arms might have served them for use, as well as for integrality and ornament.

Direct. XVII. Let necessary correction be used with discretion, according to these following rules.

1. Let it not be so seldom (if necessary) as to leave them fearless, and so make it uneffectual; and let it not be so frequent as, to discourage them, or breed in them a hatred of their parents.

2. Let it be different according to the different tempers of your children; some are so tender and timorous, and apt to be discouraged, that little or no correction may be best; and some are so hardened and obstinate, that it must be much and sharp correction that must keep them from dissoluteness and contempt.

3. Let it be more for sin against God (as lying, railing, filthy speaking, profaneness, &c.) than for faults about your worldly business.

4. Correct them not in passion, but stay till they perceive that you are calmed; for they will think else, that your anger rather than your reason is the cause.

5. Always show them the tenderness of your love, and how unwilling you are to correct them, if they could be reformed any easier way; and convince them that you do it for their good.

6. Make them read those texts of Scripture which condemn their sin, and then those which command you to correct them. As for example, if lying be their sin, turn them first to Proverbs 12:22, "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord, but they that deal truly are his delight." And Proverbs 13:5, "A righteous man hateth lying." John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil, -when

he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." Revelation 22:15, "For without are dogs -and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." And next turn him to Proverbs 13:24, "He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." Proverbs 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Proverbs 22:15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Proverbs 23:13-14, "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die; thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." Proverbs 18:18, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Ask him whether he would have you by sparing him, to disobey God, and hate him, and destroy his soul. And when his reason is convinced of the reasonableness of correcting him, it will be the more successful.

Direct. XVIII. Let your own example teach your children that holiness, and heavenliness, and blamelessness of tongue and life, which you desire them and to learn and practise. The example of parents is most powerful with children, both for good and evil. If they see you live in the fear of God, it will do much to persuade them, that it is the most necessary and excellent course of life, and that they must do so too; and if they see you live a carnal, voluptuous, and ungodly life, and hear you curse or swear, or talk filthily or railingly, it will greatly imbolden them to imitate you. If you speak never so well to them, they will sooner believe your bad lives, than your good words.

Direct. XIX. Choose such a calling and course of life for your children, as tendeth most to the saving of their souls, kind to their public usefulness for church or state. Choose not a calling that is most liable to temptations and hinderances to their salvation, though it may make them rich; but a calling which alloweth them some leisure for the remembering the things of everlasting consequence, and fit opportunities to get good, and to do good. If you bind them apprentices, or servants, if it be possible, place them with men fearing God; and not with such as will harden them in their sin.

Direct. XX. When they are marriageable, and you find it needful, look out such for them as are suitable betimes. When parents stay too long, and do not their duties in this, their children often choose for themselves to their own undoing; for they choose not by judgment, but blind affection.

Having thus told you the common duties of parents for their children, I should next have told you what specially belongeth to each parent; but to avoid prolixity, I shall only desire you to remember especially these two directions.

1. That the mother who is still present with children when they are young, be very diligent in teaching them, and minding them of good things. When the fathers are abroad, the mothers have more frequent opportunities to instruct them, and be still speaking to them of that which is most necessary, and watching over them. This is the greatest service that most women can do for God in the world: many a church that hath been blessed with a good minister, may thank the pious education of mothers; and many a thousand souls in heaven may thank the holy care and diligence of mothers, as the first effectual means. Good women this way (by the good education of their children) are ordinarily great blessings both to church and state. (And so some understand 1 Timothy 2:15, by "child-bearing," meaning bringing, up children for God; but I rather think it is by Mary's bearing Christ, the promised seed.) 2. By all means let children be taught to read, if you are never so poor, and whatever shift you make; or else you deprive them of a singular help to their

instruction and salvation. It is a thousand pities that a Bible should signify no more than a chip to a rational creature, as to their reading it themselves, and that so many excellent books as be in the world, should be as sealed or insignificant to them. But if God deny you children, and save you all this care and labour, repine not, but be thankful, believing it is best for you.

Remember what a deal of duty, and pains, and heart's grief he hath freed you from, and how few speed well, when parents have done their best: what a life of misery children must here pass through, and how sad the fear of their sin and damnation would have been to you.

Chapter 118

S. The Evil of Backbiting and Evil Speaking

The Evil of Backbiting

and Evil-Speaking by Richard Baxter

1. It is forbidden of God among the heinous, damning sins, and made the character of a notorious wicked person, and the avoiding of it is made the mark of such as are accepted of God and shall be saved: Romans 1:29-30, it is made the mark of a reprobate mind, and joined with murder, and hating God, viz. "full of envy, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters." Psalms 15:1, Psalms 15:3, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that backbites not with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbour, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbour." And when Paul describes those whom he must sharply rebuke and censure, he describes the factious sort of Christians of our times. 2 Corinthians 12:20, "For I fear lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults." Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind one to another, and tenderhearted,"

2. It is a sin which gratifies Satan, and serves his malice against our neighbour. He is malicious against all, and speaking evil, and doing hurt, are the works which are suitable to his malignity! And should a Christian make his tongue the instrument of the accuser of the brethren, to do his work against each other?

3. It signifies want of Christian love. For love speaks not evil, nor reveals men’s faults without a cause, but covers infirmities; much less will it lie and slander others, and carry about uncertain reports against them. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you: and how essential love is to true Christianity, Christ himself has often told us.

4. It is a sin which directly serves to destroy the hearers’ love, and consequently to destroy their souls. If the backbiter understood himself, he would confess that it is his very end to cause you to hate (or abate your love to) him whom he speaks evil of. He that speaks good of a man, represents him amiably; for amiableness and goodness are all one. And he that speaks evil of a man represents him hatefully or unlovely; for hatefulness, unloveliness, and evil are all one. And as it is not the natural way of winning love, to entreat and beg it, and say, I pray you love this person, or that thing; but to open the goodness of the thing or person, which will command love: so is it not the natural way to stir up hatred, by entreating men to hate this man or that; but to tell how bad they are, which will stir up hatred in them that do believe it. Therefore to speak evil of another, is more than to say to the hearers, I pray you hate this man, or abate your love to him. And that the killing of love is the killing or destroying of men’s souls, the apostle John does frequently declare.

5. And it tends also to destroy the love, and consequently the soul of him that you speak evil of. For when it comes to his hearing, (as one way or other it may do,) the evil you have reported of him behind his back, it tends to make him hate you, and so to make him worse.

6. It is a great peace-breaker wherever it is practised. It tends to set people together by the ears. When it is told that such a one spoke evil of you in such a place, there are then heart-burnings, and rehearsals, and sidings, and such ensuing malice as the devil intended by this design.

7. They that speak evil of others behind their backs, it is ten to one will I speak falsehoods of them when they do not know it. Fame is too ordinarily a liar, and they shall be liars who will be its messengers. How do you know whether the thing that you report is true? Is it only because a credible person spoke it? But how did that person know it to be true? Might he not take it upon trust as well as you? And might he not take a credible person to lie that is not? And how commonly does faction, or interest, or passion, or credulity, make that person incredible in one thing, who is credible in others, where he has no such temptation! If you know it is not true, or have not sufficient evidence to prove it, you are guilty of lying and slandering interpretatively, though it should prove true; because it might have been a lie for all you knew.

8. It is gross injustice to talk of a man's faults, before you have heard him speak for himself. I know it is usual with such to say, 0 we have heard it from those as we are certain will not lie. But he is a foolish and unrighteous judge, that will be peremptory upon hearing one party speak, and knows not how ordinary it is for a man when he speaks for himself, to blow away the most confident and plausible accusations, and make the case appear to be quite another thing. You know not what another man has to say till you have heard him.

9. Backbiting teaches others to backbite. Your example invites them to do the like: and sins which are common, are easily swallowed, and hardly repented of. men think that the commonness justifies or extenuates the fault.

10. It encourages ungodly men to the odious sin of backbiting and slan- dering the most religious, righteous person. It is ordinary with the devil's family to make Christ's faithful servants their table talk, and the objects of their reproach and scorn, and the song of drunkards? What abundance of lies go current among such malignant persons, against the most innocent, which would all be ashamed, if they had first admitted them to speak for themselves. And such slanders and lies are the devil's common means to keep ungodly men from the love of godliness, and so from repentance and salvation. And backbiting professors of religion encourage men to this; for with what mea- sure they mete, it shall be measured to them again. And they that are them- selves evil spoken of, will think that thev are warranted to requite the backbiters with the like.

11. It is a sin which commonly excludes true, profitable reproof and exhortation. They that speak most behind men's backs, do usually say least to the sinner's face, in any way which tends to his salvation. They will not go lovingly to him in private, and set home his sin upon his conscience, and exhort him to repentance; but any thing shall serve as a sufficient excuse against this duty; that they may make the sin of backbiting serve instead of it: and all is out of carnal self-saving; they fear men will be offended if they speak to their faces, and therefore they will whisper against them behind their backs. 12. It is at the least, but idle talk and a misuse of your time: what the better are the hearers for hearing of other men's misdoings? And you know that it doesn't profit the person of whom you speak. A skillful, friendly admonition might do him good! But to neglect this, and talk of his faults unprofitably, behind his back, is but to aggravate the sin of your uncharitableness, as being not contented to refuse your help to a man in sin, but you must also injure him and do him hurt.

APPLICATION

Rebuke backbiters, and do not encourage them by hearkening to their tales. Proverbs 25:23, "The north wind drives away rain, so does an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." It may be they think themselves religious persons, and will take it for an injury to be driven away with an angry countenance: but God himself, who loves his servants better than we, is more offended at their sin; and that which offends him, must offend us. We must not hurt their souls, and displease God, by drawing upon us the guilt of their sins, for fear of displeasing them. Tell them how God hates backbiting, and advise them if they know any hurt done by others, to go to them privately, and tell them of it in a way that tends to their repentance.

Taken from Vol. I, A Christian Directory. Edited and updated in modern English.

S. The Folly of Trying to Please Men

The Folly of Trying to Please Men by Richard Baxter

1. Remember what a multitude you have to please; and when you have pleased some, how many more will be still unpleased, and how many displeased when you have done your best. Alas! we are insufficient at once to observe all those that observe us and would be pleased by us. You are like one that hath but twelve pence in his purse, and a thousand beggars come about him for it, and every one will be displeased if he have it not all. If you resolve to give all that you have to the poor, if you do it to please God, you may attain your end, but if you do it to please them, when you have pleased those few that you gave it to, perhaps twice as many will revile or curse you, because they had nothing. The beggar that speeds well will proclaim you liberal, and the beggar that speeds ill will proclaim you niggardly and unmerciful; and so you will have more to offend and dishonour you, than to comfort you by their praise, if that must be your comfort.

2. Remember that all men are so selfish, that their expectations will be higher than you are able to satisfy. They will not consider your hinderances, or avocations, or what you do for others, but most of them look to have as much to themselves, as if you had nobody else to mind but them. Many and many a time, when I have had an hour or a day to spend, a multitude have every one expected that I should have spent it with them. When I visit one, there are ten offended that I am not visiting them at the same hour: when I am discoursing with one, many more are offended that I am not speaking to them all at once: if those that I speak to account me courteous, and humble, and respectful, those that I could not speak to, or but in a word, account me discourteous and morose. How many have censured me, because I have not allowed them the time, which God and conscience commanded me to spend upon greater and more necessary work! If you have any office to give, or benefit to bestow which one only can have, every one thinketh himself the fittest; and when you have pleased one that hath it, you have displeased all that went without it, and missed of their desires.

3. You have abundance to please that are so ignorant, unreasonable, and weak, that they take your greatest virtues for your faults, and know not when you do well or ill; and yet none more bold in censuring than those that least understand the things they censure. Many and many a time my own and others' sermons have been censured, and openly defamed, for that which never was in them, upon the ignorance or heedlessness of a censorious hearer; yea, for that which they directly spoke against; because they were not understood: especially he that hath a close style, free from tautology, where every word must be marked by him that will not misunderstand, shall frequently be misreported.

4. You will have many factious zealots to please, who being strangers to the love of holiness, christianity, and unity, are ruled by the interest of an opinion or a sect; and these will never be pleased by you, unless you will be one of their side or party, and conform yourself to their opinions. If you be not against them, but set yourselves to reconcile and end the differences in the church, they will hate you as not promoting their opinions, but weakening them by some abhorred

syncretisms. As in civil, so in ecclesiastical wars, the firebrands cannot endure the peaceable: if you will be neutral, you shall be used as enemies. If you be never so much for Christ, and holiness, and common truth, all is nothing, unless you be also for them, and their conceits.

5. Most of the world are haters of holiness, and have a serpentine enmity to the image of God, being not renewed by the Holy Ghost; and will not be pleased with you, unless you will sin against your Lord, and do as they do. 1 Peter 4:3-5, "Walking in lasciviousness lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you; who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." You must be counted as Lot among the Sodomites, a busy fellow that comes among them to make himself their judge, and to control them, if you tell them of their sin. You shall be called a precise, hypocritical coxcomb, (or somewhat much worse,) if you will not be as bad as they, and if by your abstinence (though you say nothing) you seem to reprehend their sensuality and contempt of God. Among insane you must play the insane, if you will escape the fangs of their revilings. And can you hope to please such men as these?

6. You shall have satanical God-haters, and men of seared and desperate consciences to please, that are malicious and cruel, and will be pleased with nothing but some horrid iniquity, and the damning of your own souls, and drawing others to damnation. Like that monster of Milan, that when he had got down his enemy, made him blaspheme God in hope to save his life, and then stabbed him, calling it a noble revenge, that killed the body and damned the soul at once. There are such in the world, that will so visibly act the devil’s part, that they would debauch your consciences with the most horrid perjuries, perfidiousness, and impiety, that they may triumph over your miserable souls. And if you think it worth the wilful damning of your souls, it is possible they may be pleased. If you tell them, we cannot please you, unless we will be dishonest, and displease God, and sin against our knowledge and consciences, and hazard our salvation, they will make but a jest of such arguments as these, and expect you should venture your souls and all upon their opinions, and care as little for God and your souls as they do. Desperate sinners are loth to go to hell alone; it is a torment to them to see others better than themselves. They that are cruel and unmerciful to themselves, and have no pity on their own souls, but will sell them for a whore, or for preferment, and honour, or sensual delights, will scarce have mercy on the souls of others: Matthew 27:25, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

7. You will have rigorous, captious, uncharitable, and unrighteous men to please, who will "make a man offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought, and watch for iniquity," Isaiah 24:20-21. That have none of that charity which covereth faults, and interpreteth words and actions favourably, nor none of that justice which causeth men to do as they would be done by, and judge as they would be judged; but judging without mercy, are like to have judgment without mercy. And are glad when they can find any matter to reproach you: and if once they meet with it (true or false) they will never forget it, but dwell as the fly on the ulcerated place.

8. You will have passionate persons to please, whose judgments are blinded, and are not capable of being pleased. Like the sick and sore that are hurt with every touch; and at last, saith Seneca, with the very conceit that you touched them. How can you please them, when displeasedness is their disease, that abideth within them, at the very heart?

9. You will find that censoriousness is a common vice, and though few are competent judges of your actions, as not being acquainted with all the ease, yet every one almost will be venturing to cast in his censure. A proud, presumptuous understanding is a very common vice; which thinks itself presently capable of judging, as soon as it heareth but a piece of the ease, and is not conscious of its own fallibility, though it have daily experience of it. Few are at your elbow, and none in your heart, and therefore know not the circumstances and reasons of all that you do, nor hear what you have to say for yourselves, and yet they will presume to censure you, who would have absolved you, if they had but heard you speak. It is rare to meet even with professors of greatest sincerity, that are very tender and fearful of sinning, in this point of rash, ungrounded judging, without capacity or call.

10. You live among unpeaceable tattlers and tale carriers, that would please others by accusing you. Who is it that hath ears that hath not such vermin as these earwigs busy at them? Except here and there an upright man, whose angry countenance hath still driven away such backbiting tongues. And all shall be said behind your backs, when you are uncapable of answering for yourselves. And if it be a man that the hearers think well of, that accuseth or backbiteth you, they think it lawful then to believe them: and most that are their friends, and of their party, and for their interest, shall be sure to be thought so honest as to be credible. And it is not strange, for a learned, ingenious, yea, a godly person to be too forward in uttering, from the mouth of others an evil report, and then the hearer thinks he is fully justified for believing it, and reporting it again to others. David himself by the temptation of a Ziba, is drawn to wrong Mephibosheth the son of his great deserving friend, 2 Samuel 16:3. No wonder then if Saul do hearken to a Doeg, to the wrong of David, and murder of the priests. Proverbs 18:8, "The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds." Proverbs 26:20, "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer the strife ceaseth." And when these are still near men, and you far off, it is easy for them to continue the most odious representation of the most laudable person’s actions in the world.

11. The imperfection of all men’s understandings and godliness is so great, that the differences of judgment that are among the best, will tend to the injury and undervaluing of their brethren. One is confident that his way is right, and another is confident of the contrary: and to how great contendings and injuries such differences may proceed, he that knoweth not in this age, shall not know for me. We need not go to Paul and Barnabas for an instance (that was a far lighter case); nor to Epiphanius, Jerome, and Chrysostom; nor to those ages and tragedies of contending bishops, that in the eastern and western churches have been before us: every one thinking his cause so plain, as to justify himself, in all that he saith and doth against those that presume to differ from him. And surely you may well expect some displeasure, even from good and learned men, when the church have felt such dreadful concussions, and bleedeth to this day, by so horrid divisions, through the remnants of that pride and ignorance which her reverend guides have still been guilty of.

12. You have men of great mutability to please; that one hour may be ready to worship you as gods, and the next to stone you, or account you as devils, as they did by Paul, and Christ himself. What a weathercock is the mind of man! especially of the vulgar and the temporizers! When you have spent all your days in building your reputation on this sand, one blast of wind or storm at last doth tumble it down, and all your cost and labour are lost. Serve men as submissively and carefully as you can; and after all, some accident or failing of their unrighteous expectations may

make all that ever you did forgotten, and turn you out of the world with Wolsey's groans, "If I had served God as faithfully as man, I had been better rewarded, and not forsaken in my distress." How many have fallen by the hands or frowns of those whose favour they had dearly purchased, perhaps at the price of their salvation! If ever you put such confidence in a friend, as not to consider that it is possible he may one day prove your enemy, you know not man; and may perhaps be better taught to know him, to your cost.

13. Every man living shall unavoidably be engaged by God himself, in some duties which are very liable to misconstruction, and will have an outside and appearance of evil, to the offence of those that know not all the inside and circumstances. And hence it comes to pass, that a great part of history is little worthy of regard; because the actions of public persons are discerned but by the halves by most that write of them. They write most by hearsay; or know but the outside and seemings of things, and not the spirit, and life, and reality of the case. Men have not the choosing of their own duties, but God maketh them by his law and providence: and it pleaseth him oft to try his servants in this kind: many of the circumstances of their actions shall remain unknown to men, that would justify them if they knew them, and account them as notorious, scandalous persons, because they know them not. How like to evil was the Israelites' taking the goods of the Egyptians! and how likely to lay them open to their censure! So was Abraham's attempt to sacrifice his son: and so was David's eating the shew-bread, and dancing almost naked before the ark; Christ's eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, Paul's circumcising Timothy and purifying in the temple; with abundance such like, which fall out in the life of every christian. No wonder if Joseph thought once of putting Mary away, till he knew the evidence of her miraculous conception; and how liable was she to censure, by those that knew it not! Oh, therefore, how vain is the judgment of man! And how contrary is it frequently to the truth! And with what caution must history be read! And oh how desirable is the great day of God, when all human censure shall be justly censured!

14. The perverseness of many is so great, that they require contradictions and impossibilities of you, to tell you that they are resolved never to be pleased by you. If John use fasting, they say, "he hath a devil," if Christ come "eating and drinking," they say, "Behold a gluttonous person, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners," Matthew 11:18-19. If your judgment and practice be conformable to superiors, especially if they have admitted of a change, you shall be judged mere knaves and temporizers: if they are not, you shall be judged disobedient, refractory, and seditious. If you speak fair and pleasingly, they will call you flatterers and dissemblers: if you speak more freely, though in a necessary case, they will say you rail. If I accept of preferment, they will say, I am ambitious, proud, and worldly: if I refuse it, (how modestly soever,) they will say, I am discontented, and have seditious designs. If I preach not when I am forbidden, I shalt be accused as forsaking the calling I undertook, and obeying man against God: if I do preach, I shall be accounted disobedient and seditious. If a friend or kinsman desire me to help him to some place or preferment which he is not fit for, or which would tend to another's wrong, if I should grant his desire, I shall be taken for dishonest, that by partiality wrong another; if I deny it him, I shall be called unnatural or unfriendly, and worse than an infidel. If I give to the poor as long as I have it, I shall be censured for ceasing when I have no more: they that know not whether you have it to give or not, will be displeased if you do not; and if many years you should maintain them freely, it is all as nothing as soon as you cease, either because your stock is spent, or because some other is made the necessary object of your charity. If you be wronged in your estate, if you go to law, they

will say, you are contentious; if you let go your estate to avoid contention, they will say, you are silly fools or idiots. If you do any good works of charity to the knowledge of men, they will say, you are hypocrites, and do it for applause; if you do it secretly, that no one know of it, they will say, you are covetous, and have no good works, and though you make a greater profession of religion, you do no good; and others shall be censured so also for your sakes. If you be pleasant and merry, they will censure you as light and vain: if you be more grave and sad, they will say, you are melancholy or discontent. In a word, whatever you do, be sure by some it will be condemned; and do or not do, speak or be silent, you shall certainly displease, and never escape the censures of the world.

15. There is among men so great a contrariety of judgments, and dispositions, and interests, that they will never agree among themselves; and if you please one, the rest will be thereby displeased. He that you please is an enemy to another; and therefore you displease his enemy by pleasing him. Sometimes, state differences divide kingdoms into parties, and one party will be displeased with you if you be of the other, and both if you are neuters, or dislike them both; and each party think their cause will justify any accusations they can charge you with, or odious titles they can give you, if not any sufferings they can bring upon you. Church differences and sects have been found in all ages, and you cannot be of the opinion of every party; when the world aboundeth with such variety of conceits, you cannot be of all at once. And if you be of one party, you must displease the rest; if you are of one side in controverted opinions, the other side accounteth you erroneous: and how far will the supposed interest of their cause and party carry them! One half of the christian world, at this day, condemneth the other half as schismatical at least, the other half doing the like for them. And can you be papists, and protestants, and Greeks, and every thing? If not, you must displease as many as you please. Yea, more; if mutable men shall change never so oft, they will expect that you change as fast as they, and whatever their contrary interests require, you must follow them in; one year you must swear, and another you must unswear all again: whatever cause or action they engage in, be it never so devilish, you must approve of it and countenance it, and all that they do you must say is well done. In a word, you must teach your tongue to say or swear any thing, and you must sell your innocency, and hire out your consciences wholly to their service, or you cannot please them. Micaiah must say with the rest of the prophets, "Go, and prosper," or else he will be hated, as not prophesying good of Ahab but evil, 1 Kings 22:8. And how can you serve all interests at once? It seems the providence of God hath, as of purpose, wheeled about the affairs of the world, to try and shame man-pleasers and temporizers in the sight of the sun. It is evident then, that if you will please all you must at once both speak and be silent, and verify contradictions, and be in many places at once, and be of all men’s minds, and for all men’s way. For my part, I mean to see the world a little better agreed among themselves, before I will make it my ambition to please them. If you can reconcile all their opinions, and interests, and complexions, and dispositions, and make them all of one mind and will, then hope to please them.

16. If you excel in any one virtue or duty, even that shall not excuse you from the contrary defamation, so unreasonable are malicious men. Nothing in the world can secure you from censorious, slanderous tongues. The perfect holiness of Jesus Christ could not secure him from being called a gluttonous person and a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners. His wonderful contempt of worldly dignities and honours, and his subjection to Caesar, could not

secure him from being slandered and crucified as Caesar's enemy. The great piety of the ancient christians excused them not from the vulgar calumny, that they met together for filthiness in the dark, nor from the cry of the rabble, Tollite impios, "Away with the ungodly," because they were against the worshipping of idols. I have known those that have given all that ever they had to the poor except their food and necessaries, and yet (though it was to a considerable value) have been reproached as unmerciful, by those that have not had what they expected. Many a one hath been defamed with scandalous rumours of uncleanness, that have lived in untainted chastity all their lives. The most eminent saints have been defamed as guilty of the most horrid crimes, which never entered into their thoughts. The principal thing that ever I bent my studies and care about, hath been the reconciling, unity, and peace of christians, and against unpeaceableness, uncharitableness, turbulency, and division; and yet some have been found, whose interest and malice have commanded them to charge me with that very sin, which I have spent my days, my zeal, and study against. How oft have contrary factions charged me with perfectly contrary accusations! I can scarce remember the thing that I can do in all the world, that some will not be offended at; nor the duty so great and clear, that some will not call my sin; nor the self-denial so great, (to the hazard of my life,) which hath not been called self-seeking, or something clean contrary to what it was indeed. Instead therefore of serving and pleasing this malicious, unrighteous world, I contemn their blind and unjust censures, and appeal to the most righteous God.

17. If you have a design for a name of honour when you are dead, consider what power a prevailing faction may have to corrupt the history of your life, and represent you to posterity perfectly contrary to what you are; and how impossible it is for posterity to know whose history is the product of malicious, shameless lies, and whose is the narrative of impartial truth. What contrary histories are there of particular persons and actions written by men of the same religion: as of Pope Gregory VII and the emperors that contended with him; and about Pope John, and many the like eases, where you may read scores of historians on one side and on the other.

18. Remember that the holiest saints or apostles could never please the world, nor escape their censures, slanders, and cruelties, no, nor Jesus Christ himself. And can you think by honest means to please them better than Christ and all his saints have done? You have not the wisdom that Christ had to please men, and to avoid offence. You have not the perfect innocency and unblamableness that Christ had, you cannot heal their sicknesses and infirmities, and do that good to them to please and win them, as Jesus Christ did; you cannot convince them, and constrain them to reverence you by manifold miracles, as Jesus Christ did. Can you imitate such an excellent pattern as is set you by the holy, patient charitable, unwearied apostle Paul? Acts 20:1-38; 1 Corinthians 4:1-21. 1 Corinthians 9:1-27; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18. 2 Corinthians 5:1-21. 2 Corinthians 6:1-18. 2 Corinthians 10:1-18. 2 Corinthians 11:1-33. 2 Corinthians 12:1-21. If you cannot, how can you please them that would not be pleased by such unimitable works of love and power? The more Paul "loved"some of his hearers, "the less he was beloved," 2 Corinthians 12:15. They used him "as an enemy for telling them the truth," Galatians 4:16. Though he "became all things to all men," he could "save but some," nor "please but some," 1 Corinthians 9:22. And what are you that you should better please them?

19. Godliness, virtue, and honesty itself will not please the world, and therefore you cannot hope to please them by that which is not pleasing to them. Will men be pleased by that which they hate?

and by the actions which they think accuse them and condemn them? And if you will be ungodly and vicious to please them, you sell your souls, your conscience, and your God, to please them. God and they are not pleased with the same ways. And which do you think should first be pleased? If you displease him for their favour, you will buy it dearly.

20. They are not pleased with God himself; yea no man doth displease so many and so much as he. And can you do more than God to please them? Or can you deserve their favour more than he? They are daily displeased with his works of providence: one would have rain, when another would have none. One would have the winds to serve his voyage, and another would have them in a contrary end. One party is displeased, because another is pleased and exalted; every enemy would have his cause succeed and the victory to be his, every contender would have all go on his side. God must be ruled by them, and fit himself to the interest of the most unjust, and to the will of the most vicious, and do as they would have him, and be a servant to their lusts, or they will not be pleased with him. And his holy nature, and his holy word, and holy ways, displease them more than his ordinary providence. They are displeased that his word is so precise and strict, and that he commandeth them so holy and so strict a life, and that he threateneth all the ungodly with damnation: he must alter his laws, and make them more loose, and fit them to their fleshly interest and lusts, and speak as they would have him, without any difficulties, before they will be pleased with them (unless he alter their minds and hearts). And how do you think they will be pleased with him at last, when he fulfils his threatenings? when he killeth them, and turneth their bodies to dust, and their guilty souls to torment and despair?

21. How can you please men that cannot please themselves? Their own desire and choice will please them but a little while. Like children, they are soon weary of that which they cried for: they must needs have it, and when they have it, it is naught, and cast away; they are neither pleased with it, nor without it. They are like sick persons that long for every meat or drink they think of, and when they have it they cannot get it down; for the sickness is still within them that causeth their displeasure. How many do trouble and torment themselves by their passions and folly from day to day! And can you please such self-displeasers?

22. How can you please all others, when you cannot please yourselves? If you are persons fearing God and feel the burden of your sins, and have life enough to be sensible of your diseases, I dare say there are none in the world so displeasing to you, as you are to yourselves. You carry that about you, and feel that within you, which displeaseth you more than all the enemies you have in the world. Your passions and corruptions, your want of love to God, and your strangeness to him and the life to come, the daily faultiness of your duties and your lives, are your daily burden, and displease you most. And if you be not able, and wise, and good enough to please yourselves, can you be able, and wise, and good enough to please the world? As your sins are nearest to yourselves, so are your graces; and as you know more evil by yourselves than others know, so you know more good by yourselves. That little fire will not warm all the room, which will not warm the hearth it lieth on.

Chapter 120

S. The Greatest Thing in the World

The Greatest Thing in the World by Richard Baxter The flesh is not only the common idol, but the most devouring idol in all the world. It hath not, as subservient, flattered idols have, only a knee and compliment, or now and then a sacrifice or ceremony, but it hath the heart, the tongue, the body to serve it; the whole estate, the service of friends, the use of wit and utmost diligence; in a word, it hath all. It is loved and served by the sensualist, as God should be loved and served by his own, even "with all their heart, and soul, and might:" they "honour it with their substance, and the firstfruits of their increase." It is as faithfully served as Christ requireth to be of his disciples: men will part with father, and mother, and brother, and sister, and nearest friends, and all that is against it, for the pleasing of their flesh. Nay, Christ required men to part with no greater matter for him than transitory earthly things, which they must shortly part with whether they will or no; but they do for the flesh ten thousand thousandfold more than ever they were required to do for Christ. They forsake God for it. They forsake Christ, and heaven, and their salvation for it. They forsake all the solid comforts of this life, and all the joys of the life to come for it. They sell all that they have, and lay down the price at its feet; yea, more than all they have, even all their hopes of what they might have to all eternity. They suffer a martyrdom in the flames of hell for ever, for their flesh. All the pains they take is for it. All the wrong they do to others, and all the stirs and rums they make in the world, is for it. And all the time they spend is for it: and had they a thousand years more to live, they would spend it accordingly If any thing seem excepted for God, it is but the bones, or crumbs, or leavings of the flesh; or rather, it is nothing: for God hath not indeed the hours which he seems to have, he hath but a few fair words and compliments, when the flesh hath their hearts in the midst of their hypocritical worship, and on his holy day; and they serve him but as the Indians serve the devil, that he may serve their turns, and do them no hurt.

Chapter 121

S. The Judgement of God Compared to that of Men

The Judgement of God Compared to that of Men by Richard Baxter

1. An humbled soul, that hath felt what it is to have displeased God, and what it is to be under his curse, and what it is to be reconciled to him by the death and intercession of Jesus Christ, is so taken up in seeking the favour of God, and is so troubled with every fear of his displeasure, and is so delighted with the sense of his love, as that he can scarce have while to mind so small a matter as the favour or displeasure of a man. God's favour is enough for him, and so precious to him, that if he find that he hath this, so small a matter as the favour of a man will scarce be missed by him.

2. God only is our supreme Judge, and our governors as officers limited by him but for others, if they will be usurpers, and set themselves in the throne of God, and there let fly their censures upon things and persons which concern them not, why should we seem much concerned in it? If a beggar step up into a seat of judicature, and there condemn one and fine another, will you fear him, or laugh at him? Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master doth he stand or fall. Men may step up into the throne of God, and there presume to judge others according to their interests and passions: but God will quickly pull them down, and teach them better to know their places. How like is the common censure of the world, to the game of boys, that will hold an assize, and make a judge, and try and condemn one another in sport! And have we not a greater Judge to fear?

3. It is God only that passeth the final sentence, from whom there is no appeal to any other: but from human judgment there lieth an appeal to God.' Their judgment must be judged of by him. Things shall not stand as now men censure them. Many a bad cause is now judged good, through the multitude or greatness of those that favour it: and many a good cause is now condemned. Many a one is taken as a malefactor because he obeyeth God and doth his duty. But all these things must be judged over again, by him that hath denounced a "woe to them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness," Isaiah 5:20. "He that saith to the wicked, Thou art righteous, people shall curse him, nations shall abhor him," Proverbs 24:24. It were ill with the best of the servants of Christ, if the judgment of the world must stand, who condemn them as fools, and hypocrites, and what they list: then the devil's judgment would stand. But he is the wise man that God will judge to be wise at last; and he only is the happy man that God calls happy. The erring judgment of a creature is but like an ignorant man's writing the names of several things upon an apothecary's boxes; if he write the names of poisons upon some, and of antidotes on others, when there are no such things within them, they are not to be estimated according to those names. How different are the names that God and the world do put upon things and persons now! And how few now approve of that which God approveth of, and will justify at last! How many will God judge heterodox and wicked that men judged orthodox, and worthy of applause! and how many will God judge orthodox and sincere! that were called heretics and hypocrites by men! God will not verify every word against his servants, which angry men, or contentious disputants, say against them. The learning, or authority, or other advantages of the

contenders, may now bear down the reasons and reputations of more wise and righteous men than they, which God will restore and vindicate at last. The names of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and many other excellent servants of the Lord, are now made odious in the writings and reports of papists, by their impudent lies; but God judgeth otherwise, with more righteous judgment. Oh what abundance of persons and causes will be justified at the dreadful day of God, which the world condemned! And how many will be there condemned, that were justified by the world! O blessed day! most desirable to the just, most terrible to the wicked and every hypocrite. How many things will then be set straight, that now are crooked! and how many innocents and saints will then have a resurrection of their murdered names, that were buried by the world in a heap of lies, and their enemies never thought of their reviving! O look to that final judgment of the Lord, and you will take men’s censures but as the shaking of a leaf.

4. It is God only that hath power to execute his sentence, to our happiness or misery. "There is one lawgiver that is able to save and to destroy," James 4:12. If he say to us, "Come ye blessed," we shall be happy, though devils and men should curse us; for those that he blesseth shall be blessed. If he condemn to hell, the applause of the world will fetch no man out, nor give him ease. A great name on earth, or histories written in their applause, or a gilded monument over their bones, are a poor relief to damned souls. And the barking of the wicked, and their scorns on earth, are no diminution to the joy or glory of the souls that shine and triumph with Christ. It is our Lord that "hath the keys of death and hell," Revelation 1:18. Please him, and you are sure to escape, though the pope, and all the wicked of the world, should thunder out against you their most direful curses. Woe to us if the wicked could execute all their malicious censures! Then how many saints would be in hell! But if it he God that justifies us, how inconsiderable a matter is it, who they are that condemn us, or what be their presences! Romans 8:33.

Chapter 122

S. The Mutual Duties Of Husbands And Wives Towards Each Other

The Mutual Duties Of Husbands And Wives Towards Each Other

By Richard Baxter, 1615-1691

Extracted and modernised with apologies

by Scott Andersen

Selfish ungodly persons everywhere enter into all kinds of relationships with a desire of serving their ownselves, and gratifying their own flesh without knowing or caring what is required of them. Their desire is for the honour, profit, or pleasure their relationship will provide them but not for what God and man requires or expects from them. [Genesis 2:18, Proverbs 18:22] Their mind is concerned only with what they shall have and not for what they shall be and do. (1)

They know what they want others to do for them, but do not care what their duty is to do for others. This is the way it is with too many husbands and wives.

We should be very concerned to know what the duties of our relationships are. And how we can please God in our relationships. Study and do your part, and God will certainly do his.

Direct. I. The first duty of husbands is to love their wives (and wives their husbands). Ephesians 5:25, Ephesians 5:28-29, Ephesians 5:33. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies; he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.Let every one of you in particular so love his wife, even as himself." See Genesis 2:24.

Some directions for maintaining love are as follows:

1. Choose a good spouse in the first place. A spouse who is truly good and kind. Full of virtue and holiness to the Lord. (2) 2. Don’t marry till you are sure that you can love entirely.

3. Be not too hasty, but know beforehand all the imperfections which may tempt you to despise your future mate. (3)

4. Remember that justice commands you to love one that has forsaken all the world for you. One who is contented to be the companion of your labours and sufferings, and be a sharer in all things with you, and that MUST be your companion until death. (4)

5. Remember that women are ordinarily affectionate, passionate creatures, and as they love much themselves, so they expect much love from you.

6. Remember that you are under God’s command; and to deny marital love to your wives, is to deny a duty which God has urgently imposed on you. Obedience therefore should command your love.

7. Remember that you are "one flesh"; you have drawn her to forsake father and mother, and to cleave to you; (5)

8. Take more notice of the good, that is in your wives, than of her faults. Let not the observation of their faults make you forget or overlook their virtues. (6) 9. Don’t magnify her imperfections until they drive you crazy.

Excuse them as far as is right in the Lord. Consider the frailty of the sex. Consider also your own infirmities, and how much your wives must bear with you. (7) 10. Don’t stir up the evil of your spouse, but cause the best in them to be lived out. (8)

11. Overcome them with love; and then they will be loving to you, and consequently lovely. Love will cause love, as fire kindleth fire. A good husband is the best means to make a good and loving wife. (9)

12. Live before them the life of a prudent, lowly, loving, meek, selfdenying, patient, harmless, holy heavenly Christian. (10) Direct. II. Husbands and wives must live together. 1 Corinthians 7:2-5

Direct III. Abhor not only adultery itself, but all that leads to unchasteness and the violation of your marriagecovenant. [Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:9; John 8:1-59; John 4:1-54, of adultery; Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 22:14; Hosea 4:2-3; Proverbs 2:17; 1 Corinthians 6:15, 1 Corinthians 6:19; Malachi 2:15; Proverbs 6:32, Proverbs 6:35; Deuteronomy 23:2; Leviticus 21:9; Leviticus 18:28; Numbers 25:9; Jeremiah 5:7-9]

Direct. IV. Husband and wife must delight in the love and company, and lives of each other. When husband and wife take pleasure in each other, it unites them in duty, it helps them with ease to do their work, and bear their burdens; and is a major part of the comfort of marriage. [Proverbs 5:18-19] Direct. V. It is your solemn duty to live in quietness and peace. To avoid every occasion of fierce anger and discord.

[I. Directions showing the great necessity of avoiding dissension.] 1. The duty of your marriage-union requires unity. Can you not agree with your own flesh?

2. Division with your spouse will pain and upset your whole life ... Just as you do not wish to hurt your own self and are quick to care for your own wounds; so you should take notice of any break in the peace of your marriage and quickly seek to heal it. 3. Fighting chills love, fighting makes your spouse undesirable to you in your mind. Wounding is separating; to be tied together through marital bonds while your hearts are estranged is to be tormented. To be inwardly adversaries, while outwardly husband and wife turns your home and delight into a prison. (11)

4. Dissension between the husband and the wife disrupts the whole family life; they are like oxen unequally yoked, no work can be accomplished for all the striving with one another.

5. It greatly makes you unfit for the worship of God; you are not able to pray together nor to discuss heavenly things together, nor can you be mutual helpers to each other’s souls. (12) 6. Dissension makes it impossible to manage your family properly.(13) 7. Your dissension will expose you to the malice of Satan, and give him advantage for many, many temptations. (14) [II. Directions for avoiding dissensions.]

1. Keep alive your love for one another. Love your spouse dearly and fervently. Love will suppress wrath; you cannot be bitter over little things with someone you dearly love; much less will you descend to harsh words, aloofness, or any form abuse. (15)

2. Both husband and wife must mortify their pride and strong self centered feelings. (16) These are the feelings which cause intolerance and insensitivity. You must pray and labour for a humble, meek, and quiet spirit. A proud heart is troubled and provoked by every word that seems to assault your selfesteem.(17)

3.Do not forget that you are both diseased persons, full of infirmities; and therefore expect the fruit of those infirmities in each other; and do not act surprised about it, as if you had never known of it before. Decide to be patient with one another; remembering that you took one another as sinful, frail, imperfect persons, and not as angels, or as blameless and perfect. (18)

4. Remember still that your are one flesh; and therefore be no more offended with the words or failings of each other, than you would be if they were your own. Be angry with your wife for her faults no more than you are angry with yourself for your own. Have such an anger and displeasure against a fault, as will work to heal it; but not such as will cause festering and aggravation of the diseased part. This will turn anger into compassion, and will cause you to administer care for the cure. (19)

5. Agree together beforehand, that when one of you is sinfully angry and upset the other shall silently and gently bear it until you have come to your sanity. (20)

6. Have an eye to the future and remember that you must live together until death, and must be the companions of each other’s lives, and the comforts of each other’s lives, and then you will see how absurd it is for you to disagree and upset each other.(21) 7. As far as you are able, avoid all occasions of wrath and quarreling, about the matters of your families.(22)

8. If you are so angry that you cannot calm yourself at least control your tongue and do not speak hurtful and taunting words, talking it out hotly fans the fire, and increases the flame; (Do not ventilate your anger as you only feed your fleshly vengenance) Be silent, and you will much sooner return to your serenity and peace.(23)

9. Let the calm and rational spouse speak carefully and compellingly reason with the other (unless it be with a person so insolent as will make things worse). Usually a few sober, grave admonitions, will prove as water to the boiling pot. Say to your angry wife or husband, "You know this should not be between us; love must put it to rest, and it must be repented of. God does not approve of it, and we shall not approve of it when this heat is over. This frame of mind is contrary to a praying frame, and this language contrary to a praying language; we must pray together; let us do nothing contrary to prayer now: sweet water and bitter come not from one spring", etc. Some calm and condescending words of reason, may stop the torrent, and revive the reason which passion had overcome.(24)

10. When you have sinfully acted towards your spouse confess to one another; and ask for forgiveness of each other, and join in prayer to God for pardon; and this will act as a preventative in you the next time: you will surely be ashamed to do that which you have confessed and asked forgiveness for of God and man.(25)

Direct. VI. One of the most important duties of a husband to his wife and a wife to her husband is to carefully, skillfully, and diligently help each other in the knowledge and worship, and obedience of God that they might be saved and grow in their Christian Life.

1. This is not love, when you neglect each other's soul.(26) Do you believe that you have immortal souls, and an endless life of joy or misery to live? Then you MUST know that your great concern and business is, to care for those souls, and for the endless life. Therefore if your love does not help one another in this which is your main concern, it is of little worth, and of little use. Every thing in this world is as valuable as it is useful. A useless or unprofitable love, is a worthless love. It is a trifling, or a childish, or a beastly love, which helps you but in trifling, childish, or beastly things. Do you love your wife, and will leave her in the power of Satan, or will not help to save her soul? What! love her, and yet let her go to hell? and rather let her be damned than you will be at the pains to endeavor her salvation? Never say you love them, if you will not labour for their salvation.

What then shall we say of them that do not only deny their help, but are hinderers of the holiness and salvation of each other! [1 Kings 11:4, Acts 5:2, Job 2:9] And yet (the Lord have mercy on the poor miserable world!) how common a thing is this among us! If the wife be ignorant and ungodly, she will do her worst to make or keep her husband in the same state as she is herself; and if God put any holy inclinations into his heart, she will be like water to the fire, to quench it or to keep it subdued; and if he will not be as sinful and miserable as herself, he shall have little rest. And if God open the eyes of the wife of a bad man, and show her the necessity of a holy life, and she resolves to obey the Lord, and save her soul, what an enemy and tyrant will her husband be to her (if God does not restrain him); so that the devil himself will do no more to prevent the saving of their souls than ungodly husbands and wives do against each other.

2. Consider also that you are not living up to the design of marriage, if you are not helping each other's souls.(27)

3. Consider also, if you neglect each other's souls, what enemies you are to one another, and how you are preparing for your everlasting sorrows: when you should be preparing for your joyful meeting in heaven, you are laying up for yourselves everlasting horror.(28)

Therefore without a moment's hesitation determine to live together as heirs of heaven, and to be a helper to one other's souls. To assist you in this holy pursuit I will give you these following directions, which if you will faithfully practice, may make you to be special blessings to each other.

Direct. I. Before you can help to save each other's souls you must be sure of your own. You must have a deep and living understanding of the great eternal matters of which you are required to speak to others about. If you have no compassion for your own soul and will sell it for a moment of ease and pleasure, surely then you have no compassion for your spouse's soul.(29)

Direct. II. Take every opportunity which your nearness provides to be speaking seriously to each other about the matters of God, and your salvation.(30) Discussing those things of this world no more than required. And then talk together of the state and duty of your souls towards God, and of your hopes of heaven, as those that take these for their greatest business. And don't speak lightly, or unreverently, or in a rude and disputing manner; but with gravity and sobriety, as those that are discussing the most important things in the whole world. [Mark 8:36]

Direct. III. When either husband or wife is speaking seriously about holy things, let the other be careful to cherish, and not to extinguish the conversation.(31)

Direct IV. Watch over the hearts and lives of one another, judging the condition of each other's souls, and the strength or weakness of each others sins and graces, and the failings of each others lives, so that you may be able to apply to one another the most suitable help. (32)

Direct. V. Do not flatter one another from a foolish love.(33) Neither meanly critise one another. Do all in true, Godly love. Some are so blinded to the faults of husband, wife or child that they do not see the sin and wickedness in them. They are deluded concerning their eternal souls. This is the same as it is with self loving sinners and their own souls, willfully deceiving themselves to their damnation. This flattering of yourselves or others, is but the devil's charm to keep you from effectual repentance and salvation. On the other hand, some cannot speak to one another of their faults, without such bitterness, or contempt, which will cause them to refuse the medicine that could save them. If the everyday warnings you make to strangers must all be offered in love, much more between the husband and wife.

Direct. VI. Keep up your love to one another, do not grow distant. For if you do, you will despise each other's counsels and reproofs.

Direct. VII. Do not discourage your spouse from instructing you by refusing to receive and learn from their corrections.(34)

Direct. VIII. Help each other by reading together the most convicting, cutting, lifegiving books. The ones most spiritual. Do not waste your time on light, weak, milktoast ministries and books. Make friendships together with the holiest persons. This is not neglecting your duty to one another, but that all the helps working together may be the more effectual.(35)

Direct. IX. Don't Conceal the state of your souls, nor hide your faults from one another. You are as one flesh, and should have one heart: and as it is dangerous for a man to be ignorant of his own soul so it is very hurtful to husband or wife to be ignorant of one another, in those areas where they have need of help.(36) Direct X. Avoid as much as possible different opinions in religion.

Direct. XI. If different religious understandings come between you, be sure that you manage it with holiness, humility, love, and peace, and not with carnality, pride, uncharitableness, or contention.

Direct. XII. Do not either blindly indulge each others faults nor be too critical of each other's state, allowing Satan to alienate your affections from one another.

Direct. XIII. If you are married to one that is an ungodly person, yet keep up all the love which is due for the relation's sake.(37)

Direct XIV. Join together in frequent and fervent prayer. Prayer forces the mind into sobriety, and moves the heart with the presence and majesty of God. Pray also for each other when you are in secret, that God may do that work which you most desire, upon each other's hearts.

Direct. XV. Lastly, Help each other by an exemplary life. Be yourself, what you desire your husband or wife should be; excel in meekness, and humility, and charity, and dutifulness, and diligence, and selfdenial, and patience.(38)

Direct. VII. Another important duty in marriage is, to help in the health and comfort of each other's bodies. Not to pamper each other's flesh, or cherish the vices of pride, or sloth, or gluttony, or the sensual pleasures in each other; but to increase the health and vigor of the body, making it fit for the service of the soul and God.

1. In health, you must be careful to provide for each other (not so much pleasing as) wholesome food, and to keep each other from that which is hurtful to your health; warning each other from the dangers of gluttony and idleness, the two great murderers of mankind.(39)

2. Also in sickness, you are to be caring of each other; and not to spare any costs or pains, by which the health of each other may be restored, or your souls confirmed, and your comforts cherished.(40)

Direct. VIII. Another duty of husbands and wives is, to be helpful to each other in their worldly business and estates. Not for worldly ends, nor with a worldly mind; but in obedience to God, who will have them labour, as well as pray, for their daily bread, and has determined that in the sweat of their brows they shall eat their bread; and that six days they shall labor and do all that they have to do; and that he that will not work must not eat.(41)

Direct IX. Also you must be careful to guard the honour of one another. You must not divulge, but conceal, the failings of each other; The reputation of each other must be as dear to you as your own. It is a sinful and unfaithful practice of many, both husbands and wives, who among their friends are discussing the faults of each other, which they are required in tenderness to cover up. MANY peevish persons will aggravate all the faults of their spouse behind their backs.(42) Direct X. IT is your marriage duty to assist one another in the education of your children.(43) Direct XI. It is your marriage duty to assist each other in charity.(44)

Direct XII. LASTLY, it is a great DUTY of husbands and wives, to help and comfort one other in preparing for a safe and happy death.(45)

1. In the time of health, you must often and seriously remind each other of the time when death will make the separation; and live together daily as those that are still expecting the parting hour....Reprove everything in one another, which would be an unwelcome memory at death. If you see each other dull and slow in heavenliness, or living in vanity, worldliness, or sloth, as if you had forgotten that you must shortly die, stir up one another to do all without delay which the approach of such a day requireth.

2. And when death is at hand, oh then what abundance of tenderness, and seriousness, and skill, and diligence, is needful for one, that hath the last office of love to perform, to the departing soul of so near a friend! Oh then what need will there be of your most wise, and faithful, and diligent help!....They that are utterly unprepared and unfit to die themselves, can do little to prepare or help another. But they that live together as the heirs of heaven, and converse on earth as fellow travellers to the land of promise, may help and encourage the souls of one another, and joyfully part at death, as expecting quickly to meet again in life eternal. THE END No doubt much of the original force and poetry has been lost in my feeble attempt to modernise. It was only my hope to make this treatise available and understandable to the reader who has not accustomed himself to reading and understanding the language of our King James Version Bible. This work was found in Volume I, Baxter's Practical Works, A Christian Directory, page 431438. Also available upon

request is a Bible study where the scriptures reflecting on each point in Baxter's above treatise are listed. (Contact Scott Andersen, email: sdandersen@juno.com) It would be hoped that the hearing of God's word regarding the mutual duties of Husbands and Wives will further strengthen your conviction and provide help to your soul to live as Faith requires. Lastly I would like to relate what a very wise man once told me: "If you are having troubles with your spouse it is not because of what you think of him or her, it is not because of negative thought patterns, it is not because you haven't first loved self. But it is what you think of Jesus. Do you love Him FIRST? Do you live for Him FIRST? Is your life, his? If you are right with Jesus Christ the King of Glory, then it will be right with your husband or your wife. And this is what is right with God."

FOOTNOTES

Some of the following scripture references are found in Baxter's Work, others I have added in hopes of increasing your edification.

1 Luke 6:31-32; 1 Corinthians 10:24; Galatians 6:2; Php 2:4; 2 Timothy 3:2; James 2:15; 1 John 3:17; Genesis 4:9; 1 Samuel 25:3-11; Esther 6:6; Isaiah 56:11; John 6:26 2 Proverbs 18:22; Proverbs 19:13-14 3 Proverbs 18:13 4 Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Colossians 3:19; Genesis 2:24 5 Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7 6 1 Corinthians 13:7; Php 2:3 7 Psalms 103:14; 1 Corinthians 13:7 8 Proverbs 10:12 9 Romans 12:21; 1 Peter 3:9 10 Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Proverbs 11:30; 1 Timothy 4:16; James 5:19-20; 1 Peter 3:1-2 11 Proverbs 19:13 12 Matthew 5:23; 1 Samuel 15:22 13 Matthew 12:25; Mark 3:25; Luke 11:17 14 James 1:13; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Job 2:9 15 Leviticus 19:8; Psalms 133:1; Proverbs 15:17; Romans 12:10; Romans 14:19; Romans 15:1; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 16 Luke 9:23; Psalms 101:5; Proverbs 16:5; Proverbs 21:4; Proverbs 28:25; Matthew 23:12; 1 Peter 5:6 17 Psalms 10:4; Hosea 7:10; Proverbs 13:10; Proverbs 28:25 18 Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:24; 1 John 1:8 19 Ephesians 4:26; Ephesians 4:32; James 1:19 20 Ephesians 4:2; 1 Corinthians 13:4 21 Ecclesiastes 9:9; Romans 7:2

22 Genesis 2:24 23 Galatians 5:15; James 3:5-6, James 3:8 24 Proverbs 15:18; Matthew 5:9; Psalms 85:8 25 Ephesians 4:32; James 5:16 26 2 Corinthians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 12:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:8 27 Genesis 2:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Ephesians 4:16; Hebrews 12:15; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Colossians 2:19 28 Genesis 35:2; Genesis 35:4; Leviticus 19:17; Numbers 16:27, Numbers 16:32 29 Genesis 2:18; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 6:3; Genesis 25:29; Genesis 25:34 30 Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 3:13; Hebrews 10:24 31 Proverbs 27:6; Proverbs 15:12; Proverbs 15:31; Proverbs 15:32 32 Hebrews 10:24 33 Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 4:26; Ephesians 5:9 34 Proverbs 29:1 35 Ephesians 4:11-16 36 James 5:16; Ephesians 5:27-32 37 1 Corinthians 7:13-14

38 1 Peter 3:1; John 13:15; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9; Titus 2:6; James 3:17; 2 Peter 1:5-8

39 1 Corinthians 6:19; Deuteronomy 21:20; Proverbs 23:21; Proverbs 19:15; Proverbs 6:9; Proverbs 10:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:10 Proverbs 19:24; Proverbs 20:13; Proverbs 23:21; Proverbs 24:33; Isaiah 56:10; 1 Timothy 5:13 40 Ephesians 5:29, Job 19:17

41 Proverbs 31:1-31; Titus 2:5; 1 Timothy 5:14; 1 Timothy 5:8; Exodus 20:9, Exodus 20:11; Genesis 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:10-12 42 James 4:11; Proverbs 17:9; 1 Peter 4:8 43 Genesis 18:19; Genesis 35:2; Joshua 24:14; 1 Timothy 5:14; Proverbs 31:1

44 Hebrews 13:2; Genesis 18:6; Romans 12:13; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Luke 16:9; 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 5:10; Proverbs 11:20; Proverbs 11:28; Nehemiah 8:1; Proverbs 19:17; Job 29:13; John 31:20 Acts 20:35

45 Deuteronomy 32:29; Psalms 39:4; Psalms 90:12; Romans 14:8; Hebrews 13:14; 1 Peter 1:17; Psalms 3:5; Psalms 37:37; Psalms 49:15; Psalms 73:24; Psalms 116:15; Proverbs 14:32; Ecclesiastes 7:1; Luke 16:22; Luke 23:43; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; 2 Corinthians 5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:4; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Php 1:20-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 2 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 1:14; Revelation 14:13; Psalms 23:4

Chapter 123

S. The Need of Personal Revival

The Need of Personal Revival by Richard Baxter

I know not what others think, but for my own part I am ashamed of my stupidity, and wonder at myself that I deal not with my own and others souls as one that looks for the great day of the Lord; and that I can have room for almost any other thoughts and words; and that such astonishing matters do not wholly absorb my mind. I marvel how I can preach of them slightly and coldly; and how I can let men alone in their sins; and that I do not go to them, and beseech them, for the Lord's sake, to repent, however they may take it, and whatever pain and trouble it should cost me.

I seldom come out of the pulpit but my conscience smiteth me that I have been no more serious and fervent. It accuseth me not so much for want of ornaments and elegancy, nor for letting fall an unhandsome word; but it asketh me, 'How couldst thou speak of life and death with such a heart? How couldst thou preach of heaven and hell in such a careless, sleepy manner? Dost thou believe what thou sayest? Art thou in earnest, or in jest? How canst thou tell people that sin is such a thing, and that so much misery is upon them and before them, and be no more affected with it? Shouldst thou not weep over such a people, and should not thy tears interrupt thy words? Shouldst thou not cry aloud, and show them their transgressions; and entreat and beseech them as for life and death?' And for myself, as I am ashamed of my dull and careless heart, and of my slow and unprofitable course of life, so, the Lord knows, I am ashamed of every sermon I preach; when I think what I have been speaking of, and who sent me, and that men's salvation or damnation is so much concerned in it, I am ready to tremble lest God should judge me as a slighter of His truths and the souls of men, and lest in the best sermon I should be guilty of their blood. Me thinks we should not speak a word to men in matters of such consequence without tears, or the greatest earnestness that possibly we can; were not we too much guilty of the sin which we reprove, it would be so.

Truly this is the peal that conscience doth ring in my ears, and yet my drowsy soul will not be awakened. Oh, what a thing is an insensible, hardened heart! O Lord, save us from the plague of infidelity and hard-heartedness ourselves, or else how shall we be fit instruments of saving others from it? Oh, do that on our souls which thou wouldst use us to do on the souls of others.

S. The Proper Respect We are to Have Towards Men

The Proper Respect We are to Have Towards Men by Richard Baxter

1. Our parents, rulers, and superiors must be honoured, obeyed, and pleased in all things which they require of us, in the several places of authority which God hath given them over us; and this must be not merely as to man, but as to the officers of God, from whom, and for whom, (and not against him,) they have all their power, Romans 13:1-14; Exodus 20:12; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13; 2 Peter 2:10.

2. We must in charity, and condescension, and meekness of behaviour, seek to please all men in order to their salvation. We must so thirst for the conversion of sinners, that we must become all things (lawful) to all men, that we may win them. We must not stand upon our terms, and keep at a distance from them, but condescend to the lowest, and bear the infirmities of the weak; and in things indifferent not take the course that pleaseth ourselves, but that which, by pleasing him, may edify our weak brother. We must forbear and forgive, and part with our right, and deny ourselves the use of our christian liberty, were it as long as we live, if it be necessary to the saving of our brethren's souls, by removing the offence which hindereth them by prejudice. We must not seek our own carnal ends, but the benefit of others, and do them all the good we can.

3. As our neighbour is commanded to love us as himself, we are bound by all lawful means to render ourselves amiable to him, that we may help and facilitate this his love, as it is more necessary to him than to us: for to help him in obeying so great a command must needs be a great duty. And therefore if his very sin possess him with prejudice against us, or cause him to distaste us for some indifferent thing, we must as far as we can lawfully, remove the cause of his prejudice and dislike; though he that hateth us for obeying God, must not be cured by our disobeying him. Wee are so far from being obliged to displease men by surliness and morosity, that we are bound to pleasing gentleness, and brotherly kindness, and to all that carriage which is necessary to cure their sinful hatred or dislike.

4. We must not be self-conceited, and prefer a weak, unfurnished judgment of our own, before the greater wisdom of another; but in honour must prefer each other: and the ignorant must honour the knowledge and parts of others that excel them, and not be stiff in their own opinion, nor wise in their own eyes, nor undervalue another man's reasons or judgment; but be glad to learn of any that can teach them, in the humble acknowledgment of their own insufficiency.

5. Especially we must reverence the judgment of our able, faithful teachers, and not by pride set up our weaker judgment against them, and resist the truth which they deliver to us from God. Neither must we set light by the censures or admonitions of the lawful pastors of the church: when they are agreeable to the word and judgment of God, they are very dreadful. As Tertullian saith, If any so offend as to be banished from communion of prayer, and assembly, and all holy commerce, it is a judgment foregoing the great judgment to come. Yea, if the officers of Christ should wrong you in their censures by passion or mistake, while they act in their own charge about

matters belonging to their cognisance and judgment, you must respectfully and patiently bear the wrong, so as not to dishonour and contemn the authority and office so abused.

6. If sober, godly persons, that are well acquainted with us, do strongly suspect us to be faulty where we discern it not ourselves, it should make us the more suspicious and fearful: and if judicious persons fear you to be hypocrites, and no sound christians, by observing your temper and course of life, it should make you search with the greater fear, and not to disregard their judgment. And if judicious persons, especially ministers, shall tell a poor, fearful, doubting christian, that they verily think their state is safe, it may be a great stay to them, and must not be slighted as nothing, though it cannot give them a certainty of their case. Thus far man's judgment must be valued.

7. A good name among men, which is the reputation of our integrity, is not to be neglected as a thing of nought; for it is a mercy from God for which we must be thankful, and it is a useful means to our successful serving and honouring God. And the more eminent we are, and the more the honour of God and religion is joined with ours, or the good of men's souls dependeth on our reputation, the more careful we should be of it; and it may be a duty sometimes to vindicate it by the magistrate's justice, against a slander. Especially preachers (whose success for the saving of their hearers depends much on their good name) must not despise it.

8. The censures of the most petulant, and the scorns of enemies, are not to be made light of, as they are their sins, which we must lament; nor as they may provoke us to a more diligent search, and careful watchfulness over our ways. Thus far man's judgment is regardable.

Chapter 125

S. The Sinfulness of Flesh-Pleasing

The Sinfulness of Flesh-Pleasing by Richard Baxter Flesh-Pleasing is a Sin How far flesh-pleasing is a sin, I shall distinctly open to you in these propositions:

1. The pleasing or displeasing of the sensitive appetite in itself considered, is neither sin nor duty, neither good nor evil.

2. To overvalue the pleasing of the flesh is a sin; and to prefer it before the pleasing of God, and the holy preparations for heaven, is the state of carnality and ungodliness, and the common cause of the damnation of souls. The delight of the flesh or senses is a natural good; and the natural desire of it in itself is neither vice nor virtue: but when this little natural good, is preferred before the greater spiritual, moral, or eternal good—this is the sin of carnal minds, which is threatened with death, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:5-8, Romans 8:13.

3. To buy the pleasing of the flesh at too dear a rate, as the loss of time, or with care and trouble above its worth, and to be too much set on making provisions to please it—does show that it is overvalued, and is the sin forbidden, Romans 8:14.

4. When any desire of the flesh is inordinate, immoderate, or irregular for matter, or manner, quantity, quality, or season—it is a sin to please that inordinate desire.

5. When pleasing the flesh does too much pamper it, and nourish filthy lusts, or any other sin, and is not necessary on some other account, as doing greater good—it is a sin. But if life requires it, lust must be subdued by other means.

6. When pleasing the flesh does hurt it, by impairing health, and so making the body less fit for duty—it is a sin. And so almost all intemperance tends to breed diseases; and God commands temperance even for the body's good.

7. When unnecessary flesh-pleasing hinders any duty of piety, justice, charity, or self-preservation, in thought, affection, word, or deed—it is sinful.

8. If any pleasing of the flesh can be imagined to have no tendency directly or indirectly to any moral good or evil, it is not the object of a moral choosing or refusing; but like the winking of the eye, is not voluntary—it is not within the compass of morality.

9. Every pleasing of the flesh, which is capable of being referred to a higher end, and is not so referred and used—is a sin. And there is scarcely anything which a man could deliberate on, but should be referred to a higher end—even to the glory of God; and to spur us up to love and thankfulness; and strengthening or fitting us some way for some duty. This is apparently a sin,

(1.) Because else flesh-pleasing is made our ultimate end, and the flesh an idol if ever we desire it only for itself (when it may be referred to a higher end). For though the sensitive appetite of itself has no intended end, yet whatever the will desires is either as an end, or as a means. That which is not desired as a means to some higher end, is desired as our ultimate end itself (in that act). But

God alone is man’s lawful, ultimate end.

(2.) Because it is against an express command, 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

(3.) Because else we shall take God’s creatures in vain, and cast them away in waste.

(4.) And we shall lose our own benefit to which the creature or pleasure should be improved.

(5.) And we shall silence reason, when it should direct; and we shall suspend the government of the will, and give the government (so long) to the flesh or brutish appetite: for that faculty rules, whose object is our end. These reasons clearly prove it a sin to terminate our desires in any act of flesh-pleasing as our end, and look no higher, when it is a matter of moral choice and deliberation.

10. But the sin here is not simply that the flesh is pleased, but that the duty of referring it to a higher end is omitted: so that it is a sin of omission (unless we proceed to refer better things as a means to it).

11. The intending of God’s glory or our spiritual good, cannot be distinctly and sensibly acted in every particular pleasure we take, or bit we eat, or thing we use; but a sincere, habitual intention well laid at first in the heart, will serve to the right use of many particular means. As a man purposes at his first setting out to what place he means to go, and afterward goes on, though at every step he thinks not sensibly of his end; so he who devotes himself unto God, and in general designs all to his glory, and the furtherance of his duty and salvation, will carry on small particulars to that end, by a secret, unobserved action of the soul, performed at the same time with other actions, which only are observed. He who intends but his health in eating and drinking, is not remembering his health at every bit and cup; and yet has such a habit of care and caution, as will unobservedly keep him in his way, and help him to fit the means unto the end. As the accustomed hand of a musician can play a lesson on his lute, while he thinks of something else, so can a resolved Christian faithfully do such accustomed things as eating, and drinking, and clothing him, and laboring in his calling, to the good ends which he (first actually, and still habitually) resolved on, without a distinct remembrance and observable intention of that end.

12. The body must be kept in that condition (as far as we can) that is fittest for the service of the soul: as you keep your horse, neither so pampered as to be unruly, nor yet so low as to disable him for travel; but all that health and strength which makes it not unruly, makes it the more serviceable.

It is not the life of the body, but the health and the cheerfulness, which makes it fit for duty. And so much pleasing of the flesh as tends but to its health and cheerfulness, is a duty, where it can be done without greater hurt the other way. A heavy body is but a dull and heavy servant to the mind, yes, a great impediment to the soul in duty, and a great temptation to many sins; as sickly and melancholy people, and many dull and phlegmatic people, know by sad experience. It is as great a duty to help the body to its due alacrity and fitness for service, as it is to tame it, and bring it under by fasting and sackcloth, when it is proud or lustful. And those who think fasting on certain days, in a formal manner, is acceptable to God, when the state of the body is not helped, but rather hurt and hindered by it, as if it were a thing required for itself, do mistakenly offer a sacrifice to God, which he requires not; and take him to be an enemy to man, who desires his pain and grief, when

it tends not to his good. A mower who has a good scythe will do more in a day, than another that has a bad scythe can do in two days. Every workman knows the benefit of having his tools in order; and every traveler knows the difference between a cheerful and a tired horse; and those who have had both health and sickness, know what a help it is in every work of God, to have a healthful body, and cheerful spirits, and an alacrity and promptitude to obey the mind. When the sights of prospects and beauteous buildings, and fields, and countries, or the use of walks, or gardens, do tend to raise the soul to holy contemplation, to admire the Creator, and to think of the glory of the life to come; this delight is lawful if not a duty, where it may be had. So when music does cheer the mind, and fit it for thanks and praise to God: and when the rest of the body, and the use of your best apparel, and moderate feasting, on the Lord's day, and other days of thanksgiving, do promote the spiritual service of the day, they are good and profitable; but to those that are more hindered by fullness, even abstinence on such days is best. So that the use of the body must be judged of as it is a means or an expression of the good or evil of the mind.

13. Sometimes the present time must be most regarded herein, and sometimes the future. For when some great sin, or judgment, or other reason calls us to a fast, when it becomes needful to the ends of that present day, we must do it, though the body were so weak that it would be somewhat the worse afterward; so be it that the good which we may expect by it that day, be greater than the good which it is likely to deprive us of afterward; otherwise the after-loss, if greater, is more to be avoided.

14. Many things do remotely fit us for our main end, which, nearly and directly, seem to have no tendency to it; as those that are only to furnish us with natural strength, and vigor, and alacrity, or to prevent impediments. As a traveler's hood and cloak, and other carriage, seem rather to be hindrances to his speed; but yet are necessary for preventing the cold and wet, which else might hinder him more. Yes, a possible, uncertain danger or impediment, if great, may be prevented with a certain small impediment. So it is fit that our bodies be kept in that health and alacrity, which is ordinarily necessary to our duty; and in eating and drinking, and lawful recreations, it is not only the next or present duty, which we prepare for, but for the duty which may be very distant.

15. Ordinarily it is safest to be more fearful of excess of fleshly pleasure, than of defect. For ordinarily we are all very prone to an excess, and also the excess is usually more dangerous. When excess is the damnation of all, or most who ever perish, and defect is but the trouble and hindrance but never, or rarely, the damnation of any—it is easy then to see on which side we should be most fearful, cautious, and vigilant

16. Yet excessive scrupulousness maybe a greater sin, and a greater hindrance in the work of God, than some small excesses of flesh-pleasing, which are committed through ignorance or inadvertency. When an honest heart which prefers God before the flesh, and is willing to please him though it displease the flesh, shall yet mistake in some small particulars, or commit some daily errors of infirmity or heedlessness, it is a far less hindrance to the main work of religion, than if that man should daily perplex his mind with scruples about every bit he eats—whether it be not too pleasing or too much; and about every word he speaks; and every step he goes—as many poor, tempted, melancholy people do; thereby disabling themselves, not only to love, and praise, and thankfulness—but even all considerable service. In summary—All pleasing of the senses or flesh, which is lawful, must have these qualifications:

1. God’s glory must be the ultimate end.

2. The matter must be lawful and not forbidden.

3. Therefore it must not be to the hindrance of duty.

4. Nor to the drawing of us to sin.

5. Nor to the hurt of our health.

6. Nor too highly valued, nor too dearly bought.

7. The measure must be moderate rate. Where any of these are lacking, it is sin. Where flesh-pleasing is habitually the bent of heart and life, and preferred before the pleasing of God—it proves the soul in captivity to the flesh, and in a damnable condition.

The great evil of flesh-pleasing!

I am next to show you the evil or malignity of predominant flesh-pleasing. For if the greatness of the sin were known, it would contribute much to the cure.

1. Understand that flesh-pleasing is the sin of sins, the end of all sin, and therefore the very sum and life of all sin. All the evil which wicked men commit, is ultimately to please the flesh. The love of flesh-pleasing is the cause of all sin. Pride, and covetousness, and whoredom, and wantonness, and gluttony, and drunkenness, and all other sins—are but either the immediate works of sensuality and flesh-pleasing, or the distant service of it, by laying in provision for it. And all the malicious enmity and opposition to God and godliness is from hence, because they cross the interest and desires of the flesh: the final cause is it for which men invent and use all the means that tend to it. Therefore all other sin being nothing but the means for the pleasing of our fleshly appetites and fancies, it is evident that flesh-pleasing is the common cause of them all, and is to all other sin as the spring is to the watch, or the poise to the clock—the weight which gives them all their motion. Cure this sin and you have taken off the poise. But, indeed, nothing but the love of pleasing God, can truly cure the love of flesh-pleasing: and such a cure is the cure of every sin.

2. Flesh-pleasing is the grand idolatry of the world. The flesh is the greatest idol that ever was set up against God. Therefore Paul says of sensual worldlings, that "their belly is their God," and thence it is that they "mind earthly things," and "glory in their shame, and are enemies to the cross of Christ," that is, to sufferings for Christ, and the doctrine and duties which would cause their sufferings. That is a man’s God, which he takes for his chief good, and loves best, and trusts in most, and is most desirous to please: and this is the flesh to every sensualist. He "loves pleasure more than God." He "savors" or "minds" the "things of the flesh," and "lives" to it, and "walks after it." He "makes provision for it to satisfy its appetite or lusts." He "sows to the flesh and fulfills its lusts." And thus, while lust or sensuality has dominion, sin is said to have dominion over them, and they are servants to it, Romans 6:14, Romans 6:20. For "to whom men yield themselves servants to obey, his servants they are whom they serve or obey," Romans vi. 16. It is not primarily the bowing of the knee and praying to a thing, which constitutes idolatry. It is the loving, and pleasing, and obeying, and seeking, and delighting in a thing, which is idolatry. So the loving of the flesh, and pleasing it, and serving it, and obeying it, and seeking and delighting in its pleasures—is the

grand idolatry—more than if you offered sacrifices to it! And so the flesh is God's chief enemy, because it has the chief love and service which are due to him. The flesh robs him of the hearts of all people who are carnal and unsanctified. All the Baals, and Jupiters, and Apollos, and other idols of the world put together, have not so much of the love and service due to God, as the flesh alone has. If other things be idolized by the sensualist, it is but as they subserve his flesh, and therefore they are made but inferior idols. He may idolize his wealth, and idolize men in power and worldly greatness; but it is only as they can help or hurt his flesh: this has his heart. By the interest of the flesh, he judges of his condition; by this he judges of his friends; by this he chooses his actions or refuses them, and by this he measures the words and actions of all others. He takes all for good which pleases his flesh, and all for bad that is against his pleasure.

3. The flesh is not only the common idol, but the most devouring idol in all the world. It has not, as inferior, flattered idols have—only a knee and compliment, or now and then a sacrifice or ceremony; but it has the heart, the tongue, the body to serve it! The whole estate, the service of friends, the use of wit and utmost diligence; in a word, it has all. The flesh is loved and served by the sensualist, "with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength." They "honor it with their substance, and the first fruits of their increase." It is as faithfully served as Christ requires to be of his disciples: men will part with father, and mother, and brother, and sister, and nearest friends—for the pleasing of their flesh. Nay, Christ required men to part with no greater matter for him than transitory earthly things, which they must shortly part with whether they will or not; but they do for the flesh ten thousand thousandfold more than ever they were required to do for Christ.

They forsake God for the flesh. They forsake Christ, and heaven, and their salvation for it. They forsake all the solid comforts of this life, and all the joys of the life to come for it. They sell all that they have, and lay down the price at its feet; yes, more than all they have, even all their hopes of what they might have to all eternity. They suffer in the flames of hell forever, for their flesh! All the pains they take is for the flesh. All the wrong they do to others, and all the stirs they make in the world, is for it. They spend all their time for their flesh—and had they a thousand years more to live, they would spend it accordingly—for their flesh.

If anything seems given for God, it is but the bones, or crumbs, or leavings of the flesh; or rather, it is nothing: for God has not indeed the hours which he seems to have, he has but a few fair words and compliments—when the flesh has their hearts in the midst of their hypocritical worship. They serve him but as the Indians serve the devil, that he may serve their interests, and do them no hurt.

4. How vile an idol is the flesh! If all the derision used by Elijah against the heathenish idolatry be due, is not as much due against the idolatry of all the sensual? Is it so great a madness to serve an idol of silver, or gold or stone, or wood? Is it any better to serve an idol of flesh and blood—which is full of filth and excrement within, and the skin itself, the cleanest part, is ashamed to be uncovered? We may say to the carnal worldling, as Elijah to the Baalists, and more; "Call upon your God in the hour of your distress: cry aloud, perhaps he is asleep, or he is blowing his nose, or vomiting, or purging: certainly he will be shortly rotting in the grave, more loathsome than the dirt or dung upon the earth." Is this a god to sacrifice all that we have to? and to give all our time, and care, and labor, and our souls and all to? O judge of this idolatry, as God will make you judge at last!

5. And here next consider how impious and horrid an abasement it is of the eternal God, to prefer so vile a thing before him! And whether every ungodly, sensual man, be not a constant, practical blasphemer? You say continually by your practice, "This filthy, nasty flesh, is to be preferred before God—to be more loved, and obeyed, and served. It deserves more of my time than God. It is more worthy of my delight and love!" God will be judge, (and judge in righteousness before long,) whether this be not the daily language of your life, though your tongue now has some better manners. And whether this be blasphemy, judge yourself. Whether you judge God or the flesh more worthy to be pleased, and which you think it better to please—ask your own heart—when cards, and dice, and eating, and drinking, and amusements, and idleness, and luxury—do all seem so sweet unto you, in comparison of your thoughts of God, and his holy word and service! and when morning and night, and whenever you are alone, those thoughts can run out with unweariedness on pleasure, upon these provisions for your flesh, which you can hardly force to look up unto God, a quarter of an hour, though with unwillingness.

6. Think also what a contempt of heaven it is, to prefer the pleasing of the flesh, before it. There are but two ends which all men aim at; the pleasing of the flesh on earth—or the enjoying of God in heaven. And these two stand one against the other. And he who sets up one, does renounce (or as good as renounce) the other. "If you sow to the flesh, of the flesh you shall reap corruption; but if you sow to the Spirit, of the Spirit you shall reap everlasting life," Galatians 6:8. Your wealth, and honor, and sports, and pleasures, and appetites are put in the scales against heaven, and all the joys and hopes hereafter. Is not heaven most basely esteemed, by those that prefer so base a thing before it?

7. Remember that flesh-pleasing is a great contempt and treachery against the soul. It is a great contempt of an immortal soul, to prefer its corruptible flesh before it, and to make its servant to become its master, and to ride on horseback; while the soul goes, as it were, on foot. Is the flesh worthy of so much time, and cost, and care, and so much ado as is made for it in the world—and is not a never-dying soul worth more?

Nay, flesh-pleasing is a betraying of the soul: you prefer its enemy before it; and put its safety into an enemy’s hands; and you cast away all its joys and hopes for the gratifying of the flesh. Might not the soul complain of your cruelty, and say, "Must my endless happiness be sold to purchase so short a pleasure for your flesh? Must I be undone forever, and lie in hell, that the flesh may be satisfied for a little time?" But why do I speak of the soul’s complaint? Alas! The soul must complain about itself for it is its own undoing! It has its choice: the flesh can but tempt it, and not constrain it. God has put the chief power and government into its hands, if it will sell its own eternal hopes, to pamper worm’s food, it must act accordingly. You would not think that man very wise, who would sell all his wealthy inheritance—to purchase a delicious feast and entertainment for an hour! And is he wiser or better who sells the inheritance of his soul, and betrays it to hell and devils forever—and all to purchase the fleshly pleasure of so short a life?

8. Remember what a beastly life it is to be a sensualist. It is an unmanning of yourselves. Sensual pleasures are brutish pleasures; beasts have them well as men. We have the higher faculty of reason, to subdue and rule the beastly part. And reason is the man; and has a higher kind of felicity to delight in. Do you think that man is made for no higher matters than a beast? Don’t you have a more noble object for your delight, than your swine or dog has? Certainly where sensual

pleasures are preferred before the higher pleasures of the soul, the man becomes a beast, or worse, subjecting his reason to his brutish part.

9. Think what a trifling, pitiful felicity it is, which fleshly people choose; how small a gain, as well as sordid. Oh how quickly will the game be ended, and the delights of boiling lust be gone! How quickly will the drink be past the throats; and their delicate dishes be turned into excrement! How short is the sport and laughter of the fool! And how quickly will that face be the index of a pained body, or a grieved, self-tormenting mind! It is but a few days until all their most adorned, pampered flesh will be turned into worms' food! A few days will turn their pleasure into anguish, their jollity into groans, their ostentation into lamentation, all their pride into shame. As every moment puts an end to all the pleasures of their lives that are past, and they are now to them as if they had never been; so the last moment is at hand, which will end the little that remains. And then the sinner will with groans confess, that he has made a miserable choice, and that he might have had a more durable pleasure if he had been wise. When the skull is cast up with the spade, to make room for a successor—you may see the hole where all the food and drink went in; but you will see no signs of mirth or pleasure.

10. Lastly, consider that there is scarcely a sin in the world more inexcusable than this. The flesh-pleaser sees the end of all his sensual delights, in the faces of the sick, and in the corpses which are daily carried to the earth, and in the graves, and bones, and dust of those who once had as merry a life as he. His reason can say, "All this is gone with them, and is as if it had never been; and so it will shortly be with me!" He knows that all the pleasure of his life past, is now of no value to himself. His warnings are constant, close, and sensible; and therefore he has the greater sin.

Four Objections

Objection #1. What hurt is it to God, or any one else—that I please my flesh? I will not believe that a thing so harmless will displease him.

Answer:

Merely as it is pleasure, it has no hurt in it. But as it is inordinate or immoderate pleasure; or as it is over-loved, and preferred before God and your salvation; or as it is greater than your delight in God; or as it lacks its proper end, and is loved merely for itself, and not used as a means to higher things, and as it is made a hindrance to the soul, and to spiritual pleasure, and the service of God; and as it is the brutish delight of an ungoverned, rebellious appetite, which masters reason, and is not under obedience to God.

Though sin can do God no hurt, it can do you hurt, and it can do him wrong. I think I have showed you what hurt and poison is in it already. It is the very rebellion of corrupted nature; the turning of all things upside down; the taking down God, and heaven, and reason, and destroying the use of all the creatures, and setting up flesh-pleasing instead of all, and making a brute your God and governor. And do you ask what harm there is in this? So will your child do, when he desires any play, or pleasure; and the sick, when they desire to please their appetite. But your father, and physician, and reason, and not brutish appetite, must be judge.

Objection #2. It's my nature to be this way. I feel it is natural to me, and therefore can be no sin.

Answer:

1. The inordinate violent, unruly appetite is as natural to you—as a leprosy is to a leprous family. And will you love your disease, because it is natural? It is just as natural, as it is to be malicious, and revengeful, and to disobey your governors, and abuse your neighbors; and yet I think they will not judge you innocent, for rebellion or abuse, because it is natural to you.

2. Though the appetite be natural, is not reason to rule it, as natural to you? And is not the subjection of the appetite to reason natural? If it is not, you have lost the nature of man, and are changed into the nature of a beast. God gave you a higher nature to govern your appetite and lower nature: and though reason cannot take away your appetite, it can rule it, and keep you from fulfilling it, in anything or measure that is unfitting.

Objection #3. God made my desires, so they cannot be sinful. It appears by the case of Eve, that the appetite was the same in innocency, therefore it is no sin.

Answer: You must not forget the difference between, 1. The appetite itself. 2. The violence and unruly disposition of the appetite. 3. And the actual obeying and pleasing of the appetite. The first (the appetite itself) was in innocency, and is yet no sin. But the other two (the violence of it, and the obeying it) were not in innocency, and are both sinful.

Objection #4. God made me this way, so why shouldn't I follow my desires? Why would God give innocent man an appetite that must be crossed by reason? and which desired, that which reason must forbid?

Answer: The sensitive nature is in order of generation before the rational: and reason and God's laws do not make sense to be no sense. You may as well ask, why God would make beasts, which must be restrained and ruled by men; and therefore have a desire to that which man must restrain them from? You do but ask, Why God made us men and not angels? Or why did he place our souls in flesh? He owes you no account of his creation. But you may see it is fit that obedience should have some trial by difficulties and opposition, before it has its commendation and reward. He gave you a body that was subject to the soul, as the horse unto the rider—and you should admire his wisdom, and thank him for the governing power of reason; and not murmur at him, because the horse will not go as well without the guidance of the rider, or because he makes you not able to go as fast and as well on foot. So much for the sensualist's objections.

Ten Marks of A Flesh-Pleaser The signs of a flesh-pleaser or sensualist are these (which may be gathered from what is said already):

1. When a man in desire to please his appetite, refers it not (actually or habitually) to a higher end, namely, the fitting himself to the service of God; but sticks only in the delight.

2. When he looks more desirously and industriously after the prosperity of his body than of his soul.

3. When he will not part with or forbear his pleasures, when God forbids them, or when they hurt his soul, or when the necessities of his soul do call him more loudly another way, but he must have his delight whatever it cost him, and is so set upon it, that he cannot deny it to himself.

4. When the pleasures of his flesh exceed his delights in God, and his holy word and ways, and the forethoughts of endless pleasure; and this not only in the passion, but in the estimation,

choice, and prosecution. When he had rather be at a play, or feast, or gaming, or getting good bargains or profits in the world—than to live in the life of faith, and love, a holy and heavenly conversation.

5. When men set their minds to contrive and study to make provision for the pleasures of the flesh; and this is first and sweetest in their thoughts.

6. When they had rather talk, or hear, or read of fleshly pleasures—rather than of spiritual and heavenly delights.

7. When they love the company of merry sensualists, better than the communion of saints, in which they may be exercised in the praises of their Maker.

8. When they account that the best calling, and condition and place for them to live in, where they have the pleasure of the flesh, where they have ease, and dine well, and lack nothing for the body—rather than that where they have far better help and provision for the soul, though the flesh be pinched for it.

9. When he will be at more cost to please his flesh, than to please God.

10. When he will believe or like no doctrine but libertinism, and hates mortification as too strict preciseness. By these, and such other signs, sensuality may easily be known; yes, by the main bent of the life.

Five Ways People Delude Themselves Many flesh-pleasers flatter themselves with better titles, being deceived by such means as these:

1. Because they are against the doctrine of libertinism, and hold as strict opinions as any. But flesh-pleasing may stand with the doctrine of mortification, and the strictest opinions—as long as they are not put in practice.

2. Because they live not in any gross, disgraced vice. They go not to stage-plays, or unseasonably to alehouses or taverns; they are not drunken, nor gamesters, nor spend their hours in unnecessary recreations or pastimes; they are no fornicators, nor wallow in wealth. But the flesh may be pleased and served in a way that has no disgrace accompanying it in the world. May not a man make his ease, or his prosperity, or the pleasing of his appetite, without any infamous excesses, to be as much his felicity and highest end, and that which practically he takes for his best—as well as if he did it in a shameful way? Is not many a man a gluttonous flesh-pleaser, who makes his delight the highest end of all his eating and drinking; and pleases his appetite without any restraint, but what his health and reputation put upon him—though he eats not until he vomits or is sick? Even the flesh itself may forbid a sensualist to be drunk, or to eat until he becomes sick; for sickness and shame are displeasing to the flesh. Many a man covers a life of sensuality, not only with a seeming temperance, unreproved of men, but also with a seeming strictness and austerity. But conscience might tell them, where they have their good things, Luke 16:25.

3. Some think they are no sensual flesh-pleasers, because they live in constant misery, in poverty and want, laboring hard for their daily bread; and therefore they hope that they are the Lazaruses, who have their sufferings here on earth. But is not all this against your will? Would you not fare as well as the rich, and live as idly, and take your pleasure, if you had as much money as they? What

you would do—that you are, in God's account. It is your will that you shall be judged by. A thief does not become an honest man when the prison or stocks hinder him from stealing, but when a changed heart hinders him.

4. Others think that they are no flesh-pleasers, because their wealth and places, and degrees of honor allow them to live high in diet and delights. It is like the rich man, Luke xvi. who was "clothed with purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day" did live upon his own, and as he thought agreeably to his rank and place; and the fool, Luke 12:19-20, that said, "Soul, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry," did intend to please himself but with his own, which God had given him as a blessing on his land and labor. But no man's riches allow him to be voluptuous. The commands of taming and mortifying the flesh—and not living after it, nor making provision for it, to satisfy its lusts—belong as much to the rich as to the poor. Though you are not to live in the same garb with the poor, you are as much bound to mortification and self-denial as the poorest. If you are richer than others, you have more to serve God with—but not more than others to serve the flesh with. If poverty denies the poor anything which might better enable their bodies or minds to serve God, you may so far go beyond them, and use with thankfulness the mercies given you; but you must no more be flesh-pleasers than they.

5. And some deceive themselves be interposing sometimes a formal fast, as the fleshly Pharisee, who "fasted twice a week," Luke 18:12, and then they think that they are no sensualists. I speak not of the popish fasting with fish and delicacies (this is not so much as a show of mortification). But what if you really fast as often as the Pharisees did—and quarrel with Christ's disciples for not fasting? Matthew 9:14-15. Will not a sensualist do as much as this—if his physician requires it for his health? If the scope of your lives is fleshly, it is not the interruption of a formal fast which will acquit you; which perhaps does but quicken your appetite to the next meal.

Examples of people mistakenly accused of flesh-pleasing Yet many are wrongfully taken by others (if not by themselves) to be sensual, by such mistakes as these:

1. Because they live not as scantily as the poor, who lack things necessary or helpful to their duty. But by that rule I must not be well, because other men are sick; or I must not walk fast, because the lame can go but slowly!

If poor men have bad horses; I may ride on the best I can get, to despatch my business, and redeem my time. So I prefer not costly, useless ostentation, before true serviceableness.

2. Others are accused as sensual, because the weakness of their bodies requires a more tender usage, and diet, than healthful men's: some bodies are unfit for duty if they fast; and some are useless through sickness and infirmities, if they be not treated with very great care. And it is as truly a duty to nourish a weak body to enable it for God's service—as to tame an unruly, lustful body, and keep it from offending him.

3. Some melancholy, conscientious people are still accusing themselves, through mere scrupulosity; questioning almost all they eat, or drink, or wear, or do—whether it be not too much or too pleasing. But it is a cheerful sobriety that God requires, which neither pampers the body, nor yet disables or hinders it from its duty; and not an unprofitable, wrangling scrupulosity.

Practical directions and helps

Direction #1. Keep your mind on heavenly things

The first and grand direction against flesh-pleasing is, that you be sure, by a serious, living faith, to see the better things with God, and to be heartily taken up in minding, loving, seeking, and securing them. All the other directions are but subservient to this. For certainly man's soul will not be idle, being a living, active principle: and it is as certain, that it will not act but upon some end, or for some end. And there are no other ends to take us up—but either the things temporal or eternal. And therefore there is no true cure for a sensual love of temporal things—but to turn the heart to eternal things.

Believingly think first of the certainty, greatness, and eternity of heavenly joys; and then think that these may more certainly be yours, than any worldly riches or delights, if you do not contemptuously reject them. And then think that this is the time in which you must make sure of them, and win them, if ever you will possess them; and that you are sent into the world on purpose on this business. And then think with yourselves, how fleshly pleasures are the only competitors with the everlasting pleasures; and that, if ever you lose them, it will be by over-loving these transitory things; and that one half of your work for your salvation lies in killing your affections to all below, that they may be alive to God alone. And lastly, think how much higher and sweeter pleasures, even in this life, the godly do enjoy than you; and you are losing them while you prefer these sordid pleasures. Do you think that a true believer has not a more excellent delight in his forethoughts of his immortal blessedness with Christ and in the assurance of the love of God, and communion with him in his holy service—than you, or any sensualist, has in fleshly pleasures? Sober and serious meditation on these things, will turn the mind to the true delights.

Direction #2: Know Yourself

Be acquainted with the range of sensual desires, and pay attention to them, and watch them in all their extravagances. Otherwise, while you are stopping one gap, they will be running out at many more. I have given you many instances in my "Treatise of Self-denial." I will here briefly set some before your eyes.

1. Watch your appetites as to food and drink—both quantity and quality. Gluttony is a common, unobserved sin. The flesh no way enslaves men more, than by the appetite; as we see in drunkards and gluttons, who can no more refrain, than one that thirsts in a burning fever.

2. Take heed of the lust of uncleanness, and all degrees of it, and approaches to it; especially immodest embraces and behavior.

3. Take heed of ribald, filthy talk, and love songs, and of such sensuous snares.

4. Take heed of too much sleep and idleness.

5. Take heed of taking too much delight in your riches, and lands, your buildings, and delectable conveniences.

6. Take heed lest honors, or worldly greatness, or men's applause—become too great a pleasure to you.

7. And lest you grow to make it your delight, to think on such things when you are alone, or talk idly of them in company with others.

8. And take heed lest the success and prosperity of your affairs does too much please you, as him: "And I'll say to myself—You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." Luke 12:19 9. Take not up any inordinate pleasure in your children, relations, or nearest friends.

10. Take heed of a delight in vain, unprofitable, sinful company.

11. Take heed of fineness of apparel, to set you out to the eyes of others.

12. Take heed of a delight in romances, novels, feigned stories, useless news—which corrupt the mind, and waste your time.

13. Take heed of a delight in any recreations which are excessive, needless, devouring time, discomposing the mind, enticing to further sin, hindering any duty—especially our delight in God. They are miserable souls who can delight themselves in no more safe or profitable things, than cards, and dice, and stage plays, and immodest dancing.

Direction #3. Know what you need to do to avoid temptation

Next to the universal remedy mentioned in the first direction, see that you have the particular remedies still at hand, which your own particular way of flesh-pleasing does most require. And let not the love of your vanity prejudice you—but impartially consider of the disease and the remedy. Of the particulars afterwards.

Direction #4. God wants you to have more pleasure, not less

Remember still that God would give you more pleasure, and not less, and that he will give you as much of the delights of sense as is truly good for you—just so that you take them in their place, in subordination to your heavenly delights. And is not this to increase and multiply your pleasure? Are not health, and friends, and food, and convenient habitation, much sweeter as the fruit of the love of God, and the foretastes of everlasting mercies, and as our helps to heaven, and as the means to spiritual comfort—than of themselves alone? All your mercies are from God. He would take none from you, but sanctify them, and give you more.

Direction #5. Think before you gratify your appetites

See that reason keep up its authority, as the governor of sense and appetite. And so take an account, whatever the appetite would have, of the ends and reasons of the thing—and to what it does conduce. Take nothing and do nothing merely because the sense or appetite would have it; but because you have reason so to do, and to gratify the appetite. If reason is laid aside—you will act as brutes.

Direction #6. Remember your death

Go to the grave, and see there the end of fleshly pleasure, and what is all that it will do for you at the last. One would think this would cure the mad desire of plenty and pleasure—to see where all our wealth, and mirth, and sport, and pleasure must be buried at last!

Direction #7. Remember your enemy

Lastly, remember that flesh is the grand enemy of your souls, and flesh-pleasing the greatest hindrance of your salvation. The devil's enmity and the world's are both but subordinate to this of the flesh. For its pleasure is the end—and the world's and Satan's temptations are both but the means to attain it.

Concluding Admonitions Besides the malignity opened before, consider,

1. How contrary a voluptuous life is to the blessed example of our Lord, and of his servant Paul, and all the apostles! Paul tamed his body and brought it into subjection, lest, having preached to others, himself should be a cast-away. And all who are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof. This was signified in the mode of baptizing, when they went down under the water and then rose out of it—to signify that they were dead and buried with Christ, Romans 6:3-4, and rose with him to newness of life.

2. Sensuality shows that there is no true belief of the life to come and proves, so far as it prevails, the absence of all grace.

3. Flesh-pleasing is a home-bred, continual traitor to the soul; a continual tempter, and nurse of all sin; the great withdrawer of the heart from God; and the common cause of apostasy itself: it still fights against the Spirit, Galatians 5:17; and is seeking advantage from all our liberties, Galatians 5:13; 2 Peter 2:10.

4. Flesh-pleasing turns all our outward mercies into sin, and strengthens itself against God by his own benefits.

5. Flesh-pleasing is the great cause of our afflictions; for God will not spare that idol which is set up against him. Flesh rebels—and flesh shall suffer!

6. And when the flesh has brought affliction, it is most impatient under it, and makes it seem intolerable. A flesh-pleaser thinks he is undone, when affliction deprives him of his pleasure.

7. Lastly, flesh-pleasing exceedingly unfits men for death; for then flesh must be cast into the dust, and all its pleasure be at an end. Oh doleful day to those that had their good things here, and their portion in this life! when all is gone that ever they valued and sought; and all the true felicity lost, which they brutishly despised!

If you would joyfully then bear the dissolution and ruin of your flesh, oh master it, and mortify it now! Seek not the ease and pleasure of your little walking, breathing clay—when you should be seeking and foretasting the everlasting pleasure. Here lies your danger and your work. Strive more against your own flesh, than against all your enemies in earth and hell. If you are saved from this, you are saved from them all. Christ suffered in the flesh, to tell you that it is not pampering, but suffering, that your flesh must expect, if you will reign with him.

Chapter 126

S. The Ten Marks of a Flesh-Pleaser

The Ten Marks of a Flesh-Pleaser by Richard Baxter The signs of a flesh-pleaser or sensualist are these:

1. When a man in his desire to please his appetite, does not do it with a view to a higher end, that is to say to the preparing himself for the service of God; but does it only for the delight itself. (Of course no one does every action conciously with a view to the service of God. Nevertheless, the general manner or habit of a life spent in the service of God is absent for the flesh-pleaser.) 2. When he looks more eagerly and industriously after the prosperity of his body than of his soul.

3. When he will not refrain from his pleasures, when God forbids them, or when they hurt his soul, or when the necessities of his soul call him away from them. But he must have his delight whatever it costs him, and is so set upon it, that he cannot deny it to himself.

4. When the pleasures of his flesh exceed his delights in God, and his holy word and ways, and the expectations of endless pleasure. And this not only in the passion, but in the estimation, choice, and action. When he had rather be at a play, or feast, or other entertainment, or getting good bargains or profits in the world, than to live in the life of faith and love, which would be a holy and heavenly way of living.

5. When men set their minds to scheme and study to make provision for the pleasures of the flesh; and this is first and sweetest in their thoughts.

6. When they had rather talk, or hear, or read of fleshly pleasures, than of spiritual and heavenly delights.

7. When they love the company of merry sensualists, better than the communion of saints, in which they may be exercised in the praises of their Maker.

8. When they consider that the best place to live and work is where they have the pleasure of the flesh. They would rather be where they have things easy, and lack nothing for the body, rather than where they have far better help and provision for the soul, though the flesh be pinched for it.

9. When he will be more eager to spend money to please his flesh than to please God.

10. When he will believe or like no doctrine but "easy-believism," and hate mortification as too strict "legalism." By these, and similar signs, sensuality may easily be known; indeed, by the main bent of the life.

S. Treason Against the Soul

Treason Against the Soul by Richard Baxter

Remember that flesh-pleasing is a great contempt and treachery against the soul. It is a great contempt of an immortal soul, to prefer its corruptible flesh before it, and to make its servant to become its master, and to ride on horseback, while it goes, as it were, on foot. Is the flesh worthy of so much time, and cost, and care, and so much ado as is made for it in the world, and is not a never-dying soul worth more? Nay, it is a betraying of the soul: you set up its enemy before it; and put its safety into an enemy's hands; and you cast away all its joys and hopes for the gratifying of the flesh. Might it not complain of your cruelty, and say, Must my endless happiness be sold to purchase so short a pleasure for your flesh? Must I be undone for ever, and lie in hell, that it may be satisfied for a little time? But why do I speak of the soul's complaint? Alas! it is of itself that it must complain! For it is its own doing! It hath its choice: the flesh can but tempt it, and not constrain it: God hath put the chief power and government into its hands, if it has determined to sell its own eternal hopes to pamper worm's meat, it will act accordingly. You would not think very honourably of that man's intelligence or honesty, who would sell the patrimony of all his children, and all his friends that trusted him therewith, and later sell their persons into slavery, and all this to purchase for himself a delicious feast, with sports and entertainment for a day! And is he wiser or better that selleth (in effect) the inheritance of his soul, and betrayeth it to hell and devils for ever, and all just to purchase the fleshly pleasure of so short a life?

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