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which are seen were not made of Things which do appear.

The Divine Being is an infinite incomprehensible Spirit: A pure Spirit, not capable of being seen or felt, like material and sensible Things, and without bodily Parts and Passions. He is essential Life, a vital active Power, with Understanding and Will in infinite Perfection; so he is summarily describ'd: *God is a Spirit.* John iv. 24.

2. His *Personalities*, as well as his Nature. There are Three Persons tho' One Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: This is Matter of pure Revelation, and can only be judged of by the Scripture Representation. So the Father is the Fountain of the Trinity, and first in Order of Nature; and in some Respect is *greater than Christ.* The Son is the *only Begotten of the Father*, by an eternal and ineffable Generation. And is the *Image of the invisible God: The Brightness of the Father's Glory, and express Image of his Person*, or Character of his Subsistence. And *thought it no Robbery to be equal with God.* The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, *The Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father.* And is called the *Spirit of Christ.* The Manner of their Subsistence in the Divine Being, is the greatest Mystery of the Christian Religion, and above all the Reason and Thought of a human Mind. John xiv. 28. John i. 18. Heb. i. 3. John xv. 26. Rom. viii. 9.

Concerning the Three Persons, the Scripture represents them as having distinct Offices and Operations in the Work of our Redemption, more particularly assign'd and appropriated to each, tho' all of them concur in the whole. So the Grace or Favour of the Father is more eminent, who first entertain'd the Thought, and formed the Design of our Recovery, without any Motive from without, or Consideration

of Desert: The *Love* of the Son, in coming into the World, taking our Nature upon him, dying a Sacrifice for Sin, sealing the New Covenant in his Blood, and living an Advocate for us in Heaven: The Efficiency and *Power* of the Holy Spirit, sanctifying the Souls of Men, applying the Redemption procured by Christ, strengthening and comforting true Believers in him.

Matt. xxviii. 19. We are baptized distinctly into the *One Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, i. e. dedicated and consecrated to the Service of this God, and obliged to every Person in whose Name we are baptized, and all the proper Duty respective to each. And we receive all saving Blessings from them: The *Grace of the Lord Jesus, the Love of the Father, the Communion of the Spirit*, is the most comprehensive Wish, and the shortest Summary of all saving Good.

1 Cor. xiii. 14.

3. His *Perfections and Attributes*. God is infinitely perfect and essentially happy. He is the proper *Seat* of all Perfection, and *Fountain* of Perfection to the Creature; the Center in which it all meets, and Spring from whence it is derived. He is distinguished from all the Creatures, Men and Angels, by his *Natural Perfections*, which are proper to himself, and incommunicable to any other; as *Necessary Self-Existence*, and *Eternity* of Being; *Immensify* of Nature, filling all Things, and being every where; *Independence* upon any other, and *Sovereignty* over all: *Immutability* and *Unchangableness*, in all the Periods of Time and Revolutions of Things in the World. Here he stands alone, *He is God, and besides him there is none*. And he shines in the Glory of his communicable Attributes, or *Moral Perfections*; such as are communicated in a lower Degree, or at least in a near Resemblance, unto the Creatures; and as they

they are capable of receiving a Likeness to him by ; as *Holiness, Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, Truth.*

He always acts according to the Direction, and in full Consistence with every Perfection of his Nature, and cannot act in any thing without the Concurrence, or unto the Prejudice of any one. And he always loves his own Image in his Creatures, and loves them in Proportion to the Likeness they bear to him.

4. His *Works* are a large and noble Scene of Consideration, full of Variety and Pleasure. So *Job Elihu* speaks to *Job*, *Hearken unto this, O Job, stand still and consider the wondrous Works of God.* *Job xxxvii. 14.* And the Psalmist speaks of *wisely considering his Doings.* *Psal. lxxiv. 9.* And the wise Man requires us to *consider the Works of God.* *Eccl. vii. 13.*

The Work of *Creation* is a stupendious Effect of Almighty Power, making all Things out of Nothing, raising up this noble Fabrick of the visible World by a Word of Command ; filling every Part with proper Inhabitants, the Earth, Air, and Sea ; the great Variety and different Kinds of Creatures, suited to their special and particular Purposes, and fitted for the common End of All, the Glory of God, and the Welfare of the whole. So the Psalmist *consider'd the Heavens which he had made, the Moon and the Stars ;* *Pf. viii 3.* and our Lord requires us to *consider the Fowls of the Air, and the Lillies of the Field.* *Mat. vi. 26. 28.* The Works of *Providence* or Government of the World which he has made, is truly admirable, and worthy of Consideration : preserving and upholding the Frame of Nature ; providing for all his Creatures suitable Good ; supplying their various Wants ; directing and overruling all their Actions, and all their Affairs, to their respective Ends. There is a *general Care, and common Providence*, which extends to the utmost Compass of the Creation, reaches to the highest

Mat. x.
29.

Pl. xxxiv.
7.

xc. 11.

Rom. iii.
24.

-----25.

2 Tim. i.
10.

Mar. xvi.
16.

highest and greatest Beings, and descends to the lower and minuter Parts; so that nothing is above its Care, or below its Notice. *A Sparrow falleth not to the Ground without our Heavenly Father.* And there is a *special and particular Providence* towards good Men, by which he guides, and directs their Ways; protects and defends them from Danger; watches over them for Good; appears seasonably for their Relief, &c. *The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them who fear him, and delivereth them.* And he gives his Angels Charge over them to keep them in all their Ways. So the whole World of Creatures is maintained and supported at the Charge of his powerful and gracious Providence, with exact Care and constant Influence.

5. The *Revelations* of his Will; or the Discovery he has made of himself in his Word. These are either such as respect the Nature of our *Duty* to him, or Grounds of our *Hope* from him; what he expects from *us*, or has given us Reason to expect from *him*. Thus he has revealed his eternal Purpose of *Mercy* to a lost World through Christ; and the Way and Method of its Exercise and Display in the Covenant of the Gospel. *We are justified freely by his Blood, through the Redemption which is in Jesus.* And he is set forth as a Propitiation for Sin through Faith in his Blood. Besides, *Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel*; the Nature and Certainty of the future State and final Salvation.

We have a distinct Account of the proper Duty of a fallen Sinner, especially with Relation to his Recovery, or what is made necessary on our Part in order to an actual Interest in the purchased Redemption, and all saving Benefits: *He who believes and is baptized shall be saved*, is the shortest Sum of what is peculiar to the

the Gospel. We have a clearer Representation, and further Enforcement of all Natural Duty, Personal, and Relative, what we owe to God, or one another, in the several Capacities wherein we stand. *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good, and what the Lord thy God requireth of thee, to do Justice, love Mercy, and walk humbly with thy God.* And, the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men, teaching them to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts; and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World. In this latter Consideration of them, the Revelations of the divine Will are more properly Laws; as in the former they are a Covenant: The One prescribes the whole Rule of the Creature's Duty; the Other, the Terms of a Sinner's Acceptance with God; and so they are respectively represented, as the *Law of Faith*, and *perfect Law of Liberty*; and as the *New Covenant*, or *New Testament in his Blood*.

Mic. vi. 8.

Tit. ii.

11, 12.

Rom. iii.

27.

Mat. xxvi.

28.

6. His Relations to us. The Natural Relations in which he stands to us, as Maker and Owner, Preserver and Ruler, Benefactor and End. We are his and not our own, for *he hath made us, and not we our selves*. He has a Right to govern and dispose us, whom he continually maintains and preserves. And he is always doing us good by innumerable and constant Mercies, and is the Spring of all our Blessings.

And the Gracious Relations in which he stands as reconciled to us in Christ, and related to us in Covenant: So he is a gracious Father, who bears a tender Regard to, and pities us, as a *Father pities his Son who serveth him*: And he is a faithful Friend, always mindful of us, and ready to help; a sure Refuge in every Time of Need. And he is the Portion of our Souls, and our proper Happiness and Rest.

(2.) What

(2.) What relates to *Ourselves*, I shall reduce to four Things.

1. We must consider our natural *Frame* and *Make*; as we are the Creatures of God, of such an Order and Rank, and with such Powers and Capacities of Nature. We are compounded Beings, consisting of a Body and a Soul, and there is something very remarkable and considerable in both.

ps.cxxxix
15.

Our Bodies were first made of the Dust of the Earth, but framed and fashioned by the Hand of God; and are now *curiously wrought in the lower Parts of the Earth*. Every Part of the Body is admirably framed for its proper Use, and fitted to its particular Office; and the whole together, makes up a curious Structure, with an erect Figure, and Marks of Majesty, peculiar to itself. Our Souls were breathed into it by God the *Father of Spirits*, and are the living Image of the Divine Spirit; essentially vital and active, reasonable and immortal Beings; consisting of Understanding, Will and Affections, executive Powers, Memory and Conscience, or a Power of Consciousness and reflecting upon ourselves; capable of knowing and loving God, and being for ever happy in the sense of his Favour and sight of his Glory: Every Soul is valuable and precious, redeemed by the Blood of Christ, and more worth than the whole World.

2. Our Moral States and Condition. We were *Innocent* and *Happy*, as we came out of the Hands of God; in the full Perfection and Felicity of our Nature, without any sinful Disorder within, or Trouble and Uneasiness without. We *fell* by Sin from our original State: The first Man, by abusing the Liberty of his Nature, and hearkening to the false Suggestions of the Devil, lost his Purity and Felicity, and
in-

involv'd himself in Guilt and Misery, under the Condemnation of the broken Law, and the Righteous Displeasure of God. In this State we come into the World : All the Sons of *Adam* have *finned in him*, and are by Nature Children of *Wrath*. We are recover'd by the Divine Grace ; restor'd to the Favour and to the Image of God, by the Blood of Christ, and the sanctifying Spirit. *Ye are washed and sanctify'd and justify'd, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*. We are brought into a State of Friendship with God, being *reconcil'd by the Blood of the Cross* ; and renewed in our Minds after his Image, being regenerate and *born of the Spirit*. The *Future State* into which we must be disposed at the Dissolution of our present Natures, is either unconceivable and endless Happiness or Misery, the proper Perfection of Glory and Joy, or Torment and Woe, according to our present State and Temper. So after the Resurrection of the Body, and Proceedings of the final Judgment : *The Wicked go into everlasting Punishment ; but the Righteous into Life eternal*. Heaven and Hell will divide the whole World of Mankind, and every one have their Lot and Portion in the State for which they are fit.

3. Our *Ways* and *Actions*. So the Prophet speaks in the Name of God ; *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, consider your Ways*. And the Psalmist speaks of himself ; *I thought on my Ways*. And the wise Man says, *The upright Man considereth his Ways*.

We should consider the *Course* of our *Actions* and *Behaviour*, in some such Manner as this ; What *have* I been doing since I came into the World, or to Years of Understanding ? How have I been employ'd hitherto ? What has been the governing Design and the proper Business of

Rom.v.12

Eph.ii.3.

1 Cor. vi.

11.

Mat xxv.

11.

Hag. i. v.

Psal.cxix.

59.

Prov. xxi.

29.

of my Life? Have I *lived unto God*; made it my End to please and honour him? Or have I *lived to myself*, made it my great Care to seek and gratify carnal or worldly self? Have
 Rom. xii. 11. I been Diligent or Negligent, *Slothful in Business*, or *Fervent in Spirit*, *serving the Lord*? What am I now doing? How do I behave myself?

Gal. vi. 16. Do I walk according to this Rule; square and conform my main Course by the Measure of the Divine Word? What is my daily Work in this World? What do I propose to myself, and intend in what I do? Do I walk worthy of my high Calling; suitable to my Relation to God, the Circumstance and Condition of my Life in which I am placed; and the Capacity, and Call and Opportunities afforded? What should

1 Thes. iv. 1. I do? How ought I to walk so as that I may please God? Rectify what I find amiss, and regulate every Disorder? What will be the proper Duty of such a Circumstance into which I am like to be cast? In every new Relation of Life, or fresh Undertaking and Engagement in the World? What Snares am I like to meet with? What Watchfulness will be needful for my Security? How may I make an Advantage of every Tryal, and improve every Blessing to the greatest Purpose of Good?

4. The Grounds of our *Hopes* and Expectations. We are design'd for another World, as well as this; and must be for ever in a future State of Happiness or Misery. Does it not concern us to consider what is like to become of us *hereafter*? Whither we must go when we leave the World, and quit the Body? Upon what Terms we stand with the great God; and upon what Grounds we build our Hopes of another World? Should we not be so wise
 Deu. xxxii. 29. to understand and consider our latter End? Whether we have been brought to an hearty Consent

sent to the Cospel Covenant, and Compliance with the Terms of Life and Death proposed in it? Whether we *know that we are pass'd from Death to Life*, and have good Hope through Grace of eternal Life? Can we say, *I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that what I have committed to him he is able also to preserve unto that Day?* And, we know that when the earthly House of this Tabernacle is dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens? Or whether we deceive ourselves with vain Presumptions, and groundless Hopes; *build upon the Sand*; meer Imaginations or gross Mistakes, which will sink under our Weight in a Day of Tryal, and will betray us at last, and disappoint us for ever?

If you say, I have cut you out much Work in so great Variety of Things: I answer, It must be the Work of every Day, and of our whole Lives, to be thinking over these Things; and every Man's Prudence must direct what is most suitable and proper to the several Seasons and Circumstances of Things.

§. 2. The *Act*. I shall briefly represent the Nature and Properties of it. What 'tis to consider, and what Kind of Consideration it ought to be.

(1.) As to the *Nature* of it. Consideration, in the general Notion of it, is the actual Exercise of our Thoughts, or Reason awaken'd and in Act. In the present Case, 'tis the Exerting our thinking Power upon some Divine Subject, and in a Religious Manner; and is differently denominated from the different Consideration of the Things we think upon, or the different Manner of its Exercise. For Example,

'Tis either *Reflection*, and looking backward, upon what is already past. So Samuel tells the People; *Consider how great Things the Lord hath done* 1 Sam. xii. done 24.

Isa. xliii. 18. *done for you. And the Prophet; Remember ye not the former Things, neither consider the Things of old? And this may reach as far back as the Beginning of our Lives, or the Beginning of the World; for we can recollect, and call back in our Thoughts, from the greatest Distance of Time. Or 'tis, Intuition, looking directly inwards, or turning the Eye of our Mind upon ourselves, and what is present with us, and now before us. Observing the present Frame and proper Workings of our Soul; and the daily Occurrences of Life, and Dealings of Providence towards us. So the wise Man directs,*

Prov. xxiii. 1. *Consider what is before thee. Or else 'tis Prospect and looking forwards; upon what is yet to come, or likely to befall us. It respects Futurity, whether of Time or Eternity, which is only Futurity drawn out to a boundless Distance. In this Sense the Spies speak to one another, Now therefore consider what you have to do; i. e. what lies before you, and what Course you ought to take. The Soul of Man has the Power and Capacity of each of these different Operations, and all of them are fitly comprehended under the common Notion of Consideration.*

Jndg. xviii. 14.

(2.) As to the Properties of it, or what Kind of Consideration it ought to be: I shall describe it a little briefly.

1. It ought to be Set and Solemn. We must not wait till something rise up in our Mind of its own Accord, and serious Thoughts thrust themselves upon us, or throw themselves in our Way. We must not only consider *Occasionally*, and upon some Accidents which may happen, and which may lead our Mind to such Thoughts, or bring them to our Remembrance whether we will or no: Tho' we ought to lay hold of every such Occasion. But it ought to be

be sometimes done of set Purpose, and with Choice and Design. We must retire out of the World, and sit down by ourselves, call to Mind proper Objects, and engage our Thoughts in a suitable Exercise. We must take a fit Opportunity for it, allow proper Time, and make Conscience of doing it, as we do of Prayer and Reading, or any other Duties of Religion. So *Isaac went out into the Fields to meditate in the Evening Tide*, i. e. he chose a fit Season for a solemn Retirement. Gen. xxiv. 63.

2. *Deep and Serious.* We must not take up with sudden and hasty, or slight and transient Thoughts; like a Glance of the Eye at an Object as one passes by, or in the Apostle's Allusion, a *Man beholding his natural Face in a Glass, who going away and presently forgets what manner of Man he was.* But it must be deep and close Thought, like a Man who looks steadfastly, and stares hard at some particular Object, when he would take great Notice of it, make his own Remarks, and be able give an Account to others. So the Prophet speaks of the King of *Babylon: They who see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider.* Isa. xiv. 16.

We must not skip from one Thing to another, or shift the Subject of our Thoughts too soon; take only a general Survey, or superficial View of Things: But our Thoughts should dwell sometime upon them, and be kept close to some particular Matter; we should endeavour to enter into it, and go as far as we can, to the Bottom of it. Like the industrious *Bee*, which don't quit a Flower till it has drawn some Sweetness from it. So *Moses* requires the *Israelites: Know therefore this Day, and consider it in thy Heart.* And 'tis said of *Mary, That she kept all these Things, and ponder'd them in her Heart.* Deut. iv. 29. Luke ii. 19.
i. e. she turned them over in her Mind, and view'd

view'd them on every Side. We should engage a serious Thoughtfulness and Concern of Mind; in Proportion to the Evidence of Truth, and Importance of the Matter which is the present Subject of our Consideration.

3. *Frequent* and often renewed. Not seldom only, or once now and then, with great Distance, and Intervals of Neglect: There are few Persons but some time or other find Occasion to consider. But we ought to renew the Exercise of it, and often repeat it: Our stated Seasons for it should often return; we should be much in it, and abound in it. The Reason is, the most lively Thoughts soon wear off, and best Impressions gradually decline; by long Neglects and frequent Intermissions; they will need to be revived and renewed by fresh Exercise, and close Application of Mind. Our cold and careless Hearts will need to be often chafed to keep them warm and make them lively.

And besides the stated Seasons for this Exercise, there are in every Man's Case, sometimes special Seasons and Calls for it. Every Sabbath Day particularly, will furnish with proper Leisure; The Apostle was *in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*. Any Opportunity of Solitude and Retirement; The Psalmist's *Reins instructed him in the Night Season*: In his waking Moments. Special Exercises of Providence in the Tryals and Afflictions of Life, is a peculiar Season; so 'tis mark'd by the wise Man: *In the Time of Prosperity rejoyce, in the Day of Adversity consider*. Or any remarkable Experience and Enjoyment of God in a solemn Ordinance, or secret Devotion.

4. It must be *Affecting* and *Practical*. Our Consideration must not be only for *Speculation* of Truth, or to form right Notions of Things; meerly

merely to exercise our Reason, and entertain our Minds. For so a wicked Man may consider the most sacred and important Truths, without being ever the better for them. A vain and un sanctify'd Mind may think over all the Subjects of Consideration proposed, and remain un sanctify'd still. But we must consider in order to an higher End ; to warm and affect our Hearts with what we think, and influence and govern our Souls ; that we may be the more deeply impressed with the Objects of our Thoughts, and brought under the Power of Divine Truth. Our deep and serious Thoughts often renewed, must make Things sink the deeper into our Minds ; give a stronger Tincture and Savour to them ; and leave a more powerful and prevailing Influence behind them. In this Sense God threatens *Babylon* ; *So that thou didst not lay these Things to thy Heart, Isa. xlvii. neither didst remember the latter End of them. 7.* And so much seems design'd in that Heap of Expression : *That they may see and know, and con- --- xli. 20. sider, and understand together that the Hand of the Lord hath done this.*

II. I shall consider the *Reasons* and Obligations. I shall briefly represent and urge them together, as being a Matter of so great Importance to all, and so generally neglected.

1. I argue from the various Significations of the Divine Will. The great God expressly requires it, in various Representations of his Will, and with very remarkable Circumstance. Thus 'tis deliver'd in Form of a Precept, and solemnly enjoyn'd with the highest Marks of Authority : *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, consider Hag. i. 5. your Ways.* He sometimes earnestly wishes and desires it : *O that they were wise, that they under- Deut. stoop this, that they would consider their latter End, xxxii. 29.*

i. e. how fain would I have them consider ; how much better pleas'd should I be, than with their thoughtless Carelessness and stupid Neglect ? At other Times he complains of it, and seems even to bewail their Unthoughtfulness, with Marks of Surprize and Astonishment, as the most unreasonable and unaccountable

Isa. i. 23. *Thing : Hear O Heavens, and give Ear O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken : I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me : The Ox knoweth his Owner and the Ass his Master's Crib, but Israel doth not know, my People don't consider, i. e. They are more stupid than the Ox and Ass.*

'Tis made one End of the Threatnings of his Word, and Afflictions of Life, to bring Men to consider: *Therefore, thou Son of Man, prepare thyself for removing, and remove by Day in their Sight, and thou shalt remove from thy Place, to another Place in their Sight.* A terrible Judgment or Denunciation, for it was to be a Sign to them of their approaching Captivity. And then it follows ; *It may be they will consider, tho' they are a rebellious House :* As if he had said, This is the most likely Means to produce this Effect, when all others have been unsuccessful ; if any thing will bring them to consider, surely this will.

From all this it plainly appears to be the positive Will of God, variously express'd, and with the most peculiar Circumstance.

2. From the Nature of the *Duty requir'd*, which is the most reasonable and easy. 'Tis a small Thing to say, 'tis not *impossible*, for God requires nothing that is so at our Hands. He expects nothing from us, which he don't make possible by his Grace. But neither is it, properly speaking, a *difficult* Thing, as many other Instances of Duty really are ; as *Self-denial* and *Mortification* ; *forgiving Injuries* ; *Watching* and

and *Fasting*; and suffering *Persecution*, &c. For what can be more easy and reasonable in all the World, than to sit down and *bethink* ourselves; to retire a little for the Exercise of our own *Thoughts*? There is certainly nothing difficult and hard in the *Nature of the Thing*, or the least Shadow and Pretence of Complaint.

Indeed we sometimes find it difficult Work to consider and meditate, to keep our Thoughts intent upon any particular Subject. But then that arises from the Levity and Vanity of our Minds; a certain *Featheriness* of Spirit, and Unfixedness of Heart, so that we are easily diverted by other Things, and apt to *start aside like a deceitful Bow*. But this must never be pleaded in the Case; for then no Duty could ever possibly be easy to us: Every Thing is difficult to an indispos'd Mind. 'Tis sufficient that in itself, and its own Nature, 'tis quite otherwise. For do but try it in any other Case; suppose any one should require you to sit down and think over some Case he would lay before you, and possess your Minds with the true State of Things; upon Assurance of some mighty Benefit, or great Reward: Would you not think it reasonable, and find it easy too? And don't we see it done every Day, in many Cases of Business and Affairs of Life, when there is any Thing sufficient to engage the Mind, or make Men think it worth the while?

3. From the Nature of the *Soul*, which is a thinking Being; capable of Thought, and fitted for Consideration. This is the peculiar Glory of our Nature, and proper to ourselves, of all the Creatures of this lower World: *We* only are capable of Consideration, and the Exercise of Thought. We have Thinking Souls, and shall we not think? We are formed for Consideration, and shall we not exert our di-

Isa. xvi. 8.

stinguishing Power? Shall we let that lie dormant and inactive, which is the great Prerogative and Perfection of our Nature? So God speaks by the Prophet; *Remember this and shew yourselves Men, bring it again to Remembrance O ye Transgressors*: i. e. Without this you don't act like Men, or shew yourselves reasonable Creatures; you degrade yourselves from your proper Rank in the Creation, and degenerate into unthinking Beasts.

If we don't think of God and ourselves, none of the Creatures in this World are capable of it; so God would loose one great End of his Creation, and Glory of his Works. Other Creatures are supported in Being, and live upon his Bounty; but are not capable of considering the Hand which sustains and supplies them. Man was made the *High Priest*, as well as Lord, of the lower Creation, to offer up its Homage to God, as well as use and enjoy it; to own God, in his Creatures, as he has the Dominion and Service of them. Yea, and 'tis *natural* to us to think, and we shall be thinking of something or other. If we don't think right, and exercise our Thoughts to good Purpose, we shall to some bad one. We cannot avoid thinking on one Thing or Other. And what a Shame and Reproach is it to our Nature, to have so noble a Power run waste, or employ'd wrong? So that in the View of the Case, 'tis only turning the Stream into a right Channel, directing our Thoughts to their proper Objects and in a regular Manner.

4. I would reason with you from the great *Benefits* and Advantage of Consideration. These are various and important; for Example,

Consideration is a great Means of *Knowledge*. 'Tis a *natural* Means of attaining necessary Knowledge, and higher Improvements; and

and 'tis an *appointed* Means too, and attended with the Promise of a Blessing. So in the Text, *Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee Understanding in all Things*, i. e. In this Way, and by this Means. By the Exercise of our Thoughts we improve our Understanding and grow in *Knowledge*; we come to take in a greater Compass of Divine Truth, and a clearer Evidence of what we know; we arrive to riper Apprehensions of Things, and gain a richer Store of Sacred Knowledge. *The Word of God will dwell richly in us, in all Wisdom and Understanding*, and we shall become as *Scribes well instructed to the Kingdom of Heaven*; *To know the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto Salvation*; and to be *thoroughly furnish'd to every good Work*.

Besides, 'tis proper to help our *Memory*, and revive the Remembrance of Truth. We easily forget the Things we know already, let them slip out of our Mind, or lie bury'd in a useless Habit; but Consideration brings them back to our Mind, and makes our Knowledge actual and present to us. We refresh our Thoughts by every Review, and those Truths which lie dormant and asleep, are awaken'd and enlivened: So we are called upon, to *Remember and bring again to Mind*; which supposes, not Ignorance of Mind, or being unacquainted with Things, but Forgetfulness and Inadvertence. And the Apostle proposes to *stir up the Christians Minds, by Way of Remembrance*; i. e. by laying before them afresh, and calling them to consider over again, what they knew before. Isa. xlv. 8.

Consideration is commonly the first Step to a saving *Conversion*, and thoro' Change of Heart. So the Psalmist speaks of himself; *I thought on my Ways, and turned my Feet unto thy Statutes*; Psal. cxix. 59.
I made haste and delay'd not to keep thy Commands.
 His whole Return to God arose from a serious
 D 2 Thought.

Luke xv.
17.

Thought. The returning *Prodigal* first came to himself, and said, *how many hired Servants in my Father's House have Bread enough and to spare.* He recover'd a right Mind from the former Dissoluteness and Dissipation of Thought; for he said this to himself, and in his own Mind. The first Beginning and Appearance of saving Good, after a long Round of open Extravagance, was retiring inward, and the Exercise of sober Thoughts. Never expect a thoughtless Inconsideration will ever promote or admit a saving Change. 'Tis by the Exercise of our own Thoughts, and a strong Impression of them upon our Mind, that we come to be sensible of our State; feel a kindly Remorse for Sin; are wrought up to hearty Willingness to be the Lord's, and full Compliance with him.

Psal. viii.
3. 4.

-xxxix.3.

2 Tim. ii. 6
ἀναζω-
ποῖν

Farther, 'tis proper to excite holy *Affections* of Soul, and the Exercise of every *Grace*. Serious Consideration will warm the Heart, and kindle Holy Desires; revive good Impressions, and enliven the Exercises of our Souls. The Holy Psalmist was affected with Admiration and Praise, when he *consider'd the Heavens, the Work of his Fingers, the Moon and the Stars which he had ordained.* And again, *my Heart, says he, was hot within me, while I was musing, the Fire burned.* So the Disciples speak; *Did not our Hearts burn within us, when our Lord suggested proper Thoughts to their Mind.* 'Tis proper to *stir up the Gift of God* in us; to draw forth every Grace into a suitable Exercise upon its proper Object; for it brings Fuel to the Fire, and is the kindly Breath which kindles a Sacred Flame, cherishes a generous Warmth, and gives Life and Vigour to all the Actions of the Soul. And you'll certainly find it, try it when you will, that solemn Seasons of devout and serious Thoughts, will mightily pro-

promote a good *Habit*, and lively *Frame* of Mind.

Again, 'twould be a great Preservative from *Sin*. Serious Consideration is proper to awaken Holy Fear, the great Guard of the Soul; and fix our Resolutions and Purposes; to bring proper Motives to our Minds, and make a deeper Impression upon them: It would quicken fervent Prayer; encourage humble Dependence; make us watchful against Snares; and circumspect in our Walk. Did we more thoroughly consider the constant Presence of God with us, and his jealous and observing Eye; should we not stand more in *Awe of God*, and not *sin against him*? Did we consider a future Judgment and final Account; should we not tremble, and be more powerfully restrain'd from carnal Mirth and youthful Folly? *But know thou*, says the wise Man to the licentious Youth, *that for all these Things God will bring thee to* Eccl. xi. 9. *Judgment*. Were we more frequent in the Thoughts of a future State and eternal World, should we not find more lasting Impression, and governing Influence upon our Souls? If we look'd for such Things, what manner of Persons ^{2 Pet. iii.} should we be in all holy Conversation and Godliness? ^{11.} Thus 'tis sometimes prescrib'd as a Means to this End: *Consider this ye who forget God, lest he* Psal. l. 22. *tear you in Pieces and there be none to deliver*. And we find it had this Effect; *Because he considereth*, Ezek. xviii *and turneth away from all his Transgressions which* ^{26.} *he hath committed*. And 'tis made the Reason of Men's continu'd Wickedness: *They consider not* Ezek. v. 5. *that they do Evil*. And again, *They consider not* Hos. vii. 2. *in their Hearts, that I remember all their Wickedness*; i. e. If they did but consider, they would not do it.

To close this Head; Serious Consideration would quicken to all *Duty*. It would enliven the
the

the Mind, and stir it up to Action. When the Heart is warmly affected and impressed, it would be free and ready to every Service of God : For this would furnish out proper Reasons, fix them upon the Heart, and make them powerful and effectual. When we grow sluggish, or are apt to be discouraged, 'tis by the Power of serious Thoughts we must be quicken'd and encourag'd in the Way of Duty ; kept close to our proper Work, and carry'd thro' all the Difficulties in our Way. This Effect is pointed out by the Psalmist : *I will meditate on thy Precepts, and have respect unto thy Ways.*

Psal. cxix.
15.

5. The great Inconvenience and Mischief of *Inconsideration*. Multitudes perish at last, and are undone for ever, under all the Means of Light and Grace, by this single Neglect. 'Tis not so much thro' Ignorance or want of necessary Knowledge, as thro' Inconsideration, and want of attending to what they know already. The necessary Points of Christian Knowledge are few and plain, and which a meaner Understanding, with proper Diligence, is able to take in ; but want of Consideration, or serious Exercise of our Thoughts upon them, deprive Men of best Understandings, of the kindly Benefit, and prevent the saving Effect. The clearest Representation of Divine Truth, and powerful Arguments laid before them ; the most awful and the most moving Subjects ; all the Charms of Divine Mercy, and Tenderness of a Redeemer's Love ; the *Terrors of the Lord*, and the *Judgment to come* ; never sink down into the Heart, or have a kindly Influence and lasting Effect : Not because they don't know them, or believe them to be true ; but because they don't consider, or work them upon their Minds by serious Thoughts. Thus the whole Efficacy of Means, and all Endeavours, lose their Force and prove in vain. 'Tis

'Tis a sad Consideration, That Men of fine Parts and curious Accomplishments ; many of long standing under the best Advantages, some who have been well instructed in the Knowledge of God, and perhaps sometimes greatly affected with it too ; have yet miscarry'd and been lost, thro' meer Neglect of Consideration, or want of being duly impress'd and influenc'd by what they knew : When a plain and upright Soul, with lower natural Capacities, and smaller Measures of Knowledge, comes to experience the Power of saving Truth, and be eternally saved, by making Conscience of Consideration, and accustoming themselves to the Exercise of it. *Grotius*, a Prodigy of Parts and Learning, laden with the Praises of the learned World, and raised to the highest Employments of Life ; bewailed upon his dying Bed, being *unprofitably* *Ab vitam* *busy* all his Life : And wish'd to exchange Condition with a certain poor Man, of the meanest Employment, who divided his Time for many Years, into three equal Parts ; his Sleep, and Work, and Devotion. I add but one Thing more.

6. The Inexcuseableness of the Neglect. For what must Men be supposed to say for themselves ? What *Colours* of Excuse will they lay upon the Matter ? What Appearance or Pretence of Truth ? Will they pretend, They *could* not consider, and were not capable of it ? That would be a good Pretence if it were true ; but that they cannot say : For they have Thinking Souls, and are naturally capable of Consideration : Yea, and they exercise that Power in other Matters too, and consider them more than enough. So that Men who truly say, they cannot convert themselves, cannot therefore say, they cannot consider, which is so great a Means
and

*perdidi o-
perose ni-
bil agen-
do.*
John Vlich

difficult Duty, and requires Toil and Care? But what is easier than Thought, or more reasonable, than to consider? What lower Thing could he require, and what might not more reasonably be expected too? If Men are willing to do any thing; if the Matter were put to themselves, could they desire more kind and condescending Treatment? May we not aply to this

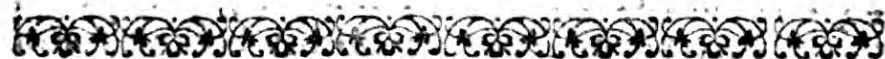
1 Kings v.
13. *Case the Passage of Naaman's Servant: If the Prophet had bid thee do some great Thing, wou'dst thou not do it; how much rather then when he says to thee, Wash and be Clean? Or will they say, they have not Time to consider, and can't find Leisure for the Exercise of serious Thoughts, and solemn Consideration: Their Minds are filled with other Cares, and taken up with other Things. But have they any greater Things to think off, more excellent and worthy in their Nature, or of higher Importance and Concern to themselves? Shall lesser Things be carefully consider'd, and the Trifles of this World be weighed and examined, while God is not in all our Thoughts; the great Things of his Law, are strange Things; and the great Salvation of the Gospel neglected? Or will they say at last, they could not find in their Hearts to consider, or bring their Minds to set about it; that they found a constant Aversion and Dislike, and could sooner do any Thing than so irksome and unpleasant a Work; that they were afraid to think of God, and durst not look within? This indeed is the true Reason, but the worst Excuse in the World: For is that fit to excuse a Fault, which is itself a greater Fault, the Root all the Evil, and Cause whence all the Disorder springs; so that they will be without Excuse, and have no reasonable Apology left.*

To

To conclude. They will be forc'd to consider Hereafter whether they will or no : In the Prophet's remarkable Words ; *In the latter Days* Jer. xxiii. *ye shall consider it perfectly.* They will be made ^{20.} to think over in the Day of their Distress, what they now neglected ; under the Weight of some great Affliction of Life, or Bodily Sickness and Pain ; upon a dying Bed, or under the nearer Prospects of an approaching Eternity ; they will have many uneasy Reflections, and sadly consider their past Security and Neglect. Then they will make God's Wish their own, tho' as much in vain as his was now : *O that we had been wise, that we had understood, and considered our latter End !* Yea, they will have the Leisure of an whole *Eternity* to exercise their Thoughts, who could not find Leisure for it here. They will think of a slighted *Saviour*, and neglected *Gospel*, and lost *Salvation*, with bitter Anguish and Distress of Soul. A great Part of the Misery of the Damned will lie in the *Workings* of their own Thoughts ; in the Reviews of their Folly, and Reproaches of their Heart. And they will be all grating and tormenting Thoughts, without any Mixture of Ease or Relief ; and have no other Effect, but to give the sharper Accents to their Misery, and the quicker Sense of Pain.

And now if what has been said may be of any Use to direct and assist any humble and serious Soul, or awaken a secure and thoughtless one, to the Exercise of Religious Consideration ; it would be a *Morning* well employ'd, and a *Year* well begun : It would be an honourable Memorial all our Days, and a comfortable Reflection at last ; if this Day commenced the Serious, and Thoughtful, and Considerate Age of Life.

F I N I S.



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