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C O N V E R S E  
With GOD in SOLITUDE:

O R,

*The* CHRISTIAN

Improving the Insufficiency and Uncertain-  
ty of human Friendship

FOR CONVERSING with GOD  
IN SECRET.

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Written by the Reverend, Learned and Holy  
MR. RICHARD BAXTER.

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ABRIDGED  
By BENJAMIN FAWCETT.

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THE  
P R E F A C E.

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*I*F Multitudes, who glory in their Christian Name, were not willingly without God in the World, there would not every where be found such melancholy Proofs of Aversion to Sacred Retirement. Every Moment of Time, and every Capacity of Nature, would not so studiously be consecrated to the low Caresses of Fellow-Worms. Nor would the natural, the unavoidable, and therefore common Disappointments resulting from Mortal Friendship, be received with such horrible Surprise, or be felt with such exquisite Pain; like the Man that cried out, when his Idols of Silver and Gold were stolen from him, They have taken away my Gods, and what have I more?

iv. P R E F A C E.

*Mr. Henry observes, where it is said of our Lord, He went up into a Mountain apart to pray, " They are not Christ's Followers, " that do not care for being alone; that can- " not enjoy themselves in Solitude, when they " have none else to converse with, none else to " enjoy, but God and their own Hearts."*

*Oh that all Hearts may be so visited with the Grace and Spirit of Jesus, as in this Instance to make it their highest Ambition to breathe his Temper, and imitate his Example! Then the Multitudes, who have so long and ardently sought their Heaven in vain, amongst the Tumults of Business, or the thoughtless Circles of Mirth and Gaiety, will seek and find it in the Recesses of Devout Retirement. Then will the Flames of Devotion, wherever they are now ascending, ascend yet higher, burn more constant, pure, and fervent, and produce more lively Foretastes of heavenly Joy.—That this small, but heavenly Tract, may, thro' a divine Blessing, contribute to answer such desirable Purposes, is the sole End of its Appearance in its present Form.*

B. F.

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Converse with God in Solitude.

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JOHN xvi. 32.

*Behold, the Hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every Man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

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CHAP. I.

Friends forsaking us in our Distress.

§ 1. *The Connection of the Text with the Context.* § 2. *A general Plan of the Work.* § 3. (1) *Why Christ suffered all his Disciples to forsake him.* § 4—6. (2) *How we may see ourselves forsaken by our Friends.* § 7. (3) *What an aggravated Affliction it is to be forsaken by our Friends.* § 8—10. (4) *Considerations to reconcile us to such an aggravated Affliction.* § 11. *The Chapter concludes with pointing out the happy Tendency of such Considerations.*

§ 1. **C**HRI<sup>ST</sup> thought fit to foretell his *Disciples*, how they would manifest their Infirmity in forsaking him. This he did, more fully to convince them, that *he knew what was in Man*, and that he voluntarily submitted to his being forsaken. Thus Man did least for Christ, when Christ was doing most for Man; even making Atonement for Man's Re-

conciliation to God, and preparing the most effectual and expensive Remedy for Man's Recovery. Christ foretold them of the Consequence of their Infirmity, to humble them, that they might not think too highly of themselves for having so freely confessed to him: *Now we are sure that thou knowest all Things, and needest not that any Man should ask thee; by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.* (verse 30.) Immediately *Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the Hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every Man to his own, and shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.* Though Christ would have his Servants know his Graces in them, he would also have them know their own Corruptions and Infirmities. We are apt to judge of what we shall do hereafter, by what we feel at present. When we feel the stirring of some Corruption, we are ready to think ourselves destitute of the contrary Grace: And when we feel the Exercise of Faith, or Love, we are ready to think we shall never more feel the contrary Corruptions. But Christ would keep us both humble and watchful, by acquainting us with the Mutability and Inconstancy of our Minds. When it goes well with us, we forget the Time is coming when it may go worse. We may say to ourselves, as Christ to his *Disciples*, 'Do we now believe? It is well. But the Time may be coming, in which we may be shook by our remaining Unbelief.—Do we now rejoice in the Love of God? The Time may be coming, when we may think ourselves forsaken of God, and that he treats us as Enemies. — Do we now pray with Fervor? The Time may come, when we shall seem to ourselves to be prayerless; or, at least, to pray in vain.' What Christ here prophesieth to his *Disciples*,

*Disciples, exactly came to pass. In the Garden, when he was sweating Blood in Prayer, they were Sleeping. Though the Spirit was willing, the Flesh was weak. They could not watch with him one Hour. When he was apprehended, then all the Disciples forsook him, and fled.*

§ 2. IN the Text there are *Three Things* that deserve our distinct Consideration.—*First, Christ was forsaken by his own Disciples, and left alone.—Secondly, when the Disciples left Christ, they were scattered every one to his own. They returned to their old Habitations, Acquaintance, and Employments, as if their Hopes and Hearts had been almost broken, and all their Labour lost in following Christ so long. Yet the Root of Faith and Love, which still remained, caused them to enquire farther of the Issue, and to meet together in secret to converse with each other about these Things. Thirdly, when Christ was forsaken of his Disciples, and left alone, yet he was not forsaken of his Father, nor so left alone, as to be separated from Him, or from his Love.* Each of these leading Sentiments of the Text will be more particularly illustrated, while in *this Chapter* we consider the Case of *Friends forsaking us in our Distress*; and (*Chap. 2*) of *Friends taken from us by Death*: Then (*Chap. 3*) what it is to have *the Presence of God with us in Solitude*; and (*Chap. 4*) *why the Presence of God in Solitude is desirable*: To which some concluding Directions will be added (*Chap. 5*) to shew *how the Presence of God in Solitude is attainable*.—The Case of *Friends forsaking us in our Distress*, makes it proper to enquire,—*Why Christ suffered all his Disciples to forsake him*;—*How we may see ourselves forsaken by our Friends*;—and *what an aggravated Affliction it is to be so forsaken*;—besides offering some *Considerations to reconcile us to such an aggravated Affliction*.



§ 3. (1) IT may seem strange to us, that Christ would suffer all his Disciples to forsake him in his Extremity. And, I doubt not, it will seem strange to us, when in our Extremity, and even in our Sufferings for Christ, we shall find ourselves forsaken by those we highly valued, and with whom we were most intimate. Providence may permit this, for such Reasons as these. — Christ, while suffering for Sin, permitted the Power and Odiousness of Sin to break forth, *that it might be known he suffered not in vain.* He permitted his Followers to desert him, and thereby discover their secret Unbelief, Selfishness, and Unthankfulness, that they might know the Death of Christ was as necessary for them, as for others; that the Disease was universal, and therefore needed an universal Remedy. It is not Christ's Intent to make his Servants seem better than they are, either to themselves, or others; or, to honour himself by his hiding their Faults; but to magnify his pardoning and healing Grace, by Means of those Sins, which he pardons and heals. — *Hereby, he brings his Followers to the fuller Knowledge of themselves.* He shews them that, which ought all their Days to keep them humble, and watchful, and at a Distance from Presumption and Self Confidence. When we have confessed Christ, or done him any considerable Service, we are apt, with the *Disciples*, to say, *Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?* As if they had rather been Givers to Christ, than Receivers from him. But when *Peter* forswears him, and the rest fly from him, and afterwards reflect on their Ingratitude and Cowardice; then they better discern their Weakness, and where their Dependence ought to be. — *He also, by this Means, teaches them what they would have been, if God had totally left them to themselves.* When our  
Faults.

Faults have hurt us, and made us ashamed, we shall be thankful for recovering Grace, and not boast, as if we had *made ourselves to differ from others.*—Our Lord might also design to have no Support from Man in his Sufferings. It was part of his voluntary Humiliation, to be deprived of all earthly Comforts, and to bear Affliction even from those few, that lately were his faithful Servants. Thus no Man could challenge to himself the Honour of contributing, in any Degree, to the Redemption of the World; no, not so much as by encouraging the Redeemer.—*In this Way Christ might render the Witnesses of his Disciples to him of greater Authority.* When all their Doubts were dissipated, they would be received, as the most impartial Witnesses, by a doubting World.—*And thus Christ would also teach us, that the best of Men are not entirely to be trusted.* Paul lived in a Time when Christians were more self-denying and stedfast than they now are, yet he says, *At my first Answer no Man stood with me, but all Men forsook me.*

§ 4 (2) *Christians, expect to be conformed to your Lord in this Part of his Humiliation.* Are your Friends yet friendly to you? Don't promise yourselves an unchanging Constancy in them. Are they yet useful to you? Expect the Time when they cannot help you. Are they your Comforters, and is their Company your Delight? Be ready for the Time, when they may become your sharpest Scourges, and Heart-piercing Grievs; at least, *when you shall say, We have no Pleasure in them.* Have any, or all, of them already failed you? What Wonder? Are they not Men, and Sinners? Reprove yourselves, for your unwarrantable Expectations, and learn to know what Man is.—*Expect some of your Friends, whom you have thought sincere, to prove very unfaithful.* Are you better than

David, who had an Achitophal? Or than Paul, who had a Demas? Or than Christ, who had a Judas? Because Iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold. If Pride, Vain-Glory, and Sensuality are unmortified, such Persons are not to be trusted. For Wealth, Honour, or worldly Interest, they will part with God and Salvation; and much more with their best Friends on Earth. With Job, you may have occasion to complain, *He hath put my Brethren far from me, and mine Acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My Kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar Friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine House, and my Maids, count me for a Stranger; I am an Alien in their Sight. I called my Servant, and he gave me no Answer; I entreated him with my Mouth. My Breath is strange to my Wife, tho' I entreated for the Children's Sake of my own Body. Yea, young Children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward Friends abhorred me; and they whom I loved, are turned against me.* You may be obliged, as well as David, to say, *Yea, mine own familiar Friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my Bread, hath lift up his Heel against me.* Those that have been most acquainted with the Secrets of your Soul, may be your Betrayers. They, whom you have laid under the strongest Obligations, may prove your most inveterate Enemies. Many faithful Ministers of Christ have preached, and prayed, and wept for their People's Souls; and after all have been reproached and persecuted. Like the Patient, that being cured of a mortal Disease, sued his Physician at Law, for making him sick with Medicines. Paul was accounted an Enemy by the Galatians, because he told them the Truth. Ungrateful Truth makes the faithfullest Preachers most ungrateful. *I heard the Defaming of many, says Jeremiah; Fear on every*

every Side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my Familiars watched for my Halting, saying, Paradvventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our Revenge on him. Thus must the Servants of Christ be used, in Conformity to their suffering Head.

§ 5.—Some that are sincere, and whose Hearts are with you, may by Temptation be drawn to disown you. When Malice is slandering you, timorous Friendship may perhaps be silent, and afraid to take your Part. If Peter's Fear can deny his suffering Lord, wonder not that faint hearted Friends disown us, who give them too much occasion to do so. Why may not we be obliged to say, as David did, *My Lovers and my Friends stand aloof from my Sore; and my Kinsmen stand afar off.*—Many Things may occasion sincere Friends to fall out. Paul and Barnabas may grow so hot as to separate from each other. Easily can Satan, if permitted, set the Tinder on Fire, which he finds in the gentlest Dispositions. There are no Friends so near and dear, whom the Infirmities of Passion may not either alienate from, or render an Affliction to, each other.—Clashing Interests may very much interrupt Friendship. See this in the Contentions of Abraham and Lot; of Isaac and Ishmael; of Jacob and Esau; of Laban and Jacob; of Leah and Rachel; of Joseph and his Brethren; of Saul and David; and of Ziba, Mephibosheth, and David; with many others. It is rare to meet with a Jonathan that will affectionately love unto Death the Man, who is appointed to deprive him of a Kingdom. He can say, 'I suffer by another;' or, 'I am a Loser by him;' thinks he has a Licence for his unfriendly Thoughts and Actions. When you can gratify the Desires of the Covetous, Ambitious, and Selfish, or so cure their distempered Minds, as to let

them with perfect Charity, then all the World will be your Friends.—*The same may be said of Difference in Opinions.* If your Friend is proud, it is wonderful how he will slight you, and withdraw his Love, because you are not of his Mind. If he be zealous, he is easily tempted, to think it a part of his Duty to God, to disown you, or grow negligent of your Friendship; because, your differing from him, is, as he thinks, either, an Evidence of your neglecting God; or, of your contradicting the Truth of God. When all your Friends have the same intellectual Complexion and Temperature, and their Understanding is of the same Size with your own, then you may hope for uninterrupted Friendship.—*Some of your Friends may, in their own Apprehension, get above you in Wisdom, Wealth, or Honour.* Upon this, you will grow unsuitable to them. They will pity your Weakness, in not seeing the Truth which is so clear to their Eye; or your Simplicity, for hindering your own Preference; and therefore will converse, for the future, with those of their own distinguished Rank.—*Some will think they have now discovered your Foibles.* And indeed our Defects are so many, and our Infirmities so great, that the more Men know us, the more we deserve their Pity or Reproof. But this will not excuse that Neglect of Friendship and Virtue, which is owing to the Pride of those, who probably overlook much greater Failings in themselves.—*Some are so changeable, that the same Friends will not please them long.* Their Love is a Flower that quickly withers. Novelty must feed their slippery Affections.—*Perhaps they think they have got better Friends.* Either, they have met with those that are more suitable; or, that may be more useful, as having more Learning, Wealth, or Power.—*Some may think it is their Duty to be shy of*  
*you*

*you under Sufferings.* Though they must not desert Christ; they think, for their own Preservation, they may forsake a Fellow-Mortal. But they forget their Lord's interesting Declaration, *In as much as ye did it, or did it not, to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye did it, or did it not, to me.*

§ 6.—*Some of your Friends, to cover their own Unfaithfulness, will plead, that they forsake you for your Faults.* Thus, by pretending Zeal for God, they make a Duty of their Sin. There are few Crimes in the World, that are not hypocritically called by Names of Piety and Virtue.—*Some may really mistake your Case, and think you suffer as evil Doers.* So when God had taken away *Job's* Children, Riches, and Health; his Friends would take away the Reputation and Comfort of his Integrity; and, under Pretence of bringing him to Repentance, they charge him with what he was never guilty of. Censorious, false-accusing Friends, cut deeper than malicious, slandering Enemies. Even your most Self-denying Acts of Obedience to God, may be so misunderstood by your real Friends, as to be turned to your Rebuke; like *David's dancing before the Ark.* Thus Friends may do the Work of Enemies, yea of Satan himself, *the Accuser of the Brethren;* and may wrong you much more than open Adversaries could have done. But suppose you are chargeable with some real Crime; in that Case, to expect your Friend should befriend your Sins, or behave to you, as if you was innocent, would but shew your Ignorance of the Nature and Usefulness of true Friendship, and that there is too much Friendship yet subsisting between you and your Sins.—*Even the Friends that are most faithful to you, may be utterly incapable of affording you any real Service.* The greatest and best of Men are but *miserable Comforters.* They  
may

may mourn over your Sicknesses and Pains, without any Tendency to heal or ease them. Their Ignorance may increase your Misery, by attempting your Relief. They may exasperate your Oppressors, while they think to speak that, which may set you free from Oppression. Their friendly Mistakes may resemble *Peter's*, when he gave that carnal Counsel to his Lord, *Be it far from thee, Lord; this Suffering shall not be unto thee:* Also when he rashly drew his Sword against the Officers that came to apprehend Jesus. Love and good Meaning will not prevent the Mischiefs of Ignorance and Error.—*Your best Friends may not only be unable to relieve you, but their Sufferings may greatly add to your Grief.* While your Troubles become theirs, theirs will become yours, and your own Stock of Sorrows be thereby increased.—*And though your Friends are both sincere and serviceable, yet they must continue with you but a little while.* Perhaps God will take away your dearest Friends, and leave you in the Midst of many Enemies. If you have but one, perhaps God will separate that one from you, either by Death, or in some remote Situation. *The godly Man ceaseth, the faithful fail from among the Children of Men.*

§ 7. (3) *To be forsaken of our Friends, in such Circumstances as have been mentioned, is a greatly aggravated Affliction.*—They usually forsake us in our greatest Sufferings and Straits, when we have the greatest Need of them; especially at a dying Hour, when all other worldly Comforts fail. As we must leave our Houses, Lands, and Wealth, so must we, for the present, leave our Friends.—Often they fail us, when we are most faithful in our Duty.—And perhaps they are Persons of whom we deserved best, and from whom we might have expected most. Which of us must not say, with David, *All Men are Liars*; that is, deceitful, either through  
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Unfaithfulness, or Insufficiency; that either will forsake us, or cannot help us in Time of Need.

§ 8. (4) *In order to reconcile our Minds to such an aggravated Affliction, let us attend to the following Considerations. As for Instance;—Consider how this Affliction sets the Creature at a due Distance from the Creator. All-sufficiency, Immutability, and perfect Faithfulness are proper to Jehovah. Glorious as the Sun is, we wonder not at its Setting, or being eclipsed; and why should we wonder to have a Friend, a pious Friend, fail us for a Time, and in the Hour of our Distress? Some Friends will not, but all may, if God leave them to their own Weakness. Man is not your Rock. He has no Stability but what is derived, dependent, and uncertain. Learn, therefore, to rest on God alone, and lean not too confidently on any Mortal.—Consider what a useful Discovery this Affliction makes of the common Infirmity of Man. If any of God's Servants live in constant Holiness, without any Stumbling in their Way, it tempts some Self-accusing Soul to think itself altogether graceless. But when we read of Peter's cursing and swearing that he knew not Jesus; and how he and Barnabas were carried away with Dissimulation; and of David's Unkindness to Mephibosheth, the Seed of Jonathan; and of his vile Treachery to Uriah, a faithful and deserving Subject; we are less offended at the Unfaithfulness of our Friends, and are taught to compassionate their Frailty; and also are not so hopeless, when we ourselves have failed God or Man.—Consider how this Affliction manifests the Meanness and Carnality of our Self-Love. We should not discern this Sin in its Root, if we did not see and taste it in its Fruits. When you have tasted the Fruits of your Friend's remaining Worldliness, Selfishness, and carnal Fears; then you will better know the Odioufness*  
of



of these Vices, which thus break through all Obligations to God and you, in a direct Contradiction to the Light of Conscience, and the Operations of divine Grace.

§ 9. — *Consider this Affliction as a good Remedy against over-loving your Friends.* In loving God, we are in no Danger of Excess, and therefore have no Need of any Thing to quench it. In loving Saints as Saints, and purely for Christ's Sake, we are not apt to exceed. Yet our Understanding may mistake, by thinking Saints have more Holiness than they really have; and we are very apt to mix a selfish Love, with that which is holy; and not merely to love a Christian as a Christian, but to over-love him, because he is our Friend. The Christian that has no special Love to us, we are apt to undervalue; but one that intirely loves us, we love above his proper Worth. And if we love any, more for loving us, than for loving Christ, no Wonder we are thus afflicted, to cure us of our selfish Love. O how highly do we think of their Judgments, Graces, and Conduct, that highly esteem us; when greater Excellencies in another are scarcely observed! If we exalt our Friends too high in our Esteem, it is a Sign that God must cast them down. As their Love to us was the Snare, so their Unkindness and Unfaithfulness to us is the fittest Remedy. God is very jealous of our Hearts, while they inordinately love and value any of his Creatures, and will rebuke our Excess; tho' the opposite Extreme is also odious, to be void of natural, friendly, or social Affections. God cannot take it well to see us dote upon Dust and Frailty like ourselves, at the same Time that all his attractive Goodness causes such languid Love to him, that we ourselves can scarcely feel it. If therefore he cure us, by permitting our Friends to  
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shew us how little they deserve such excessive Love, when God himself has so little of our Love; it is because he is so tender of his own Glory, and merciful to his Servants' Souls.—*Consider also how this Affliction leads us to observe and honour the wonderful Patience of God.* When our Friends forsake us in our Distress, especially if we suffer for Christ, it is God they injure more than us; and if He bear with them, and forgive them upon Repentance, why should we not do so, who are much less injured? The vile Ingratitude of Sinners should make us reflect, ‘How great and wonderful is the Patience of God, which bears with those that abuse him, to whom they are infinitely obliged! And how great is that Mercy, which hath born with, and pardoned greater Wrongs done by myself to God, than Men have ever done to me!’ When *David* remembered his Sin, by which God was provoked to raise up that Son against him, of whom he had been too fond, it made him easily bear the Curses and Reproaches of *Shimei*. It will make us bear Abuse from others, to remember how ill we have behaved towards God, and consequently how ill we have deserved at his Hands.

§ 10.—*Consider how this Affliction puts us upon our Guard, that the Love of our Friends may not hinder us, when we are called to suffer or die.* When we overlove them, it tears our Hearts to leave them; and strongly tempts us to betray the Cause of Christ. It is so hard a Thing to be willing to die, that it is a Mercy to have any Thing removed, that makes us unwilling. The excessive Love of Friends, is not the least of those Impediments. O how loth is many a one to die, when they think of parting with Wife, or Husband, or Children, or other dear Friends! And if any Unkindness happens to arise between such Friends,  
then

then we are ready to say, 'It is Time to leave the World, when my dearest Friends thus forsake me!' This helps us to remember our dearest everlasting Friend, and to grieve that we have been no truer to him, who would not have forsaken us in our Extremity. Sometimes it makes us so weary of the World, that with *Elijah* we say, *Now, O Lord, take away my Life.* Thus the Unkindness of Friends is a greater Help to loosen us from the World, and after proves a great Mercy to a departing Soul; and indeed fortifies us against other Temptations arising from Friendship. When an intimate Friend has grown strange, and soon after turned away from every Appearance of serious Religion, I have known others convinced thereby of the Mercy of God, in making their Friend's Desertion the Means of their own Preservation. When Husbands have done this, and at the same Time have behaved inhuman to their Wives, I have often observed, how the poor Women have been kept from following them in their Apostasy; into which other Women have been drawn, whose Husbands behaved more kindly. Therefore, I must still say, we were undone, if we had the disposing of ourselves. We should never be willing to have our Friends forsake us; yet God has thereby kept many Souls from being undone for ever.—Once more, *consider that our having too much Comfort in any Creature, is very unsuitable to our present State.* The Work of Mortification much consists in having our Enjoyments so far annihilated, that they may have no Power to draw our Hearts from God, or detain us from our Duty. And the more excellent and lovely any Enjoyment appears to us, the less is it dead to us, or we to it; and the more will it be able to hinder and insnare us.

§ 11.

§ II. IF you seriously consider these Things, you will admire the Wisdom of God in leaving you under this Kind of Trial, and weaning you from every created Enjoyment, and teaching you by his Providence, as well as by his Word, to *cease from Man, whose Breath is in his Nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* You will not wonder, that they who live in other Sins, should be guilty of this Unfaithfulness to Friends. Their Obligations to you are Nothing in Comparison with their great and manifold Obligations to God. You know you have more injured God yourselves, than any Man ever injured you; and if God bear with you, have you not great Reason to bear with others? Are you not more prone to aggravate the Wrong which others do to you, than that which you do to them! Nay, you have been much more injurious to yourselves, than ever others have been to you. Near as you are to yourselves; yet all your Enemies on Earth, or in Hell, have not done you half the Hurt, that you have done to yourselves.

‘ Have I forfeited my own Salvation, and deserved  
‘ everlasting Wrath, and sold myself and my Saviour  
‘ for so base a Thing as sinful Pleasure, and shall I  
‘ ever wonder that another Man does me some tem-  
‘ poral Hurt? Was my Friend so near, or so much  
‘ oblig’d to me, as myself? O sinful Soul, let thy  
‘ own, rather than thy Friend’s, Treachery and Neg-  
‘ lects be the Matter of thy Wonder, thy Displeasure,  
‘ and Complaint? And let thy Conformity to Jesus  
‘ Christ, be thy holy Ambition and Delight; not as  
‘ thy Suffering, nor as it is counted by Men’s Sin;  
‘ but as it is thy Fellowship in the Sufferings of thy  
‘ Lord, and caused by his Love.’ Our Conformity  
to, and Fellowship with Christ in his Sufferings, in  
any remarkable Degree, is the Lot of his best Ser-  
vants,

vants, and the highest of their Attainments in the present State; and is therefore, neither to be expected with Dread, nor born with Impatience, but with holy Joy. And if it be so with Sufferings for Christ in general, it must be so with this particular Sort of Suffering; even, to be forsaken of our nearest and dearest Friends, when we are most abused by our Enemies.

CHAP.

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C H A P. II.

Friends taken from us by Death.

§ 1. *The Disciples forsook their Lord for Want of Self-Denial.* § 2. *The great Evil of Selfishness.* § 3—8. (1) *Consolations for such as mourn the Death of their Friends;* § 9—11. *and (2) for such as doubt whether Heaven itself will renew the Friendship they have lost;* § 12, 13. *or (3) doubt whether the Friendship, that is renewed in Heaven, will be so much the more endearing.*

§. 1. **W**E are next to consider, *why the Disciples forsook their Lord, and what they had Recourse to, when they left him.* The Text says, *Ye shall be scattered every Man to his own.* Self-Denial was not perfect in them, and therefore Selfishness prevailed in the Hour of Temptation. They had before forsaken all for Christ. They had left Parents and Families, Estates and Trades, to be his Disciples. But tho' they believed him to be the Christ, yet they dreamed of a visible Kingdom, and were animated by carnal Expectations of being great Men upon Earth, under Christ as a Temporal Prince. And therefore when they saw him in the Hands of his Enemies, under the most ignominious Treatment, they concluded that their Hopes were now disappointed, and in their sudden-Fright seemed to repent their having followed him. They now begun to think that they had Lives  
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of their *own* to save, and Families of their *own* to mind, and Business of their *own* to do. They that had forsook their private Interests and Affairs, and were gathered together for the Sake of living in Communion with Jesus Christ and one another, now return to their particular Callings, *and are scattered every Man to his own.*

§ 2. SELFISHNESS is the great Enemy of all Societies, of all Fidelity, and Friendship. There is no trusting any Person in whom Self is predominant. And where it does not reign, the Remainders of it make Men walk unevenly and unsteadily, both towards God and each other. They will certainly deny God and their Friends, in a Time of Trial, who are not able to deny themselves. Or rather, he that is prevailingly selfish, was never a real Friend to any. He has always some Interest of his own, which his Friend must needs contradict, or is insufficient to satisfy. His Houses, Land, or Money, his Children, Reputation, or something which he calls his *own*, will frequently be the Matter of Contention; and for the Sake of these Things, which are so near to him, he will cast off his nearest Friend. Contract no special Friendship with a selfish Man. Put no Confidence in him, whatever Friendship he may profess. He is so confined to himself, that he has no true Love to spare for others. If he seem to love a Friend, it is not as a Friend, but as a Servant, or at best as a Benefactor. He loves you for himself, as he loves his Money, his Horse, or House; because you may be serviceable to him. When you have no more Capacity to serve him, he has no more love for you.

§ 3. HERE it may be proper to offer some *Advice to such as are lamenting the Death of their dearest Friends; and—doubting whether Heaven itself will renew such Friend-*

*Friendship, or so much as need it ;—or, if such Friendship be renewed in Heaven, whether the Enjoyment of it will be so much the more endearing.*

§ 4. (1) *They that are lamenting the Death of their dearest Friends, may find some Relief from the following Considerations. Let it be granted, that you mourn the Loss, not of a false Friend, but of one of the most sincere, faithful, and intimate. Consider,—Who deprived you of your Friend? Was it not God? Did not he that gave him to you, take him from you? Did not his Lord and Owner call him Home? Can God do any Thing unjust? May he not do what he pleases with his own? Was there any Defect of Wisdom, or Goodness, of Justice, or Mercy in God's Disposal of your Friend? Or will you ever have Rest, but in submitting to the Divine good Pleasure?—If your Friend had lived as long as you would have had him, you know not what Sin he might have fallen into. God could indeed have preserved him from Sin; but he preserves in the Use of Means; and sometimes sees that Death is the best Means for Preservation. Had God permitted your Friend to have fallen into some scandalous Sin, might it not have been much worse than Death to him and you? So faithful a Friend might have been shaken, like Peter, and have denied his Lord; and thereby have appeared as odious in your Eyes, as he had ever been amiable.—You know not what Unkindness to yourself, your dearest Friend might have been guilty of. Alas! there is greater Frailty and Inconstancy in Man, than you are aware of. How often have the Hearts of Parents been broke by undutiful Children, whom in Infancy, they would much more easily have followed to the Grave? Which of us see not Reason to distrust ourselves? And why should we promise ourselves more from another than from*



from ourselves?—*Had your Friend lived longer, you know not what great Calamity might have befallen him. When the Righteous seem to perish, and merciful Men are taken away, they are taken away from the Evil to come.* How many Deaths have I lamented, as unseasonable in my View; but Providence has soon taught me, that their longer Life would have increased their Misery! If your Friend had survived, what Comfort would he have found on Earth, *in seeing and bearing such Sins, as vexed a righteous Lot from Day to Day; and perhaps himself at the same Time under personal Afflictions, Temptations, and Reproaches?*—*What was the World to your Friend, while he did enjoy it?* Was it not a Place of Toil and Trouble, of Envy and Vexation, of Enmity and Poyson; of successive Cares, and Fears, and Griefs; and especially of Sin? Did he groan under the Burthen of a sinful Nature; of a distempered, tempted, troubled Heart; of Languishings and Weakness in every Grace; of the Rebukes of God, the Wounds of Conscience, and the Malice of a wicked World? Did you not often join in Prayer with him, to obtain Deliverance from every Burthen, and will you now grieve that he has received the Answer of Prayer? Is the World a Place of Rest, or of Trouble to yourself; and would you have your Friend also to be as far from Rest? If your present Circumstances are at all easy and peaceful, you little know what Storms are near; or how soon you may see the Days, hear the Tidings, feel the Pains, and bear the Burthens, which may oblige you to desire Death, and confess that a Life on Earth is no Felicity.

§ 5.—*Do you think it is for the Hurt or Good of your Friend, that he is removed from hence? It cannot be for his Hurt, unless he be in Hell. And if he be*  
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in Hell, he was no fit Person for you to take much Pleasure in upon Earth. He might have been a fit Object of your Compassion, but not of your Complacency. How can you be undone for Want of such Company, as God will not endure in his Sight? And if your Friend is in Heaven, you should regard his Good, as well as your own, and not wish him from thence. If Love teaches us to *mourn with them that mourn, and to rejoice with them that rejoice*; can it be an Act of rational Love to mourn for them that are possessed of the highest everlasting Joys?

§ 6.—*God will not honour himself merely by one Servant, but by many.* God best knows when his Work is done. When our Friends have finished what God intended them to do, is it not Time for them to be gone, and for others to take their Places? God will have a Succession of his Servants in the World. If *David* had not died, there had been no *Solomon*, nor *Jehoshaphat*, nor *Hezekiah*, nor *Josiah*, to honour God in the same Throne.—*You must not have all your Mercies conveyed to you merely by one Instrument.* God will not have you confine your Love only to one of his Servants. Therefore when one has done his Part for your Welfare, God will send you other Mercies by another Hand; and it is fit he should chuse the Messenger who bestows the Gift. If you resolve to have all your Mercies in one Channel, or refuse to have any more Mercies, your Case deserves not Compassion, but Correction.—*Does your Esteem for your Friend center in him, in yourself, or in God?* If in God; why are you troubled to have God dispose of him according to his unerring Wisdom? If in your Friend; he is now made perfect, and therefore more lovely, and more fit for your joyful Complacency. If in yourself only; it is just in God to take him from you,

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to teach you to prefer God before yourself, and to know better the Nature of true Friendship, and that your own Felicity absolutely depends upon God alone.

§ 7.—*Did you get Good by your Friend while he was with you?* If you only loved him, and made but little Use of him for your spiritual Profit, God in Justice took him from you. Your Friend was given you, as your Candle, to work by the Light of it; as your Raiment, to wear it; as your Food, to feed upon it. Did you receive his Counsel, and hearken to his Reproof, and pray and converse with him, so as to elevate your Thoughts to God, and inflame your Breast with sacred Love?

§ 8.—*And are you not too forgetful where you yourself now are, and where you must shortly be for ever?* Where would you have your Friend, but where you must be yourself? If he had staid here a Thousand Years, how little of that Time could you have had his Company? When you are almost leaving the World yourself, would you not send your Treasure before you? How soon shall you go from hence to God, where you shall find your Friend, whom you lamented as if he had been lost, and there shall dwell with him for ever? O foolish Mourner! Would you not have your Friend at Home; at his Home and your's; with *his Father and your Father, his God and your God?* Can you miss him so much for a Day, when you have the Prospect of living with him to all Eternity?

§ 9. (2) NOTWITHSTANDING what has been suggested, *some may doubt whether Heaven itself will renew the Friendship they have lost.* To scatter such a distressing Apprehension, let the following Reasons, for expecting your Friendship to revive again in Heaven,  
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be attended to. — You cannot justly think that the Knowledge of glorified Saints shall be more imperfect, than their Knowledge was while they were upon Earth. We shall know much more, but not less than before. Heaven exceeds Earth in Knowledge, as much as it does in Joy. — The Angels in Heaven have now a distinct Knowledge of the least Believers on Earth, and rejoice in their Conversion, and are stiled by Christ *Their Angels*: Therefore, when we shall be *equal to the Angels*, we shall certainly know our nearest Friends, who will have their Share with us in that Glory. — *Abraham* knew the Rich Man in Hell, and the Rich Man knew *Abraham* and *Lazarus*: Therefore we shall have as distinct a Knowledge. — The two Disciples knew *Moses* and *Elijah* in the Mount, whom they had never seen before: Much more shall we be made to know the Saints in Heaven. — Our present Knowledge *shall be done away* in Heaven, only in Regard to its Imperfection; or, *when that which is perfect is come*; just as we put away childish Things, when we become Men. The Change is from *seeing thro' a Glass*, to *seeing Face to Face*; and from *knowing in Part*, to *knowing even as we also are known*.

§ 10. — AND tho' God be All in All in Heaven, yet we shall there, not only know, but love and rejoice in Fellow-Creatures. For Christ, in his glorified Human Nature, is a Creature; and, as such, will no Doubt be known and loved by all his Members, without any Diminution of the Glory of his Divine Nature. The several Members of the Body of Christ will, in Heaven, be so nearly related to each other, that they must know and love each other, and not be unconcerned in each others Felicity. The future triumphant State of the Church is often described in

Scripture, as a *Kingdom*, the *City of God*, the *New Jerusalem*; each of which implies a Society. The Saints themselves are called *Kings*; and it is said of them, that they *shall judge the World*, and *shall judge Angels*; they must therefore have a distinct Knowledge of the Persons and Things, which are to be subjected to their Judgment. As one Part of the Saints Happiness, they are to *come from the East and West*, and *sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven*; and therefore shall, not only know those great *Patriarchs*, but shall take peculiar Delight in their Presence and Converse. Besides, Love to Saints, as well as to God, is a Grace that *never faileth*.

§ 11. GOD can make Use of glorified Creatures, in Subordination to himself, so as to be no Diminution to his own All-sufficiency. Nor must we conceive of Heaven itself, as if it had no Use for Fellow-Creatures, nor any Comfort in them. Tho' *Flesh and Blood shall not enter into that Kingdom*, but our *Bodies shall be spiritual*, yet at the Resurrection God shall give to every Soul its own *Body*, and a *Body* distinct from the Soul; which must therefore have a Felicity suited to a glorified *Body*. And tho' it is said of *knowing Christ after the Flesh, now henceforth know we him no more*, it can only mean, that a carnal Knowledge shall be turned into a spiritual. Thus the Excellency of our Knowledge of Christ in Heaven, resembles the Glory of our heavenly Bodies, which shall be made to *shine forth, as the Sun, in the Kingdom of our Father*.

§ 12. (3) *And if any should still doubt, whether the Friendship, that is renewed in Heaven, will be so much the more endearing, let such take the following Answer.*  
 —If you should have all your Happiness immediately

ately and solely in God, you will sustain no Loss. — Or, if you should have as much Happiness in other Friends, whom you never knew before, that will not diminish your Enjoyment of your former Friends. — But most probably your Love to glorified Saints will distinctly regard them, both for their Holiness, and for their Relation to you. As Holiness is the chief Excellence, no doubt you will love those most, that will have most of God and Glory, tho' you never knew them upon Earth. And amongst those, whom you knew upon Earth, you will certainly love them best, whom God made Use of for your greatest Good, and who were the Instruments of your Conversion and Salvation. It is manifest that our Benefactors shall have our peculiar Regard in Heaven; because we shall there for ever remember, love, and praise *him that loved us, and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, and made us Kings and Priests unto God.* And therefore we shall also remember others with Love and Thankfulness, in just Subordination to Christ, and in Proportion as they were our Friends *for Jesus' Sake.*

§ 13. THE never-failing Nature of Love is a principal Motive to kindle and increase it. Thus God draws us to every holy Duty, by shewing us the Excellency of that Duty, and it is no small Excellency to say, that it *never fails.* They therefore, that think they shall have no personal Knowledge of each other, nor personal Love to each other, in Heaven, take the most effectual Course to destroy in their Souls all holy Love to those, *especially that are of the Household of Faith.* I am not able to love much, where I foresee I am not to love long. I cannot love an Inn, so well as my own House; because I am sooner to leave it. I must love my *Bible*, better than Books of *Law*, or *Physick*; because it leads to Eternity. I must love

Holiness in myself and others, better than Food and Raiment, or Riches and Honours, or Beauty and Pleasures, because that must be loved for ever; while the Love of these is as transitory as the Things themselves. I must confess, as the Experience of my own Soul, that the Expectation of loving my Friends in Heaven, principally kindles my Love to them on Earth. If I thought I should never know them, and consequently never love them, after this Life is ended, I should in reason number them with temporal Things, and love them as such, at the same Time allowing for the excellent Nature of Grace. But I now delightfully converse with my godly Friends, in a firm Persuasion that I shall converse with them for ever; and take Comfort in those of them that are Dead or Absent, as believing I shall shortly meet them in Heaven; and love them, I hope, with a heavenly Love, as the Heirs of Heaven, even with a Love that shall there be perfected, and more fully and for ever exercised.

C H A P.

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### C H A P. III.

#### The Presence of God with us in Solitude.

§ 1. *What the Presence of God is.* § 2. *How God is present with us.* § 3. *He is with us, (1) as a gracious Father;* § 4. *(2) to do us Good;* § 5. *and (3) to converse with us.* § 6. *Like Christ, we should live upon God when forsaken by Men.* § 7. *When are we necessarily called into Solitude.* § 8. *When is Solitude sinful.* § 9—11. *Considerations to prevent voluntary and unnecessary Solitude.*

§ 1. **T**O the Reasons already assigned for bearing the Loss of Friends, this may be added, that it gives us the loudest Call to retire from all the World, and to converse with God himself, and affords us some Assistance in such divine Converse. But this brings us to the Third Part of the Text, where our Lord says, *And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.* He that is with the King, is not alone, tho' forsaken by all others. He on whom the Sun shines is not without Light, tho' all his Candles are put out. If God be our God, he is our All. And if God be our All, we shall not, while he is with us, find the Want of Creatures. For—He is with us, who is *Every where* and therefore is never from us.—He is with us, who is *Almighty*, and therefore we need not fear what Man can do unto us. He can deliver us, when and how he pleases, from every Danger and Distress.

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—He is with us, who is *Infinitely wise*, to preserve us even from our own Folly, as well as from our Enemy's Subtilty. He knows what to do with us, in what Paths to lead us, and what Condition is best for us.—He is with us, who is *infinitely good*; alone fit to be the perpetual Delight of our Souls. There is Nothing in him to disaffect, or discourage us. We may love him, without Fear of over-loving.—He is with us, who is *intimately related to us*. He most dearly loves us, and will never withhold any Thing from us that is for our real Good.

§ 2. *This is He* that is with us, when all have left us. But as to *the Manner how* he is with us, let us more particularly observe; He is with us—*by his gracious fatherly Presence*;—*sufficiently to do us Good*;—*and entertain us with his holy Converse*.

§ 3. (1) *God is with us, by his gracious fatherly Presence*; and not merely as he is every where, by his essential Presence. We are in his Family, attending on him, *as the Eyes of Servants look unto the Hand of their Masters*. As his Children, *we are ever with him, and all that he hath is ours*; that is, all that is fit to be communicated to us. *When we awake, we should still be with him*. When we go abroad, we should behave *as always before him*. Our Life and Works should be a *Walking with God*.

§ 4. (2) *God is always with us, sufficiently to do us Good*. Tho' we have none else to care for us; yet he will never cast us out of his Care, but bids us *cast all our Care upon him*, and promises that he will *care for us*. Tho' we have none else to provide for us, *our heavenly Father knoweth all the Things we need*, and will make the best Provision. Tho' we have none else to defend us, he is our *sure Defence*; the Rock to which we fly, and upon which we are surely built.

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He gathers us to himself, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings. And while Love is thus protecting us, we may well say, *the Father is with us.* Tho' we have none else to support us when we are weak; yet *his Grace is sufficient for us; for his Strength is made perfect in Weakness.* Tho' we have none to teach us, and resolve our Doubts; yet *the Master of Assemblies is with us, and will guide us into all Truth.* Tho' we have none else to comfort us in Darkness and Distress; yet, like *Hagar in the Wilderness,* we shall have Reason to say, *Thou God see'st us.* Tho' all our Friends like *Job's,* turn our Enemies, and add Affliction to our Affliction; yet he says, *hitherto shall ye come, but no further, and here shall your proud Waves be stayed.* Tho' we say with *David,* *We looked on our right Hand, and beheld, but there was no Man that would know us; Refuge failed us; no Man cared for our Souls;* yet we may add, as he does, *O Lord, thou art my Refuge, and my Portion in the Land of the living.* Tho', like *David,* we also complain, *Our Enemies speak Evil of us, whisper together against us, and desire our Hurt;* yet we may share his Consolation and say, *Thou, Lord, upholdest us in our Integrity, and settest us before thy Face for ever.* Tho' Friends be far off; yet *the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken Heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite Spirit.* Thus God is with us, when Men are against us, or far from us. His People find by happy Experience that they are not alone. *His Hand is with them to keep them from Evil, that it may not grieve them, but work together for their Good.* He is their hiding Place, to preserve them from Trouble; surely the Floods of great Waters shall not come nigh unto them; he shall compass them about with Songs of Deliverance.

§ 5. (3) *God is also with us, to entertain us with his holy Converse.* Wherever our Friends are, God is still at Hand to be the most profitable, honourable, and delightful Subject of our Meditations. There is enough in him to employ all the Faculties of our Souls. A Person, in a well-furnished Library, or indeed in the various Volume of the visible Creation, may excellently engage his Thoughts many Years together; but all would be Nothing, unless God was the Sense of Books and Creatures, and the Substance of all these noble Studies. He that is alone, and has only God himself to study, need never want Matter for his Meditation. Nor need he want Matter for Discourse, who has God to talk of; tho' he has not the Name of any other Friend to mention. He has no Want either of Work, or Pleasure, who can spend his solitary Hours in the believing Contemplations of eternal Love, and of all the Divine Attributes and Works. What delightful Converse, then, may a serious Christian have with God alone! He is always present, always at Leisure to be spoke with, always easy of Access! He has no Interest that will clash with our Happiness! He never mistakes our Meaning, or our Character! If we converse with Men, their Passions and Interests, their Errors and Weaknesses, render the Trouble so great, and the Benefit so small, that many have become thereby weary of the World, and have spent the rest of their Time in Desarts. In Proportion, indeed, as any Thing of God appears in Men, their Converse is excellent and delightful. But there is so much of Vanity and Sin in all of us, as exceedingly darkens our Light, and damps the Pleasure, and blasts the Profit of our mutual Converse. How often have I been delighted in God, when I have found most Deceit and Darkness in the World! How often

often has he comforted me, when it was not in Man to do it! How often has he relieved and delivered me, when all other Help failed me! *Looking to him*, has been my Stay and Rest; when the Creature has been *a bruised Reed*, or as *a broken Tooth*, and *a Foot out of Joynt*.

§ 6. As *Followers of Christ*, let us endeavour to imitate him in this, to live upon God, when Men forsake us; and to be persuaded, that while *God is with us*, we are *not alone*, nor forsaken.—Not that we are therefore to undervalue our useful Friends, nor be unthankful for so great a Blessing as a godly Friend, nor be negligent in improving the Company and Help of such. *Two is better than one*. The Communion of Saints is a Mercy highly to be esteemed; and the undervaluing of it, is at least a Sign of Declension in the spiritual Life.—Nor are we on any Pretence to slight our Friends, and disoblige them, or neglect any Duty that we owe them, or any Means necessary to the regular Continuance of their Friendship.—Nor must we, without Cause, retire from human Society into Solitude. To be weary of conversing with Men, is often connected with a Weariness of our Duty. A voluntary Retirement into Solitude, when God does not call or drive us thither, is but retiring from the Place or Work which God has appointed us; and consequently a retiring rather from God, than to God. Like some idle Servants that think they should not work so hard, because it is but *Worldly Business*; and think their Masters deal not *Religiously* by them, unless they allow them to neglect their Labour, that they may spend more Time in serving God: As if it were not serving God, to be faithful in their Masters Service.

§ 7. IT must be acknowledged that very holy Persons have lived in a State of Retirement from human Converse. There are several Circumstances in which this may become a Duty. As for Instance; when Persecution leaves us no Opportunity of serving or honouring God in any other Situation.—When natural Infirmary, or any other Accident, renders a Person less serviceable to God and his Church in Society, than in Solitude.—When a Person has committed a Sin of such a scandalous Nature, that, tho' he be truly penitent for it, no particular Church can be satisfied to receive him into full Communion.—When some peculiar Temptations can, after frequent Trials, be no other Ways effectually resisted, but by refraining from human Converse.—Also, when a Person by Age or Sickness, finds himself so near to Death, that his actual Preparation for it will be greatly promoted by Solitude.

§ 8. BUT when Retirement from human Converse has no such necessary Call, it usually proceeds from some vicious Distemper;—Perhaps from Cowardice, when the Soldiers of Christ, for Fear of suffering, hide their Heads, instead of confessing him before Men.—Or from Indolence and Weariness of Duty, when slothful and unprofitable Servants hide their Lord's Talents. For it is easier to run away from our Work, than to do it; and to go out of the Reach of Ignorance, Malice, Contradiction, and Ungodliness, than to encounter and conquer them by the Word of Truth and a Life of Holiness; and to hide ourselves in some Wilderness or Cell, whilst others are fighting the Battles of the Lord.—Or it may be owing to mere Impatience. When we cannot bear the Frowns, and Scoffs, and Violence of the Ungodly, we fly from such Trials, which we ought to  
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overcome by Patience.—Or it may proceed from Humour and Discontent with our Condition. Many retire from human Converse to gratify their peevish Resentment, expecting to find that in Privacy, which they could not in Publick, nor is to be found any where on Earth.—Sometimes it proceeds from Melancholy, which is vexed in Company, and indulges its own sickly Imagination, by *living, like the Man possessed, amongst the Tombs.*—And sometimes it proceeds from Pride and Self-Ignorance. If we think much better of ourselves than of others, we shall despise their Converse. On the contrary, we should consider what proud, worldly, selfish, and disordered Hearts we are like to carry with us into Solitude, and that the nearest Enemy is the worst, and the nearest Trouble the greatest.

§ 9. THUS many are led into Solitude by their Infirmities or Vices; and if they live where Popish Vanity may seduce them, they will perhaps imagine, that they are serving God, and entering into Perfection, when they are but obeying their sinful Inclinations. The Duties of a public Life are undoubtedly more in Number, greater in Weight, and of more excellent Tendency to the Honour of God, and the Good of Society, than the Duties of Retirement. ‘A good Man, says *Seneca*, is a common Good. Nor can any Thing be a common Good, except every one has some Share in it †.’ Therefore, to prevent *the Evil of voluntary and unnecessary Solitude*, let the following Considerations be attended to. As for Instance;—While you do Good but to few, and live almost to yourselves, you are too little promoting the Honour

† Vir bonus est commune bonum. Nulla essent communia, nisi Pars illorum pertineret ad Singulos,

Honour of the Redeemer, and his Kingdom in the World, and too little subserving the Design of his Death and Resurrection.—You will live in the greatest Deficiency of the Grace of Charity, and therefore in a low and very undesirable State.—You will want the Communion of Saints, the Benefit of publick Ordinances, and the edifying Gifts and Graces of others.—In Proportion to your doing so little Good to others, you will have the less Comfort yourselves. They have usually the most Peace and Comfort in themselves, that are the most profitable to others. ‘ You must live for others, if you would live yourself, says *Seneca*; for we can never be properly said to live well, when all our Attention is fixed upon ourselves\*.’ O the Delight that there is in doing Good to many! None know it, that have not tried it. Not because such Delight is owing to Merit, but to the pleasing of God, and to the sweet and amiable Nature of Goodness itself, and to the Efficacy of divine Promises, and because we receive by communicating, and because Charity makes all the Good we do to another to be to us as our own.

§ 10.—Considering also, how dark and partial we are, and how heedless we are of ourselves, and with what Difficulty we get or maintain Acquaintance with our Hearts, we so much the more need the Eye of others. Even an Enemy’s Eye may be useful, though malicious, and may do us Good, while it intends Evil. ‘ An Evil, says *Bernard*, which none sees, none reproves; and where there is no Fear of being reproved, the Tempter will be the more bold, and Sin will

\* Non potest quisquam bene degere, qui se tantum intuetur; alteri vivas oportet, si tibi vis vivere.

‘ will be practised with less Hesitation. ’ ’Tis hard to know the Spots in our own Faces, when we have neither Glass nor Beholder, to acquaint us with them. ‘ Solitude, says *Chrystom*, is the Cover of all Vices\*. ‘ In Company this Cover is laid aside, and Vice being more naked, is more ashamed. Beholders occasion the Shame, which Solitude is not acquainted with; and it is a Piece of Impenitency, not to be ashamed of Sin. — And we are for the most Part so weak and sickly, that we are unable to subsist without the Help of others. God has left some Impotency, Insufficiency, and Necessity upon all, which should keep all Men sociable, and make them acknowledge their Need of others, and be thankful for their Assistance, and be ready to do the Good to others, which they would have others do to them.

§ II. — In Privacy, Pride will have great Advantage, and Repentance great Disadvantage. ‘ Any Person, as *Cassianus* observes, may think himself patient and humble, as long as he keeps out of Company; but his depraved Nature will soon appear, whenever it meets with any Provocation §. ‘ We cannot easily know what Sin or Grace is in us, if we have not such Trials, as are not to be found in Solitude. — Flying from the Observation and Judgment of others, is a kind of Self-Accusation; as if we confessed ourselves to be so bad, that we cannot stand the Trial of the Light. ‘ A good Conscience, says *Seneca*, appeals to the Multitude; but a bad Conscience is perplex-

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|| Malum quod Nemo videt, Nemo arguit: Ubi autem non timetur Reprehensor, Securus accedit Tentator; licentius perpetratur Iniquitas.

• Solitudo est Velamen omnium Vitiatorum.

§ Tam diu patiens quisque sibi videtur & humilis, donec nullius Hominum Consortio commiscetur; ad Naturam pristinam reversurus quum interpellaverit cujus libet Occasionis Commotio,



‘ ed with anxious Thoughts, even in Solitude. If  
 ‘ what you do, be truly good, let all Men know it :  
 ‘ If it be wicked, it is in vain to conceal it from o-  
 ‘ thers, while you know it yourself. And if you def-  
 ‘ pise this single Witness, how great is your Mife-  
 ‘ ry\*!’ Solitude is too much like Death to be desira-  
 ble. He that does good is alive, but he is dead, that  
 is usefess. ‘ He, says *Seneca*, lives indeed, who is ser-  
 ‘ viceable to many. Numbers feel that he has Life;  
 ‘ while they that lie hid in a stupid Inactivity, even  
 ‘ anticipate their own Death†.’ And it is the most  
 culpable Death, and therefore the worst, to have Life,  
 and not to use it.—Once more consider, that the  
 nearest Resemblance to Heaven is a Life of holy Com-  
 munion. In the Heavenly Jerusalem none shall be  
 solitary, but all the Members shall in perfect Harmo-  
 ny love and praise their Maker and Redeemer.

- *Bona Conscientia Turbam advocat: Mala in Solitudine anxia est & sollicita. Si honesta sunt quæ facis, omnes sciant: Si turpia, quid refert Neminem scire, cum Tu scias? O Te miserum, si contemnis hunc Testem!*
- ‡ *Vivit is, qui multis Usui est: Vivit is, qui sentitur; qui vero latitant & torpent, Mortem suam antecesserint,*

CHAP.

## C H A P. IV.

Why the Presence of God in Solitude is  
desirable.

§ 1. *Solitude is not to be feared, but improved.* § 2. *Improvement of Solitude panted after.* § 3, 4. *If God is with us in Solitude, we have (1) the Maker, Ruler, and Disposer of all Things with us, § 5. (2) to whom we are absolutely devoted, § 6. (3) who best loves us, § 7. (4) whose Love is more to us than the Love of all the Friends in the World, § 8, 9. (5) with whom our greatest Business lies, § 10 (6) with whom we may converse without Reserve or Interruption, § 11. and (7) with whom we must live for ever.*

§ 1. **I**F God calls us into Solitude, or if Men forsake us, we may rejoice in this, that *we are not alone, because the Father is with us.* Fear not such Solitude, but be ready to improve it, if you be cast upon it. If God be your God, reconciled to you in Christ, and his Spirit be in you, you are provided for Solitude, and need not fear if all the World should cast you off. If you be banished, imprisoned, or left alone, it is but a Relaxation from your greatest Labours, a Cessation of your sharpest Conflicts, and your Removal from a Multitude of great Temptations. Though you may not cowardly retreat, or run away, from the Fight or Danger; yet if God will dispense with you, and let you

you live in greater Peace and Safety, you have no Cause to murmur. A Fruit-Tree that grows by the Highway-Side, seldom keeps it's Fruit to Ripeness, within the Reach of so many Passengers. Even *Seneca* could say, ' I never bring so good a Temper out of Company, as I took into it. What I had been regulating, is put out of Order. What I had banished from my Mind, gains Admittance again. Thus I receive great Hurt from having much Company\*.' How many vain and foolish Words corrupt the Minds of those that converse with an ungodly World; while Solitude is free from such Temptations! In Solitude, you breathe not in so corrupt an Air; you hear not the Speeches which offend Piety, Modesty, and Charity; nor the Complaints of the Discontented; nor the bitter Words of the Angry; nor the Wranglings of the Contentious; nor the Slanders and Reproaches of the Malicious; nor the Revilings of the Ungodly cast upon the Righteous; nor how the Erroneous artfully corrupt the Minds of the Unwary; nor the Distractions and Clamours, too common in religious Disputes; nor are pained with the Oaths and Blasphemies of the Wicked, the Imprudencies of the Weak, the Persecutions of Enemies, or the Falling-out of Friends. In your Solitude with God, you will not see the Cruelty of proud Oppressors; nor the Prosperity of the Wicked, to excite your Envy; nor the Adversity of the Righteous, to stir up your Grief; nor worldly Pomp, to dazzle you; nor fading Beauty, to entice you; nor wasting Calamities to afflict you. As you lose the Help of your gracious Friends, so you are freed from the Effects of their Peevishness, and other manifold

\* *Nunquam a Turba Motes, quos extuli, refero. Aliquid ex eo quod composui turbatur. Aliquid ex his quæ fugavi redit. Inimica est multorum Conversatio.*

manifold Imperfections. In a Word, you are *there* half delivered from the Vanity and Vexation of the World. And were it not that you are yet undelivered from yourselves, and your own depraved Hearts, what Felicity would your Solitude be!

§ 2. ALAS, we cannot out-run our own Diseases; we must carry with us into Solitude the Remains of our corrupted Nature, our dead and dull, our selfish and earthly, our impatient and discontented Minds; and, what is worst of all, our lamentable Weakness of Faith and Love, our Strangeness to God and Heaven, and Backwardness to the Things of eternal Life! ‘ O that I could escape *these*, tho’ I were in the Hands of the most cruel Enemies! O that such a Heart could be left behind! To out-run it, how gladly would I quit House, and Land, and Honour, and all sensual Delights! O that I knew the Place, where there is none of this Darknes, nor Disaffection, nor Distance from God! O that I could find it! O that I might dwell there, tho’ I should never more see the Face of Mortals, nor ever hear a human Voice, nor ever taste the Delights of Flesh!— Alas, foolish Soul, such a Place there is, that has all this, and more than this; but it is in Paradise, not in the Wilderness; it is above with Christ, not here upon Earth! And am I yet so loth to die? Am I yet no more desirous of the blessed Day, when I shall be unclothed of Flesh and Sin? O Death, what an Enemy art thou even to my Soul, by frightening me from the Presence of my Lord, and hindring my Desires and Willingness to be gone? This is wronging me much more, than by laying my Flesh to rot in Darknes. Fain would I know God, and love, and enjoy him more. But O this hurtful Love of present Life! O this unreasonable Fear of dying!

‘ O

' O wretched Man that I am! Who shall deliver me from  
 ' this Body of Death?—From this carnal unbelieving  
 ' Heart, that can sometimes think more delightfully  
 ' of a Wilderness than of Heaven?—That can seek af-  
 ' ter God in desert Solitude, among Birds, and Beasts,  
 ' and Trees; and yet is so backward to be loosed  
 ' from Flesh, that I might find him, and enjoy him  
 ' in the World of Glory? Can I expect that Heaven  
 ' should come down to Earth, and that the Lord of  
 ' Glory should remove his Court, and either leave  
 ' the Retinue of his celestial Courtiers, or bring them  
 ' all down into this simple World, to satisfy my fleshly  
 ' Mind? Or can I expect the Translation of *Enoch*,  
 ' or the Chariot of *Elijah*? Is it not enough that my  
 ' Lord has conquered Death, and sanctified the  
 ' Passage, and prepared the Place of my perpetual  
 ' Abode?—Well! Tho' a Wilderness is not Hea-  
 ' ven, it shall be sweet and welcome for the Sake of  
 ' Heaven, if from thence I may but have a clearer  
 ' Prospect of Heaven; and if, by retiring from the  
 ' Croud and Noise of Folly, I may but be better dis-  
 ' posed to converse above, and to use, alas, my too  
 ' weak and languid Faith, till it be exchanged for the  
 ' Beatifick Vision. May there but be more of God,  
 ' readier Access to him, more flaming Love, more  
 ' Heart-comforting Intimations of his Favour, in a  
 ' Wilderness than in a City, in a Prison than in a  
 ' Palace, let that Wilderness be my City, and that  
 ' Prison be my Palace, as long as I abide on Earth.  
 ' If, in Solitude, I may have *Enoch's Walk with God*,  
 ' I shall in due Season have such a Translation, as will  
 ' bring me to the same Felicity which he enjoys; and  
 ' in the mean Time, as well as after, it is no Disad-  
 ' vantage, if by mortal Eyes I am seen no more. If  
 ' the Chariot of Contemplation will, in Solitude raise  
 ' me

‘ me to more believing affectionate Converse with  
 ‘ Heaven, than I could expect in Tumults and Temp-  
 ‘ tations, it shall reconcile me to Solitude, and make  
 ‘ it my Paradise on Earth, till Angels, instead of  
 ‘ *Elijah’s* Chariot, shall convey me to the Presence of  
 ‘ my glorified Jesus.’

§ 3. Is it grievous to you to be alone, because you have been used to much Company? — Consider, that Company may so abuse you, that it may be more grievous to you not to be alone. You will not wish for the Society of Wasps and Serpents; and even Bees have such Stings, that their Honey may be bought too dear. — But can you say you are alone, while you are with God? Is his Presence Nothing to you? Does it not signify more than the Company of all the Men in the World? There can be no Want of Man when we can speak with God. And were it not that God is here revealed to us as in a Glass, and that we are conversing with God in Man, human Converse would be of little Worth. — If you suggest, that Solitude is disconsolate to a sociable Mind. Think again, that the most desirable Society is no Solitude. If God be nothing to you, you are not a *Christian*, but an *Atheist*. If God be God to you, he is your All in All, and then should not his Presence be instead of All? — O that I might get one Step nearer to God, tho’ I receded many from all the World! O that I could find that Place on Earth, where a Soul may have nearest Access to him, and the fullest Knowledge and Enjoyment of him, tho’ I never more saw the Face of Friends! — On these Terms I should cheerfully say, with my blessed Saviour, *I am not alone, because the Father is with me*; and not without having the best Reasons to assign for saying so. For if God be with me, — *The Maker, Ruler, and Disposer of*  
*all*

*all Things is with me;—He is with me, to whom I am absolutely devoted;—Who loves me best;—Whose Love is more to me than the Love of all my Friends in the World;—With whom my greatest Business lies;—With whom I may converse without Reserve or Interruption;—and with whom I must live for ever.*

§ 4. (1) IF God be with me, *the Maker, Ruler, and Disposer of all Things is with me.* So that in him all Things are virtually with me. I have that in Gold and Jewels, which I seem to want in Silver, Lead, and Dross. I can want no Friend, if God vouchsafes to be my Friend. I can enjoy no Friend, if God be my Enemy. If God be reconciled unto me, I need not fear the greatest Enemy. I shall not miss the Light of a Candle, if I have this blessed Sun. The Creature is Nothing, but what it is from, and in God; and as it discovers him, and helps the Soul to know him, serve him, or draw nearer to him. As it is the Sinner's Idolatry, to thirst after the Creature in the Neglect of God, thereby making the World his God; so it approaches to the same aggravated Sin, when we lament the Loss of Creatures more than God's Displeasure. If I am under the Wrath of God, I have so much greater Cause for Lamentation than for the Loss, or Absence, or Frowns of Mortals, as should almost make me forget that there is such a Thing as Man to be regarded. But if God be my Friend in Christ, I have so much to think of with Delight and Complacency of Soul, as makes it extremely absurd inordinately to lament the Absence of a Worm, while I have his Love and Presence who is All in All. If God cannot content me, and be enough for me, how is he then my God? Or how shall he be my Heaven and everlasting Happiness?

§ 5.

§ 5. (2) *IF God be with me, he is with me to whom I am absolutely devoted.* I am wholly his, and have acknowledged his Interest in me, and long ago disclaimed all Usurpers, and penitently and unreservedly resigned myself to him. Where should I dwell but with him who is my Owner, and with whom I have made the most solemn Covenant that ever I made? With whom should a Servant dwell, but with his Master? Or a Wife, but with her Husband? Or Children, but with their Father? I am nearer related to my God and Saviour, than to any other Relation in the World. I have renounced all the World, as it stands in Competition or Comparison with my God. How shall I hate Father and Mother, Brother and Sister, and Wife and Children for his Sake, if I cannot spare them, or be without them, to enjoy him? To hate them, is but to use them as Men do hated Things; that is, to cast them away with Contempt, so far as they would alienate me from Christ, that I may cleave to him, and be satisfied in him alone. I am now married to Christ; and with whom should I delight to dwell, but with him who has taken me into so near a Relation? ‘O my dear Lord, hide not thou thy Face from  
 ‘ an unkind, and unworthy Sinner! Let me but dwell  
 ‘ with thee, and see thy Face, and feel the gracious  
 ‘ Tokens of thy Love; and then, if thou see’st it best  
 ‘ for me, let me be cast off by all the World; or, let  
 ‘ all other Friends be where they will, so that my  
 ‘ Soul may but be with thee? For thy Sake, I have  
 ‘ agreed to forsake all, and I resolve by thy Grace  
 ‘ to stand to this Agreement.’

§ 6. (3) *IF God be with me, he is with me who loves me best.* The Love of all the Friends on Earth is Nothing to his Love. How plainly hath he declared his Love to me, in the strange Condescension, the  
 Suf-



Sufferings, Death, and Intercession of his dear Son ? In the Communications of his Spirit, the Operations of his Grace, and the near Relations into which he has brought me ? In the Course of his Providences, by many and wonderful Preservatives and Deliverances, and by the Conduct of his Wisdom thro' a Life of Mercies ? What Love appears in his precious Promises, and in the glorious Provisions he has made for me with himself to all Eternity ? \* O my Lord, I am ashamed that thy Love is so much lost; that it has no better Return from an unkind, unthankful Heart; that I am no more delighted in thee, and swallowed up in the Contemplation of thy Love. I can contentedly let go all others, for the Converse of some one Bosom-Friend, as *Jonathan* was to *David*; and can I not much more be satisfied in thee alone ! All Men delight most in the Company of those that love them best; when they seek Satisfaction, it is not with the Multitude, but in the Converse of their dearest Friends. And who, blessed God, should be so dear to me as thyself ? Did not my unthankful Heart basely neglect thy Love, I should never be so unsatisfied in thee, but should heartily say, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee ? And there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.* Tho' not only my Friends, but my *Flesh* and my *Heart* fail; yet thou, Lord, wilt be the *Strength of my Heart, and my Portion for ever.* Therefore how far soever I am from Man, *it is good for me to draw near to thee.* O let me dwell there, where thou wilt not be strange, *because thy Loving-Kindness is better than Life ! In the Multitude of my Thoughts within me, let thy Comforts delight my Soul !* Let me dwell as in thy Family, and *when I awake, let me be still with thee !* Let me go no whither, but where I am still following thee ! Let me do Nothing,  
 \* but

' but thy Work ; nor serve any other, but when I  
 ' may truly call it a serving thee ! Let me hear No-  
 ' thing, but thy Voice ; and let me know thy Voice,  
 ' by whatever Instrument thou shalt speak ! Let me  
 ' never see any Thing, but thyself, and the Glass  
 ' that represents thee, and the Books in which I may  
 ' read thy Name ! Whether in Company, or Solitude,  
 ' let me be continually with thee, and so thou vouchsafe  
 ' to hold me by my right Hand, and guide me with thy  
 ' Counsel, and afterward receive me to thy Glory !

§ 7. (4) IF God be with me, *I shall be with him, whose  
 Love is more to me, than the Love of all the Friends in the  
 World.* Their Love may perhaps afford me some lit-  
 tle Comfort, as it flows from his ; but his Love is  
 that only upon which I live. His Love gives me  
 Life and Time, Health and Food, Books and Un-  
 derstanding, Provision and the temperate Use of it,  
 Friends and the Blessings they communicate. Sun,  
 Earth, and Air are not so useful and necessary to me,  
 as his Love. The Love of all my Friends cannot  
 heal my Sickneses, nor pardon the smallest of my  
 Sins, nor assure me of God's Forgiveness, nor restore  
 the Health of my Soul, nor give lasting Peace to my  
 troubled Conscience, nor banish the Fears of Death,  
 nor secure my Passage to everlasting Life. Death  
 will be Death still, and Danger will be Danger still,  
 when all my Friends have done their best. But my  
 God is an All-sufficient Friend. He can prevent my  
 Sickness, or rebuke and cure it; or make it so good for  
 me, that I shall thank him for it. He can blot out  
 my Transgressions, and forgive all my Sins, and justi-  
 fy me, when the World and my own Conscience con-  
 demn me. He can teach me to believe, repent, and  
 pray, to hope, suffer, and overcome. He can quiet  
 my Soul in the midst of Trouble, and give me a well-

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grounded

grounded everlasting Peace, and a Joy that  
 can take from me. He can deliver me  
 Distempers and Corruptions of my froward  
 both ease and secure me in the painful War  
 daily maintained in my own Breast. He  
 as easy a Thing to die, as to undress and  
 He can strip Death of it's terrible Aspect,  
 mild and comfortable Voice can preach to  
 and sweetest Sermon, even what Jesus  
 the Cross, *Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt  
 me in Paradise.*—And is this the Difference  
 the Love of Man and of God? And do  
 the Loss of Man? And am I yet so backward  
 verse with God, and to be satisfied in his  
 ' Ah, my God, how justly mayst thou  
 ' Love, which I thus undervalue; and refuse  
 ' verse, which I have first refused! How  
 ' thou turn me over to Man, to sinful Man  
 ' Converse I so much desire, till I have  
 ' dear-bought Experience, the Difference  
 ' earthly and an heavenly Friend! Have  
 enough found what Man is in a Time of  
 I not been told it over and over, and too  
 quick, by deceitful and selfish Friends; by  
 conceited Friends; by passionate and  
 Friends; by tender, faithful, but unable Friends  
 often have I found that human Friendship  
 Addition to our Woe, a beloved Calamity  
 tion which Nature will not be without?  
 Nature loves Evil, nor is wholly deceived in  
 (for there is Good in Friendship, and Dear  
 Love;) but because the Good which is  
 panied with so much Evil, is the Beginning  
 high and durable Friendship, and points us  
 sed Society and Converse which we shall

Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem.—But how much better have I found the Friendship of the All-sufficient God? His Love has not only pitied, but relieved me. He has not only been afflicted, as it were, in my Afflictions, but has seasonably, powerfully, and sweetly delivered me. My burdened Mind has been eased by his Love, which was but more burdened by the fruitless Love of all my Friends. Often have I come to Man for Help and Comfort, and gone away as from an empty Cistern, that had no Water to cool my Thirst; but God has been a present Help. Could I get near him, I was sure of Light, how great soever my former Darkness; I was sure of warming, quickening Life, how dead soever I had been before. All my Misery was, that I could not get near him. My guilty Soul could not get satisfying Acquaintance with him. My earthly Heart lay dead, and would not stir; or, if by any celestial Force it began a little to move towards him, it soon fell down again. My carnal Mind was entangled in diverting Vanities. Thus have I been kept from Communion with my God. Kept! Not by external Violence; not by Bars, or Bolts, or Distance of Place, or Lowness of Condition; nor by any Misrepresentations or Reproaches of Man; but, alas! by myself, by the Darkness, Stupidity, and vile Affections of a naughty Heart. These, these have been the Bars, and Bolts, and Jailors to keep me from my God. Had it not been for these, I might have got nearer to him; I might have walked and dwelt with him; yea, *dwelt in him, and he in me*; nor have missed my Friends, nor felt my Enemies. And is it my sinful Distance from my God, that has been my Loss, my Wilderness, my Woe? Is it a nearer Admittance to the Presence of his Love, that must be my Recovery, and my Joy, if ever I attain to Joy?

‘ O then, my Soul, lay hold on Christ the R  
 ‘ and in him, and by him, draw near to Go  
 ‘ *from Man, whose Breath is in his Nostril*  
 ‘ God in his Saints, and delightfully conv  
 ‘ Christ in them, while thou hast Op  
 ‘ But remember thou livest not upon the  
 ‘ their Love, but upon God; and theref  
 ‘ their Company but for His; and if thou  
 ‘ be content if thou hast not theirs. He v  
 ‘ Man, that enjoys God. Collect all th  
 ‘ Thoughts, and Desires, which have been  
 ‘ and lost upon the Creatures, and set the  
 ‘ God himself, and press into his Presence,  
 ‘ verse with him, and thou shalt find the M  
 ‘ thy present Discontent, and thy sweet E  
 ‘ shall tell thee, thou hast made a happy Ch

§ 8. (5) IF God be with me, *he is with*  
*whom my greatest Business lies.* What Compa  
 I desire, but theirs, with whom I must do  
 necessary Work? I have more to do with C  
 with all the World; yea, more and greate  
 with him in one Day, than with all the W  
 my Life. I have Business with Mortals abou  
 or Lands, Food or Raiment, Labours or Re  
 private or public Peace; but what are the  
 Business with God? Indeed, with holy M  
 holy Business; but it is only as they are M  
 from God, and come to me on his Business:  
 then, my Business is much more with God  
 them; with him that sent them, than with  
 sengers. My Business with God is so grea  
 I had not a Mediator to encourage, and  
 to do my Work, and procure my Accep  
 Thoughts of it would overwhelm my Soul.  
 fore let Man stand by; I have to do with t

God, and with him I am to transact in this little Time the Business of my endless Life. I am to seek of God thro' Christ the Pardon of all my great and grievous Sins; and, if I speed not, woe unto me that ever I was born! I have some Hopes of Pardon, but intermixed with many perplexing Fears. I have Evidences of Grace, but they are exceedingly blotted. I want Assurance that God is my reconciled Father, and that he will receive me to himself when the World forsakes me. I have many languishing Graces to be strengthened; and, alas! what rooted, inveterate, vexatious Corruptions to be cured? Can I look into my Heart, into such an unbelieving and earthly Heart, into such a proud and peevish Heart, into such a perplexed and trembling Heart, and not discern how great my Business is with God? Can I survey my Sins, feel my Wants, and sink under my Weaknesses? Can I review my lost Time, and all the Grace I have ungratefully resisted, and all the Mercies I have abused; or, can I look forward, and see how near my Time is to an End? Can I think of the Malice and Diligence of Satan; the Number, Power, and Policy of my Enemies; the many dangerous Snares and Temptations that are around me; and my own Ignorance, Weakness, and Unwatchfulness, and not know that my greatest Business is with God? Can I feel and lament my Afflictions, and think my Burden greater than I can bear, and find that Man cannot relieve me? Can I go mourning in the Heaviness of my Soul, and water my Bed with Tears, and fill the Air with my Groans, or feel my Soul overwhelmed, and my Words intercepted? Can I think of dying? Can I draw near to Judgment? Can I contemplate Heaven's everlasting Joys, or Hell's everlasting Pains, and not feel that my greatest Business is with God?

‘ O my Soul, the Case is easily resolved, with  
‘ thou art most seriously to converse. Where  
‘ thou be, but where thy Business is, an  
‘ nefs so important?’—Alas! what have  
with Man? What can it do but make m  
ach, to hear a deal of senseless Chat, about the  
and Thoughts of Men, or their Lands and  
and a thousand Impertinences, that only pro  
the dreaming World is not awake? What  
is it to see the Bustles of a Bedlam-World, a  
they strive to prove or make themselves ur  
How tedious and trifling are the Discourses  
the Learned, when God is not the Mark they  
Were it not that some Converse with Men, p  
my Converse with God, and that my Master  
ced me in Society, and appointed me much  
Work with others, and for others, and that mu  
Mercy is conveyed by others, Man might stand  
Solitude would be better than the best Socie  
God alone should take me up.—Nothing is  
my Misery and Shame, as that I have so lit  
and Skill in the Management of my grand B  
that my Work is with God, and my Heart  
with him. What might I not do in holy Medi  
Prayer one Hour, if I were disposed, like one  
had so long a Season, and so great a Necessity  
versing with God? A prayerless Heart, a He  
flies away from God, is most inexcusable in  
one as I, that have so much important Busin  
him. It is Work that must be done, and if w  
will never be repented of. I have never return  
the Presence of God, when I have really dra  
to him, as I have from the Company of Mor  
pening the Loss of my Time, and trembling  
Discomposure contracted by their vain and

Discourse. I often repent that I have prayed to him so coldly, and conversed with him so negligently, and served him so remissly; but I never repent of the Time, Care, Affections, or Diligence employed in his holy Work. O that I had lived more with God, tho' I had been less with some that are eminent in the World, or even with the dearest of my Friends! How much more sweet would my Life have been! How much more blameless, regular, and pure! How much more fruitful, and answerable to my Obligations and Professions! How much more comfortable in the Review! How many Falls, and Wounds, and Grievs might have been prevented! O how much more pleasing is it now to my Remembrance, to think of the Hours in which I have lain at the divine Footstool, tho' it were in Tears and Groans; than to think of the Time I have spent in Converse with the greatest, most learned, or dearest of my Acquaintance!

§ 9. AND as my *greatest* so my *daily Business* is also with God. He purposely leaves me under daily Wants, and Necessities, and the daily Assault of Enemies, and Surprize of Afflictions, that I may be daily driven to him. He loves to hear from me. He would have me to be no Stranger with him. I have Business with him every Hour, and need not want Employment for all the Faculties of my Soul, if I know what it is to converse in Heaven. Prayer and every devout Thought, has an Object so great and excellent, as ought to possess me wholly. Nothing of God must be treated lightly. His Name must not be took in vain. *He will be sanctified in them that come nigh him.* He must be loved with all the Heart. His Servants need not be weary for Want of Employment, nor thro' its trifling or unprofitable Nature. Had I Cities to build, or



Kingdoms to govern, I might more reasonably plain that my Faculties are unemployed, than when I am to converse in Heaven. In other things the Delight abates, when Desire is gratified, Knowledge attained; but in God there is more to be known, when I seem to know him, I am never satisfied with the easiness of his presence, nor is there any Uneasiness or Unworthiness in him to abate my Desires; but I am drawn to his highest Excellencies, and drawn on to desire more, by the infinite Light which I have beheld, and by the infinite Good which I have enjoyed. If I am idle, or seem to want Employment, when I am to contemplate all the Works and Mercies, all the Relations and Perfections of my Lord, surely it is for want of Eyes to see, or Inclination to my Business. If God be not employed by my Soul, then all the Persons and Things of the Earth are not enough.—And when I have nothing but his Goodness to delight in, where my Soul may find itself, without any Fear of exceeding its measure, how sweet should this Employment be? Let me be more confined here, by the Narrowness of the present than Knowledge. We can never love him in Proportion, either to his Goodness or Amiability in himself, or to his Love to us. What Need then of any other Company or Business, when we have infinite Goodness to delight in and to love, than such Company or Business may subsist in the greatest Work?—‘Come Home, then, O Soul, to God. Converse in Heaven. Turn *thine Eyes from beholding Vanity.* Let not the sparks of affections kindle upon Straw or Briars, that when they have made a Flash or Noise, a little while they leave thee to thy Cold and Darkness. But co

' dwell upon celestial Beauties, and make it thy daily  
 ' and most diligent Work to kindle thy Affections on  
 ' the infinite everlasting Good; and, thus, they will  
 ' never be extinguished for Want of Fewel; but the  
 ' longer they burn, the greater will be the Flame.  
 ' Tho' while Love is but a Spark, thou canst not ea-  
 ' sily make it burn, and art complaining of thy cold  
 ' and backward Heart, that it is hardly warmed with  
 ' the Love of God; yet, when the whole Pile has  
 ' took Fire, and the Flame ascends, then Fire will  
 ' breed Fire, and Love will produce Love, and all the  
 ' Malice of Hell itself shall never be able to suppress  
 ' or quench it unto all Eternity.'

§ 10. (6) IF God be with me, *he is with me with  
 whom I may converse without Reserve or Interruption.* It is  
 great Encouragement to my Converse with God, that  
 no Misunderstanding, no Malice of Enemies, no past  
 Sin, nor present Frailty; no, nor the infinite Dis-  
 tance of the most holy and glorious God, can hinder  
 my Access to him, or interrupt my Leave and Liber-  
 ty of Converse. If I converse with the Poor, their  
 Wants afflict me, being greater than I can supply. If  
 I would converse with the Great, it is not easy to  
 get Access, and less easy to have their Favour, un-  
 less I purchase it at too dear a Rate. How strangely  
 and contemptuously do they look on their Inferiors!  
 How must their Word or Smile be solicited! How  
 soon are they weary of you! Especially if you would  
 put them to any Cost or Trouble! With how much  
 Labour and Difficulty must you climb, to see the Top  
 of one of those Mountains! And when you are there,  
 you are but in a Place of Barrenness, and have No-  
 thing to satisfy you for your Pains, and may soon be  
 glad to get far enough from them, and learn better to  
 relish the accessible, calm, and fruitful Valleys.——

How different from this, is my Soul's Conviction of God! Company never hinders him from hearkening to my Suit. He is Infinite, and Omnipotent, All-sufficient for every individual Soul, as if there were no other to look after in the World. When I am taken up with the Attendance and Praises of the heavenly Hosts, he is as free and as ready to answer the Prayers and Sighs of a contrite Creature, if he had no nobler Creatures, nor higher Angels to regard. I am often unready to pray, but always ready to hear. I am unready to come near him, to walk with him, and delight myself in him, but I am never unready to entertain me. Many a Time my Conscience would have driven me away, but he has invited me to him, and rebuked my accursed trembling Conscience. Many a Time I have called myself a Prodigal, a miserable Sinner, when he has called me *his Son*, and reproved me for querulousness in his Love. He has readily forgiven the Sins, which I thought would have made my Soul the Fewel of Hell. He has entertained me with *Joy*, with *Music*, with a *Feast*, when I rather deserved to be cast out of his House. He has tenderly embraced me, when he might have said, *Depart from me, thou Worker of Iniquity, I know thee not*. Little did I think he could ever have forgiven the Vanity and Villainy of my Youth; when I had sinned against Light; when I had resisted Conscience; when I had frequently and wilfully injured him; when I thought he would never have forgotten it; when I thought of the Greatness of his Love and Mercy, and the Blessed Intercession of his Son, have cancelled all. O how many Mercies have I tasted, since I thought I had found my way all Mercies! How patiently has he bore with me, since I thought he would never have put up with me. And yet, except my Sins, and the withdraw

my Heart, there has been Nothing to interrupt our Converse. Tho' he is God, and I a Worm; tho' he is in Heaven, and I on Earth; yet he is near in all that I call upon him for. Tho' he has the Praises of Angels, he disdains not my Sighs and Tears. Tho' he is perfectly loved by Spirits made perfect, he despises not the little Spark of my weak and languid Love. Tho' I injure him by loving him no more; tho' I often forget him, and have been out of the Way, or refused to hear, when he has called, and have ungratefully rejected the Entertainments of his Love, and have unfaithfully associated myself with those whose Company he forbid me; yet he has not divorced me. O wonderful, that Heaven will be familiar with Earth, God with Man, the most High with a Worm, and the most Holy with a vile Sinner! Man refuses me, when God entertains me. Those I never wronged, reproach me; and God, whom I have unspeakably injured, invites and intreats me, and condescends to me, as if he was obliged to serve me. Men abhor me, whom I have deserved well of; and God, from whom I deserve eternal Torments, graciously accepts me. I upbraid myself with my Sins, but he upbraids me not. I condemn myself for them, but he will not condemn me. He forgives me sooner than I can forgive myself. I have Peace with him, before I can have Peace in my own Conscience.

— ' Draw near, then, O my Soul, to him, who  
 ' is willing to have thy Company; who frowns thee  
 ' not away, except when thou hast sinned, that thou  
 ' mayst repent and be fitter for his Converse. Draw  
 ' near to him, who will not wrong thee, by crediting  
 ' thine Enemies' false Reports, or by *laying to thy*  
 ' *Charge Things that thou knowest not*; but will forgive  
 ' the Wrongs thou hast done, and justify thee from

' the Sins which Conscience lays to thy  
 ' Come to him, who invites thee to come  
 ' Word and Spirit, by his Ministers and Merc  
 ' who promises, that *those who come to him, he*  
 ' *wife cast out.* Walk with him, who will *ho*  
 ' *thy right Hand.* Speak to him, who teaches  
 ' speak, and understands and accepts thy Stam  
 ' and *helps thine Infirmities,* when thou *kno*  
 ' *what to pray for as thou oughtest,* and gi  
 ' *Groanings which cannot be uttered by thy bes*  
 ' Words. Speak to him, whom *the Heaven and*  
 ' *of Heavens, cannot contain; but to this Man wi*  
 ' *even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spi*  
 ' *trembles at his Word; yea, a broken and a*  
 ' *Heart he will not despise.* Walk with him,  
 ' never weary of the Converse of the Uprigh  
 ' is never angry with thee but for flying from  
 ' from drawing back, or being too strange,  
 ' fusing the Kindness and Felicity of his P  
 ' The Day is coming when the proudest of t  
 ' of Men would be glad of a kind Look fro  
 ' with whom thou hast Leave now to walk  
 ' glad would those be of a Father's Smile, o  
 ' Intimation of Hope and Mercy from him, w  
 ' will not condescend to favour thee with their  
 ' but delight to injure and abuse thee! Draw  
 ' him, therefore, on whom the whole Creat  
 ' pends, and whose Favour the greatest of  
 ' will at last cry for, when all their Pomp ar  
 ' sure can purchase Nothing. Walk with hi  
 ' is Love itself, nor think him unwilling or u  
 ' nor let any Artifices of the Tempter drive th  
 ' him. Having felt the Storms abroad, methir  
 ' shouldst say, how safe, how sweet, how goo  
 ' *draw near to God!* — Once more,

§ II. (7) IF God be with me, *he is with me, with whom I must live for ever.* My House or Land, my Walks or Books, or even my Friends as cloathed with Flesh, are Pleasures I must possess but a little while. *Henceforth know we no Man after the Flesh; yea, tho' we have known Christ after the Flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more;* for his Body in Heaven is spiritual and glorious. And tho' when we come to Christ, we may converse with Father or Mother, with Wife or Children, as glorified Saints; yet in the Relations in which they now stand, we shall converse with them but a little while. *For the Time is short: It remaineth, that both they that have Wives, be as tho' they had none; and they that weep, as tho' they wept not; and they that rejoice, as tho' they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as tho' they possessed not; and they that use this World, as not abusing it; or, as tho' they used it not: For the Fashion of this World passeth away.* Why then should I so much regard a Converse of so short a Continuance? Why should I be so familiar in my Inn, and so fond of that Familiarity, as to grieve at the Thought of leaving it, and of going to my glorious, eternal Home? Shall I love the Company of a Fellow-Traveller or perhaps of one that is going to a contrary Place, and not take more Pleasure in remembering my Home?—O my Soul, consider 'thou dost not dwell, but travel here. It 'is thy Father's House, where thou must abide for 'ever. Tho' he is invisible, he is every step of thy 'Way nearer to thee than any Mortal. Walk then, 'as seeing him, who is invisible. Harken to him, when 'he speaks. Obey his Voice. Observe his Way: 'Speak to him boldly, tho' humbly and reverently, 'as his Child. Tell him what ails thee. Look up- 'on all thy Suffering as the Demerit of thy Sin.

' Confess

Confess thy Folly and Unkindness, crave  
 pardon, and remind him what and why his  
 suffered. — Treat with him about thy futu-  
 re. Desire his Grace, and give up thy  
 Conduct and Care. Tell him the History  
 Crimes, with penitential Tears and Groans  
 him, also, that *where Sin has abounded*, he  
 may now *much more abound*, and therefore  
 punished the more. Tell him, that thou art  
 angry with that which offends him most, and  
 disobedient, unthankful Heart; that thou art  
 of a Heart that loves him no more; and that  
 never please thee, till it loves him better,  
 more desirous to please him. Tell him of thy  
 Infirmities, and intreat the Protection of his Love  
 him of thy Infirmities, and beg not only his  
 Forbearance, but his Help; sensible, that  
*him thou canst do Nothing*; and that, *strengthen*  
*him, thou canst do all Things*. When thou  
 despair not, but crave his Hand to raise  
 again. — Especially speak to him of every  
 Thing, and thank him for his Promises,  
 thy Hopes of what thou shalt be, and have,  
 among his Saints for ever. Rejoice in the  
 promised Joys, even of seeing his Glory, and  
 and praising him better than thou canst now  
 Begin those Praises. And, as thou walk  
 him, take Pleasure in the Mention of his  
 Works; *be thankful unto him, and bless his Name*  
 light thyself in considering, what a God, a  
 Father, all Believers have; whither this God  
 conducting thee; what he will do with thee  
 how he will employ thee for ever. Joyfully  
 celebrate the Glory of his Works, the Righteousness  
 his Judgments, and the Holiness of his Way

his Praises elevate thy Heart and Voice. Turn away all slavish Fears, all hurtful Doubts and Griefs, that would interrupt or spoil the Melody. Thy Father loves, even thy Complaints and Tears; and how much more thy Praises and Thanksgivings? — If indeed he seems to chide or hide his Face, because thou hast offended him; let the Cloud that is gathered by thy Folly, come down in Tears; yet fly not from him, but beg his Pardon, and the Privilege of a Servant, tho' unworthy to be treated as a Son; and thou wilt find that he is merciful and ready to forgive: Only return, and keep closer for Time to come. — If the Breach, thro' thy Neglect, be gone so far, that thou seemest to have lost thy God, and to be cast off and forsaken; despair not yet, for he does but hide his Face, till thou repent. Be not regardless of his Withdrawings, and of thy Loss. Cry out, *My Father, my Saviour, my God, why dost thou hide thy Face? Why hast thou forsaken me? What shall I do here without thee? O leave me not, lose me not in this howling Wilderness! Let me not be a Prey to any ravenous Beast, to Sin and Satan, to my Foes and thine!* Tell him, these are the Lamentations of his Child. Beg that thy childish Follies may be pardoned; and tho' he correct thee, that he will not forsake his Child. If thou hast not Words to pour out before him, at least *smite upon thy Breast*; and tho' thou art afraid or ashamed to *lift up so much as thine Eyes unto Heaven*, yet look down and say, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*; and it will tend to thy Pardon and Justification, and be a Prayer which he cannot deny. — Or if thou hast long called upon thy Father's Name, and hearest not his Voice, and hast no Return; enquire for him of them that know him, and are acquainted with his Way; and

ask



' ask the Watchmen, where thou mayst find thy  
 ' At length he will appear to thee, and first find  
 ' that thou mayst find him, and will shew thee  
 ' thou didst lose him, by losing thyself. See  
 ' and thou shalt find him. Wait, and he will  
 ' appear in Kindness; for he never fails or forsakes  
 ' those that wait for him. Thou art surer in his  
 ' venant-Love, than thou canst believe or apprehend  
 ' ——— This kind of Converse, O my Soul, thou  
 ' to maintain with thy God. Thou hast, all  
 ' Interest of all his afflicted Servants to tell him  
 ' the Concerns of his Kingdom; the Fury of his  
 ' Enemies; the Dishonour they cast upon his  
 ' the Advancement of his Gospel and Glory in this  
 ' World. But still let his righteous Judgment be  
 ' remembered, and all be centered in his glorious  
 ' lasting Kingdom.' — Is it not much better  
 to converse with him, whom I must be with for ever,  
 about the Place, the Company, the Work, and the Interests  
 of my perpetual Abode, than to be talking with  
 Strangers, and be hindered in my Way by  
 Impertinencies?

C

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C H A P. V.

How the Presence of God in Solitude is attainable.

§ 1. *More Reasons hinted at for desiring the Presence of God in Solitude.* § 2, 3. *In Order to enjoy the Presence of God in Solitude, (1) be reconciled to him; § 4. (2) depend on Christ's Mediation; § 5. (3) get free from Guilt; § 6. (4) cherish no Idol in the Heart; § 7—9. (5) Live by Faith; § 10. and (6) keep the Heart with all Keeping. § 11. The blessed God to be admired for his perfect Suitableness to the Desires of the Soul. § 12. The Work concludes with ardent Breathings after God.*

§. 1. **L**ARGELY as I have pointed out, in the preceding Chapter, the Reasonableness of saying in Solitude, *I am not alone, because the Father is with me*; yet I am sensible there are other weighty Reasons to be assigned which well deserve to engage our Meditations; tho' here I shall but briefly mention them. As for Instance; — *Converse with God gives human Converse all its Excellency.* Converse with Man is only so far desirable as it tends to our Converse with God. And therefore the End must be preferred before the Means. — *All divine Dispensations and Ordinances are designed to assist our Converse with God.* It is the Office of Christ, and the Work of the Holy Spirit,

Spirit, and the Usefulness of all the Means of God, and of all Creatures, Mercies, and Afflictions, conduce our straying Souls to God, that we may converse with him, and enjoy him. — *Converse with God is most suitable to those that are near Death* best prepares for Death. It is the nearest Resemblance to the Work we are to do after Death. We had rather, when Death comes, be found conversing with God, than with Man. A dying Man has principally to do with God; he is going to the Judgment with God; and he must trust in his Mercy. It therefore concerns us to draw near to God now, and not be Strangers to him, lest Strangeness at Death should be our Terror. — *God's Willingness to converse with us is the most wonderful Condescension.* Will he converse with such a Worm, with such a vile Sinner! therefore, how inexcusable is my Crime, if I refuse his Company, and reject so great a Mercy! — *Heaven itself is but our Converse with God, and with the Saints that are glorified.* Consequently, our holy converse with God here, is the State that most resembles Heaven, and best prepares for it, and indeed is a Heaven there is upon Earth.

§ 2. IN order to assist you in attaining to this converse with God, let the following Directions be fully attended to. As for Instance;—*Be reconciled to God;—Depend on the Mediation of Christ;—Get free from Guilt;—Cherish no Idol in the Heart;—Live in Faith;—And, keep the Heart with all Keeping.* As obvious as such Directions are, there may be an Incapacity in some Persons, to be much in such Contemplations, arising from Melancholy, or Infirmities. The Confusion and Hurry, which may be apt to prevail in Retirement, make it proper for such Persons to attend, for the most Part, to the

ligious Duties which are carried on by the Help of others. Instead of well-digested Meditations in Solitude, they must content themselves with *a little Time in secret Prayer*, and with *short occasional Meditations*; and be so much the more in social Reading and Hearing, Prayer and Praise, till their better State of bodily Health, and more vigorous Spirits, shall fit them for the desirable Improvement of their Solitude.

§ 3. (1) *Make sure of your Reconciliation to God in Christ, and of his being indeed your Father and Friend. How can two walk together, except they be agreed? Can you take Pleasure in dwelling with consuming Fire? Or, in conversing with the most dreadful Enemy?—* But that every doubting, or self-accusing Soul may not find a Pretence for flying from God, let such know and consider, that God does not cease to be a Father, whenever a fearful Soul is drawn to question or deny it. Let them also know and consider, that in the Offers of Grace to all miserable Sinners, and in the assured Readiness of God to receive and embrace the truly Penitent, there are such Tidings as ought exceedingly to rejoice a Sinner; and such abundant Encouragements, as ought to draw the most Guilty to seek unto God for Mercy.—It must be acknowledged, however, that the sweetest Converse with God is for his Children, and for those that have some Assurance that they are his Children. And perhaps you will say, that this is not easily attained; how shall we know that God is our Friend? To this I answer, If you are unfeignedly Friends to God, it is *because he first loved you*. Prefer him before all other Friends, and before all the World's Wealth and Vanity. Use him as your best Friend, and abuse him not by Disobedience or Ingratitude. Own him, though at the dearest Rate, whenever you are called to it.

Desire

Desire his Presence, and lament his Absence. *Love him with all your Heart.* Think not hardly of him. Suspect him not. Misunderstand him not. He is not to his Enemies. Receive not any false Report against him. Take him to be really better for you than all the World. Thus do, and doubt not that you are Friends with God, and God with you. Be but heartily willing to be Friends to God, and that God should be your chiefest Friend, and you may be sure that it is so indeed, and that you shall have what you desire; and then how delightfully you converse with God!

§ 4. (2) *Depend entirely on the Mediation of Christ, the great Reconciler.* Without him there is no way near to God; but *in his Beloved* you shall be accepted. Whatever Fear of God's Displeasure shall follow you, presently fly to Christ for Safety. When Guilt shall look you in the Face, commit your Cause to Christ, and desire him to answer for you. When the Doors of Mercy seem to be shut against you, fly to him that *has the Keys*, and when any Time can open to you and let you in. Let him to answer for you to God, to your own Conscience, and to all Accusers. By him alone you may boldly and comfortably converse with God; but without him, God will not know you.

§ 5. (3) *If you would have sweet Communion with God, take Heed of bringing into his Presence any particular Guilt.* Christ himself never reconciled God and Sin; and the Sinner and Sin are so nearly related that, notwithstanding the Death of Christ, you feel that *Iniquity dwelleth not with God, but he is all Workers of it, and the foolish shall not stand in his Sight*; and that if you will presume to sin because you are his Children, *be sure your Sin will find you out*.

what Fear, what Shame, what Self-Abhorrence, and Self-Revenge will Guilt raise in a penitent Soul, when it comes with the Soul into the Light of the Presence of the Lord! It will unavoidably abate your Boldness and your Comfort. When you should be taking a sweet Complacency in his reconciled Face, and promised Glory, you will be reproaching yourselves for your former Sins, and be ready even to tear your Flesh, to think that you should do as you have done, and use him as you would not have used a common Friend, and that you have cast yourselves upon his Wrath. But a peaceful Conscience, a Soul *washed in Innocency*, will walk with God in *Quietness and Assurance*, without those Frowns and Fears, which to others are a Taste of Hell.

§ 6. (4) *Be sure that you bring no Idols in your Hearts, when you come to converse with God.* Take Heed of inordinate Affection to any Creature. Let all Things else be as nothing to you, that you may have none to take up your Thoughts but God; and your Minds may be farther separated from them, than your Bodies. Bring not into Solitude, or Contemplation, a proud, or wanton, or covetous Mind. It is of much greater Importance, what Heart you bring, than what Place you are in, or what Business you are upon. A Mind drowned in Ambition, Sensuality, or Passion, will scarce find God any sooner in Retirement, than in a Crowd; for God will not own, nor be familiar with such a one; unless he is returning from those Sins to God. ‘What Advantage is there, says *Seneca*, in the greatest rural Silence, if Passions rage within?’ Bring not thy House, or Land, or Credit, or carnal Friend along with thee in thine Heart, if thou wouldst walk in Heaven, and converse with God.

§ 7.

\* Quid prodest totius Regionis Silentium, si Affectus fremunt?

§ 7. (5) *Live still by Faith.* Let Faith, as it lay Heaven and Earth together. Look not at as if he were far off. *Set him always before you at your right Hand.* When you awake, be still in the Morning, thank him for your Rest, and up yourself to his Conduct and Service for the Day. Go forth as with him, and as doing his In every Action, let the Command of God, Promise of Heaven, be before your Eyes, and your Hearts. Live, as having incomparably more do with God and Heaven, than with all the things that, with Paul, you may say, *To me to live is and to die is Gain.* You must shut up the Sense, except in Subordination to Faith, and Faith upon a God, a Christ, and a World that is seen, if you would by Experience know what it be above the brutish Life of Sensualists, and converse with God.—*O Christian, if thou hadst learned this blessed Life, how high and noble thy Conversation be! How easily wouldst thou spare, and how little wouldst thou miss, the loss of the greatest Mortals, or the Presence of worldly Comfort! City or Country would be alike to thee; only that Place and State would be best to thee, where thou hast the greatest Liberty and Freedom to converse with God. Thou mayest say of human Society, as Seneca, It is the same to me, whether I converse with a single Friend, or a Multitude; I am satisfied with one, and with many. Thus being taken up with God, thou mightest live as at Liberty; and in a Wilderness as in a City; and in a Place of Banishment, as in thy native Land; for the Earth is the Lord's,*

\* Unus pro populo mihi est, et Populus pro uno: Mihi satis est, nullus pro populo.

Fullness thereof; and every where thou mayst find  
 him, and converse with him, and *lift up holy Hands*  
 unto him. In every Place, thou art within the  
 Sight of Home, and Heaven is in thine Eye, and  
 thou art conversing with that God, in whose Con-  
 verse the highest Angels place their most transcen-  
 dent Felicity.

§ 8. How little Cause, then, have all the Church's  
 Enemies to triumph, since they can never exclude a  
 true Believer from the Presence of his God, nor banish  
 him into such a Place where he cannot have *his Con-  
 versation in Heaven?* The Stones, that were cast at  
 holy Stephen, could not hinder him from *seeing the  
 Heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right Hand of  
 God.* A Patmos allowed Saint John to be *in the Spi-  
 rit on the Lord's Day.* Christ never so speedily and  
 comfortably owns his Servants, as when the World  
 disowns them, and abuses them for his Sake, and hurls  
 them about *as the Off-couring of all Things.* When  
*the Jews had cast out the Man, whom Christ had cured  
 of his Blindness, Jesus soon found him.* Persecutors  
 do but promote the *Blessedness and exceeding Joy* of  
 Sufferers for Christ.—How little Reason, then, have  
 Christians to shun such Sufferings, by any unlawful  
 Means; and to give so dear, as the Hazard of their  
 Souls, for the Sake of escaping the Safety, Honour,  
 and Happiness of Martyrdom?

§ 9. INDEED, we judge not, we love and live not,  
 as Saints must do, if we judge not *that* to be the truest  
 Liberty, and love it not as the best Condition, in  
 which we may most intimately converse with God.  
 And O how much harder is it to walk with God, in a  
 Court, in the Midst of sensual Delights, than in a  
 Prison or Wilderness, where we have none to inter-  
 rupt us, and Nothing else to engage us! Our prepos-  
 sessed



fessed Minds, our earthly Hearts, our carnal  
 ons, and the Pleasures of a prosperous State,  
 Prisons and Jailors of our Souls. Where it  
 these, how free should we be, tho' our Bod  
 confined to the straitest Room? He is at Libe  
 can walk in Heaven, and have Access to G  
 make Use of all the Creatures in the World,  
 moting his heavenly Conversation. And h  
 Prisoner, whose Soul is chained to Flesh an  
 and confined to his Lands and Houses, and  
 the Dust of worldly Riches, or wallows in the  
 Gluttony, Drunkenness, or Lust; who is  
*God*, and desires not to be near him; who *say*  
*Depart from me, for I desire not the Knowled*  
*Ways*; who loves his Prison and his Chains  
 that he refuses to be set free, and hates those  
 cruellest Hatred, that endeavour his Deliverar  
 is the poor Prisoner of Satan, who has not L  
 believe, nor love God, nor converse in Hea  
 feriously mind and seek the Things that are n  
 and honourable; who has no Liberty to pray  
 ditate, or speak of Things divine, or love t  
 verse of those that do; who is tyed so har  
 Drudgery of Sin, that he cannot leave it for a  
 a Week, or a Day, in order to delight hi  
 walking with God. But he who lives in the  
 of God, and is employed in attending upon h  
 in conversing with Christ, and with heave  
 jects; such a one has no Reason to complain  
 Want of Friends, or Company, or Accomme  
 nor be too impatient under any corporal C  
 ment.

§ 10. (6) *Lastly, keep your Hearts with all*  
 Let nothing have Entertainment there, whic  
 abridge your Liberty of conversing with Go

not those Hearts with worldly Vanities, which are made, and new-made, to be the Habitation of God. Desire not the Company which would diminish your heavenly Acquaintance and Correspondence. Be not unfriendly, nor self sufficient and self-conceited, but beware, lest under the ingenuous Title of a Friend, a special, prudent, faithful Friend, you should entertain an Idol, or an Enemy to your Love of God, or a Competitor with your highest and best Friend. It is not the specious Title of a Friend, that will save you from the Thorns and Briars of Disappointment, even from greater Troubles than ever you found from open Enemies.

2 § 11. O blessed be that high and everlasting Friend, who is every way suited to upright Souls! To their Minds and Memories, to their Delight and Love,—by unchangeable Truth, inexhaustible Goodness, unspotted Light, dearest Love, and firmest Constancy! Why has my dark sighted and drowsy Soul been so seldom with him? Why has it so often, so slightly, so unthankfully passed by, and not observed him, nor hearkened to his kindest Invitations? What is all this Vanity and Vexation that has filled my Memory, burdened my Mind, and cheated and corrupted my Affections; while my dearest Lord has been Days and Nights so unworthily forgotten, so contemptuously neglected, or loved, as if I loved him not? O that those lost and empty Hours had been spent in the humblest Converse with him, which have been dreamed away upon—  
I know not what!

§ 12. ‘ O my God, how much wiser and happier  
‘ had I been, had I rather chosen to mourn with thee,  
‘ than to rejoice and sport with any other! O that I  
‘ had rather wept with thee, than laughed with the  
‘ Creature! For the Time to come, let that be my  
D Friend,

Friend, that most befriends my dark, and du  
 backward Soul in its heavenly Conversation !  
 there be none such on Earth, let me be v  
 earthly Friends ! O blot out every Name fro  
 corrupted Heart, which hinders the deeper l  
 ving of thy Name ! Ah ! Lord, what a  
 what a blind ungrateful Thing, is a Hea  
 touched with celestial Love ! Yet, Lord,  
 not run to thee, when I have none else th  
 know me ? Shall I not draw near to thee, w  
 fly from me ? When daily Experience crys  
 loud, *None but Christ — God or Nothing —*  
 foolish Heart, that hast not thought of it ! V  
 Lord, is that Place, that Cave, or Desert,  
 I might soonest find thee, and fullest enjoy  
 Is it in the Wilderness that thou walkest, or  
 Croud ; in the Closet, or in the Church ?  
 is it that I might soonest meet with God ? Bu  
 I now perceive I have a Heart to find, befor  
 like to find my Lord ! O lifeless stony Hear  
 is dead to him that gave it Life, and to no  
 him ! Could I not love, or think, or feel at a  
 thinks I were less dead than now ; less d  
 dead, than now I am alive ! I had almo  
 Lord, let me never love more, till I can love th  
 think more on any Thing, till I can more willing  
 of thee ! But I must suppress that Wish ; f  
 will act ; and the Motions of Nature are ne  
 to those of Grace. And therefore in the Life  
 ture, and in the Glimmerings of thy Light, I w  
 for more of the celestial Life. My God, thou  
 Consent ; it is here attested under my Hand  
 rate me from what and whom thou wilt, so I  
 be nearer thee ! Let me love thee more, and fee  
 of thy Love, and then let me love or be bel

‘ the World, as little as thou wilt! — I thought Self-  
 ‘ Love had been a more predominant Thing; but  
 ‘ now I find Repentance has its Anger, its Hatred,  
 ‘ and its Revenge. I am truly angry with my Heart,  
 ‘ that has so often and foolishly offended thee. Me-  
 ‘ thinks I hate that Heart, that is so cold and back-  
 ‘ ward in thy Love, and almost grudge it a Dwel-  
 ‘ ling in my Breast. Alas, when Love should be the  
 ‘ Life of Prayer, the Life of Meditation, the Life of  
 ‘ Sermons, and of holy Conference, and my Soul in  
 ‘ them should long to meet thee, and delight to men-  
 ‘ tion thee, I wander, Lord, I know not whither! Or,  
 ‘ I sit still, and wish, but do not rise, and run, and  
 ‘ follow thee; yea, I do not, what I seem to do;  
 ‘ all is dead, all is dead, for Want of Love! I often  
 ‘ cry, *O where is that Place, where the quickening*  
 ‘ *Beams of Heaven are warmest, that my frozen Soul*  
 ‘ *might seek it out!* But whither can I go, to City, or  
 ‘ to Solitude? Alas, I find it is not Place that makes  
 ‘ the Difference! I know that Christ is perfectly re-  
 ‘ plenished with Life and Light and Love; and I hear  
 ‘ him as our Head and Treasure, proclaimed and  
 ‘ offered to us in thy Gospel. This is thy Reward,  
 ‘ *He that bath the Son bath Life.* O why then is my  
 ‘ barren Soul so empty! I thought I had long ago  
 ‘ consented to thy Offer; and then according to thy  
 ‘ Covenant, both Light and Life in him are mine.  
 ‘ And yet must I still be dark and dead? — Ah,  
 ‘ dearest Lord, I say not that I have too long waited;  
 ‘ but if I continue thus to wait, wilt thou never find  
 ‘ the Time of Love, and come and own thy panting,  
 ‘ gasping Worm? Wilt thou never dissipate these  
 ‘ Clouds, and shine upon this dead and darkened  
 ‘ Soul? Hath my Night no Day? Thrust me not  
 ‘ from thee O my God; for it is a Hell, be to thrust

' from thee ! But surely the Cause, could I  
 ' rather could I cure it, is all at Home. Sit  
 ' *my Face that is turned from God, when*  
 ' *Face is turned from me.* And if *my Life,*  
 ' Earth, must be out of Sight, and *be hid*  
 ' Root, *with Christ in God*; if all the rest  
 ' ved for that better World, and I must here  
 ' these small Beginnings, O make me more to  
 ' long for thine Appearing, and not to fear  
 ' of my Deliverance, or unbelievingly to  
 ' this *Sodom*, as one that would rather stay  
 ' than come to thee ! Tho' Sin has made  
 ' ward to the Fight, let it not make me back  
 ' receive the Crown; tho' it has made me  
 ' in thy Work, let it not make me backwa  
 ' ceive that Wages, which thy Love will gi  
 ' pardoned, poor, accepted Services ! The  
 ' too often drawn back, when I should h  
 ' unto thee, and have walked with thee in t  
 ' of Grace ; yet heal that Unbelief and Dis  
 ' which would make me draw back, when t  
 ' est me to possess thy Glory ! Tho' the Sici  
 ' Lameness of my Soul have hindered me in  
 ' ney ; yet let my painful Fatigues help n  
 ' Desire to be delivered, and to be at Home  
 ' without the interposing Nights of thy Di  
 ' I shall perfectly feel richest Love, and w  
 ' thy glorified Saints, in the Light of thy Gl  
 ' umphing in thy Praise for evermore ! Ame

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