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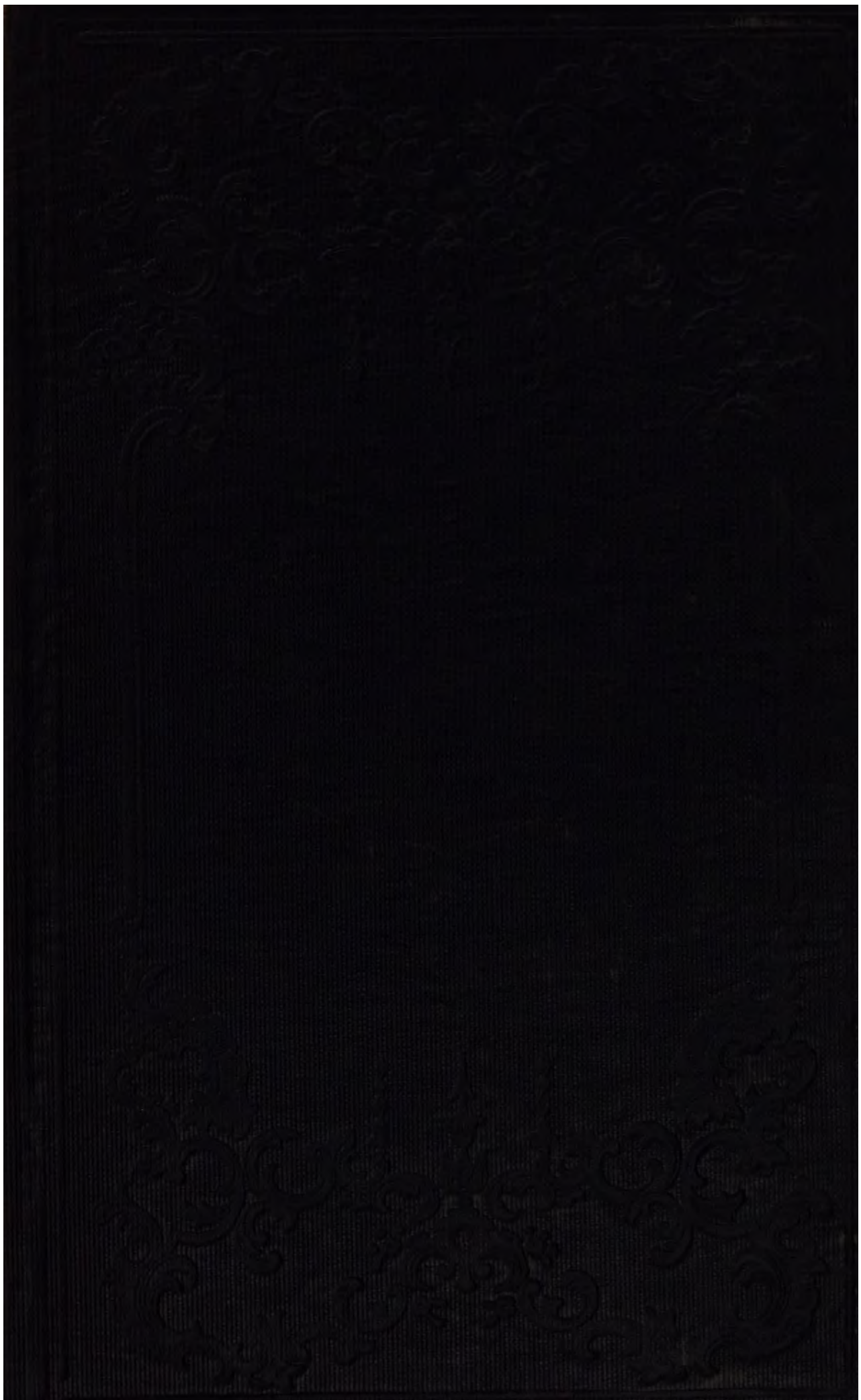
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF THE
REV. MATTHEW HENRY.

BY THE
REV. JAMES HAMILTON, LONDON,
AUTHOR OF "LIFE IN EARNEST," "MOUNT OF OLIVES," ETC.

THE first Life of Matthew Henry was written by a friend and cotemporary, the Rev. William Tong; and in the present day, a collateral descendant has published in three separate works, the Life of the Rev. Philip Henry, Memoirs of the Rev. Matthew Henry, and Memoirs of his sisters, Mrs. Savage and Mrs. Hulton. Never has biographer fulfilled his task with more conscientious accuracy, more affectionate enthusiasm, or a more delightful congeniality of feeling, than Sir John Bickerton Williams. To his volumes, or sources which he has indicated, we are indebted for all our facts; and readers whose curiosity is in any degree awakened by this slight notice, will find abundant information in those faithful records, where the memory of these worthies lives, and their very spirit breathes. Their able and excellent biographer must accept our thanks

for the kind interest which he has shown, and the help he has rendered to the present undertaking.

IN the reign of Charles I. there was an orchard at Whitehall, and the keeper of it was John Henry, a Welshman. His wife, Magdalen Rochdale, was a pious woman who took great pains with her children, and instructed them carefully in "Perkins' Six Principles," and the other lesson-books which preceded the Shorter Catechism. When dying, she said, "My head is in heaven, and my heart is in heaven; it is but one step more, and I shall be there too." The name of their only son was Philip. Having become a thoughtful boy at Westminster school, and, at Oxford, under such teachers as Owen and Goodwin, having grown into an enlightened Christian and an accomplished divine, he became a minister, and was settled in Worthenbury, a little parish of Flintshire.

The playmate of princes—for Charles II. and James II. were near his own age, and, when children, were often in his father's house—a gainly suavity marked the demeanour of PHILIP HENRY all his days; and the memories of his boyhood mingled with the convictions of his manhood, and, without diluting his creed, softened his spirit. When a Presbyterian and a Puritan he still remembered Whitehall; how he used to run and open the water-gate to Archbishop Laud, and how his father took him to visit the Primate in the Tower, and how the captive prelate gave him some pieces of new money. He recollected the crowd which assembled before the palace that dismal 30th of January, when a king of England lost his head. And he treasured

up the keepsakes which the royal children had given him. His father died a sturdy royalist; and though he himself loved the large Gospel and strict religion of the Commonwealth, with a filial tenderness he always cherished these personal recollections of the reign.

The people of Worthenbury were very few. Though a popular preacher, Philip Henry never counted eighty communicants. And his parishioners were poor; they delved and ploughed, and made the most of hungry little farms. But though they were neither numerous nor learned, their minister felt that they were sufficiently important to demand his utmost pains. He visited and catechised them till he diffused a goodly measure of Christian intelligence; he took an affectionate and assiduous interest in all their concerns, and by the amenity of his disposition as greatly endeared himself as by the blameless elevation of his life he commended the Gospel; and, though destined for a small and homely congregation, he laboured hard at his sermons. Indeed this latter part of his work was hardly felt as a labour. He had an instinct for sermon-making. To his quaint and ingenious mind there was the same enjoyment in a curious division, or a happy plan, which an enthusiastic artist feels in sketching a novel subject or a striking group; and it was a treat to his methodical eye to see accumulating in his cabinet piles of clear and evenly written manuscript, and systems of pungent theology.

Few have surpassed Philip Henry in that trim antithesis and exact alliteration which were so prized by our ancestors. If it were asked, "What are the Promises?" the answer was, "Articles of the Covenant; Breasts of Con-

solation; Christian's Charter:"— and so on through all the alphabet down to "Wells of Salvation; 'Xceeding great and precious; Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus; Zion's peculiar." And even his common conversation shaped itself into balanced sentences and proverbial maxims. "If I cannot go to the house of God, I will go to the God of the house." "Forced absence from God's ordinances, and forced presence with wicked people, is a grievous burden to a gracious soul." "Solitariness is no sign of sanctity. Pest-houses stand alone, and yet are full of infectious diseases." "There are two things we should beware of— That we never be ashamed of the Gospel, and that we may never be a shame to it." "There are three things, which, if Christians do, they will find themselves mistaken:—If they look for that in themselves which is to be had in another, viz. *righteousness*; If they look for that in the law which is to be had only in the Gospel, viz. *mercy*; If they look for that on earth which is to be had only in heaven, viz. *perfection*." In defiance of modern criticism, we own a certain kindness for this old-fashioned art; it has a Hebrew look; it reminds us of the alphabetic psalms, and the "six things, yea seven" of Solomon. And we believe that it has a deep root in nature—the love of alliteration and antithesis being, in another form, the love of rhyme and metre. We never see in an ancient garden, a box-tree peacock, or a hemisphere of holly, but we feel a certain pleasure; we cannot help admiring the obvious industry; and we feel that they must have been a genial and gay-hearted people who taught their evergreens to ramp like lions, or flap their wings like crowing cocks. And, more

especially we feel that but for this grotesque beginning we might never have arrived at the landscape gardens of later times. Though they were the mere memorials of what amused our fathers we could tolerate these conceits in cyprus and yew, but when we recollect that they were the first attempts at the picturesque, and the commencement of modern elegance, we view them with a deeper interest. Doubtless this alliterative and antistrophic style was eventually overdone, and like the Dutch gardener who locked up his apprentice in the one summer-house because he had secured a thief in the other, the later Puritans sacrificed everything to verbal jingles and acrostic symmetry. But Philip Henry was a scholar, and a man of vigorous intellect, and, in the sense most signal, a man of God. Translated into the tamest language his sayings would still be weighty; but when we reflect that to his peasant hearers their original terseness answered all the purpose of an artificial memory, we not only forgive but admire it. Many a good thought has perished because it was not portable, and many a sermon is forgotten because it is not memorable; but like seeds with wings, the sayings of Philip Henry have floated far and near, and like seeds with hooked prickles, his sermons stuck to his most careless hearers. His tenacious words took root, and it was his happiness to see not only scriptural intelligence, but fervent and consistent piety spreading amongst his parishioners.

When he had settled at Worthenbury, Mr. Philip Henry sought in marriage the only daughter and heiress of Mr. Matthews of Broad Oak. There was some demur on the part of her father; he allowed that Mr. Henry was a

gentleman, a scholar, and an excellent preacher, but he was a stranger, and they did not even know where he came from. "True," said Miss Matthews, "but I know where he is going, and I should like to go with him:" and she went. There is little recorded of her, except that she was very kind-hearted, devout, and charitable, "and always well satisfied with whatever God and her friends did for her." Five of their six children grew up; and when Bartholomew-day banished Philip Henry from his pulpit and his people, his wife's inheritance of Broad Oak supplied a better home than was found by the families of most ejected ministers.

Seldom has a scene of purer domestic happiness been witnessed than the love of God and one another created there. Ensconced in his well-furnished library, transcribing into his folio common-place book choice sentences from Cicero and Seneca, Augustine and Ambrose, Calvin and Beza, Baxter and Caryl, or writing out courses of sermons which he yet hoped to preach; the industrious divine improved his abundant leisure. And whilst his partner looked well to the ways of her household, the thriving fields and tasteful garden proclaimed their united husbandry. Standing hospitably by the way-side, their house received frequent visits from the most renowned and godly men in that vicinity, visits to which their children looked forward with veneration and joy, and which left their long impression on youthful memories. And on all the inmates of the family, the morning and evening worship told with hallowing power. Seldom has this ordinance been observed so sacredly, or rendered so delightful. Alluding to the words

chalked on plague-stricken houses, Philip Henry would say, "If the worship of God be not within, write 'Lord have mercy upon us' on the door; for a plague, a curse is there." And as he deemed it so important, he laboured to make it instructive and engaging to all. In the morning he arranged it so that the bustle of the day should not infringe on it, and in the evening so early that no little girl should be nodding at the chapter, nor any drowsy servant yawning through the prayer. "Better one away than all sleepy," he would say, if occasionally obliged to begin before some absentee returned; but so much did the fear of God and affection for the head of the household reign, that none were wilfully missing. And with this "hem" around it the business of each successive day was effectually kept from "ravelling." It was his custom to expound a portion of Scripture, and he encouraged his children to write notes of these familiar explanations. Before they quitted the paternal roof each of them had in this way secured in manuscript a copious commentary on the Bible, which they treasured up as a precious memorial of their happy early days, and their heavenly-minded father. In the hands of his only son these simple notes became the germ of the most popular English commentary.—It is this son's history which we ought to sketch; but as the Broad Oak family was one, and Matthew and his sisters not only loved one another tenderly, but pursued the same solid and useful studies for a long time together, we may for a few moments glance at them.

Though younger than her brother, SARAH was the oldest sister. When six or seven years of age her father taught

her Hebrew, and among other good customs she early began to take notes of sermons, so that before she reached her threescore and ten she had many fair-written volumes—the record of sweet Sabbaths and endeared solemnities. Married to Mr. Savage, a substantial farmer, and a pious man, in the abundance of a farm-house she found ample means for indulging her charitable disposition, and whilst blessed by the poor, to whose necessities she ministered, she was beloved by grateful friends, to whom her Christian composure and tender sympathy made her a welcome visitor in seasons of anxiety or sorrow. Through life she retained the bookish habits which she acquired at Broad Oak, and found time to read a great deal, and to copy for the use of her children many of those Christian biographies which were then circulated in manuscript, and not intended for the press. But her superior understanding and elevated tastes did not disqualify her for the more irksome duties of her station. She verified the remark that “Educated persons excel in the meanest things, and refined minds possess the most common sense.” She made all the better farmer’s wife for being Philip Henry’s daughter; and the main difference betwixt the cultivated lady and the vulgar housewife was, that she did more things, and did them better. In the morning she visited the dairy, the kitchen, and the market, and then it seemed as if she was all day alike in the parlour and the nursery. Besides clothing her household she found time to make garments for the poor; and by lying down with a book beside her she contrived to improve her mind, and read the works of such theologians as Owen, and Flavel, and Howe. Like her father, and most of the Puritans, she possessed a serene and

tranquil spirit, and during the forty years of her married life was never known to lose her temper. Doubtless much of her successful industry, as well as the quiet dignity of her character, must be ascribed to this meek self-possession ; for whilst her notable neighbours deemed it needful to screech commands over all the house, and follow each blundering menial in a perpetual fluster, the simplicity and forethought of Mrs. Savage's directions saved a world of trouble, and all things appeared to adjust and expedite themselves around her calm and gentle presence. Her new home was near her parents, and, besides frequent visits, she was often getting a word in season from the ready pen of her loving father. "If you would keep warm in this cold season, (January 1692,) take these four directions:—1. Get into the Sun. Under his blessed beams there are warmth and comfort. 2. Go near the fire. 'Is not my Word like fire?' How many cheering passages are there! 3. Keep in motion and action—stirring up the grace and gift of God that is in you. 4. And seek Christian converse and communion. 'How can one be warm alone?'" Along with the piety of her father she inherited much of his observant eye and spiritual mind ; and many of her remarks are not only striking in themselves, but derive a charm from the little things which first suggested them:—"Seeing other creatures clean and white in the same place where the swine were all over mire, I thought it did represent good and bad men in the same place ; the one defiled by the same temptations which the other escape through the grace of God and watchfulness." "I was affected lately when I saw our newly-sown garden, which we had secured so carefully, as we thought, from

fowls, and had closely covered it, yet receive as much hurt by the unseen mole, which roots up and destroys. Lord grant this be not the case of my poor soul! Many good seeds are sown. Line upon line. Daily hearing or reading some good truths. And, by the grace of God, with my good education, I have been kept from many outward sins; but I have great reason to fear the unseen mole of heart-corruption, pride, covetousness. These work secretly but dangerously; Lord, do thou undertake for me." "The coals coming to the fire with ice upon them at first seemed as though they would put out the fire, but afterwards they made it burn more fiercely: I had this meditation,—It is often so with me. That which seems against me is really for me. Have not afflictions worked for my good? Sometimes I have gone to an ordinance, as these coals to the fire, all cold and frozen, and there I have been melted. My love and desire have been inflamed. That it hath not oftener been so has been my own fault." But no extract from her journals can set in a more interesting light this admirable woman than the following lines recording the death of her only surviving son.—"1721, Feb. 15. My dear Philip was seized with the fatal distemper, the small-pox. Many, many fervent prayers were put up for him, both in closets and congregations; but on Monday, Feb. 27, between one and two o'clock, he breathed his last;—the blessed spirit took wing, I trust, to the world of everlasting rest and joy. The desire of our eyes, concerning whom we were ready to say, 'This son shall comfort us;' once all our joy, now all our tears. Near twenty-two years of age, he was just beginning to appear in public business, sober and pious. A true lover of

his friends, of whom he said on his death-bed, 'I lay them down as I do my body, in hope to meet again every way better.' . . . I do not think the worse of God, or of prayer, for this dispensation ; yet, sometimes I am much oppressed. I find that deceit lies in generals. How often have I in word and in tongue given up and devoted my *all*—yoke-fellow, children, estate—and all without mental reservation. And now, when God comes to try me in but one dear comfort, with what difficulty can I part with him ! Oh this wicked heart ! Lord, I am thine. Though thou shouldst strip me of all my children, and of all my comforts here, yet if thou give me thyself, and clear up to me my interest in the everlasting covenant, it is enough. That blessed covenant has enough in it to gild the most gloomy dispensation of Providence. I have condoling letters daily from my friends. Their words, indeed, do reach my case, but cannot reach my heart."

The second sister was CATHARINE, who became the wife of Dr. Tylston, a pious physician in Chester ; but we have failed in obtaining any farther information regarding her.

The third was ELEANOR. Her gracious disposition was easily seen through all the timidity and diffidence of her retiring nature ; and after her death her private papers exhibited the same anxiety to cultivate heart religion, and to grow in knowledge, which distinguished all her family. Like her youngest sister, she was married to a tradesman in Chester, and then took the name of Radford.

That youngest sister was ANN. The sweetness of her temper, and her aptitude for learning, made her a special favourite with her father, and he used to call his Nancy

“the diamond in his ring.” As she grew up, her early dispositions took the form of a cheerful activity and obligingness, which exceedingly endeared her to her friends, whilst her happy and contented piety was constantly reminding them that wisdom’s ways are pleasantness. She used to spend much of the Sabbath in singing psalms of praise; and the kindness of her nature, and her loving confidence in the goodness of the Lord, made her visits a peculiar comfort in the house of mourning. And, lest God’s mercies should slip out of memory, she used to mark them down. The following is one list of “Family Mercies.”—

“The house preserved from fire, June 1690; the family begun to be built up; children preserved from the perils of infancy. Two of my near relations’ children taken off quickly by death; mine of the same age spared, March 1693. One child of a dear friend burnt to death; another neighbour’s child drowned lately; yet mine preserved. One of the children preserved from a dangerous fall down a pair of stairs into the street; the recovery of both of them from the small-pox, May 1695. Both recovered from a malignant fever when they had been given up; at the same time two servants brought low by it, yet raised up. Ourselves preserved from the same distemper, when two dear relations, mother and daughter, fell by it. Wonder of mercy not to be forgotten.” It was of this fever, and within a few weeks of one another, that Mrs. Hutton and her sister Radford died, in 1697. It was a time of heavy trial in a once happy circle, for their venerated father had died the year before. “Yet God is good,” was the dying testimony of this meek believer, and she entreated that none would think the

worse of family religion for the afflictions which had followed so fast on them. "I am not weary of living, but I am weary of sinning. I would live as Christ lives, and where Christ lives, and that I am sure will be heaven."

This was the pious family in which MATTHEW HENRY was born. Of these intelligent and affectionate sisters he was the only brother, and of those godly parents he was the eldest surviving child. He was born at Broad Oak, Oct. 18, 1662.

When three years old it is said that he could read the Bible distinctly, and he early showed a strong passion for books. Lest he should injure his health by excessive application, his mother was frequently obliged to drag the little student from his closet, and chase him out into the fields. He had for his tutor Mr. Turner, a young man who then lived at Broad Oak, and who afterwards published a folio volume of "Remarkable Providences;" but whether Mr. Turner had then acquired his taste for extraordinary narratives, or whether the imagination of his pupil was inflamed by their recital, we cannot tell. There is no love of the marvellous in his writings. But in the formation of his character, and the direction of his studies, by far the most influential element was veneration for his learned and saintly sire. The father's devotion and industry inspired the son. And surely this was as it ought to be. Though love to a pious father is not piety, yet with the children of the godly the fifth commandment has often proved the portico and gateway to the first; and perhaps theirs is the most scriptural devotion whose first warm feelings towards their "Father who is in heaven," mingle with tender memo-

ries of their father that was on earth. No character could be more impressive than Philip Henry's, no spirit more impressible than that of Philip Henry's son. Till an up-grown lad he was in his father's constant company. He witnessed the holy elevation and cheerful serenity of his blameless life. He was aware how much his father prayed in secret, and besides occasional sermons, he heard his daily expositions and exhortations at the worship of the family. And from what he saw, as much as from what he heard, the conviction grew with his growth, that of all things the most amiable and august is true religion, and of all lives the most blessed is a walk with God. A hallowed sunshine irradiated Broad Oak all the week; but like rays in a focus, through the Sabbath atmosphere every peaceful feeling and heavenly influence fell in sacred and softening intensity. On these days of the Son of man, the thoughtful boy was often remarkably solemnized; and when the services of the sanctuary were over, would haste to his little chamber to weep and pray, and could scarcely be prevailed on to come down and share the family meal. On one of these occasions his father had preached on the grain of mustard-seed, and, wistful to possess this precious germ, he took the opportunity of a walk with his father to tell his fears and anxieties about himself. The conversation is not recorded, but he afterwards told his confidante, his sister, that he hoped he too had received a "grain of grace," and that in time it might come to something. With his young sisters he held a little prayer-meeting on the Saturday afternoons; and amid the sequestered sanctity of their peaceful home, and

under the loving eye and wise instruction of their tender parents, these olive plants grew round about the table.

As we have already noticed, the learning and religious experience of Philip Henry drew to his house many of his most renowned cotemporaries; such as the quaint and lively Richard Steel; the venerable Francis Tallents; the accomplished but extremely modest John Meldrum of Newport, after whose funeral Mr. Henry said, "The relics of so much learning, piety, and humility, I have not seen this great while laid in a grave;" William Cook, "an aged, painful, faithful minister," at Chester, so absorbed in study and in communion with a better country that he scarce ever adverted to any of the things around him; and Edward Lawrence, whose emphatic counsels, *e. g.* "Tremble to borrow twopence," "Make no man angry or sad," did not sink so deep into the memories of his own motherless children as into those of their happier companions at Broad Oak. On a mind so pious and reverential as was that of the younger Henry, the sight and conversations of so many distinguished ministers produced a strong impression; and, united to his natural gravity and studiousness, predisposed himself for the ministry. It was his great delight to be in their society, or in the company of warm-hearted Christians, listening to their discourse, or essaying to join in it. He inherited all his father's affection for the Bible, doting over its every sentence with curious avidity, and treasuring up its sayings in his heart. And having long practised the transcription of sermons, anon he began to make them.

At the age of eighteen his father took him to the academy of Mr. Doolittle at Hackney. The journey on horseback

X J. S. L. H. H.

was effected in five days. On arriving at London he writes, "I never saw so many coaches. If I should say we saw somewhat above a hundred after we came into the town I should speak within compass." The following extract from his first letter to his sisters gives a glimpse of the state of non-conforming churches in London in the year 1680, and presents the young student in an interesting point of view.

"On Saturday my father went to Islington, and I went to cousin Hotchkiss and Mr. Church's. Mr. Church came with us to see first Bedlam and then the monument. The monument is almost like a spire steeple, set up in the place where the great fire began. It is 345 steps high, and thence we had a sight of the whole city. Yesterday we went to Mr. Doolittle's meeting-place; his church I may call it, for I believe there is many a church that will not hold so many people. There are several galleries; it is all pewed; and a brave pulpit, a great height above the people. They began between nine and ten in the morning, and after the singing of a psalm, Mr. Doolittle first prayed and then preached, and that was all. His text was Jer. xvii. 9. In the afternoon my father preached on Lam. iii. 22, at the same place. Indeed, Mr. Lawrence told him at first he must not come to London to be idle; and they are resolved he shall not; for he is to preach the two next Sabbaths, I believe, at Mr. Steel's and Mr. Lawrence's. On Sabbath-day night about five o'clock, cousin Robert and I went to another place and heard, I cannot say another sermon, but a piece of another, by a very young man, one Mr. Shower, and a most excellent sermon it was, on the evil of sin. The truth was we could scarce get any room, it was so crowded.

“This morning we went to Islington, where I saw the place we are like to abide in, and do perceive our rooms are like to be very strait and little ; that Mr. Doolittle is very studious and diligent, and that Mrs. Doolittle and her daughter are very fine and gallant.

“Dear sisters, I am almost ever thinking of you and home ; but dare scarce entertain a thought of returning, lest it discompose me. I find it a great change.

“Pray do not forget me in your thoughts, nor in your prayers, but remember me in both. So commending you all to the care and protection of Almighty God, whose kingdom ruleth over all, I rest, your ever loving and affectionate brother,

“MATTHEW HENRY.”

They were troublous times, and it was not long before Mr. Doolittle's academy was dispersed. Matthew Henry went back to Broad Oak, and the next time he returned to London it was to study law. He had not abandoned his original destination ; but as it was then very problematical whether nonconformists would ever be allowed freely to exercise their ministry, it is possible that he may have wished to secure to himself the alternative of an honourable profession. He never became an enthusiast in his legal studies ; but he learned enough to add considerably to his store of information, and he always looked back with pleasure to friendships which he formed at Gray's Inn.

It was in 1687, when the penalties against dissent were somewhat relaxed, that Matthew Henry was ordained a minister. On the eve of this important event he devoted

a considerable time to self-examination ; and in the paper in which he records its results, he writes—

“ I think I can say with confidence that I do not design to take up the ministry as a trade to live by, or to enrich myself, out of the greediness of filthy lucre. No ! I hope I aim at nothing but *souls*; and if I gain those, though I should lose all my worldly comforts by it, I shall reckon myself to have made a good bargain.

“ I think I can say with as much assurance, that my design is not to get myself a name amongst men, or to be talked of in the world as one that makes somewhat of a figure. No; that is a poor business. If I have but a good name with God I think I have enough, though among men I be reviled, and have my name trampled upon as mire in the streets. I prefer the good word of my Master far before the good word of my fellow-servants.

“ I can appeal to God that I have no design in the least to maintain a party, or to keep up any schismatical faction ; my heart rises against the thoughts of it. I hate dividing principles and practices, and whatever others are, I am for peace and healing; and if my blood would be a sufficient balsam, I would gladly part with the last drop of it for the closing up of the bleeding wounds of differences that are amongst true Christians.”

For five and twenty years Mr. Henry was minister of the Presbyterian congregation at Chester, and many things combined to make it a happy pastorate. Broad Oak was not far from Chester, and till the year 1696, when Philip Henry removed to the better country, many delightful visits were exchanged between the father and the son. Wrenbury

Wood, the home of his elder sister, Mrs. Savage, was still nearer; and by their respective marriages his other three sisters all settled in Chester, and with their families became members of his flock. And his congregation increased. Not only was it needful to enlarge the place of worship, but many of his hearers were men of education and mental enlargement, to whom it was animating to preach, and in whose intelligent Christian fellowship it was pleasant to spend his occasional hours. The number of communicants was eventually 350, and Mr. Henry had the greatest joy which an earnest minister can have—he knew of many to whose salvation God had blessed his instructions and entreaties. And so long as he remained with them, he had that other greatest joy—he saw his children walking in the truth.

Like his father, Mr. Henry found great delight in study; and like that father, his turn of mind was systematic. His sermons were a series. To the volatile auditories of modern times there would be something appalling in a body of divinity which occupied the Sabbaths of fourteen years. But the later Puritans, especially, were lovers of order and routine; congregations were more stationary, and the world had then a feeling of latitude and leisure which it can never know again. And perhaps the regular recurrence of similar services, and the weekly resumption of the stated subject, and the placid distillation of scriptural lessons, were as congenial to Sabbath rest and spiritual growth as the endless variety and turbulent excitement which our own generation, more languid or more mercurial, craves. And there is no reason why method should produce monotony. In

the hands of Matthew Henry, besides its continuous instructiveness, method was often a stimulus to attention, and an additional means of vivacity. On the subject, "Put off the old man, put on the new," he gave a course of many sermons in the following scheme:—

- 1 "Put off pride, and put on humility.
- 2 Put off passion, and put on meekness.
- 3 Put off covetousness, and put on contentment.
- 4 Put off contention, and put on peaceableness.
- 5 Put off murmuring, and put on patience.
- 6 Put off melancholy, and put on cheerfulness.
- 7 Put off vanity, and put on seriousness.
- 8 Put off uncleanness, and put on chastity.
- 9 Put off drunkenness, and put on temperance.
- 10 Put off deceitfulness, and put on honesty.
- 11 Put off hatred, and put on love.
- 12 Put off hypocrisy, and put on sincerity.
- 13 Put off bad discourse, and put on good discourse.
- 14 Put off bad company, and put on good company.
- 15 Put off security, and put on watchfulness.
- 16 Put off slothfulness, and put on diligence.
- 17 Put off folly, and put on prudence.
- 18 Put off fear, and put on hope.
- 19 Put off a life of sense, and put on a life of faith.
- 20 Put off self, and put on Jesus Christ."

At another time he gave a set of sermons on "Penitent Reflections and Pious Resolutions," taking for his general text, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies," and selecting for particular reflections and resolutions such antithetic texts as—

- 1 "I have sinned."—Ps. xli. 4.
"I will do so no more."—Job xxxiv. 32.
- 2 "I have done foolishly."—2 Sam. ii. 10.
"I will behave myself wisely."—Ps. ci. 2.
- 3 "I have perverted that which is right."—Job xxxiii. 27.
"I will never forget thy precepts."—Ps. cxix. 93, &c.

Those who are acquainted with that beautiful work, "Buchanan's Comfort in Affliction," will know where to find a recent example akin to the foregoing, in which a leading text is the subject, and other texts happily selected supply the particular instances.

In those primitive days Mr. Henry's Sabbath-morning congregation met at nine o'clock. The service usually began with singing the Hundredth Psalm; and, after a short prayer, Mr. Henry expounded a chapter of the Old Testament, having begun with Genesis, and continuing in regular order. Then, after another psalm and a longer prayer, he preached a sermon about an hour in length, and after prayer and singing, the congregation was dismissed with the blessing. The afternoon service was nearly the same, except that it was a chapter of the New Testament which was then expounded. On Thursday evening he gave a lecture, which was well attended by his own people, and to which some Episcopalians came, who did not choose to forsake their own church on the Lord's day. For this weekly lecture he found a subject which lasted twenty years, in "Scriptural Questions." It was Oct. 1692 when he began with Gen. iii. 9, "Adam, where art thou?" and it was May 1712 when he arrived at Rev. xviii. 18, "What city is like unto this great city?"

The solemnity with which Baptism was administered, and the Lord's Supper celebrated, in Matthew Henry's meeting-house, struck many at the time; and from the fervour of his own spirit they proved eminently means of grace. His "Communicant's Companion" is still well known, and by its minute directions, shows how vital to

the believer, and how blessed to the affectionate disciple, he deemed a due commemoration of his dying Lord. His original biographer remarks, "His soul was formed for this ordinance. He was full of love to Christ, and thankfulness to God for Christ."

His tender nature drew him towards the young, and his playful simplicity made him their apt instructor. An hour of every Saturday was devoted to public catechising, and many young persons ascribed their first earnestness in religion to the close dealing and touching addresses with which this exercise was frequently ended.

There were then no religious nor philanthropic societies; but the public spirit of Mr. Henry prompted him to efforts beyond the bounds of his own congregation. When a series of sermons "for the Reformation of Manners" was projected, he did his utmost to promote it, and contributed four of his most able and important addresses. And moved by the miserable case of the prisoners in Chester gaol, he was in the habit of visiting them and preaching to them, till the curate of St. Mary's prevailed on the governor to discharge him. In the meanwhile his disinterested labours had been the means of much good to the criminals.

The great business of Mr. Henry's life was the cultivation of piety in himself and others. His religion was not the less profound that it was mild and evenly; nor is it the less fitted for imitation that it adorned and cheered a life of tranquil tenor. The present volume contains "Directions for Daily Communion with God," and his own practice was a constant effort to "begin and spend and conclude each day with God." Besides the full and deliberate worship of God

in his family, he abounded in secret prayer. It was his recourse in every undertaking. His sermons were begun, his books were published, his journeys were commenced, and the important steps of his history were taken with prayer. "What incomes of grace," he wrote, "yea and outward good things, as far as they are indeed good for us, have we by an access to God in Christ. Such have a companion ready in all their solitudes ; a counsellor in all their doubts ; a comforter in all their sorrows ; a supply in all their wants ; a support under all their burdens ; a shelter in all their dangers ; strength for all their performances ; and salvation ensured by a sweet undeceiving earnest. What is heaven but an everlasting access to God ? and present access is a pledge of it." And as he had devout and confident recourse to the throne of grace, so he was an alert and thankful observer of those providences which answered prayer. He would say that the good things of God's children "are not dispensed out of the basket of common providence, but out of the ark of the covenant ;" and "those mercies are the sweetest which are seen growing upon the root of a promise." Like his cotemporary in Scotland, Thomas Boston, his diary is full of recognitions of God's superintending care and kind interposing hand. Gratitude for mercies was constantly irradiating his path and sweetening his spirit ; and if he sometimes sought the prayers of his friends, he also sought the help of their praises. On special occasions he invited them to his house to join in thanksgiving for recent deliverances or distinguishing favours. "O magnify the Lord with me ; let us exalt his name together."

In a pre-eminent degree Mr. Henry possessed a spiritual mind; and of that spirituality one great secret was his devout and delighted observance of the Lord's day. On it he accumulated all the endearment and veneration of a grateful and conscientious spirit, and in it he collected patience and impulse for the days to come. To him the Sabbath was like a reservoir on the summit of a hill. He was sure that if this day were filled with heavenly things it would send down its bright and refreshing streams through all the week.

The better to "fix his heart," and help his memory, he kept an occasional journal. As affording the most intimate view of his character, we may give a few extracts from it.

"June 23, 1696.—This afternoon about three o'clock, my father's servant came for the doctor, with the tidings that my dear father was taken suddenly ill. I had then some of my friends about me, and they were cheerful with me; but this struck a damp upon all. I had first thought not to have gone till the next day, it being somewhat late and very wet, and had written half a letter to my dear mother, but I could not help going; and I am glad I did go, for I have often thought of that, 2 Kings ii. 10. 'If thou see me when I am taken up from thee,' &c. The doctor and I came to Broad Oak about eight o'clock, and found him in great extremity of pain; nature, through his great and unwearied labours, unable to bear up, and sinking under the load. As soon as he saw me he said, 'Oh son, you are welcome to a dying father; I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my de-

parture is at hand.' A little after midnight, my mother holding his hands as he sat in bed, and I holding the pillow to his back, he very quietly and without any struggling, groan, or rattling, breathed out his dear soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he had faithfully served."

"July 1.—There are some things I would more particularly engage myself to upon this providence.

"1. To be more grave and serious.

"2. To be more meek and humble, cautious and candid, because these were the graces that my dear father was eminent for, and God owned him in them, and men honoured him for them. I am sensible of too much hastiness of spirit. I would learn to be of a cool, mild spirit.

"3. To be more diligent and industrious in improving my time, for I see it is hasting off apace, and I desire to have it filled up, because I see I must shortly put off this my tabernacle, and there is no working in the grave."

"Oct. 18, 1697.—Through the good hand of my God upon me I have finished my thirty-fifth year—one half of the age of man. It is now high noon with me, but my sun may go down at noon. I was affected this morning when alone, in thinking *what* I was born—a rational creature, a helpless creature, and a sinful creature. *Where* I was born—in the church of God, in a land of light, in a house of prayer. *What* I was born for—to glorify God my Maker, and prepare to get to heaven."

"Jan. 1, 1701.—Being more and more confirmed in my belief of the being and attributes of God, of the mediation

of the Lord Jesus Christ between God and man, and of the reality and weight of invisible things ; and being more and more satisfied that this is the true grace of God wherein I stand ; I do solemnly resign and give up my whole self to God in Jesus Christ. I commit my soul and all the concerns of my spiritual state to the grace of God, and to the word of his grace, subjecting myself to the conduct and government of the blessed Spirit, and to his influences and operations, which I earnestly desire and depend upon for the mortifying of my corruptions, the strengthening of my graces, the furnishing me for every good word and work, and the ripening of me for heaven. I commit my body and all the concerns of my outward condition to the providence of God, to be ordered and disposed by the wisdom and will of my Heavenly Father. Not knowing the things which may befall me this year, I refer myself to God. Whether it shall be my dying year or no, I know not ; but it is my earnest expectation and hope that the Lord Jesus Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death, by health or sickness, by plenty or poverty, by liberty or restraint, by preaching or silence, by comfort or sorrow. Welcome, welcome, the will of God, whatever it be."

"Oct. 18, 1701.—I have thought much this day what a great variety of cross events I am liable to while in the body, and how uncertain what may befall me in the next year of my life ; pain, or sickness, or broken bones, loss in my estate, death of dear relations, reproach, divisions in the congregation, public restraints and troubles : my fortieth year may be as Israel's was, the last of my sojourning in this

wilderness. The worst of evils would be sin and scandal. The Lord keep me from that, and fit me for any other."

"Dec. 31, 1703.—Unfixedness of thought, a wretched desultoriness. Some speak of time well spent in thinking ; but I find unless in speaking, reading, or writing, my thinking doth not turn to much account. Though I have had comfort in some broken good thoughts, yet I can seldom fix my heart to a chain of them. Oh that the thought of my heart may be forgiven !

"I have oft bewailed my barrenness in good discourse, and unskilfulness in beginning it, and coldness of concern for the souls of others ; and in reflection on this year I find it has not been much better. I bless God I love good discourse, and would promote it, but I want zeal."

"Jan. 1, 1705.—I know this is the will of God, even my sanctification. Lord, grant that this year I may be more holy, and walk more closely than ever in all holy conversation. I earnestly desire to be filled with holy thoughts, to be carried out in holy affections, determined by holy aims and intentions, and governed in all my words and actions by holy principles. Oh that a golden thread of holiness may run through the whole web of this year !

"I know it is the will of God that I should be useful, and by his grace I will be so. Lord, thou knowest it is the top of my ambition in this world to do good, and to be serviceable to the honour of Christ and the welfare of precious souls. I would fain do good in the pulpit, and good with my pen ; and, which I earnestly desire to abound more in, to do good by my common converse."

"Jan. 1, 1706.—I know not what the year shall bring

forth ; but I know it shall bring forth nothing amiss to me, if God be my God in covenant ; if it bring forth *death*, that I hope shall quite finish sin and free me from it. Lord, let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. I commit my family to my heavenly Father, to God, even my own God, my Father's God, my children's God. Oh pour out thy Spirit upon my seed, thy blessing, that blessing of blessings, upon my offspring, that they may be praising God on earth when I am praising him in heaven."

"Dec. 31, 1707.—I begin to feel my journey in my bones, and I desire to be thereby loosened from the world, and from this body. The death of my dear and honoured mother this year has been a sore breach upon my comfort ; for she was my skilful faithful counsellor ; and it is an intimation to me that now, in the order of nature, I must go next As to my ministry here, Mr. Mainwaring's leaving me and his wife has been very much my discouragement. But Providence so ordered it that Mr. Harvey's congregation are generally come into us, or else we began to dwindle, so that I should have gone on very heavily."

"March 8, 1713, London.—I preached Mr. Rosewell's evening lecture, Ps. 89. 16, 'The joyful sound.' As I came home I was robbed. The thieves took from me about ten or eleven shillings. My remarks upon it were,—1. What reason have I to be thankful to God, who have travelled so much, and yet was never robbed before. 2. What a deal of evil the love of money is the root of, that four men would venture their lives and souls for about half-a-crown a-piece. 3. See the power of Satan in the children of disobedience.

4. See the vanity of worldly wealth; how soon we may be stripped of it. How loose, therefore, we should sit to it."

As might easily be surmised from the extent of his writings, Mr. Henry was a hard student. His plan was to rise early: he was usually in his study at five o'clock, sometimes as early as four; and except the hour allowed for breakfast and morning worship, remained there till noon, often till four in the afternoon. Nothing more tried his meek and patient spirit than intrusions on his studying time. "I am always best when alone. No place is like my own study: no company like good books, especially the book of God." But with all his love of leisure and retirement he was no hermit. He was rich in friends. He was much consulted by them; and besides an extensive correspondence, he showed his interest in them by his minute and affectionate intercessions. "How sweet a thing it is to pray, minding a particular errand." That errand was often some conjuncture in the history of a friend, or a friend's family. And nothing leaves a softer halo round his memory than his filial and fraternal piety. His conduct was a reverential transcript from his father's bright example; the best tribute which love and veneration can render: and his own life was a sermon on the text which he selected after his beloved mother died, "Her children shall rise up, and call her blessed." He and his sisters grew up together in the holy atmosphere of their Broad Oak home; and though they all eventually had houses of their own, they never knew a suspicion or a quarrel, a dry word or a divided interest.

When the first volumes of his Commentary had been

published, and Mr. Henry's talents as a divine and an expositor were known, he received repeated calls to come and be a London minister. He was invited to succeed Dr. Bates, then Mr. Nathanael Taylor, then Mr. Spademan; but all these invitations he resolutely and successfully refused. At last the congregation at Hackney made an onset which he could no longer withstand. After a year of hesitation and painful anxiety he agreed to go. Among many considerations which influenced him, the two following were the most powerful:—"There is manifestly a much wider door of opportunity to do good opened to me at London than is at Chester, in respect to the frequency and variety of week-day occasions of preaching, and the great numbers of the auditors. The prospect I have of improving these opportunities, and of doing good to souls thereby, is, I confess, the main inducement to me to think of removing thither.

"Though the people at Chester are a most loving people, and many of them have had, and have an exceeding value for me and my ministry, yet I have not been without my discouragements, and those such as have tempted me to think that my work in this place has been in a great measure done: many that have been catechised with us, have left us, and very few have been added to us."

It was on the 18th of May, 1712, that Mr. Henry began his labours at Hackney. He was in his fiftieth year, and had been five and twenty years at Chester. He found abundance of that occupation to which he had looked forward with such desire, having opportunities of preaching almost every day of the week, and sometimes twice or thrice

on the same day. And probably it was in this way that he accomplished most; for his Hackney congregation was not large. He found only a hundred communicants. It was not a lively period in the history of religion anywhere, and the London churches widely shared the spiritual torpor which soon after his decease transformed the Presbyterian chapel at Chester into a Unitarian meeting-house.

On leaving his former flock Mr. Henry promised to visit them once a year. In the summer of 1713 he fulfilled that promise, and again in May, 1714, he quitted Hackney for the same purpose. The two last Sabbaths of this visit were employed on the texts, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God," and, "Let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." That rest was nearer than he knew. On Monday, June 21, he set out on his return to London. He was engaged to preach at Nantwich on the way. His horse threw him, but he denied that he had sustained any injury. Accordingly, he preached on Prov. xxxi. 18; but every one noticed that he was not so lively as usual. He was short, and afterwards very heavy and sleepy. He asked his friends to pray for him, "for now I cannot pray for myself." He remarked, "Sin is bitter," and said, "I bless God I have inward supports." But he was soon seized with apoplexy, and at eight on the following morning, June 22, he fell asleep.

On the following day his eldest sister, Mrs. Savage, has this entry in her journal:—

"Wednesday, June 23.—I went to the place to take leave of the dear earthen vessel, in which was lodged such a

treasure, and shall always remember there was nothing of death to be seen in his face, but rather something of a smile. How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed! That head, that hand so fitted for service, now cold and moveless. Lord, what is man, the greatest, the best? When God bids Moses go up and die on Mount Nebo, it is observable he adds, 'As Aaron thy brother was gathered to his people.' Sure this should mind me of my own dissolution, as sprung from the same good olive, and spending our childhood together in much comfort and pleasure, under that dear and benign shadow. I have reason to think he loved me the best of all his sisters, and it is with satisfaction I think of the love I had for him, and the great unity that was amongst us then, so that I do not remember one angry or unkind word betwixt us. Though I well remember that I have thought my dear mother had most tenderness and love for my brother, yet I was so far from envying for his sake that I complied with her, and loved him with a pure heart fervently. I remember the many cares and fears I had for him when he was ill of a fever at London, at Mr. Doolittle's, and the strong cries and tears I offered in secret to my heavenly Father, accompanied with a purpose of a particular act of religion that I would be found in, if God should hear prayer for him, and spare him to us, greatly dreading how my dear parents could bear the stroke. God was graciously pleased then to hearken to our petitions, and give him to us again; but, after a time, my good purposes (to my shame) proved abortive."

"Friday, June 25.—We gathered up the mantle of this dear Elijah, took the remains to Chester, lodged them in

the silent tomb, 'the house appointed for all living.' We laid him in Trinity Church, by his dear first wife, accompanied with a vast crowd desiring to pay their tribute to his blessed memory."

In 1687 Mr. Henry married Miss Hardware, a young lady remarkable for her beauty and piety; but when they had been only eighteen months united she was seized with the small-pox, and died. His second wife was Miss Warburton, of Grange, the virtuous daughter of a respected family. By this marriage a son and five daughters survived him. The son inherited the estate of Grange, and assumed the maternal name. It is feared that he did not inherit his father's piety. For some time he represented the city of Chester in Parliament.

By his sermons, and his abundant personal labours, Matthew Henry served his generation; by his industrious and ingenious pen he has done a service to the world. From time to time he published tracts and treatises, which met with some attention even in that drowsy age, and many of which have been highly valued since. The "Pleasantness of a Religious Life" has been often republished, and no treatise on the Lord's Supper is better known or prized than the "Communicant's Companion." The present volume contains other specimens of his practical theology, which, though they have not gone into oblivion, have not got into the wide circulation to which their solid worth and earnestness entitle them. In reading his "Directions for Daily Communion with God," the interest and profit of the perusal will be augmented by remembering that it was his own daily effort to "walk with God."

However, these and all his other treatises—enough to engross the leisure hours of any other pastor, if not to immortalize any other divine—were incidental efforts on the part of this herculean student, and mere episodes in a colossal undertaking. His industry, piety, and sanctified genius, have left their peerless memorial in “An Exposition of the Old and New Testament;” and like the *Penseroso*, and other poems, which are read with double interest because their author wrote “*Paradise Lost*,” the following tracts, if excellent themselves, should be read with keener expectation by those who remember that their author wrote Henry’s *Exposition*.

It is with literary monuments as with architectural trophies; we like not only to know who reared them, but how they went to work, and we would be glad to learn how far they enjoyed their labour, and what were their emotions when the task was done. Kennicott’s process in collating the Hebrew text, and Johnson’s operations in compiling his mighty *Lexicon*, are among the most interesting curiosities of literature, and few passages in autobiography are more thrilling than those, for instance, in which Gibbon records his moon-light musings when the “*Decline and Fall*” was finished, and Pollok describes the rapture in which he completed the “*Course of Time*.” Few achievements can be so vast as a continuous commentary on the Bible. We are therefore grateful to Dr. Adam Clarke’s biographer for telling us how, during the forty years that his book was in building, he would sometimes be so absorbed that he did not observe the knock at the study-door, but was discovered on his bended knees with the pen in his

hand and the paper before him; and how, when the last sentence was written, he led his son into the library, and surprised him by the new spectacle of the great table, cleared of all its folios, and nothing but a Bible remaining. "This, Joseph, is the happiest period I have enjoyed for years. I have written the last word. I have put away the chains that would remind me of my bondage. And *there* have I returned the deep thanks of a grateful soul to the God who has shown me such great and continued kindness." And we can sympathize with his family, who, sharing in his emancipation, testified their joy by presenting him with a silver vase. And it exceedingly enhances our interest in Scott's Notes, when we remember the circumstances of bodily suffering and financial anxiety in which they were written, and if we sometimes deem them common-place or meagre, we rebuke our discontent by asking, "How could they be better when the press was always clanking at his heels, and he often rose from a bed of sickness to write them?" Matthew Henry did not live to finish his great undertaking, but to the research of his biographer, we are indebted for some interesting particulars regarding the commencement and progress of the work. It was a labour of love, and like the best productions of the pen, flowed from the abundance of the author's mind. The commentary was all in Matthew Henry before a word of it was written down. In his father's house, as we have seen, the Bible was expounded every day, and he and his sisters had preserved ample notes of their father's terse and aphoristic observations. Then during his own Chester ministry he went over more than

once the whole Bible in simple explanations to his people. Like the Spartan babe whose cradle was his father's shield, it would be scarcely a figure to say that the Bible was the pillow of his infant head, and familiar with it from his most tender years it dwelt richly in him all his days. It was the pivot round which his meditations, morning, noon, and evening, turned, and whatever other knowledge came in his way, he pounced on it with more or less avidity as it served to elucidate or enforce some Bible saying. What has been remarked of an enthusiast in Egyptian antiquities—that he had grown quite pyramidal—may be said of the Presbyterian minister at Chester; he had grown entirely biblical. He had no ideas which had not either been first derived from Scripture, or afterwards dissolved in it. And as his shrewd sense, his kindly nature, his devotional temperament, and his extensive information were all thoroughly scripturalized, it needed no forcing nor straining. It was but to draw the spigot, and out flowed the racy exposition. “The work has been to me its own wages, and the pleasure recompense enough for all the pains.”

Much was incidentally jotted down, and the materials lay affluent about him, before he commenced writing for the press. It was the advice of the Rev. Samuel Clarke and other friends which moved him to begin, and the following entry in his journal announces the commencement of the work. “Nov. 12, 1704. This night, after many thoughts of heart, and many prayers concerning it, I began my Notes on the Old Testament. It is not likely I shall live to finish it, or if I should, that it should be of public

service, for I am not *par negotio*; yet in the strength of God, and I hope with a single eye to his glory, I set about it, that I may endeavour something and spend my time to some good purpose, and let the Lord make what use he pleaseth of me. I go about it with fear and trembling, lest I exercise myself in things too high for me. The Lord help me to set about it with great humility." Yes,—“Fear and trembling,” and “many prayers,”—these are the secret of its success. All the author’s fitness, and all his fondness for the work would have availed little, had not the Lord made it grow. In September, 1706, he finished the Pentateuch, and on the 21st of November that year he writes: “This evening I received a parcel of the Exposition of the Pentateuch. I desire to bless God that he has given me to see it finished. I had comfort from that promise, ‘Thou shalt find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.’” That volume came out separately, and though near her eightieth year, his mother lived to see it, and, scarcely hoping to read all the volume, the good old lady began with Deuteronomy. Every second year produced another volume, till April 17th, 1714, he records: “Finished Acts, and with it the fifth volume. Blessed be God that has helped me and spared me. All the praise be to God.” Two months after he ceased from all his labours, and Dr. Evans and others took up the fallen pen. They completed a sixth volume, but did not continue “Matthew Henry.”

The zest with which he began lasted all along. So dear was the employment that it was not easy to divert him from it, and each possible moment was devoted to it. Even

when roused from slumber by illness in the family, his eye would brighten at the sight of it, and he would draw in his studying-chair "to do a little at the exposition." What he says in the preface to the Prophecies—his least successful volume—will awaken the fellow-feeling of the reader, and remind him of Bishop Horne's touching farewell to the Book of Psalms. "The pleasure I have had in studying and meditating on those parts of these prophecies which are plain and practical, and especially those that are evangelical, has been an abundant balance to and recompense for the harder tasks we have met with in other parts that are more obscure. In many parts of this field the treasure must be digged for, as that in the mines; but in other parts the surface is covered with rich and precious products, with corn and flocks, and of which we may say, as was said of Noah, 'These same have comforted us greatly concerning our work, and the toil of our hands,' and have made it very pleasant and delightful. God grant it may be no less so to the readers."

It would be easy to name commentators more critical, more philosophical, or more severely erudite; but none so successful in making the Bible understood. And the question with sensible readers will always be, not, What did the commentator bring to the Bible? but, What did he bring out of it? And tried by this test, Henry will bear the perpetual palm. His curious inferences, and his just though ingenious "Note!"s, are such as could only have occurred to one mighty in the Scriptures, and minute in the particular text; and to the eager Bible-student, they often present themselves with as welcome surprise as the basket of unexpected

ore which a skilful miner sends up from a deserted shaft. Nor dare we admire them the less because detected in passages where our duller eye or blunter hammer had often explored in vain. On the other hand it is possible to name some who have commented more fully on particular books; but most of them are something more than expositions. They are homiletic notes and expository dissertations. In the language of quaint old Berridge, a preacher is a "Gospel-baker." In the same idiom, a commentator should be a "Bible-miller." Bread-corn must be bruised; and it is the business of the skilful interpreter to give nothing but the text transformed—bread-corn in the guise of flour. This was what Matthew Henry did, and he left it to "Gospel-bakers" to add the salt and leaven, or mayhap the sugar and the laurel-leaf, and make a sermon or an essay as the case might be.

To its author the exposition was a blessed toil; but he could not foresee the wide acceptance and growing favour which awaited it. He could not anticipate that the most powerful minds of after-ages should be its most ardent admirers, or that the panegyrics should be passed on it which we know that Ryland, and Hall, and Chalmers have pronounced. Still less could it occur to him that the kindness with which cotemporaries received it should be a hundred-fold exceeded by a generation so fastidious and book-surfeited as our own. But could its subsequent history have been revealed to his benignant eye, the circumstance which would have elicited the gladdest and most thankful sparkle would have been to behold it in thousands of Christian families, the Sabbath-companion and the household book.

It is not only through the glass doors of stately book-cases that its gilt folios shine, nor on the study-shelves of manses and evangelical parsonages that its brown symbol of orthodoxy may be recognised; but in the parlour of many a quiet tradesman, and the cupboard of many a little farmer, and on the drawers-head of many a mechanic or day-labourer, the well-conned quartos hold their ancestral station, themselves an abundant library, and hallowed as the heirloom of a bygone piety. In the words of a beloved friend, who has done much for Henry's Commentary, "It has now lasted more than one hundred and thirty years, and is at this moment more popular than ever, gathering strength as it rolls down the stream of time; and it bids fair to be *The Comment* for all coming time. True to God, true to nature, true to common sense, and true to the text, how can it ever be superseded? Waiting pilgrims will be reading it when the last trumpet sounds, Come to judgment."

FROM THE FUNERAL SERMONS

ON THE

DEATH OF THE REV. MATTHEW HENRY.

BY

DANIEL WILLIAMS, D.D., AND REV. W. TONG.

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FROM SERMON BY D. WILLIAMS. D.D.

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ALL of you must die, "it is appointed." You shall die when, and where, and how the Lord pleaseth, whether you consent or not. But would you find death unstung, and friendly? Would you have Christ receive your departing souls, to fit them for, and admit them into, the heavenly mansions? Would you find it a release from all that is grievous, and to be a "joyful entrance into the everlasting kingdom of your Saviour?" Then live unto the Lord. These are inseparably joined by the gospel constitution. Oh ask then, to whom do you live, is it to God or the devil? After what do you walk, is it after the flesh or the Spirit? This is your seed-time; "If you sow to the Spirit, you shall reap life everlasting: if you sow to the flesh, you shall of the flesh reap corruption." It is high time the youngest of you should begin to live to the Lord, for you may die in youth. It is truest wisdom in any of you who have begun,

to hold on to the end: for a life spent to the Lord, will at death end in happiness to yourselves, and great comfort to your godly friends.

This may afford some allay to our grief, when we reflect on the very afflictive occasion of our present meeting, viz. the death of the reverend, laborious, and useful Mr. Matthew Henry. I could not have chosen a fitter text, for it was eminently exemplified in him. Few ministers so acknowledged Christ's propriety in them, much fewer arrived to an equal degree of activity in the Lord's service.

He was the son of two eminent saints, who were the glory of Christ in their day; and their character has eminently survived in his life and temper, as in the account of their lives which he published. As they took more than ordinary pains in his education, when young, so they received the highest pleasure in his probity and usefulness in their aged years. Nor did God give a testimony to their pious care in making it successful to him alone; but gave them the comfort of seeing all their grown children walking in their integrity.

God, to whom "all his works are known from the beginning," oft lays a foundation for the service he designs, by fitting persons from the womb, as to constitution and genius, in great variety; as we see in St. Paul, Luther, Melancthon, &c.; in like manner, having determined to do great things by our deceased brother, gave him a very strong body, without which his labours had wasted him in his youth; he also framed the organs of speech to the advantage of his public performances; his fancy was lively, his memory retentive, and his judgment solid.

Such a natural capacity rendered him capable of uncommon improvements, and being cultivated at home, and at the Reverend Mr. Doolittle's, he soon signalized himself in all the useful parts of learning proper to his designed employment, which was the ministry. Having finished those preparatory studies, and apprehending that the knowledge of the laws might contribute to more distinct conceptions of some subjects and terms in theology, he applied himself for

some time to that study, and made good use of that knowledge in several of his composures.

After he had attained what he proposed to himself in the Inns of Court, he set himself toward entering upon the ministerial work, though in a time of persecution! He preferred this to all other employs, because, as himself often suggested, the work was more pleasant, the subject which still employed the mind, more helpful to promote a heavenly life, and the power of religion in his own heart; it gave the best opportunity of serving Christ in his greatest designs on earth, and of benefiting mankind in what most concerned them, viz. the salvation of their souls.

In order to his undertaking this work he impartially studied the controversy between the Established Church and the Dissenters, and upon the maturest thoughts he chose to be a Presbyterian minister, being fully persuaded the cause of Christ in the matters debated was in their hands, and for this resolved to embark with them, notwithstanding the reproach and hardships to which he might be exposed; for it was not earth, but heaven, to which he directed his course. Yet, with his non-conformity, he highly esteemed all pious conformists, and kept up a Christian charity towards such as differed from him.

Upon the evidence of his eminent gifts and graces, with a strong propension to discharge the duties, and promote the blessed ends, of that sacred office, he was regularly invested in it by fasting and prayer, and the imposition of the hands of Presbyters.

He always accounted the work of the ministry the most honourable employment; and was to his death a singular honour to it, by his unwearied diligence and exemplary conversation. From his undertaking the service of Christ in this function, the business of his life was, both to improve in meetness for it, and to "fulfil the ministry he had received of the Lord." His "profiting appeared to all," by being able on the sudden to perform so well upon any subject, and thereby he commended the close study of the Scriptures; for the whole Bible being fixed in his head, as

well as heart, facilitated his work on all occasions. Can the most invidious point to the man alive, of whom it can be more justly said, he laboured much in the Lord? If you consider how oft he preached you must wonder how he could write so much. But if you reckon how many books he printed, could you imagine he preached so frequently? What time must be laid out in the five volumes on the Bible, besides many other valuable books and printed sermons!

Whilst he continued pastor in Chester, which was two-and-twenty years, he filled up that station with service on Lord's days and week days: besides this, he laid out himself in the adjacent counties, as one who had upon him the care of all the churches. How frequently did he preach seven or eight times a week!

Since his transplanting to this place, he spent himself here and in the city, as if his strength were miraculously supplied to do much, upon a foresight that his time was short. And of this he seemed to have some presages when he assigned it as an apology to a godly person who cautioned him against over doing; and truly some such impulse was the best reason he had to give.

Great was his acceptance, though his lot was to be in an age wherein the office is so despised, that the same qualifications which commend all others can scarce preserve a minister from contempt. But Providence peculiarly smiled on our brother in this respect, though he neither courted applause, nor sought his worldly interest by flattery, or other unbecoming methods. What gave him esteem were his integrity, affableness, the triumph of grace over his passions, forwardness to speak well of all and ill of none, savoury discourses readily fitted to all occasions, useful and unwearied labours, and a readiness to serve all, with a pleasant acknowledgment of what endowments or success any others were blessed with. By these means the places were full where he was employed, persons of all denominations greatly affected, and his surprising death is the subject of universal mourning.

All must acknowledge the aptitude of his performances to common benefit. Thus he studied, and accommodated his labours to persons of all ages. Young ones he catechised in a way that exceedingly conduced to give light, and beget an affection for gospel truths. Early religion he warmly pressed, and meltingly invited youth to close with Christ Jesus. Such as were converted he laboured to improve to higher degrees of grace, and an exacter walking. For this end he published tracts, wherein most of the heads of practical religion are treated of with that judgment, as shows his acquaintance with the power of godliness and the hearts of men. His words were decent, though familiar, and his proverbial sentences were contrived to affect, and retain in the memory some important truth. If it be objected that he oft made use of Scripture phrases allusively, rather than in their proper sense, yet it must be granted some pious things were ever gravely expressed by those words; and I think that from his being so very conversant in Scripture words, they first presented themselves to his mind, when the matter he treated of would be aptly expressed thereby.

Whether he prayed or preached, it was with such a fervour as declared his heart was in it, and that he was employed therein from the vigorous actings of his faith and love.

As he earnestly implored the presence of God for success, so through his blessing he found it granted in a signal manner. Many, very many, were converted and edified by his ministerial labours. These are now his crown.

This is the person whom God has taken away with a stroke, and so suddenly as not to allow us time to pray for his life. You can hear him no more, nor see him any more, till the general assembly. He is cut off, at the age of fifty-two, when ripest for service.

Need I call you to lament this loss? a loss so great that I cannot aggravate it; so extensive that I scarce know where to begin or end. A tender wife has lost a faithful affectionate husband, filling up that relation to all good



purposes. Hopeful children deprived of the kindest of fathers; one concerned to see "Christ formed in them," and fitted to promote their welfare in every respect. You, his people, are bereaved of a faithful, profitable pastor, whose place is not easily filled up. We ministers have lost a bright example, an affectionate brother, a general assistant, as occasion offered; a man whose excessive pains must put the slothful to many blushes. The loss is public, we have one fewer to promote the kingdom of our Lord, and stand in the gap to avert impending judgments; yea, I fear we may lament the fall of such a pillar in the church, as "taken away from the evil to come."

We are stupid if we weep not for ourselves. But, as for his part, his sudden death has no terror attending it, for his Lord found him employed as the wise and faithful servants whom he declareth blessed. He had preached twice on the Lord's day, he preached also on Monday, and had appointed to do the same on Tuesday, but died that morning; God, by death, released him from his labours. Submission to the divine will only could have reconciled his active soul long to survive his work; this trial God prevented, by not suffering him to live one day beyond his labours. But the rest in heaven after death was what he longed for, and it seems that by some presage he apprehended he was not far from this, for the last head in the last book he published is this, "Let us long for the perfection of those spiritual pleasures in the kingdom of glory." And adds, "Our love to God in this world is a love in motion, in heaven it will be a love at rest; Oh when shall that sabbatism come," &c.

His present happiness yields some allay to our sorrow; but yet it is a greater relief under all losses, that our Lord is the King eternal, his word endureth for ever; with him is the residue of the Spirit; he has wise ends in this sore dispensation, and can make it work for good.

That this end may be attained, be all of you attentive to the voice of God by this rebuke, and comply therewith.

Let each impartially inquire, whether you have not a

hand in removing this mercy, by your forfeiture. The death of very useful ministers, especially when much needed, is generally a punishment for some sins of those who were most concerned in them. Wherein conscience points to any guilt neglect not repentance; and apply to the blood of Christ by faith, lest even a worse thing come unto you. Again, see you act as becomes Christians under this providence.

Let the afflicted widow trust in God, as able to fill up the place of the deceased, and the children walk worthy of his name, and not depart from such a father's ways, as too many have done in this degenerate age. How solemnly would he have laid this charge if he had seen them about him in his dying agonies! Oh may they find the return of his many recorded prayers!

You who here attended on his ministry, see you live the truths he dispensed, for you are accountable for great advantages: Christ will not account them good servants who gained but two talents when they received five. Nor is it proper for you to overlook it; that since the death of the eminent Dr. Bates, you have lost two such worthy men, as Mr. Billio and Mr. Henry, in the midst of their days, and the greatest capacity for service.

Many observe you, and your influence on our public interest, as Dissenters, is very considerable. Therefore it is your concern, unanimously, to get a well-qualified pastor; but regard sincerely the real benefit of your souls in the choice you make; for if lower matters govern your inclinations it discovers carnality of mind, and will grow more so if indulged in this instance.

We ministers are hereby called to double our care in serving the designs of our Lord; we have fewer hands, and may soon meet with harder work. The aspect of things warns us to apply ourselves to get more wisdom, faith, and fortitude; that we may neither mistake our duty, nor treacherously desert it, in the greatest trials.

Finally, It is incumbent on all to lay to heart the suddenness of your pastor's death. When he left you he was

likelier to live than many of us, and no symptom of any danger till within a very few hours before his dissolution. We must be stupid unless it excite us to pray, "Lord, teach us to know how frail we are!" And to endeavour so to know the frailty of your state as to be always ready. Oh get oil in your lamps, and those lamps trimmed: he that may die without warning has reason to see that he delay not repentance, nor trifle in what eternity depends on. He "who applies his heart to wisdom," must so number his days as to finish the proper business of every day in its day; for the morrow is not ours, and if it come, its own work is assigned with it.

It will be vain to wish we could recall past time, when conscience represents the many abuses and neglects of a past life now ending. The summons may be so hasty that you have not many moments to set heart or house in order.

Therefore take care that your pursuits of this world be not excessive, lest you be arrested by that voice, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." When you are tempted, remember, you may be cut off in the very act of sin, as Zimri was. Entertain every call to duty, and opportunity for service and spiritual benefit, with this thought, there is no working in the grave, where I must soon be; "the night cometh, wherein no man can work."

You must all confess that you cannot die safely unless you have served your generation, are real converts, and in temper of spirit meet for heaven: nor can you die comfortably, unless your graces flourish, your fruit abound, and have at least a grounded hope of your interest in Christ, with a vital sense of his favour.

These are too great, too necessary, and too difficult, to be postponed, or negligently applied to, by men who are "crushed before the moth." The greatest haste, and the utmost diligence, are scarce enough to quiet us, when we realize how much depends upon a life subject to be cut off in a moment, by a thousand accidents. Happiest he who soonest enters into wisdom's paths, passeth the whole time

of his sojourning here with the most solicitous care in discharging all present duty, and improving all present helps. This is the way to finish well.

This finishing well was a sentence oft made use of by my deceased brother, and therefore I conclude with an importunate desire that we may have a solemn regard thereto in all our sacred and civil transactions.

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FROM SERMON BY THE REV. W. TONG.

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LET us live in the well-grounded hope of following our godly friends to heaven, and meeting them there, and being together for ever with the Lord; lay the ground-work of such hope sure and strong, for the superstructure is to reach as high as heaven; and when you have done this, then rejoice in hope. I know nothing that can better support your spirits under the loss of such excellent ones, than a lively hope of a speedy meeting again in a better world; the time of separation is but short, yet a little while and you shall see them again; you parted in sorrow, you shall meet in joy. Perhaps you had not the opportunity of seeing some of them die, of closing their eyes, and bidding them farewell: but that shall not hinder your joyful meeting; and how will you then welcome each other in a world of bliss, and wonder to see how much you are all changed for the better, since your last parting! How will you congratulate each other in the favour of our blessed Lord, who has washed your souls so clean, and made them so glad! But I must stop my thoughts here, that are ready to run out beyond bounds. Comfort yourselves and one another with these things.

I know I speak to many this day who need such comforts. Here is a great congregation, bereaved of a most faithful,

wise, laborious minister; here is a disconsolate family, bereaved of one of the most exemplary and useful relations that I ever knew any family blessed with. How is a great blow given to us all! The death of Mr. Henry is an universal loss! It is and will be universally lamented.

Expect not, sirs, that I should enter upon the particulars of his excellent character; very much has been said of him already in a little compass, by that worthy aged minister who first preached to you on this mournful occasion.

I hope this will be more fully done in an account of his exemplary life: that constant diary he kept will furnish out proper and excellent materials, besides what may be added from the observation of others.

But that which chiefly restrains me now is, that it is needless to do it in this place; for though you have not enjoyed him much above two years, yet in that time you "have known his doctrine, his manner of life, his purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, and patience," 2 Tim. iii. 10.

And who has not known him? His works praise him in the gates, and will do so; his great and good works from the pulpit, from the press, his immense labours, his incredible diligence in preaching, in expounding, in writing, his care of all the churches: he, like "Demetrius, had a good report of all men, and of the truth itself; and we also bear witness, and ye know that our witness is true," 3 John 12.

He had in him that happy mixture of excellent gifts and graces that seldom meet in the same person, and they made him very amiable to all who knew him.

In him you had the happy mixture of great strength of judgment and fervour of spirit. Some are very zealous, but not so judicious; others judicious but not so zealous: he was both a burning and a shining light.

In him you had a true greatness of soul, mixed with exemplary modesty and humility; nothing in him appeared sordid and abject, nothing vain and supercilious.

In him you had a most agreeable cheerfulness, with a due temperament of solidity and seriousness.

In him you might observe a strict regard to the dictates of his own conscience, joined with a most candid tenderness to those who differed from him.

In his preaching you had a very just and close way of thinking, with the most plain, proper, natural, and easy expression, and a great regard to the honour of Christ and free grace, joined with a constant endeavour to beat down sin, and revive the power and practice of godliness.

It was this happy conjunction of excellent gifts and graces, that made him live so much desired, and die so much lamented.

I am a witness of that tender and conscientious concern with which he left his old and dear friends at Chester, and of that comfort and satisfaction he had in his acceptance and usefulness in this part of the vineyard. I am persuaded, these last two years of his life and labours have been a great blessing to many souls in and about the city of London.

My own interest in his acquaintance and friendship for the space of above twenty-eight years, is a thing of too private a nature to mention upon so solemn an occasion; but it must never be forgotten by me. I own it as a precious talent put into my hand, and to be accounted for. He was a most cordial, prudent, faithful, unalterable friend; and if a passionate affection does not deceive me, I think verily I shall less value this life and world, since he is gone from it.

The death of this faithful servant of Christ at this time is a very dark and threatening providence: God calls us to more than common sorrow by it; he expects we should lay it to heart; and all the circumstances of it considered, both those of a private and public nature, we should lay it nearer to our hearts than ordinary. We should not suffer it to pass over us lightly; we should feel our loss, and fear the displeasure of our God, and tremble because of the ark of God.

But yet we must not abandon ourselves to inconsolable grief, or quarrel with God, nor despair of his mercy to us.

As for the broken family, I am persuaded there are great mercies in store for them: the fatherless children are left with God, and he will keep them alive; and let the widow trust in him. Though God in this sad providence seems to have spoken against them, I believe he will earnestly and affectionately remember them still.

I know no family in which the entail of the covenant from one generation to another has more evidently appeared. I know no family more enriched with a large stock of treasure of prayers by religious predecessors on both sides. And a family that is thus rich in prayer, is rich in the promises too, while the present branches of it adhere to the covenant, and live up to their education; and we rejoice to see that it is thus with them, and daily pray for their growth and establishment in wisdom and grace.

And for this afflicted broken congregation, though they ought to be sensible what they have lost, a skilful guide, and a faithful helper of their souls; one who, they hoped, would have been the happy instrument of great good, not only to themselves, but to their families; one that was wonderfully fitted to feed the lambs of the flock, and took great delight in that part of his work.

Yet let them not distrust the care of the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. This place and people have been signally owned and favoured of God, from one time to another. In the mount it has been seen that God has provided; and we hope he will have the same care and concern for you still. And the great respect you always had for your faithful ministers while they were with you, and the true Christian generosity with which you have treated their families when they have been gone, gives us good encouragement that the presence of God shall be the glory in the midst of you; and that you shall yet have a pastor according to his own heart, who shall carry on the same work, feed you with the same sincere milk of the word, and be a great blessing to you, and the rising generation among you.

And though the church of God in general feels this loss, and laments it greatly, that this your minister was taken away before he had finished the great undertaking, his noble, delightful task, the Exposition of the Bible; yet we have all cause to bless God, who spared him so long, and helped him to carry it on so far.

It is the observation of a worthy minister, on the death of a person of great note in all the churches, who had a heart enlarged for God, and bent upon doing more eminent service, "that no one ever finished all the great designs he had for the glory of God in this world, excepting the Lord Jesus Christ. He indeed could say, 'It is finished.'" As for others, their good desires and purposes go beyond the limits of their time and life; but they have finished all that God designed to do by them; and he is able to carry on his own work by other hands, and thereby to make it evident that he is to his people "all in all."

And I hope those who have attended long upon the ministry of good Mr. Henry, and taken down his expositions upon that part of the Bible that yet remains, whether in the public assembly or in his family, will carefully gather up those precious fragments, that none may be lost; and will communicate them to the world in the best way they can, that this great work may be finished, and be as much as possible his own performance.

To conclude: We must flee to this as our last resort; though ministers, the best of ministers, die, the gospel does not die with them; 1 Pet. i. 24, 25, "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."





## TO THE READER.

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THE first two of these discourses were preached (that is, the substance of them,) at the morning lecture at Bednal Green, the former August 13th, the other August 21st, 1712. The latter of them I was much importuned to publish by many who heard it; which I then had no thoughts at all of doing, because in divers practical treatises we have excellent directions given, of the same nature and tendency, by better hands than mine. But upon second thoughts I considered, that both those sermons of beginning and spending the day with God, put together, might perhaps be of some use to those into whose hands those larger treatises do not fall. And the truth is, the subject of them is of such a nature, that if they may be of any use, they may be of general and lasting use; whereupon I entertained the thought of writing them over, with very large additions throughout, as God should enable me, for the press. Communicating this thought to some of my friends, they very much encouraged me to proceed in it, but advised me to add a third discourse of closing the day with God, which I thereupon took for my subject at an evening lecture, September 3rd, and have likewise much enlarged and altered that. And so this came to be what it is.

I am not without hopes, that something may hereby be contributed among plain people, by the blessing of God upon the endeavour, and the working of his grace with it, to the promoting of serious godliness, which is the thing I aim at; and yet I confess that I should not have

published it, had I not designed it for a present to my dearly beloved friends in the country, whom I have lately been rent from.

And to them, with the most tender affection, and most sincere respects, I dedicate it, as a testimony of my abiding concern for their spiritual welfare; hoping and praying that their conversation may be in every thing as becomes the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see them, or else be absent, I may hear comfortably of their affairs, that they stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

I am,

Their cordial and affectionate Well-wisher,

MATT. HENRY.

*Sept. 8, 1712.*

DIRECTIONS  
FOR  
DAILY COMMUNION WITH GOD.

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PART I.  
SHOWING HOW TO BEGIN EVERY DAY WITH GOD.

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“My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.”—PSALM v. 3.

You would think it a rude question, if I should ask you, and yet I must entreat you seriously to ask yourselves, what brings you hither so early this morning? and what is your business here? Whenever we are attending on God in holy ordinances, (nay, wherever we are,) we should be able to give a good answer to the question which God put to the prophet, “What dost thou here, Elijah?” As when we return from holy ordinances, we should be able to give a good answer to the question which Christ put to those who attended on John Baptist’s ministry, “What went ye out into the wilderness to see?”

It is surprising to see so many assembled together here; surely the fields are white unto the harvest; and I am willing to hope, it is not merely for a walk this pleasant morning, that you are come hither; or for curiosity, because the morning lecture was never here before; that it is not for company, or to meet your friends here; but that you are come with a pious design to give glory to God, and to receive grace from him, and in both to keep up your communion with him. And if you ask us, who are ministers, what our business is, we hope we can truly

say, it is (as God shall enable us) to assist and further you herein. "Comest thou peaceably?" said the elders of Bethlehem to Samuel; and so perhaps you will say to us: to which we answer, as the prophet did, "Peaceably;" we come to sacrifice unto the Lord, and invite you to the sacrifice.

While the lecture continues with you, you have an opportunity of more than doubling your morning devotions. Besides your worshipping of God in secret, and in your families, which this must not supersede, or jumble out, you here call upon God's name in the solemn assembly; and it is as much your business in all such exercises to pray a prayer together, as it is to hear a sermon; and it is said, the original of the morning exercise was a meeting for prayer, at the time when the nation was groaning under the dreadful, desolating judgment of a civil war. You have also an opportunity of conversing with the word of God; you have "precept upon precept," and "line upon line:" Oh that as the opportunity awakens you morning by morning, (so as the prophet speaks,) your ears may be "wakened to hear as the learned," Isa. l. 4.

But this is not all; we desire that such impressions may be made upon you by this cluster of opportunities, as you may always abide under the influence of; that this morning lecture may leave you better disposed to morning worship ever after; that these frequent acts of devotion may so confirm the habit of it, as that henceforward your daily worship may become more easy, and if I may so say, in a manner natural to you.

For your help herein, I would recommend to you holy David's example in the text, who having resolved in general, ver. 2, that he would abound in the duty of prayer, and abide by it, "Unto thee will I pray," here fixes one proper time for it, and that is the morning; "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning." Not in the morning only; David solemnly addressed himself to the duty of prayer three times a day, as Daniel did; "Morning, and evening, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud," Ps. lv. 17: nay, he does

not think that enough, but "Seven times a-day will I praise thee," Ps. cxix. 164. But particularly in the morning.

*Doct.* It is our wisdom and duty to begin every day with God.

Let us observe in the text,

I. The good work itself that we are to do. God must hear our voice, we must direct our prayer to him, and we must look up.

II. The special time appointed and observed for the doing of this good work; and that is in the morning, and again, in the morning, that is, every morning, as duly as the morning comes.

I. The good work which by the example of David we are here taught to do is, in one word, to pray; a duty dictated by the light and law of nature, which plainly and loudly speaks, "Should not a people seek unto their God?" but which the gospel of Christ gives us much better instructions in, and encouragements to, than any that nature furnishes us with; for it tells us what we must pray for, in whose name we must pray, and by whose assistance, and invites us to come boldly to the throne of grace, and to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. This work we are to do, not in the morning only, but at other times, at all times. We read of preaching the word out of season, but we do not read of praying out of season, for that is never out of season: the throne of grace is always open, and humble supplicants are always welcome, and cannot come unseasonably.

But let us see how David here expresses his pious resolutions to abide by this duty.

1. "My voice shalt thou hear." Two ways David may here be understood: either,

(1.) As promising himself a gracious acceptance with God. "Thou shalt," that is, thou wilt, hear my voice, when in the morning I direct my prayer to thee; so it is the language of his faith, grounded upon God's promise, that his ear shall be always open to his people's cry. He had prayed, ver. 1, "Give ear to my words, O Lord;" and, ver. 2, "Hearken unto the voice of my cry;" and here he receives an answer to

that prayer, "Thou wilt hear," I doubt not but thou wilt; and though I have not presently a grant of the thing I prayed for, yet I am sure my prayer is heard, is accepted, and comes up for a memorial, as the prayer of Cornelius did; it is put upon the file, and shall not be forgotten. If we look inward, and can say by experience that God has prepared our heart, we may look upright, may look forward, and say with confidence that he will cause his ear to hear.

We may be sure of this, and we must pray in the assurance of it, in a full assurance of this faith, that wherever God finds a praying heart, he will be found a prayer-hearing God: though the voice of prayer be a low voice, a weak voice, yet, if it come from an upright heart, it is a voice that God will hear, that he will hear with pleasure, it is his delight, and that he will return a gracious answer to; he has heard thy prayers, he has seen thy tears. When, therefore, we stand praying, this ground we must stand upon, this principle we must stand to, nothing doubting, nothing wavering, that whatever we ask of God as a Father, in the name of Jesus Christ the Mediator, according to the will of God revealed in the Scripture, it shall be granted us either in kind or kindness; so the promise is, John xvi. 23; and the truth of it is sealed to by the concurring experience of the saints in all ages, ever since man began to call upon the name of the Lord, that Jacob's God never yet said to Jacob's seed, "Seek ye me in vain," and he will not begin now. When we come to God by prayer, if we come aright, we may be confident of this, that notwithstanding the distance between heaven and earth, and our great unworthiness to have any notice taken of us, or any favour showed us, yet God does hear our voice, and will not turn away our prayer, or his mercy. Or,

(2.) It is rather to be taken, as David's promising God a constant attendance on him, in the way he has appointed. "My voice shalt thou hear," that is, I will speak to thee: because thou hast inclined thy ear unto me many a time, therefore I have taken up a resolution to call upon thee at

all times, even to the end of my time ; not a day shall pass, but thou shalt hear from me. Not that the voice is the thing that God regards, as they seemed to think, who in prayer made their voice to be heard on high, Isa. lviii. 4. Hannah prayed and prevailed when her voice was not heard ; but it is the voice of the heart that is here meant : God said to Moses, " Wherefore criest thou unto me ? " when we do not find that he said one word, Exod. xiv. 15. Praying is lifting up the soul to God, and pouring out the heart before him ; yet, as far as the expressing of the devout affections of the heart by words may be of use to fix the thoughts, and to excite and quicken the desires, it is good to draw near to God, not only with a pure heart, but with an humble voice ; so must " we render the calves of our lips."

However, God understands the language of the heart, and that is the language in which we must speak to God. David prays here, ver. 1, not only " give ear to my words," but " consider my meditation ;" and Ps. xix. 14, " Let the words of my mouth, proceeding from the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight."

This therefore we have to do in every prayer,—we must speak to God, we must write to him ; we say we hear from a friend whom we receive a letter from ; we must see to it that God hears from us daily.

1. He expects and requires it. Though he has no need of us or our services, nor can be benefited by them, yet he has obliged us to offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise to him continually.

(1.) Thus he will keep up his authority over us, and keep us continually in mind of our subjection to him, which we are apt to forget. He requires that by prayer we solemnly pay our homage to him, and give honour to his name, that by this act and deed of our own, thus frequently repeated, we may strengthen the obligations we lie under to observe his statutes, and keep his laws, and be more and more sensible of the weight of them. " He is thy Lord, and worship thou him," that by frequent humble adorations of his perfections, thou mayst make a constant humble compliance



with his will the more easy to thee. By doing obeisance we are learning obedience.

(2.) Thus he will testify his love and compassion towards us. It would have been an abundant evidence of his concern for us, and his goodness to us, if he had only said, "Let me hear from you as often as there is occasion; call upon me in the time of trouble or want, and that is enough:" but to show his complacency in us, as a father does his affection to his child when he is sending him abroad, he gives us this charge, "Let me hear from you every day, by every post, though you have no particular business;" which shows that the prayer of the upright is his delight; it is music in his ears. Christ says to his dove, "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely," Cant. ii. 14. And it is to the spouse, the church, that Christ speaks in the close of that song of songs, "O thou that dwellest in the gardens, (in the original it is feminine,) the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it." What a shame is this to us, that God is more willing to be prayed to, and more ready to hear prayer, than we are to pray!

2. We have something to say to God every day. Many are not sensible of this, and it is their sin and misery: they live without God in the world; they think they can live without him, are not sensible of their dependence upon him, and their obligations to him, and, therefore, for their parts they have nothing to say to him; he never hears from them, no more than the father did from his prodigal son, when he was upon the ramble, from one week's end to another. They ask scornfully, "What can the Almighty do for them?" And then no marvel if they ask next, "What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" And the result is, they say to the Almighty, "Depart from us," and so shall their doom be. But I hope better things of you, my brethren, and that you are not of those who cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God. You are all ready to own that there is a great deal that the Almighty can do for you, and that there is profit in praying to him; and therefore

resolve to draw nigh to God, that he may draw nigh to you.

We have something to say to God daily:

(1.) As to a Friend we love, and have freedom with. Such a friend we cannot go by without calling on, and never want something to say to, though we have no particular business with him; to such a friend we unbosom ourselves, we profess our love and esteem, and with pleasure communicate our thoughts. Abraham is called "the friend of God," and this honour have all the saints: "I have not called you servants, (says Christ,) but friends;" "his secret is with the righteous." We are invited to acquaint ourselves with him, and to walk with him, as one friend walks with another; the fellowship of believers is said to be "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;" and have we nothing to say to him then?

Is it not errand enough to the throne of his grace, to admire his infinite perfections, which we can never fully comprehend, and yet never sufficiently contemplate, and take complacency in? to please ourselves in beholding the beauty of the Lord, and giving him the glory due to his name? Have we not a great deal to say to him in acknowledgment of his condescending grace and favour to us, in manifesting himself to us and not to the world? and in profession of our affection and submission to him? "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

God has something to say to us as a friend every day, by the written word, in which we must hear his voice; by his providences, and by our own consciences: and he hearkens and hears whether we have anything to say to him by way of reply, and we are very unfriendly if we have not. When he says to us, "Seek ye my face," should not our hearts answer as to one we love, "Thy face, Lord, will we seek?" When he says to us, "Return, ye backsliding children," should not we readily reply, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God?" If he speak to us by way of conviction and reproof, ought not we to return an answer by way of confession and submission? If he speak to us by way of

comfort, ought not we to reply in praise? If you love God, you cannot be to seek for something to say to him, something for your hearts to pour out before him, which his grace has already put there.

(2.) As to a Master we serve, and have business with. Think how numerous and important the concerns are that lie between us and God, and you will readily acknowledge that you have a great deal to say to him. We have a constant dependence upon him, all our expectation is from him; we have constant dealings with him, he is the God with whom we have to do, Heb. iv. 13.

Do we not know that our happiness is bound up in his favour; it is life, the life of our souls; it is better than life, than the life of our bodies: and have we not business with God to seek his favour, to entreat it with our whole hearts, to beg as for our lives that he would lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and to plead Christ's righteousness, as that only through which we can hope to obtain God's loving-kindness?

Do we not know that we have offended God, that by sin we have made ourselves obnoxious to his wrath and curse, and that we are daily contracting guilt? And have we not then business enough with him to confess our fault and folly, to ask for pardon in the blood of Christ, and in him who is our peace to make our peace with God, and renew our covenants with him, in his own strength, to go and sin no more?

Do we not know that we have daily work to do for God, and our own souls, the work of the day that is to be done in its day? And have we not then business with God, to beg of him to show us what he would have us to do, to direct us in it, and strengthen us for it? To seek to him for assistance and acceptance, that he will work in us both to will and to do that which is good, and then countenance and own his own work? Such business as this the servant has with his master.

Do we not know that we are continually in danger? Our bodies are so, and their lives and comforts; we are continually surrounded with diseases and deaths, whose arrows fly

at midnight and at noon day ; and have we not then business with God, going out and coming in, lying down and rising up, to put ourselves under the protection of his providence, to be the charge of his holy angels? Our souls much more are so, and their lives and comforts ; it is those our adversary the devil, a strong and subtile adversary, wars against, and seeks to devour ; and have we not then business with God to put ourselves under the protection of his grace, and clothe ourselves with his armour, that we may be able to stand against the wiles and violences of Satan ; so as we may neither be surprised into sin by a sudden temptation, nor overpowered by a strong one ?

Do we not know that we are dying daily, that death is working in us, and hastening towards us, and that death fetches us to judgment, and judgment fixes us in our everlasting state? And have we not then something to say to God in preparation of what is before us? Shall we not say, Lord, make us to know our end? Lord, teach us to number our days? Have we not business with God, to judge ourselves that we may not be judged, and to see that our matters be right and good?

Do we not know that we are members of that body whereof Christ is the head? and are we not concerned to approve ourselves living members? Have we not then business with God upon the public account, to make intercession for his church? Have we nothing to say for Zion? nothing in behalf of Jerusalem's ruined walls? nothing for the peace and welfare of the land of our nativity? Are we not of the family, or but babes in it, that we concern not ourselves in the concerns of it?

Have we no relations, no friends, who are dear to us, whose joys and griefs we share in? and have we nothing to say to God for them? no complaints to make, no requests to make known? Are none of them sick or in distress? none of them tempted or disconsolate? And have we not errands, at the throne of grace, to beg relief and succour for them?

Now lay all this together, and then consider whether you have not something to say to God every day ; and particu-

larly in days of trouble, when it is meet to be said unto God, "I have borne chastisement;" and when, if you have any sense of things, you will say unto God, "Do not condemn me."

3. If you have all this to say to God, what should hinder you from saying it? from saying it every day? Why should not he hear your voice, when you have so many errands to him?

(1.) Let not distance hinder you from saying it. You have occasion to speak with a friend, but he is a great way off, you cannot reach him, you know not where to find him, nor how to get a letter to him, and therefore your business with him is undone: but this needs not keep you from speaking to God; for though it is true, God is in heaven, and we are upon earth, yet he is nigh to his praying people in all that they call upon him for; he hears their voice wherever they are. "Out of the depths I have cried unto thee," says David, Ps. cxxx. 1. "From the ends of the earth I will cry unto thee," Ps. lxi. 2. Nay, Jonah says, "Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice." *Undique ad caelos tantundem est vice*—"In all places we may find a way open heavenward:" thanks be to Him who by his own blood has consecrated for us a new and living way into the holiest, and settled a correspondence between heaven and earth.

(2.) Let not fear hinder you from saying what you have to say to God. You have business with a great man it may be; but he is so far above you, or so stern and severe toward all his inferiors, that you are afraid to speak to him, and you have none to introduce you, or to speak a good word for you, and therefore you choose rather to drop your cause: but there is no occasion for your being thus discouraged in speaking to God; you may come boldly to the throne of his grace; you have there a *παρηγορια*, "a liberty of speech," leave to pour out your whole souls. And such are his compassions to humble supplicants, that even his terror need not make them afraid. It is against the mind of God that you should frighten yourselves, he would have you encourage

yourselves, for "you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption," by which you are brought into this among the other glorious liberties of the children of God. Nor is this all—we have one to introduce us, and to speak for us, an Advocate with the Father. Did ever children need an advocate with a father? But that by those two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, we have not only the relation of the Father to depend upon, but the interest and intercession of an Advocate; a "High Priest over the house of God," in whose name we have access with confidence.

(3.) Let not his knowing what your business is, and what you have to say to him, hinder you; you have business with such a friend, but you think you need not put yourselves to any trouble about it, for he is already apprized of it; he knows what you want, and what you desire, and therefore it is no matter for speaking to him: it is true, all your desire is before God, he knows your wants and burthens, but he will know them from you; he has promised you relief, but his promise must be put in suit, and he will for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Though we cannot by our prayers give him any information, yet we must by our prayers give him honour. It is true, nothing we can say can have any influence upon him, or move him to show us mercy, but it may have an influence upon ourselves, and help to put us into a frame fit to receive mercy. It is a very easy and reasonable condition of his favours, "Ask, and it shall be given you." It was to teach us the necessity of praying, in order to our receiving favour, that Christ put that strange question to the blind men, "What would ye that I should do unto you?" He knew what they would have, but those that touch the top of the golden sceptre must be ready to tell, "what is their petition," and "what is their request."

(4.) Let not any other business hinder our saying what we have to say to God. We have business with a friend perhaps, but we cannot do it because we have not leisure; we

have something else to do, which we think more needful; but we cannot say so concerning the business we have to do with God, for that is without doubt the one thing needful, to which every thing else must be made to give way. It is not at all necessary to our happiness that we be great in the world, or raise estates to such a pitch; but it is absolutely necessary that we make our peace with God, that we obtain his favour, and keep ourselves in his love. Therefore no business for the world will serve to excuse our attendance upon God; but, on the contrary, the more important our worldly business, the more need we have to apply ourselves to God by prayer for his blessing upon it, and so to take him along with us in it. The closer we keep to prayer, and to God in prayer, the more will all our affairs prosper.

Shall I prevail with you now to let God frequently hear from you? Let him hear your voice, though it be but the voice of your breathing, Lam. iii. 56, that is a sign of life; though it be the voice of your groanings, and those so weak that they cannot be uttered, Rom. viii. 26. Speak to him, though it be in a broken language, as Hezekiah did, "Like a crane, or a swallow, so did I chatter," Isaiah xxxviii. 14. Speak often to him; he is always within hearing. Hear him speaking to you, and have an eye to that in everything you say to him; as when you write an answer to a letter of business you lay it before you. God's word must be the guide of your desires, and the ground of your expectations in prayer; nor can you expect that he should give a gracious ear to what you say to him, if you turn a deaf ear to what he says to you.

You see that you have frequent occasion to speak with God, and therefore are concerned to grow in your acquaintance with him, to take heed of doing anything to displease him, and to strengthen your interest in the Lord Jesus, through whom alone it is that you have access with boldness to him. Keep your voice in tune for prayer, and let all your language be a pure language, that you may be fit to call on the name of the Lord. And in every prayer remember you are speaking to God, and make it to appear you

have an awe of him upon your spirits: let us not be rash with our mouth, nor hasty to utter anything before God, but let every word be well weighed, because "God is in heaven, and we upon earth," Eccl. v. 2. And if he had not invited and encouraged us to do it, it had been unpardonable presumption for such sinful worms as we are to speak to the Lord of glory, Gen. xviii. 27. And we are concerned to speak from the heart, heartily, for it is for our lives, and for the lives of our souls, that we are speaking to him.

2. We must direct our prayer unto God. He must not only hear our voice, but we must with deliberation and design address ourselves to him. In the original it is no more but, "I will direct unto thee;" it might be supplied, "I will direct *my soul* unto thee," agreeing with Ps. xxv. 1, "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." Or, "I will direct my *affections* to thee;" having set my love upon thee, I will let out my love to thee. Our translation supplies it very well, "I will direct my prayer unto thee." That is,

(1.) When I pray unto thee I will direct my prayers; and then it denotes a fixedness of thought, and a close application of mind, to the duty of prayer. We must go about it solemnly, as those who have something of moment much at heart, and much in view therein, and therefore dare not trifle in it. When we go to pray we must not give the sacrifice of fools, who think not either what is to be done, or what is to be gained, but speak the words of the wise, who aim at some good end in what they say, and suit it to that end; we must have in our eye God's glory, and our own true happiness; and so well-ordered is the covenant of grace, that God has been pleased therein to twist interests with us, so that in seeking his glory we really and effectually seek our own true interests. This is directing the prayer, as he that shoots an arrow at a mark directs it, and with a fixed eye and steady hand takes aim right. This is engaging the heart to approach to God, and in order to that disengaging it from everything else. He who takes aim with one eye shuts the other; if we would direct a prayer to God we must look off all other things, must gather in



our wandering thoughts, must summon them all to draw near and give their attendance, for here is work to be done that needs them all, and is well worthy of them all; thus we must be able to say with the psalmist, O God, "my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed."

(2.) When I direct my prayer, I will "direct it to thee." And so it speaks,

[1.] The sincerity of our habitual intention in prayer. We must not direct our prayer to men, that we may gain praise and applause with them, as the Pharisees did, who proclaimed their devotions as they did their alms, that they might gain a reputation, which they knew how to make a hand of: "Verily they have their reward," men commend them, but God abhors their pride and hypocrisy. We must not let our prayers run at large, as they did who said, "Who will show us any good?" nor direct them to the world, courting its smiles, and pursuing its wealth, as those who are therefore said not to "cry unto God with their hearts," because they "assembled themselves for corn and wine," Hos. vii. 14. Let not self, carnal self, be the spring and centre of your prayers, but God; let the eye of the soul be fixed upon him as your highest end in all your applications to him; let this be the habitual disposition of your souls, to be to your God for a name and a praise; and let this be your design in all your desires, that God may be glorified, and by this let them all be directed, determined, sanctified, and, when need is, overruled. Our Saviour has plainly taught us this, in the first petition of the Lord's prayer; which is, "Hallowed be thy name:" in that we fix our end, and other things are desired in order to that; in that the prayer is directed to the glory of God in all that whereby he has made himself known, the glory of his holiness; and it is with an eye to the sanctifying of his name that we desire his kingdom may come, and his will be done, and that we may be fed, and kept, and pardoned. A habitual aim at God's glory is that sincerity which is our gospel perfection, that single eye, which where it is, the whole body, the whole soul, is full of light. Thus the prayer is directed to God.

[2.] It speaks the steadiness of our actual regard to God in prayer. We must direct our prayer to God, that is, we must continually think of him, as one with whom we have to do in prayer. We must direct our prayer, as we direct our speech, to the person we have business with. The Bible is a letter God has sent to us, prayer is a letter we send to him; now you know it is essential to a letter that it be directed, and material that it be directed right; if it be not, it is in danger of miscarrying, which may be of ill consequence. You pray daily, and therein send letters to God; you know not what you lose if your letters miscarry; will you therefore take instructions how to direct to him?

Give him his titles, as you do when you direct to a person of honour; address yourselves to him as the great Jehovah, God "over all, blessed for evermore;" the "King of kings, and Lord of Lords;" as "the Lord God, gracious and merciful;" let your hearts and mouths be filled with holy adorings and admirings of him, and fasten upon those titles of his which are proper to strike a holy awe of him upon your minds, that you may worship him with reverence and godly fear. Direct your prayer to him as the God of glory, with whom is terrible majesty, and whose greatness is unsearchable, that you may not dare to trifle with him, or to mock him in what you say to him.

Take notice of your relation to him, as his children, and let not that be overlooked and lost in your awful adorations of his glories. I have been told of a good man, among whose experiences, which he kept a record of, after his death, this among other things was found; that such a time at secret prayer, his heart at the beginning of the duty was much enlarged, in giving to God those titles which are awful and tremendous, in calling him the *Great*, the *Mighty*, and the *Terrible* God; but going on thus he checked himself with this thought, "And why not my Father?" Christ has both by his precept and by his pattern taught us to address ourselves to God as "our Father;" and the Spirit of adoption teaches us to cry "Abba, Father." A son, though a prodigal, when he returns and repents may go to his

father, and say unto him, "Father, I have sinned;" and though no more worthy to be called a son, yet humbly bold may call him "Father." When Ephraim bemoans himself "as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," God bemoans him as a "dear son," as a "pleasant child," Jer. xxxi. 18, 20; and if God is not ashamed, let us not be afraid to own the relation.

Direct your prayer to him in heaven; this our Saviour has taught us in the preface to the Lord's prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven." Not that he is confined to the heavens, or as if the heaven, or the heaven of heavens, could contain him; but there he is said to have prepared his throne, not only his throne of government, by which his kingdom ruleth over all, but his throne of grace, to which we must by faith draw near. We must eye him as God in heaven, in opposition to the gods of the heathens, which dwelt in temples made with hands. Heaven is a high place, and we must address ourselves to him as a God infinitely above us; it is the fountain of light, and to him we must address ourselves as the Father of lights; it is a place of prospect, and we must see his eye upon us, from thence beholding all the children of men; it is a place of purity, and we must in prayer eye him as a holy God, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness; it is the firmament of his power, and we must depend upon him as one to whom power belongs. When our Lord Jesus prayed he lifted up his eyes to heaven, to direct us whence to expect the blessings we need.

Direct this letter to be left with the Lord Jesus, the only Mediator between God and man; it will certainly miscarry if it be not put into his hand, who is that other angel who puts much incense to the prayers of saints, and so perfumed presents them to the Father, Rev. viii. 3. What we ask of the Father must be in his name; what we expect from the Father must be by his hand; for he is the High Priest of our profession, who is ordained for men, to offer their gifts, Heb. v. 1. Direct the letter to be left

with him, and he will deliver it with care and speed, and will make our service acceptable. Mr. George Herbert, in his poem called "The Bag," having pathetically described the wound in Christ's side as he was hanging on the cross, makes him speak thus to all believers as he was going to heaven :

If you have any thing to send or write,  
 I have no bag but here is room,  
 Unto my Father's hands and sight,  
 Believe me, it shall safely come;  
 That I shall mind what you impart,  
 Look, you may put it very near my heart.  
 Or if hereafter any of my friends  
 Will use me in this kind, the door  
 Shall still be open, what he sends  
 I will present, and something more,  
 Not to his hurt; sighs will convey  
 Anything to me; hark, despair, away

### 3. We must look up. That is,

(1.) We must look up in our prayers, as those who speak to one above us, infinitely above us, the "High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity;" as those who expect every good and perfect gift to come from above, from the Father of lights; as those who desire in prayer to enter into the holiest, and to draw near with a true heart. With an eye of faith we must look above the world and everything in it, must look beyond the things of time. What is this world, and all things here below, to one that knows how to put a due estimate upon spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Jesus Christ? The spirit of a man at death goes upward, Eccl. iii. 21, for it returns to God who gave it; and therefore, as mindful of its original, it must in every prayer look upward toward its God, toward its home, as having set its affections on things above, wherein it has laid up its treasure. Let us, therefore, in prayer lift up our hearts with our hands unto God in the heavens. It was anciently usual in some churches for the minister to stir up the people to pray with this word, *Sursum Corda*,—*Up with your hearts*; "unto thee, O Lord, do we lift up our souls."

(2.) We must look up after our prayers,

[1.] With an eye of satisfaction and pleasure; looking up is a sign of cheerfulness, as a down-look is a melancholy one. We must look up as those who, having by prayer referred ourselves to God, are easy and well pleased, and with an entire confidence in his wisdom and goodness patiently expect the issue. Hannah, when she had prayed, looked up, looked pleasant; she went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 18. Prayer is heart's-ease to a good Christian; and when we have prayed we should look up, as those who through grace have found it so.

[2.] With an eye of observation, what returns God makes to our prayers. We must look up, as one who has shot an arrow looks after it to see how near it comes to the mark; we must look within us, and observe what the frame of our spirits is after we have been at prayer, how well satisfied they are in the will of God, and how well disposed to accommodate themselves to it; we must look about us, and observe how Providence works concerning us, that if our prayers be answered, we may return to give thanks; if not, that we may remove what hinders, and may continue waiting. Thus we must set ourselves upon our watch-tower, to see what God will say unto us, and must be ready to hear it, Ps. lxxxv. 8, expecting that God will give us an answer of peace, and resolving that we will return no more to folly. Thus must we keep up our communion with God; hoping that whenever we lift up our hearts unto him, he will lift up the light of his countenance upon us. Sometimes the answer is quick, "While they are yet speaking, I will hear;" quicker than the return of any of your posts; but if it be not, when we have prayed we must wait.

Let us learn thus to direct our prayers, and thus to look up; to be inward with God in every duty, to make heart-work of it, or we make nothing of it. Let us not worship in the outward court, when we are commanded and encouraged to enter within the veil.

II. The particular time fixed in the text for this good

work is the morning; and the Psalmist seems to lay an emphasis upon this, in the morning, and again, in the morning: not then only, but then to begin with; let that be one of the hours of prayer. Under the law we find that every morning there was a lamb offered in sacrifice, Exod. xxix. 39; and every morning the priests burned incense, Exod. xxx. 7; and the singers stood every morning to thank the Lord, 1 Chron. xxiii. 30. And so it was appointed in Ezekiel's temple, Ezek. xlvi. 13-15. By which an intimation was plainly given, that the spiritual sacrifices should be offered by the spiritual priests every morning, as duly as the morning comes. Every Christian should pray in secret, and every master of a family with his family, morning by morning; and there is good reason for it.

1. The morning is the first part of the day, and it is fit that He that is first should have the first, and be first served. The heathen could say, *A Jove principium*—"Let your beginning be with Jupiter." Whatever you do, begin with God. The world had its beginning from him, we had ours, and therefore whatever we begin, it concerns us to take him along with us in it. The days of our life, as soon as ever the sun of reason rises in the soul, should be devoted to God, and employed in his service; "From the womb of the morning let Christ have the dew of thy youth," Ps. cx. 3. The first-fruits were always to be the Lord's, and the firstlings of the flock. By morning and evening prayer we give glory to him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last; with him we must begin and end the day, begin and end the night, who is the beginning and the end, the first cause, and the last end.

Wisdom has said, "Those that seek me early shall find me;" early in their lives, early in the day; for hereby we give to God that which he ought to have, the preference above other things. Hereby we show that we are in care to please him, and to approve ourselves to him, and that we seek him diligently. What we do earnestly we are said in Scripture to do early, Ps. ci. 8. Industrious men rise betimes. David expresseth the strength and warmth of his

devotion, when he says, "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee," Ps. lxxiii. 1.

2. In the morning we are fresh and lively, and in the best frame; when our spirits are revived with the rest and sleep of the night, and we live a kind of new life; and the fatigues of the day before are forgotten. The God of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, yet, when he exerts himself more than ordinary on his people's behalf, he is said to "awake as one out of sleep," Ps. lxxviii. 65. If ever we be good for anything it is in the morning; it is therefore become a proverb, *Aurora musis amica*—"The morning is a friend to the muses;" and if the morning be a friend to the muses, I am sure it is no less so to the graces. As he that is the first should have the first, so he that is the best should have the best; and when we are fittest for business, we should apply ourselves to that which is the most needful business.

Worshipping God is work that requires the best powers of the soul, when they are at the best; and it well deserves them; how can they be better bestowed, or so as to turn to a better account? Let "all that is within me bless his holy name," says David, and all little enough. If there be any gift in us by which God may be honoured, the morning is the time to stir it up, 2 Tim. i. 6, when our spirits are refreshed, and have gained new vigour; then "Awake, my glory, awake psaltery and harp, for I myself will awake early," Ps. lvii. 8. Then let us stir up ourselves to take hold on God.

3. In the morning we are most free from company and business, and ordinarily have the best opportunity for solitude and retirement; unless we be of those sluggards who lie in bed, with "yet a little sleep, a little slumber," till the work of their calling calls them up with, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?" It is the wisdom of those who have much to do in the world, that they have scarce a minute to themselves of all day, to take time in the morning, before business crowds in upon them, for the business of their religion; that they may be entire for it, and therefore the more intent upon it.

As we are concerned to worship God when we are least burthened with deadness and dullness within, so also when we are least exposed to distraction and diversion from without; the apostle intimates how much it should be our care to attend upon the Lord without distraction, 1 Cor. vii. 35. And therefore that one day in seven, (and it is the first day too, the morning of the week,) which is appointed for holy work, is appointed to be a day of rest from other work. Abraham leaves all at the bottom of the hill when he goes up into the mount to worship God. In the morning, therefore, let us converse with God, and apply ourselves to the concerns of the other life, before we are entangled in the affairs of this life. Our Lord Jesus has set us an example of this, who, because his day was wholly filled up with public business for God and the souls of men, rose up in the morning a great while before day, and before company came in, and went out into a solitary place, and there prayed, Mark i. 35.

4. In the morning we have received fresh mercies from God, which we are concerned to acknowledge with thankfulness to his praise. He is continually doing us good, and loading us with his benefits. Every day we have reason to bless him, for every day he is blessing us; in the morning particularly; and therefore, as he is giving out to us the fruits of his favour, which are said to be "new every morning," Lam. iii. 23, because though the same we had the morning before, they are still forfeited, and still needed, and upon that account may be called still new; so we should be still returning the expressions of our gratitude to him, and of other pious and devout affections, which, like the fire on the altar, must be new every morning, Lev. vi. 12.

Have we had a good night? and have we not an errand to the throne of grace to return thanks for it? How many mercies concurred to make it a good night! distinguishing mercies, granted to us, but denied to others! Many have not where to lay their heads, our Master himself had not; "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head;" but



we have houses to dwell in, quiet and peaceable habitations, perhaps stately ones; we have beds to lie in, warm and easy ones, perhaps beds of ivory, fine ones, such as they stretched themselves upon who were at ease in Zion; and are not put to wander in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, as some of the best of God's saints have been forced to do, of whom the world was not worthy. Many have beds to lie on, yet dare not, or cannot, lie down in them, being kept up either by the sickness of their friends, or the fear of their enemies. But we have laid us down, and there has been none to make us afraid; no alarms of the sword, either of war or persecution. Many lay them down and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day, through pain of body, or anguish of mind. Wearisome nights are appointed to them, and their eyes are held waking; but we have laid us down and slept without any disturbance, and our sleep was sweet and refreshing, the pleasant parenthesis of our cares and toils. It is God who has given us sleep, has given it us as he gives it to his beloved. Many lay them down and sleep, and never rise again, they sleep the sleep of death, and their beds are their graves; but we have slept and waked again, have rested, and are refreshed; we shake ourselves, and it is with us as at other times, because the Lord has sustained us; and if he had not upheld us, we had sunk with our own weight when we fell asleep, Ps. iii. 5.

Have we a pleasant morning? Is the light sweet to us, the light of the sun, the light of the eyes, do these rejoice the heart? and ought we not to own our obligations to him who opens our eyes, and opens the eyelids of the morning upon us? Have we clothes to put on in the morning, garments that are warm upon us, Job xxxvii. 17, change of raiment, not for necessity only, but for ornament? We have them from God; it is his wool and his flax that is given to cover our nakedness, and the morning when we dress ourselves is the proper time of returning him thanks for it; yet, I doubt, we do it not so constantly as we do for our food when we sit down to our tables, though we have as much reason to

do it. Are we in health and at ease? Have we been long so? We ought to be thankful for a constant series of mercies, as for particular instances of it, especially considering how many are sick and in pain, and how much we have deserved to be so.

Perhaps we have experienced some special mercy to ourselves or our families, in preservation from fire or thieves, from dangers we have been aware of, and many more unseen; weeping perhaps endured for a night, and joy came in the morning; and that calls aloud upon us to own the goodness of God. The destroying angel perhaps has been abroad, and the arrow that flies at midnight, and wastes in darkness, has been shot in at others' windows, but our houses have been passed over. Thanks be to God for the blood of the covenant, sprinkled upon our door-posts; and for the ministration of the good angels about us, to which we owe it that we have been preserved from the malice of the evil angels against us, those rulers of the darkness of this world, who, perhaps, creep forth like the beasts of prey, when he makes darkness and it is dark. All the glory be to the God of the angels.

5. In the morning we have fresh matter ministered to us for the adoration of the greatness and glory of God. We ought to take notice, not only of the gifts of God's bounty to us, which we have the comfort and benefit of, they are little narrow souls that confine their regards to them; but we ought to observe the more general instances of his wisdom and power in the kingdom of providence, which redound to his honour, and the common good of the universe. The 19th Psalm seems to have been a morning meditation, in which we are directed to observe how "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work;" and to own not only the advantage we receive from their light and influence, but the honour they do to him who stretched out the heavens like a curtain, fixed their pillars, and established their ordinances, according to which they continue to this day, for they are all his servants. "Day unto day utters this speech, and night unto

night showeth this knowledge ;” even the eternal power and godhead of the great Creator of the world, and its great Ruler. The regular and constant succession and revolution of light and darkness, according to the original contract made between them, that they should reign alternately, may serve to confirm our faith in that part of divine revelation which gives us the history of the creation, and the promise of God to Noah and his sons, Gen. viii. 22. His “covenant with the day and with the night,” Jer. xxxiii. 20.

Look up in the morning, and see how exactly the day-spring knows its place, knows its time, and keeps them: how the morning light takes hold of the ends of the earth, and of the air which is turned to it as clay to the seal, instantly receiving the impressions of it, Job xxxviii. 12-14. I was pleased with an expression of a worthy good minister I heard lately, in his thanksgivings to God for the mercies of the morning: “How many thousand miles,” said he, “has the sun travelled this last night to bring the light of the morning to us poor sinful wretches, that justly might have been buried in the darkness of the night!” Look up and see the sun as a bridegroom richly dressed, and greatly pleased, coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race: observe how bright his beams are, how sweet his smiles, how strong his influences: and, if there be no speech or language where their voice is not heard, the voice of these natural preachers, proclaiming the glory of God, it is pity there should be any speech or language where the voice of his worshippers should not be heard, echoing to the voice of those preachers, and ascribing glory to him who thus makes the morning and evening to rejoice. But whatever others do, let him hear our voice to this purpose in the morning, and in the morning let us direct our praises unto him.

6. In the morning we have, or should have, had fresh thoughts of God, and sweet meditations on his name, and those we ought to offer up to him in prayer. Have we been, according to David’s example, “remembering God upon our beds, and meditating upon him in the night-

watches?" When we awake can we say as he did, "We are still with God?" If so, we have a good errand to the throne of grace by the words of our mouths, to offer up to God the meditations of our hearts, and it will be to him a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. If the heart has been inditing a good matter, let the tongue be as the pen of a ready writer, to pour it out before God, Ps. xlv. 1.

We have the Word of God to converse with, and we ought to read a portion of it every morning: by it God speaks to us, and in it we ought to meditate day and night, which if we do, that will send us to the throne of grace, and furnish us with many a good errand there. If God in the morning by his grace direct his word to us, so as to make it reach our hearts, that will engage us to direct our prayer to him.

7. In the morning, it is to be feared, we find cause to reflect upon many vain and sinful thoughts that have been in our minds in the night season; and upon that account it is necessary that we address ourselves to God by prayer in the morning, for the pardon of them. The Lord's prayer seems to be calculated primarily in the letter of it for the morning; for we are taught to pray "for our daily bread this day:" and yet we are then to pray, "Father, forgive us our trespasses;" for as in the hurry of the day we contract guilt by our irregular words and actions, so we do in the solitude of the night, by our corrupt imaginations, and the wanderings of an unsanctified ungoverned fancy. It is certain, "The thought of foolishness is sin," Prov. xxix. 9. Foolish thoughts are sinful thoughts; the first-born of the old man, the first beginnings of all sin; and how many of these vain thoughts lodge within us wherever we lodge? Their name is Legion, for they are many; who can understand these errors! They are more than the hairs of our head. We read of those who work evil upon their beds, because there they devise it; and when the morning is light they practise it, Mic. ii. 1. How often in the night season is the mind disquieted and distracted with distrustful careful thoughts; polluted with unchaste and wanton thoughts; intoxicated with proud aspiring thoughts; soured and

leavened with malicious, revengeful thoughts; or, at the best, diverted from devout and pious thoughts by a thousand impertinences: out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, which lie down with us, and rise up with us, for out of that corrupt fountain, which, wherever we go, we carry about with us, these streams naturally flow. Yea, and in the multitude of dreams, as well as in many words, they are also divers vanities, Eccl. v. 2.

And dare we go abroad till we have renewed our repentance, which we are every night, as well as every day, thus making work for? Are we not concerned to confess to him who knows our hearts, their wanderings from him, to complain of them to him as revolting and rebellious hearts, and bent to backslide; to make our peace with the blood of Christ, and to pray that the thought of our heart may be forgiven us? We cannot with safety go into the business of the day under the guilt of any sin unrepented of, or unpardoned.

8. In the morning we are addressing ourselves to the work of the day, and therefore are concerned by prayer to seek unto God for his presence and blessing. We come, and are encouraged to come boldly, to the throne of grace, not only for mercy to pardon what has been amiss, but for grace to help in every time of need: and what time is it that is not a time of need with us? And, therefore, what morning should pass without morning prayer? We read of that which the duty of every day requires, Ezra iii. 4, and in reference to that we must go to God every morning to pray for the gracious disposal of his providence concerning us, and the gracious operations of his Spirit upon us.

We have families to look after, it may be, and to provide for, and are in care to do well for them; let us then every morning by prayer commit them to God, put them under the conduct and government of his grace, and then we effectually put them under the care and protection of his providence. Holy Job rose up early in the morning to offer burnt-offerings for his children, and we should do so to offer up prayers and supplications for them, according to

the number of them all, Job i. 5. Thus we cause the blessing to rest on our houses.

We are going about the business of our callings perhaps, let us look up to God in the first place, for wisdom and grace to manage them well, in the fear of God, and to abide with him in them; and then we may in faith beg of him to prosper and succeed us in them, to strengthen us for the services of them, to support us under the fatigues of them, to direct the designs of them, and to give us comfort in the gains of them. We have journeys to go, it may be; let us look up to God for his presence with us, and go no whither, where we cannot in faith beg of God to go with us.

We have a prospect, perhaps, of opportunities of doing or getting good, let us look up to God for a heart to every price in our hands, for skill, and will, and courage to improve it, that it may not be a price in the hand of a fool. Every day has its temptations too; some perhaps we foresee, but there may be many more that we think not of, and are therefore concerned to be earnest with God, that we may not be led into any temptation, but guarded against every one; that whatever company we come into, we may have wisdom to do good and no hurt to them, and to get good and no hurt by them.

We know not what a day may bring forth; little think in the morning what tidings we may hear, and what events may befall us before night; and should therefore beg of God grace to carry us through the duties and difficulties which we do not foresee, as well as those which we do; that, in order to our standing complete in all the will of God, as the day is, so the strength may be. We shall find, that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, and that, therefore, as it is folly to take thought for to-morrow's event, so it is wisdom to take thought for to-day's duty, that sufficient unto this day, and the duty of it, may be the supplies of the divine grace, thoroughly to furnish us for every good word and work, and thoroughly to fortify us against every evil word and work; that we may not think, or speak, or do anything in all the day,

which we may have cause upon any account to wish unthought, unspoke, and undone at night.

#### THE APPLICATION.

1. Let this word put us in mind of our omissions; for omissions are sins, and must come into judgment. How often has our morning worship been either neglected or negligently performed! The work has been either not done at all, or done deceitfully; either no sacrifice at all brought, or it has been the torn, and the lame, and the sick; either no prayer, or the prayer not directed aright, nor lifted up. We have had the morning's mercies, God has not been wanting in the compassion and care of a Father for us, yet we have not done the morning's service, but have been shamefully wanting in the duty of children to him.

Let us be truly humbled before God this morning for our sin and folly herein, that we have so often robbed God of the honour, and ourselves of the benefit, of our morning worship. God has come into our closets, seeking this fruit, but has found none, or next to none; has hearkened and heard, but either we spake not to him at all, or spake not right. Some trifling thing or other has served for an excuse to put it by once, and when once the good usage has been broken in upon, conscience has been wounded, and its bonds weakened, and we have grown more and more cool to it, and perhaps by degrees it has been quite left off.

2. I beseech you, suffer a word of exhortation concerning this. I know what an influence it would have upon the prosperity of your souls, to be constant and sincere in your secret worship, and therefore, give me leave to press it upon you with all earnestness; let God hear from you every morning, every morning let your prayer be directed to him, and look up.

(1.) Make conscience of your secret worship; keep it up, not only because it has been a custom you have received by

tradition from your fathers, but because it is a duty, concerning which you have received commandments from the Lord. Keep up stated times for it, and be true to them. Let those who have hitherto lived in the total neglect, or in the frequent omission, of secret prayer, be persuaded henceforward to look upon it as the most needful part of their daily business, and the most delightful part of their daily comfort, and do it accordingly with a constant care, and, yet, with a constant pleasure.

No persons who have the use of their reason can pretend to an exemption from this duty; what is said to some is said to all, "Pray, pray, continue in prayer, and watch in the same." Rich people are not so much bound to labour with their hands as the poor, poor people are not so much bound to give alms as the rich, but both are equally bound to pray. The rich are not above the necessity of the duty, nor the poor below acceptance with God in it. It is not too soon for the youngest to begin to pray; and those whom the multitude of years has taught wisdom, yet at their end will be fools, if they think they have no further occasion for prayer.

Let none plead they cannot pray; for if you are ready to perish with hunger, you could beg and pray for food; and if you see yourselves undone by reason of sin, can you not beg and pray for mercy and grace? Art thou a Christian? Never for shame say, thou canst not pray, for that is as absurd as for a soldier to say, he knows not how to handle a sword, or a carpenter an axe. What are you called for into the fellowship of Christ, but that by him you may have fellowship with God? You cannot pray so well as others, pray as well as you can, and God will accept of you.

Let none plead that they have not time in a morning for prayer. I dare say you can find time for other things that are less needful. You had better take time from sleep than want time for prayer. And how can you spend time better, and more to your satisfaction and advantage? All the



business of the day will prosper the better, for your beginning it thus with God.

Let none plead that they have not a convenient place to be private in for this work: Isaac retired into the field to pray: and the Psalmist could be alone with God in a corner of the house top. If you cannot perform it with so much secrecy as you would, yet perform it; it is doing it with ostentation that is the fault, not doing it under observation, when it cannot be avoided. I remember, when I was a young man coming up hither to London in the stage coach, in King James's time, there happened to be a gentleman in the company, who then was not afraid to own himself a Jesuit. Many rencounters he and I had upon the road, and this was one: He was praising the custom in popish countries of keeping the church doors always open, for people to go into at any time to say their prayers. I told him it looked too much like the practice of the Pharisees, that prayed in the synagogues; and did not agree with Christ's command, "Thou, when thou prayest" thyself, enter not into the church with the doors open, but "into thy closet and shut thy doors." When he was pressed with that argument, he replied with some vehemence, "I believe you Protestants say your prayers nowhere; for," said he, "I have travelled a great deal in the coach in company with Protestants, have often lain in inns in the same room with them, and have carefully watched them, and could never perceive that any of them said his prayers night or morning but one, and he was a Presbyterian." I hope there was more malice than truth in what he said: but I mention it as an intimation, that though we cannot be so private as we would be in our devotions, yet we must not omit them, lest the omission should prove not a sin only, but a scandal.

(2.) Make a business of your secret worship, and be not slothful in this business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Take heed lest it degenerate into a formality, and you grow customary in your accustomed services. Go about the duty solemnly; be inward with God in it; it is not

enough to say your prayers, but you must pray your prayers, must pray in praying, as Elijah did, Jam. v. 17. Let us learn to labour fervently in prayer, as Epaphras did, Col. iv. 12, and we shall find that it is the hand of the diligent in this duty that makes rich. God looks not at the length of your prayers, nor shall you be heard for your much speaking or fine speaking; but God requires truth in the inward part, and it is the prayer of the upright that is his delight. When you have prayed, look upon yourselves as thereby engaged and encouraged, both to serve God and to trust in him; that the comfort and benefit of your morning devotions may not be as the morning cloud which passes away, but as the morning light which shines more and more.

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## PART II.

### SHOWING HOW TO SPEND THE DAY WITH GOD.

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“On thee do I wait all the day.”—PSALM xxv. 5.

WHICH of us is there that can truly say this? Who lives this life of communion with God, which is so much our business, and so much our blessedness? How far short do we come of the spirit of holy David, though we have much better assistances for our acquaintance with God than the saints then had, by the clearer discoveries of the mediation of Christ. Yet, that weak Christians, who are sincere, may not therefore despair, be it remembered, that David himself was not always in such a frame that he could say so; he had his infirmities, and yet was a “man after God’s own heart;” we have ours, which, if they be sincerely lamented and striven against, and the habitual bent of our souls be toward God and heaven, we shall be accepted through Christ, for we are not under the law, but under grace.

However, David’s profession in the text, shows us what should be our practice, On God we must wait all the day.

That denotes two things, a patient expectation, and a constant attendance.

1. It speaks a patient expectation of his coming to us in a way of mercy; and then, all the day must be taken figuratively, for all the time that the wanted and desired mercy is delayed. David, in the former part of the verse prayed for divine conduct and instruction, "Lead me in thy truth and teach me." He was at a loss, and very desirous to know what God would have him to do, and was ready to do it; but God kept him in suspense, he was not yet clear what was the mind and will of God, what course he should steer, and how he should dispose of himself; will he therefore proceed without divine direction? No, "On thee I will wait all the day," as Abraham attended on the sacrifice from morning till the sun went down, before God gave him an answer to his inquiries concerning his seed, Gen. xv. 5, 12, and as Habakkuk stood upon his watch-tower to see what answer God would give him, when he consulted his oracle; and though it do not come presently, yet at the end it shall speak, and not lie.

David, in the words before the text, had called God "The God of his salvation," the God on whom he depended for salvation, temporal and eternal salvation; from whom he expected deliverance out of his present distresses, those troubles of his heart that were enlarged, ver. 17, and out of the hands of those enemies who were ready to triumph over him, ver. 2, and who hated him with a cruel hatred, ver. 19. Hoping that God will be his Saviour, he resolves to wait on him all the day, like a genuine son of Jacob, whose dying profession was, Gen. xlix. 18, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." Sometimes God precedes his people with the blessings of his goodness, before they call he answers them, is in the midst of his church, to help her, and that right early, Ps. xlvi. 5. But at other times he seems to stand afar off, he delays the deliverance, and keeps them long in expectation of it, nay, and in suspense about it; the light is neither clear nor dark, it is day, and that is all; it is a cloudy and dark day, and it is not

till evening time that it is light, that the comfort comes which they have been kept all the day waiting for; nay, perhaps it comes not till far in the night, it is at midnight that the cry is made, "Behold the bridegroom comes." The deliverance of the church out of her troubles, the success of her struggles, and rest from them, a rescue from under the rod of the wicked, and the accomplishment of all that which God has promised concerning it, is what we must continue humbly waiting upon God for, without distrust or impatience; we must wait all the day,

(1.) Though it be a long day; though we be kept waiting a great while, quite beyond our own reckoning; though, when we have waited long, we are still obliged to wait longer, and are bid with the prophet's servant to "go yet seven times," 1 Kings xviii. 43, before we perceive the least sign of mercy coming. "We looked that this *and the other* had been he that should have delivered Israel," but are disappointed; "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved," Jer. viii. 20. The time is prolonged, nay, the opportunities are let slip, the summer time, and harvest time, when we thought to have reaped the fruit of all our prayers, and pains, and patience, is past and ended, and we are as far as ever from salvation. The time that the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim was long, much longer than it was thought it would have been when it was first lodged there; it was twenty years, so that the whole house of Israel lamented after the Lord, and began to fear it would abide for ever in that obscurity, 1 Sam. vii. 2.

But though it be a long day, it is but a day, but one day, and it is known to the Lord, Zech. xiv. 7. It seems long while we are kept waiting, but the happy issue will enable us to reflect upon it as short, and but for a moment. It is no longer than God has appointed, and we are sure his time is the best time, and his favours are worth waiting for. The time is long, but it is nothing to the days of eternity, when those who had long patience shall be recompensed for it with an everlasting salvation.

(2.) Though it be a dark day, yet let us wait upon God all the day. Though while we are kept waiting for what God will do, we are kept in the dark concerning what he is doing, and what is best for us to do, yet, let us be content to wait in the dark. Though we see not our signs, though there is none to tell us how long, yet let us resolve to wait, how long soever it be; for though what God does we know not now, yet we shall know hereafter, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

Never was man more at a loss concerning God's dealings with him than poor Job was: "I go forward, but he is not there; backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, on the right hand, but I cannot see him," Job xxiii. 8, 9; yet he sits down, ver. 10, resolving to wait on God all the day with a satisfaction in this, that though he know not the way that he takes, "he knows the way that I take, *and* when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold," approved and improved. He sits by as a refiner, and will take care that the gold be in the furnace no longer than is needful for the refining of it. When God's way is in the sea, so that he cannot be traced, yet we are sure his way is in the sanctuary, so that he may be trusted, Ps. lxxvii. 13, 19. And when "clouds and darkness are round about him," yet even then "justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

(3.) Though it be a stormy day, yet we must wait upon God all the day. Though we are not only becalmed, and do not get forward, but though the wind be contrary, and drive us back, nay, though it be boisterous, and the church be tossed with tempests, and ready to sink, yet we must hope the best; yet we must wait, and weather the storm by patience. It is some comfort that Christ is in the ship; the church's cause is Christ's cause, he has espoused it, and he will own it; he is embarked in the same vessel with his people, and therefore, "Why are you fearful?" Doubt not but the ship will come safe to land; though Christ seem for the present to be asleep, the prayers of his disciples will awake him, and he will rebuke the winds and the waves;

though the bush burn, if God be in it, it shall not be consumed. Yet this is not all, Christ is not only in the ship, but at the helm; whatever threatens the church is ordered by the Lord Jesus, and shall be made to work for its good. It is excellently expressed by Mr. George Herbert:

Away despair, my gracious God doth hear,  
 When winds and waves assault my keel,  
 He doth preserve it, he doth steer,  
 E'en when the boat seems most to reel.  
 Storms are the triumph of his art,  
 Well may he close his eyes, but not his heart.

It is a seasonable word at this day. What God will do with us we cannot tell; but this we are sure of, that he is a God of judgment, infinitely wise and just, and therefore, "Blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. xxx. 18. He will do his own work in his own way and time; and though we be hurried back into the wilderness, when we thought we had been upon the borders of Canaan, we suffer justly for our unbelief and murmurings, but God acts wisely, and will be found faithful to his promise; his time to judge for his people, and to repent himself concerning his servants, is when he sees that their strength is gone. This was seen of old in the mount of the Lord, and shall be again. And therefore let us continue in a waiting frame. Hold out faith and patience, for "It is good that a man should both hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."

2. It speaks a constant attendance upon him in a way of duty. And so we understand the day literally; it was David's practice to wait upon God all the day. It signifies both *every day*, and all *the day long*; it is the same with that command, Prov. xxiii. 17, "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long."

*Doct.* It is not enough for us to begin every day with God, but on him we must wait every day, and all the day long.

For the opening of this I must show, I. What it is to wait upon God: II. That we must do this every day, and all the day long.

I. Let us inquire what it is to wait upon God. You have heard how much it is our duty in the morning to speak to him, in solemn prayer. But have we then done with him for all day? No, we must still be waiting on him; as one to whom we stand very nearly related, and very strongly obliged. To wait on God, is to live a life of desire toward him, delight in him, dependence on him, and devotedness to him.

1. It is to live a life of desire toward God; to wait on him as the beggar waits on his benefactor, with earnest desire to receive supplies from him; as the sick and sore in Bethesda's pool waited for the stirring of the water, and attended in the porches with desire to be helped in and healed. When the prophet had said, "Lord, in the way of thy judgments we have waited for thee," he explained himself thus in the next words, "The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee; *and* with my soul have I desired thee," Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. Our desire must not be only toward the good things that God gives, but toward God himself, his favour and love, the manifestation of his name to us, and the influence of his grace upon us. Then we wait on God, when our souls pant after him, and his favour, when we thirst for God, for the living God; Oh that I may behold the beauty of the Lord! Oh that I may taste his goodness! Oh that I may bear his image, and be entirely conformed to his will! for there is none in heaven or earth that I can desire in comparison of him. Oh that I may know him more and love him better, and be brought nearer to him, and made fitter for him. Thus upon the wings of holy desire should our souls be still soaring upward toward God, still pressing forward, forward toward heaven.

We must not only pray solemnly in the morning, but that desire which is the life and soul of prayer, like the fire upon the altar, must be kept continually burning, ready for the sacrifices that are to be offered upon it. The bent and bias of the soul, in all its motions, must be toward God, the serving of him in all we do, and the enjoying of him in all we have. And this is principally intended in the com-

mands given us to pray alway, to pray without ceasing, to continue in prayer. Even when we are not making actual addresses to God, we must have habitual inclinations toward him; as a man in health, though he is not always eating, yet has always a disposition in him toward the nourishment and delights of the body. Thus must we be always waiting on God, as our chief good, and moving toward him.

2. It is to live a life of delight in God, as the lover waits on his beloved. Desire is love in motion, as a bird upon the wing; delight is love at rest, as a bird upon the nest; now though our desire must still be so toward God, that we must be wishing for more of God, yet our delight must be so in God, that we must never wish for more than God. Believing him to be a God all-sufficient, in him we must be entirely satisfied; let him be mine, and I have enough. Do we love to love God? Is it a pleasure to us to think that there is a God? that he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be? that he is our God by creation, to dispose of us as he pleases? our God in covenant, to dispose of all for the best to us? This is waiting on our God, always looking up to him with pleasure.

Something or other the soul has that it values itself by, something or other that it reposes itself in; and what is it? God or the world? What is it that we pride ourselves in, which we make the matter of our boasting? It is the character of worldly people that they boast themselves in the multitude of their riches, Ps. xlix. 6, and of their own might, and the power of their own hands, which they think have gotten them this wealth; it is the character of godly people, that "in God they boast all the day long," Ps. xliv. 8. That is waiting on God; having our eye always upon him with a secret complacency, as men have upon that which is their glory, and which they glory in.

What is it that we please ourselves with, which we embrace with the greatest satisfaction, in the bosom of which we lay our heads, and in having which we hug ourselves, as having all we would have? The worldly man, when his barns are full of corn, says, "Soul, take thine ease, eat,



drink, and be merry," the godly man can never say so till he finds his heart full of God, and Christ, and grace; and then, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul;" here repose thyself. The gracious soul dwells in God, is at home in him, and there dwells at ease, is in him perpetually pleased; and whatever he meets with in the world to make himself uneasy, he finds enough in God to balance it.

3. It is to live a life of dependence on God, as the child waits on his father, whom he has a confidence in, and on whom he casts all his care. To wait on God, is to expect all good to come to us from him, as the worker of all good for us, and in us, the giver of all good to us, and the protector of us from all evil. Thus David explains himself, Ps. lxii. 5, "My soul, wait thou only upon God," and continue still to do so, for "my expectation is from him;" I look not to any other for the good I need; for I know that every creature is that to me, and no more than he makes it to be, and from him every man's judgment proceeds. Shall we lift up our eyes to the hills? Does our help come thence? Does the dew that waters the valleys come no further than from the tops of the hills? Shall we go higher, and lift up our eyes to the heavens, to the clouds? Can they of themselves give rain? No, if God hear not the heavens, they hear not the earth; we must therefore look above the hills, above the heavens, for all our help cometh from the Lord. It was the acknowledgment of a king, and no good one neither, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee, out of the barn floor, or out of the wine-press?"

And our expectations from God, as far as they are guided by, and grounded upon, the word which he has spoken, ought to be humbly confident, and with a full assurance of faith. We must know and be sure that no word of God shall fall to the ground, that the expectation of the poor shall not perish. Worldly people say to their gold, "Thou art my hope;" and to the fine gold, "Thou art my confidence," and the rich man's wealth is his strong city: but God is the only refuge and portion of the godly man here in the land of the living;

it is to him only that he says, and he says it with a holy boldness, "Thou art my hope and my confidence." The eyes of all things wait on him, for he is good to all; but the eyes of his saints especially, for he is in a peculiar manner good to Israel, good to them. They know his name, and therefore will trust and triumph in him, as those who know they shall not be made ashamed of their hope.

4. It is to live a life of devotedness to God, as the servant waits on his master, ready to observe his will, and do his work, and in everything to consult his honour and interest. To wait on God is entirely and unreservedly to refer ourselves to his wise and holy directions and disposals, and cheerfully to acquiesce in them, and comply with them. The servant that waits on his master chooses not his own way, but follows his master, step by step: thus must we wait on God, as those who have no will of our own, but what is wholly resolved into his; and must therefore study to accommodate ourselves to his. It is the character of the redeemed of the Lord, that they follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes, with an implicit faith and obedience. As the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, and the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress, so must our eyes wait on the Lord, to do what he appoints us, to take what he allots us; "Father, thy will be done;" Master, thy will be done.

The servant waits on his master, not only to do him service but to do him honour; and thus must we wait on God, that we may be to him for a name, and for a praise. His glory must be our ultimate end, to which we, and all we are, have, and can do, must be dedicated; we wear his livery, attend in his courts, and follow his motions as his servants, for this end, that he may in all things be glorified.

To wait on God is to make his will our rule.

(1.) To make the will of his precept the rule of our practice, and to do every duty with an eye to that. We must wait on him to receive his commands, with a resolution to comply with them, how much soever they may contradict our corrupt inclinations or secular interests. We

must wait on him as the holy angels do, who always behold the face of their Father, as those who are at his beck, and are ready to go upon the least intimation of his will, though but by a wink of his eye, wherever he sends them. Thus must we do the will of God, as the angels do it who are in heaven, those ministers of his that do his pleasure, and are always about his throne in order to it, and never out of the way.

David here prays, that God would show him his way, and lead him, and teach him, and keep him, and forward him, in the way of his duty; and so the text comes in as a plea to enforce that petition, for "on thee do I wait all the day;" ready to receive the law from thy mouth, and in everything to observe thy orders. And then it intimates this, that those, and those only, can expect to be taught of God, who are ready and willing to do as they are taught. If any man will do his will, be stedfastly resolved in the strength of his grace to comply with it, he shall know what his will is. David prays, Lord, "give me understanding," and then promises himself, "I shall keep thy law, yea, I shall observe it," as the servant that waits on his master. They that go up to the house of the Lord, with an expectation that he will teach them his ways, it must be with an humble resolution, that they will walk in his paths, Isa. ii. 3. Lord, let the pillar of cloud and fire go before me, for I am determined with full purpose of heart to follow it, and thus to wait on my God all the day.

(2.) To make the will of his providence the rule of our patience, and to bear every affliction with an eye to that. We are sure it is God who performs all things for us, and he performs the thing that is appointed for us; we are as sure that all is well that God does, and shall be made to work for good to all that love him; and in order to that we ought to acquiesce in, and accommodate ourselves to, the whole will of God. To wait on the Lord is to say, It is the Lord, let him do to me as seemeth good to him, because nothing seemeth good to him but what is really good; and so we shall see when God's work appears in a full light. It

is to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt, *for* should it be according to my mind?" It is to bring our mind to our condition in everything, so as to keep it calm and easy, whatever happens to make us uneasy

And we must therefore bear the affliction, whatever it is, because it is the will of God; it is what he has allotted us, who does all according to the counsel of his own will. This is Christian patience; I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, not because it was to no purpose to complain, but because thou didst it, and therefore I had no reason to complain. And this will reconcile us to every affliction, one as well as another, because, whatever it is, it is the will of God, and in compliance with it we must not only be silent, because of the sovereignty of his will, "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker;" but we must be satisfied because of the wisdom and goodness of it. Whatever the disposals of God's providence may be concerning those who wait on him, we may be sure that as he does them no wrong, so he means them no hurt: nay, they may say as the Psalmist did, even when he was plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, however it be, yet God is good, and therefore, "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, yet will I wait on him."

I might open this duty of waiting on God by other scripture expressions which speak the same thing, and are, as this, comprehensive of a great part of that homage which we are bound to pay to him, and that communion which it is our interest to keep up with him. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son Jesus Christ."

It is to set God always before us, Ps. xvi. 8. To look upon him as one always near us, always at our right hand, and who has his eye upon us wherever we are, and whatever we are doing; nay, as one in whom we live and move, and have our being, with whom we have to do, and to whom we are accountable. This is pressed upon us as the great principle of gospel obedience, "Walk before me, and be thou upright;" herein consists that uprightness which is our evangelical perfection, in walking at all times as before God, and studying to approve ourselves to him.

It is to have our eyes ever toward the Lord, as it follows here, Ps. xxv. 15. Though we cannot see him by reason of our present distance and darkness, yet we must look toward him, toward the place where his honour dwells; as those who desire the knowledge of him and his will, and direct all to his honour as the mark we aim at, labouring in this, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him. To wait on him, is to follow him with our eye in all those things wherein he is pleased to manifest himself, and to admit the discoveries of his being and perfections.

It is to acknowledge God in all our ways, Prov. iii. 6. In all the actions of life, and in all the affairs of life, we must walk in his hand, and set ourselves in the way of his steps. In all our undertakings we must wait upon him for direction and success, and by faith and prayer commit our way to him to undertake for us, and him we must take with us wherever we go; "If thy presence go not up with us, carry us not up hence." In all our comforts we must see his hand giving them out to us, and in all our crosses we must see the same hand laying them upon us, that we may learn to receive both good and evil, and to bless the name of the Lord both when he gives and when he takes.

It is to follow the Lord fully, as Caleb did, Numb. 14. 24. It is to "fulfil after the Lord," so the word is; to have respect to all his commandments, and to study to stand complete in his whole will. Wherever God leads us, and goes before us, we must be followers of him as dear children, must follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, and take him for our guide whithersoever we go.

This is to wait on God, and those who do so may cheerfully wait for him, for he will without fail appear in due time to their joy; and that word of Solomon shall be made good to them, "He who waits on his master shall be honoured," for Christ has said, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be," Prov. xxvii. 18.

II. Having showed you what it is to wait on God, I come next to show, that this we must do every day, and all the day long.

1. We must wait on our God, *omni die—every day*, so some. This is the work of every day which is to be done in its day, for the duty of every day requires it. Servants in the courts of princes have their weeks or months of waiting appointed them, and are obliged to attend only at certain times. But God's servants must never be out of waiting; all the days of our appointed time, the time of our work and warfare here on earth, we must be waiting, Job xiv. 14, and not desire or expect to be discharged from this attendance, till we come to heaven, where we shall wait on God, as angels do, more nearly and constantly.

We must wait on God every day.

(1.) Both on sabbath days, and on week days. The Lord's day is instituted and appointed on purpose for our attendance on God in the courts of his house, there we must wait on him to give glory to him, and to receive both commands and favours from him. Ministers must then wait on their ministry, Rom. xii. 7, and people must wait on it too, saying, as Cornelius for himself and his friends, "Now we are all here ready before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God," Acts x. 33. It is for the honour of God, to help to fill up the assemblies of those who attend at the footstool of his throne, and to add to their number. The whole sabbath time, except what is taken up in works of necessity and mercy, must be employed in waiting on our God. Christians are spiritual priests, and as such it is their business to wait in God's house at the time appointed.

But that is not enough; we must wait upon our God on week days too, for every day of the week we want mercy from him, and have work to do for him. Our waiting upon him in public ordinances on the first day of the week, is designed to fix us to, and fit us for, communion with him all the week after; so that we answer not the intentions of the sabbath, unless the impressions of it abide upon us, and go with us into the business of the week, and be kept always in the imagination of the thought of our heart. Thus from one sabbath to another, and from one new moon to another, we must keep in a holy gracious frame; must be so in the

Spirit on the Lord's day, as to walk in the Spirit all the week.

(2.) Both on idle days and busy days we must be found waiting on God. Some days of our lives are days of labour and hurry, when our particular calling calls for our close and diligent application; but we must not think that will excuse us from our constant attendance on God. Even when our hands are working about the world our hearts may be waiting on our God, by an habitual regard to him; to his providence as our guide, and his glory as our end, in our worldly business; and thus we must abide with him in them. Those who rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, in pursuit of the world, yet are concerned to wait on God, because otherwise all their care and pains will signify nothing; it is labour in vain, Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2; nay, it is labour in the fire.

Some days of our lives we relax from business, and take our ease. Many of you have your time for diversion; but then when you lay aside other business, this of waiting upon God must not be laid aside. When you prove yourselves with mirth, as Solomon did, and say, you will enjoy pleasure a little, yet let this wisdom remain with you, Eccles. ii. 1, 3; let your eye be then up to God, and take heed of dropping your communion with him, in that which you call an agreeable conversation with your friends. Whether it be a day of work, or a day of rest, we shall find nothing like waiting upon God, both to lighten the toil of our work, and to sweeten the comfort of our repose. So that whether we have much to do or little to do in the world, still we must wait upon God, that we may be kept from the temptation that attends both the one and the other.

(3.) Both in days of prosperity, and in days of adversity, we must be found waiting upon God. Does the world smile upon us and court us? yet let us not turn from attending on God to make our court to it. If we have ever so much of the wealth of the world, yet we cannot say we have no need of God, no further occasion to make use of him, as David was ready to say, when in his prosperity he said he

should never be moved; but soon saw his error when God hid his face, and he was troubled, Psalm xxx. 6. When our affairs prosper, and into our hands God brings plentifully, we must wait upon God as our great Landlord, and own our obligations to him; must beg his blessing on what we have, and his favour with it, and depend upon him both for the continuance and for the comfort of it. We must wait upon God for wisdom and grace, to use what we have in the world for the ends for which we are intrusted with it, as those who must give account, and know not how soon. And how much soever we have of this world, and how richly soever it is given us to enjoy it, still we must wait upon God for better things, not only than the world gives, but than he himself gives in this world. "Lord put me not off with this for a portion."

And when the world frowns upon us, and things go very cross, we must not so fret ourselves at its frowns, or so frighten ourselves with them, as thereby to be driven off from waiting on God, but rather let us thereby be driven to it. Afflictions are sent for this end, to bring us to the throne of grace, to teach us to pray, and to make the word of God's grace precious to us. In the day of our sorrow we must wait upon God, for those comforts which are sufficient to balance our griefs; Job, when in tears, fell down and worshipped God taking away, as well as giving. In the day of our fear we must wait upon God, for those encouragements that are sufficient to silence our fears; Jehoshaphat in his distress waited upon God, and it was not in vain, his heart was established by it; and so was David's often, which brought him to this resolution, which was an anchor to his soul, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."

(4.) Both in the days of youth, and in the days of old age, we must be found waiting on God. Those who are young cannot begin their attendance on God too soon: the child Samuel ministered to the Lord, and the Scripture story puts a particular mark of honour upon it; and Christ was wonderfully pleased with the hosannas of the children who waited on him, when he rode in triumph into Jerusa-



lem: when Solomon in his youth, upon his accession to the throne, waited upon God for wisdom, it is said, "The saying pleased the Lord." "I remember thee, (says God to Israel,) *even* the kindness of thy youth, when thou wentest after me, *and didst wait upon me* in a wilderness," Jer. ii. 2. To wait upon God is to be mindful of our Creator, and the proper time for that is in the days of our youth, Eccl. xii. 1. Those who would wait upon God aright, must learn betimes to do it; the most accomplished courtiers are those who are brought up at court.

And may the old servants of Jesus be dismissed from waiting on him? No, their attendance is still required, and shall be still accepted; they shall not be cast off by their Master in the time of old age, and, therefore, let not them desert his service. When through the infirmities of age they can no longer be working servants in God's family, they may be waiting servants. Those who like Barzillai are unfit for the entertainments of the courts of earthly princes, may relish the pleasures of God's courts as well as ever. The Levites, when they were past the age of fifty, and were discharged from the toilsome part of their ministration, yet still must wait on God, must be quietly waiting to give honour to him, and to receive comfort from him. Those who have done the will of God, and their doing work is at an end, have need of patience to enable them to wait till they inherit the promise: and the nearer the happiness is which they are waiting for, the dearer should the God be they are waiting on, and hope shortly to be with, to be with eternally.

2. We must wait on our God, *toto die—all the day*, so we read it. Every day from morning to night we must continue waiting on God; whatever change there may be of our employment, this must be the constant disposition of our souls, we must attend upon God, and have our eyes ever toward him; we must not at any time allow ourselves to wander from God, or to attend on any thing beside him, but what we attend on for him; in subordination to his will, and in subserviency to his glory.

(1.) We must cast our daily cares upon him. Every day brings with it its fresh cares, more or less ; these awake with us every morning, and we need not go so far forward as to-morrow to fetch in care, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." You who are great dealers in the world, have your cares attending you all the day ; though you keep them to yourselves, yet they sit down with you, and rise up with you ; they go out and come in with you, and are more a load upon you than those you converse with are aware of. Some, through the weakness of their spirits, can scarce determine any thing but with fear and trembling.

Let this burthen be cast upon the Lord, believing that his providence extends itself to all your affairs, to all events concerning you, and to all the circumstances of them, even the most minute and seemingly accidental ; that your times are in his hands, and all your ways at his disposal. Believe his promise, that all things shall be made to work for good to those that love him, and then refer it to him in every thing, to do with you and yours as seemeth good in his eyes, and rest satisfied in having done so, and resolve to be easy. Bring your cares to God by prayer in the morning, spread them before him, and then make it to appear all the day, by the composedness and cheerfulness of your spirits, that you left them with him, as Hannah did, who, when she had prayed, went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 18. Commit your way to the Lord, and then submit to his disposal of it, though it may cross your expectations ; and bear up yourselves upon the assurances God has given you, that he will care for you as the tender father for the child.

(2.) We must manage our daily business for him, with an eye to his providence, putting us into the calling and employment wherein we are ; and to his precept, making diligence in our duty ; with an eye to his blessing, as that which is necessary to make it comfortable and successful ; and to his glory, as our highest end in all. This sanctifies our common actions to God, and sweetens them, and makes them pleasant to ourselves. If Gaius brings

his friends whom he is parting with a little way on their journey, it is but a piece of common civility; but let him do it after a godly sort; let him in it pay respect to them, because they belong to Christ, and for his sake; let him do it that he may have an opportunity of so much more profitable communication with them, and then it becomes an act of Christian piety, 3 John 6. It is a general rule by which we must govern ourselves in the business of every day, "Whatever we do in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," Col. iii. 17; and, thus, in and by the Mediator we wait on our God.

This is particularly recommended to servants, though their employments are but mean, and they are under the command of their masters according to the flesh, yet let them do their servile work as the servants of Christ, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; let them do it with singleness of heart as unto Christ, and they shall be accepted of him, and from him shall receive the reward of the inheritance, Eph. vi. 5—8; Col. iii. 22, 24. Let them wait on God all the day, when they are doing their day's work, by doing it faithfully and conscientiously, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by aiming at his glory even in common business: they work that they may get bread, they would live not that they may live to themselves, and please themselves, but that they may live to God, and please him. They work that they may fill up time, and fill up a place in the world, and because that God who made and maintained us, has appointed us with quietness to work and mind our own business.

(3.) We must receive our daily comforts from him; we must wait on him as our Benefactor, as the eyes of all things wait upon him to give them their food in due season, and what he gives them that they gather. To him we must look as to our Father for our daily bread, and from him we are appointed to ask it, yea, though we have it in the house, though we have it upon the table. We must wait upon him for a covenant right to it, for leave to make use of it, for a blessing upon it, for a nourish-

ment by it, and for comfort in it. It is in the word and prayer that we wait on God, and keep up communion with him, and by these every creature of God is sanctified to us, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5, and the property of it is altered, "To the pure all things are pure;" they have them from the covenant, and not from common providence, which makes a little that the righteous man has better than the riches of many wicked, and much more valuable and comfortable.

No inducement can be more powerful to make us see to it, that what we have we get honestly, and use it soberly, and give God his due out of it, than this consideration, that we have our all from the hand of God, and are intrusted with it as stewards, and consequently are accountable. If we have this thought as a golden thread running through all the comforts of every day; these are God's gifts, every bit we eat, and every drop we drink, is his mercy; every breath we draw, and every step we take, his mercy; this will keep us continually waiting upon him, as the ass on his master's crib, and will put a double sweetness into all our enjoyments. God will have his mercies taken fresh from his compassions, which for this reason are said to be new every morning; and, therefore, it is not once a week that we are to wait upon him, as people go to market to buy provisions for the whole week, but we must wait on him every day, and all the day, as those who live from hand to mouth, and yet live very easy.

(4.) We must resist our daily temptation, and do our daily duties in the strength of his grace. Every day brings its temptation with it; our Master knew that when he taught us, as duly as we pray for our daily bread, to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." There is no business we engage in, no enjoyment we partake of, but it has its snares attending it; Satan by it assaults us, and endeavours to draw us into sin: now sin is the great evil we should be continually upon our guard against, as Nehemiah was, ch. vi. 13, "That I should be afraid, and do so, and sin." And we have no way to secure ourselves, but by waiting on God all the day, we must not only in the morning put our-

selves under the protection of his grace, but we must all the day keep ourselves under the shelter of it; must not only go forth, but go on in dependence upon that grace which he has said shall be sufficient for us, that care which will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able. Our waiting upon God will furnish us with the best arguments to make use of in resisting temptations, and with strength according to the day. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," and then we wait on the Lord all the day

We have duty to do, many an opportunity of speaking good words, and doing good works, and we must see and own that we are not sufficient of ourselves for any thing that is good, not so much as to think a good thought; we must therefore wait upon God, must seek to him, and depend upon him, for that light and fire, that wisdom and zeal, which is necessary to the due discharge of our duty; that by his grace we may not only be fortified against every evil word and work, but furnished for every good word and work. From the fulness that is in Jesus Christ, we must by faith be continually drawing "grace for grace;" grace for all gracious exercises; grace to help in every time of need: we must wait on his grace, must follow the conduct of it, comply with the operations of it, and must be turned to it as wax to the seal.

(5.) We must bear our daily afflictions with submission to his will. We are bid to expect trouble in the flesh, something or other happens every day that grieves us, something in our relations, something in our callings, events concerning ourselves, our families, or friends, that are causes of sorrow: perhaps, we have every day some bodily pain or sickness; or, some cross and disappointment in our affairs; now, in these we must wait upon God. Christ requires it of all his disciples, that they take up their cross daily, Matt. xvi. 24. We must not wilfully pluck the cross down upon us, but must take it up when God lays it in our way, and not go a step out of the way of duty, either to meet it, or to miss it. It is not enough to bear the cross, but we must

take it up, we must accommodate ourselves to it, and acquiesce in the will of God in it. Not, "This is an evil, and I must bear it," because I cannot help it, but, "This is an evil, and I will bear it," because it is the will of God.

We must see every affliction allotted us by our heavenly Father, and in it must discover his correcting hand, and, therefore, must wait on him to know the cause wherefore he contends with us; what the fault is for which we are in this affliction chastened; what the distemper is which is to be by this affliction cured; that we may answer God's end in afflicting us, and so may be made partakers of his holiness. We must attend the motions of Providence, keep our eye upon our Father when he frowns, that we may discover what his mind is, and what the obedience is which we are to learn by the things that we suffer.

We must wait on God for support under our burthens; must put ourselves into, and stay ourselves upon, the everlasting arms, which are laid under the children of God to sustain them, when the rod of God is upon them. And him we must attend for deliverance; must not seek to extricate ourselves by any sinful indirect methods, nor look to creatures for relief, but still wait on the Lord until he have mercy on us; well content to bear the burthen till God ease us of it, and ease us in mercy, Ps. cxxiii. 2. If the affliction be lengthened out, yet we must wait upon the Lord, even when he hides his face, Isa. viii. 17, hoping it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment, Isa. liv. 7, 8.

(6.) We must expect the tidings and events of every day, with a cheerful and entire resignation to the divine Providence. While we are in this world we are still expecting, hoping well, fearing ill; we know not what a day, or a night, or an hour will bring forth, Prov. xxvii. 1, but it is big with something, and we are too apt to spend our thoughts in vain about things future, which happen quite differently from what we imagined. Now in all our prospects we must wait upon God.

Are we in hopes of good tidings, a good issue? Let us wait on God as the giver of the good we hope for, and be

ready to take it from his hand ; and to meet him with suitable affections when he is coming toward us in a way of mercy. Whatever good we hope for, it is God alone, and his wisdom, power, and goodness, that we must hope in. And therefore our hopes must be humble and modest, and regulated by his will ; what God has promised us we may with assurance promise ourselves, and no more. If thus we wait on God in our hopes, should the hope be deferred, it would not make the heart sick ; no, nor if it should be disappointed, for the God we wait on will overrule all for the best : but when the desire comes, in prosecution of which we have thus waited on God, we may see it coming from his love, and it will be “ a tree of life,” Prov. xiii. 12.

Are we in fear of evil tidings, of melancholy events, and a sad issue of the depending affairs ? Let us wait on God to be delivered from all our fears, from the things themselves we are afraid of, and from the amazing tormenting fears of them, Ps. xxxiv. 4. When Jacob was with good reason afraid of his brother Esau, he waited on God, brought his fears to him, wrestled with him, and prevailed for deliverance. “ What time I am afraid,” says David, “ I will trust in thee,” and wait on thee. And that shall establish the heart, shall fix it, so as to set it above the fear of evil tidings.

Are we in suspense between hope and fear ? sometimes one prevails, and sometimes the other ? Let us wait on God, the God to whom belong the issues of life and death, good and evil, from whom our judgments, and every man’s, proceed, and compose ourselves into a quiet expectation of the event, whatever it may be, with a resolution to accommodate ourselves to it, hope the best, and get ready for the worst, and then take what God sends.

#### THE APPLICATION.

1. Let me further urge upon you this duty of waiting upon God all the day, in some more particular instances, according to what you have to do all the day, in the ordinary

business of it. We are weak and forgetful, and need to be put in mind of our duty in general, upon every occasion for the doing of it; and therefore I choose to be thus particular, that I may be your remembrancer.

(1.) When you meet with your families in the morning, wait upon God for a blessing upon them, and attend him with your thanksgivings for the mercies you and yours have jointly received from God the night past; you and your houses must serve the Lord, must wait on him. See it owing to his goodness, who is the Founder and Father of the families of the righteous, that you are together, that the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in your tabernacles, and therefore wait upon him to continue you together, to make you comforts to one another, to enable you to do the duty of every relation, and to lengthen out the days of your tranquillity. In all the conversation we have with our families, the provision we make for them, and the orders we give concerning them, we must wait upon God, as the God of all the families of Israel, Jer. xxxi. 1, and have an eye to Christ, as he in whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

Every member of the family sharing in family mercies, must wait on God for grace to contribute to family duties. Whatever disagreeableness there may be in any family relation, instead of having the spirit either burthened with it, or provoked by it, let it be an inducement to wait on God, who is able either to redress the grievance, or to balance it, and give grace to bear it.

(2.) When you are pursuing the education of your children, or the young ones under your charge, wait upon God for his grace to make the means of their education successful. When you are yourselves giving them instruction in things pertaining either to life or godliness, their general or particular calling, when you are sending them to school in a morning, or ordering them the business of the day, wait upon God to give them an understanding, and a good capacity for their business; especially their main business, for it is God that giveth wisdom. If they



are but slow, and do not come on as you could wish, yet wait on God to bring them forward, and to give them his grace in his own time; and while you are patiently waiting on him, that will encourage you to take pains with them, and will likewise make you patient and gentle towards them.

And let children and young people wait on God in all their daily endeavours, to fit themselves for the service of God and their generation. You desire to be comforts to your relations, to be good for something in this world; do you not? Beg of God then a wise and an understanding heart, as Solomon did, and wait upon him all the day for it, that you may be still increasing in wisdom, as you do in stature, and in favour with God and man.

(3.) When you go to your shops, or apply yourselves to the business of your particular calling, wait upon God for his presence with you. Your business calls for your constant attendance every day, and all the day; keep the shop, and thy shop will keep thee; but let your attendance on God in your callings be as constant as your attendance on your callings. Eye God's providence in all the occurrences of them. Open shop with this thought, I am now in the way of my duty, and I depend upon God to bless me in it. When you are waiting for customers, wait on God to find you something to do in that calling to which he has called you; those you call chance customers, you should rather call providence customers, and should say of the advantage you make by them, "The Lord my God brought it to me."

When you are buying and selling, see God's eye upon you, to observe whether you are honest and just in your dealings, and do no wrong to those you deal with; and let your eye then be up to him, for that discretion to which God does instruct not only the husbandman, but the tradesman, Isa. xxviii. 26; that prudence which directs the way, and with which it is promised the good man shall order his affairs; for that blessing which makes rich, and adds no sorrow with it; for that honest profit which may be expected in the way of honest diligence.

Whatever your employments be, in country-business, city-business, or sea-business, or only in the business of the house, go about them in the fear of God, depending upon him to make them comfortable and successful, and to prosper the work of your hands unto you. And hereby you will arm yourselves against the many temptations you are compassed about with in your worldly business ; by waiting on God you will be freed from the care and cumber which attends much serving, will have your minds raised above the little things of sense and time, will be serving God when you are most busy about the world, and will have God in your hearts when your hands are full of the world.

(4.) When you take a book into your hands, God's book, or any other useful good book, wait upon God for his grace to enable you to make a good use of it. Some of you spend a deal of time every day in reading, and I hope none of you let a day pass without reading some portions of Scripture, either alone or with your families ; take heed that the time you spend in reading be not lost time ; it is so if you read that which is idle and vain and unprofitable ; it is so if you read that which is good, even the word of God itself, and do not mind it, or observe it, or aim to make it of any advantage to you ; wait upon God, who gives you those helps for your souls, to make them helpful indeed to you. The eunuch did so, when he was reading the book of the prophet Isaiah in his chariot, and God presently sent him one who made him understand what he read.

You read perhaps now and then the histories of former times. In acquainting yourselves with them you must have an eye to God, and to that wise and gracious providence which governed the world before we were born, and preserved the church in it, and therefore may be still depended upon to do all for the best, for he is Israel's King of old.

(5.) When you sit down to your tables wait on God ; see his hand spreading and preparing a table before you in despite of your enemies, and in the society of your friends ; often review the grant which God made to our first father Adam, and in him to us, of the products of the earth ; Gen.

29, "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed," bread corn especially, "to you it shall be for meat;" and the grant he afterwards made to Noah, our second father, and in him to us; Gen. ix. 3, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb;" and see in those what a bountiful Benefactor he is to mankind, and wait upon him accordingly.

We must eat and drink to the glory of God, and then we wait on him in eating and drinking. We must receive nourishment for our bodies, that they may be fitted to serve our souls in the service of God, to his honour in this world. We must taste covenant love in common mercies, and enjoy the Creator while we are using the creature. We must depend upon the word of blessing from the mouth of God, to make our food nourishing to us; and if our provisions be mean and scanty, we must make up the want of them by faith in the promise of God, and rejoice in him, as the "God of our salvation, though the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine."

(6.) When you visit your friends, or receive their visits, wait upon God. Let your eye be to him with thankfulness for your friends and acquaintance that you have comfort in; that the wilderness is not made your habitation, and the solitary and desert land your dwelling; that you have comfort not only in your own houses, but in those of your neighbours with whom you have freedom of converse; and that you are not driven out from among men, and made a burthen and terror to all about you. That you have clothing not only for necessity but for ornament, to go abroad in, is a mercy, which, that we may not pride ourselves in, we must take notice of God in, "I decked thee with ornaments," says God, "and put earrings in thine ears," Ezek. xvi. 11, 12. That you have houses, furniture, and entertainment, not only for yourselves but for your friends, is a mercy in which God must be acknowledged.

And when we are in company, we must look up to God for wisdom to carry ourselves so that we may do much good to, and get no harm by, those with whom we converse.

Wait on God for that grace with which our speech should be always seasoned, by which all corrupt communication may be prevented, and we may abound in that which is good, and to the use of edifying, and which may minister grace to the hearers, that our lips may feed many.

(7.) When you give alms, or do any act of charity, wait on God; do it as unto him, give to a disciple in the name of a disciple, to the poor because they belong to Christ; do it not for the praise of men, but for the glory of God, with a single eye, and an upright heart; direct it to him, and then your alms as well as your prayers, like those of Cornelius, come up for a memorial before God, Acts x. 4. Beg of God to accept what you do for the good of others, that your alms may indeed be offerings, Acts xxiv. 17, may be an "odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God," Phil. iv. 18.

Desire of God a blessing upon what you give in charity, that it may be comfortable to those to whom it is given, and that though what you are able to give is but a little, like the widow's two mites, yet that by God's blessing it may be doubled, and made to go a great way, like the widow's meal in the barrel, and oil in the cruse.

Depend upon God to make up to you what you lay out in good works, and to recompense it abundantly in the resurrection of the just; nay, and you are encouraged to wait upon him for a return of it even in this life; it is bread cast upon the waters, which you shall find again after many days. And you should carefully observe the providence of God, whether it do not make you rich amends for your good works according to the promise, that you may understand the loving-kindness of the Lord, and his faithfulness to the word which he has spoken.

(8.) When you inquire after public news, in that wait upon God; do it with an eye to him; for this reason, because you are truly concerned for the interests of his kingdom in the world, and lay them near your hearts; because you have a compassion for mankind, for the lives and souls of men, and especially of God's people; ask "What news?"

not as the Athenians, only to satisfy a vain curiosity, and to pass away an idle hour or two, but that you may know how to direct your prayers and praises, and how to balance your hopes and fears, and may gain such an understanding of the times, as to learn what you and others ought to do.

If the face of public affairs be bright and pleasing, wait upon God to carry on and perfect his own work; and depend not upon the wisdom or strength of any instruments. If it be dark and discouraging, wait upon God to prevent the fears of his people, and to appear for them when he sees that their strength is gone. In the midst of the greatest successes of the church, and the smiles of second causes, we must not think it needless to wait on God; and in the midst of its greatest discouragements, when its affairs are reduced to the last extremity, we must not think it fruitless to wait upon God; the creatures cannot help without him, but he can help without them.

(9.) When you are going journeys wait on God, put yourselves under his protection, commit yourselves to his care, and depend upon him to give his angels a charge concerning you, to bear you up in their arms when you move, and to pitch their tents about you where you rest. See how much you are indebted to the goodness of his providence, for all the comforts and conveniences you are surrounded with in your travels. It is he who has cast our lot in a land where we wander not in wildernesses, as in the deserts of Arabia, but have safe and beaten roads; and that through the terrors of war the highways are not unoccupied. To him we owe it that the inferior creatures are serviceable to us, and that our going out and coming in are preserved; that when we are abroad we are not in banishment, but have liberty to come home again; and when we are at home, we are not under confinement, but have liberty to go abroad.

We must, therefore, have our eyes up to God at our setting out, "Lord, go along with me where I go;" under his shelter we must travel, confiding in his care of us, and encouraging ourselves with that in all the dangers we meet

with; and in our return must own his goodness; all our bones must say, "Lord, who is like unto thee," for he "keepeth all our bones, not one of them is broken."

(10.) When we retire into solitude, to be alone walking in the fields, or alone reposing ourselves in our closets, still we must be waiting upon God; still we must keep up our communion with him, when we are communing with our own hearts. When we are alone we must not be alone, but the Father must be with us, and we with him. We shall find temptations even in solitude, which we have need to guard against; Satan set upon our Saviour when he was alone in a wilderness; but there also we have opportunity, if we know but how to improve it, for that devout, for that divine, contemplation, which is the best conversation, so that we may never be less alone than when alone. If when we sit alone and keep silence, withdrawn from business and conversation, we have but the art, I should say the heart, to fill up those vacant minutes with pious meditations of God and divine things, we then gather up the fragments of time which remain, that nothing may be lost, and so are we found waiting on God all the day.

2. Let me use some motives to persuade you thus to live a life of communion with God, by waiting on him all the the day.

(1.) Consider, the eye of God is always upon you. When we are with our superiors, and observe them to look upon us, that engages us to look upon them; and shall we not then look up to God, whose eyes always behold, and whose eyelids try, the children of men? He sees all the motions of our hearts, and sees with pleasure the motions of our hearts towards him, which should engage us to set him always before us.

The servant, though he be careless at other times, yet, when he is under his master's eye, will wait in his place and keep close to his business; we need no more to engage us to diligence, than to do our work with eye service while our master looks on, and because he does so, for then we shall never look off.

(2.) The God you are to wait on is one with whom you have to do, Heb. iv. 13. "All things," even the thoughts and intents of the heart, "are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;" *προς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λογος*—"with whom we have business," or word; who hath something to say to us, and to whom we have something to say: or, as some read it, "To whom for us there is an account;" there is a reckoning, a running account between us and him; and we must every one of us shortly give account of ourselves to him, and of everything done in the body; and therefore are concerned to wait on him, that all may be made even daily, between us and him, in the blood of Christ, which balances the account. Did we consider how much we have to do with God every day, we would be more diligent and constant in our attendance on him.

(3.) The God we are to wait upon continually waits to be gracious to us; he is always doing us good, precedes us with the blessings of his goodness, daily loads us with his benefits, and slips no opportunity of showing his care of us when we are in danger, his bounty to us when we are in want, and his tenderness for us when we are in sorrow. His good providence waits on us all the day, to preserve our going out and our coming in, Isa. xxx. 18; to give us relief and succour in due season, to be seen in the mount of the Lord. Nay, his good grace waits on us all the day, to help us in every time of need; to be strength to us according as our day is, and all the occurrences of the day. Is God thus forward to do us good, and shall we be backward and remiss in doing him service?

(4.) If we attend upon God, his holy angels shall have a charge to attend upon us. They are all appointed to be ministering spirits, to minister for the good of them who shall be heirs of salvation, and more good offices they do us every day than we are aware of. What an honour, what a privilege, is it to be waited on by holy angels, to be borne up in their arms, to be surrounded by their tents! What a security is the ministration of those good spirits against

the malice of evil spirits! This honour have all they that wait on God all the day.

(5.) This life of communion with God, and constant attendance upon him, is a heaven upon earth. It is doing the work of heaven, and the will of God, as they do it who are in heaven; whose business it is always to behold the face of our Father. It is an earnest of the blessedness of heaven; it is a preparative for it, and a prelude to it; it is having our conversation in heaven, whence we look for the Saviour. Looking for him as our Saviour, we look to him as our director; and by this we make it to appear that our hearts are there, which will give us good grounds to expect that we shall be there shortly.

3. Let me close all with some directions, what you must do, that you may thus wait on God all the day.

(1.) See much of God in every creature; of his wisdom and power in the making and placing of it, and of his goodness in its serviceableness to us. Look about you, and see what a variety of wonders, what an abundance of comforts, you are surrounded with; and let them all lead you to him who is the fountain of being, and the giver of all good; all our springs are in him, and from him are all our streams; this will engage us to wait on him, since every creature is that to us that he makes it to be. Thus the same things which draw a carnal heart from God, will lead a gracious soul to him; and since all his works praise him, his saints will thence take continual occasion to bless him.

It was (they say) the custom of the pious Jews of old, whatever delight they took in any creature, to give to God the glory of it. When they smelled a flower, they said, "Blessed be he that made this flower sweet;" if they ate a morsel of bread, "Blessed be he that appointed bread to strengthen man's heart." If thus we taste in every thing that the Lord is gracious, and suck all satisfaction from the breasts of his bounty, (and some derive his name from *mamma*—*a breast*,) we shall thereby be engaged constantly to depend on him, as the child is said to hang on the mother's breast.



(2.) See every creature to be nothing without God. The more we discern of the vanity and emptiness of the world, and all our enjoyments in it, and their utter insufficiency to make us happy, the closer we shall cleave to God, and the more intimately we shall converse with him, that we may find that satisfaction in the Father of spirits which we have in vain sought for in the things of sense. What folly is it to make our court to the creatures, and to dance attendance at their door, whence we are sure to be sent away empty, when we have the Creator himself to go to, who is rich in mercy to all that call upon him; is full, and free, and faithful? What can we expect from lying vanities? Why then should we observe them, and neglect our own mercies? Why should we trust to broken reeds, when we have a "Rock of Ages," to be the foundation of our hopes? And why should we draw from broken cisterns, when we have the "God of all consolation," to be the fountain of our joys?

(3.) Live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot with any confidence wait upon God but in and through a Mediator, for it is by his Son that God speaks to us, and hears from us; all that passes between a just God and poor sinners must pass through the hands of that blessed "Daysman, who has laid his hand upon them both;" every prayer passes from us to God, and every mercy from God to us, by that hand. It is in the face of the Anointed that God looks upon us; and in the face of Jesus Christ that we behold the glory and grace of God shining. It is by Christ that we have access to God, and success with him in prayer, and, therefore, must make mention of his righteousness, even of his only. And in that habitual attendance we must be all the day living upon God, we must have an habitual dependence on him, who always appears in the presence of God for us; always gives attendance to be ready to introduce us.

(4.) Be frequent and serious in pious ejaculations. In waiting upon God we must often speak to him, must take all occasions to speak to him; and when we have not

opportunity for a solemn address to him, he will accept of a sudden address, if it come from an honest heart. In these David waited on God all day, as appears by ver. 1. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul;" to thee do I dart it, and all its gracious breathings after thee. We should in a holy ejaculation ask pardon for this sin, strength against this corruption, victory over this temptation, and it shall not be in vain. This is to pray always, and without ceasing. It is not the length or language of the prayer that God looks at, but the sincerity of the heart in it; and that shall be accepted, though the prayer be very short, and the groanings such as cannot be uttered.

(5.) Look upon every day, as those who know not but it may be your last day. At such an hour as we think not the Son of man comes; and therefore we cannot any morning be sure that we shall live till night; we hear of many lately who have been snatched away very suddenly; "What manner of persons therefore ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Though we cannot say, we ought to live as if we were sure this day would be our last, yet it is certain, we ought to live as those who do not know but it may be so; and the rather, because we know the day of the Lord will come first or last: and, therefore, we are concerned to wait on him; for on whom should poor dying creatures wait, but on a living God?

Death will bring us all to God, to be judged by him; it will bring all the saints to him, to the vision and fruition of him; and one we are hastening to, and hope to be for ever with, we are concerned to wait upon, and to cultivate an acquaintance with. Did we think more of death, we would converse more with God. Our dying daily is a good reason for our worshipping daily; and, therefore, wherever we are, we are concerned to keep near to God, because we know not where death will meet us. This will alter the property of death; Enoch, who walked with God, was translated that he should not see death; and this will furnish us with that which will stand us in stead on the other side death and the grave. If we continue waiting on God every day,

and all the day long, we shall grow more experienced, and consequently more expert in the great mystery of communion with God; and thus our last days will become our best days, our last works our best works, and our last comforts our sweetest comforts; in consideration of which take the prophet's advice, Hos. xii. 6, "Turn thou to thy God; keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually."

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### PART III.

#### SHOWING HOW TO CLOSE THE DAY WITH GOD.

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"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety."—PSALM iv. 8.

THIS may be understood, either figuratively, of the repose of the soul, in the assurances of God's grace; or literally, of the repose of the body, under the protection of his providence: I love to give Scripture its full latitude, and therefore take in both.

1. The psalmist having given the preference to God's favour above any good, having chosen that, and portioned himself in that, here expresses his great complacency in the choice he had made. While he saw many making themselves perpetually uneasy with that fruitless inquiry, "Who will show us any good?" wearying themselves for very vanity; he had made himself perfectly easy, by casting himself upon the divine good will, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." Any good, short of God's favour, will not serve our turn, but that is enough, without the world's smiles. The moon, and stars, and all the fires and candles in the world, will not make day without the sun; but the sun will make day without any of them. These are David's sentiments, and all the saints agree with him. Finding no rest, therefore, like Noah's dove in a deluged, defiled world, he flies to

the ark, that type of Christ, "Return unto thy rest, unto thy Noah, (so the word is in the original, for Noah's name signifies rest,) O my soul," Ps. cxvi. 7.

If God lift up the light of his countenance upon us, as it fills us with a holy joy, it puts gladness into the heart more than they have whose corn and wine increase, ver. 7; so it fixes us in a holy rest, I will lay me down and sleep. God is my God, and I am pleased, I am satisfied, I look no further, I desire no more, I dwell in safety, or in confidence; while I walk in the light of the Lord, as I want no good, nor am sensible of any deficiency, so I fear no evil, nor am apprehensive of any danger. The Lord God is to me both a *sun* and a *shield*; a sun to enlighten and comfort me, a shield to protect and defend me.

Hence learn, that those who have the assurances of God's favour toward them, may enjoy, and should labour after, a holy serenity and security of mind. We have both these put together in that precious promise, Isa. xxxii. 17, "But the work of righteousness shall be peace;" there is a present satisfaction in doing good; and in the issue, "the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever;" quietness in the enjoyment of good, and assurance in a freedom from evil.

(1.) A holy serenity is one blessed fruit of God's favour: "I will now lay me down in peace and sleep." While we are under God's displeasure, or in doubt concerning his favour, how can we have any enjoyment of ourselves. While this great concern is unsettled the soul cannot but be unsatisfied. Has God a controversy with thee? Give not sleep to thy eyes, nor slumber to thy eye-lids, till thou hast got the controversy taken up. Go, humble thyself, and make sure thy Friend, thy best Friend, and when thou hast made thy peace with him, and hast some comfortable evidence that thou art accepted of him, then say wisely and justly, what that carnal worldling said foolishly and without ground, "Soul, take thine ease," for in God, and in the covenant of grace, "thou hast goods

laid up for many years," goods laid up for eternity, Luke xii. 19. Are thy sins pardoned? Hast thou an interest in Christ's mediation? Does God now in him accept thy works? "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart," Eccles. ix. 7. Let this still every storm, and command, and create a calm in thy soul.

Having God to be our God in covenant, we have enough, we have all; and though the gracious soul still desires more of God, it never desires more than God; in him it reposes itself with a perfect complacency; in him it is at home, it is at rest. If we be but satisfied of his loving-kindness, we may be satisfied with his loving-kindness, abundantly satisfied. There is enough in this to satiate the weary soul, and to replenish every sorrowful soul, Jer. xxxi. 25; to fill even the hungry with good things, with the best things; and being filled they should be at rest, at rest for ever, and their sleep here should be sweet.

(2.) A holy security is another blessed fruit of God's favour. Thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety; when the light of thy countenance shines upon me I am safe, and I know I am so, and I am therefore easy, for "with thy favour wilt thou compass me as with a shield," Ps. v. 12. Being taken under the protection of the divine favour, though an host of enemies should encamp against me, yet my heart shall not fear, in this I will be confident, Ps. xxvii. 3. Whatever God has promised me I can promise myself, and that is enough to indemnify me, and save me harmless, whatever difficulties and dangers I may meet with in the way of my duty. "Though the earth be removed, yet will not we fear," Ps. xlvi. 2; not fear any evil, no not in the valley of the shadow of death, in the territories of the king of terrors himself; for there thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. What the rich man's wealth is to him, in his own conceit, a strong city and a high wall, that the good man's God is to him, Prov. xviii. 10, 11. "The Almighty shall be thy gold, thy defence," Job xxii. 25. marg.

Nothing is more dangerous than security in a sinful

way, and men crying peace, peace, to themselves, while they continue under the reigning power of a vain and carnal mind. Oh that the sinners that are at ease were made to tremble! Nothing is more foolish than a security built upon the world and its promises, for they are all vanity and a lie; but nothing more reasonable in itself, or more advantageous to us, than for good people to build with assurance upon the promises of a good God; for those who keep in the way of duty, to be quiet from the fear of evil; as those who know no evil shall befall them, no real evil, no evil but what shall be made to work for their good; as those who know, while they continue in their allegiance to God as their King, that they are under his protection, under the protection of Omnipotence itself, which enables them to bid defiance to all malignant powers; "If God be for us, who can be against us?" This security even the heathen looked upon every honest virtuous man to be entitled to, that is,

*Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus.*

He whose life was upright and free from iniquity.

And thought that

*Et si fractus illabatur orbis,  
Impavidum ferient ruinæ.*

If the world should fall in pieces about his ears, he needed not fear being lost in the desolations of it.

Much more reason have Christians, who hold fast their integrity, to lay claim to it; for who is he, or what is it, that shall harm us, if we be followers of him that is good, in his goodness?

[1.] It is the privilege of good people, that they may be thus easy and satisfied. This holy serenity and security of mind is allowed them, God gives them leave to be cheerful; nay, it is promised them, "God will speak peace to his people and to his saints;" he will fill them with joy and peace in believing; his peace shall keep their hearts and minds, keep them safe, keep them calm. Nay, there is a method appointed

for their obtaining this promised serenity and security. The Scriptures are written to them that their joy may be full, and that through patience and comfort of them they may have hope. Ordinances are instituted to be wells of salvation, out of which they may draw water with joy. Ministers are ordained to be their comforters, and the helpers of their joy. Thus willing has God been to show the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that they might have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18.

[2.] It is the duty of good people to labour after this holy security and serenity of mind, and to use the means appointed for the obtaining it. Give not way to the disquieting suggestions of Satan, and to those tormenting doubts and fears that arise in your own souls. Study to be quiet, chide yourselves for your distrusts, charge yourselves to believe, and to hope in God, that you shall yet praise him. You are in the dark concerning yourselves, do as Paul's mariners did, cast anchor and wish for the day. Poor trembling Christian, that art tossed with tempests and not comforted, try to lay thee down in peace and sleep; compose thyself into a sedate and even frame. In the name of him whom winds and seas obey, command down thy tumultuous thoughts and say, "Peace, be still." Lay that aching trembling head of thine where the beloved disciple laid his, in the bosom of the Lord Jesus; or, if thou hast not yet attained such boldness of access to him, lay that aching trembling heart of thine at the feet of the Lord Jesus, by an entire submission and resignation to him, saying, "If I perish, I will perish here:" put it into his hand by an entire confidence in him; submit it to his operation and disposal, who knows how to speak to the heart. And if thou art not yet entered into this sabbatism, as the word is, Heb. iv. 9, this present rest that remaineth for the people of God, yet look upon it to be a land of promise, and therefore, though it tarry, wait for it, for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie. "Light is sown for the righteous," and what is sown shall come up again at last in a harvest of joy.

2. The Psalmist having done his day's work, and perhaps fatigued himself with it, it being now bed-time, and having given good advice to those to whom he had wished a good night, to commune with their own hearts upon their beds, and to offer the evening sacrifices of righteousness, ver. 4, 5, now retires to his chamber with this word, "I will lay me down in peace and sleep." That which I chose this text for will lead me to understand it literally, as the disciples understood their Master, when he said, "Lazarus sleepeth, of taking rest in sleep," John xi. 12, 13. And so we have here David's pious thoughts when he was going to bed. As when he awakes he is still with God, he is still so when he goes to sleep, and concludes the day as he opened it, with meditations on God, and sweet communion with him.

It should seem David penned this psalm when he was distressed and persecuted by his enemies; perhaps it was penned on the same occasion with the foregoing psalm, when he fled from Absalom his son; without were fightings, and then no wonder that within were fears; yet then he puts such a confidence in God's protection, that he will go to bed at his usual time, and, with his usual quietness and cheerfulness, will compose himself as at other times. He knows that his enemies have no power against him, but what is given them from above; and they shall have no power given them but what is still under the divine check and restraint; nor shall their power be permitted to exert itself so far as to do him any real mischief; and therefore he retires into the secret place of the Most High, and abides under the shadow of the Almighty, and is very quiet in his own mind. That will break a worldly man's heart which will not break a godly man's sleep. Let them do their worst, says David, "I will lay me down and sleep: the will of the Lord be done." Now observe here,

(1.) His confidence in God. "Thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety;" not only makest me safe, but makest me know that I am so; makest me to dwell with a good assurance. It is the same word that is used concerning him who walks uprightly, that he walks surely, Prov. x. 9. He goes boldly



in his way, so David here goes boldly to his bed. He does not dwell carelessly, as the men of Laish, Judg. xviii. 7. but dwells at ease in God, as the sons of Zion, in the city of their solemnities, when their eyes see it a quiet habitation, Isa. xxxiii. 20.

There is one word in this part of the text that is observable; thou, Lord, only dost secure me. Some refer it to David; "even when I am alone, have none of my privy-counsellors about me to advise me, none of my life-guards to fight for me, yet I am under no apprehension of danger while God is with me." The Son of David comforted himself with this, that when all his disciples forsook him, and left him alone, yet he was not alone, for the Father was with him. Some weak people are afraid of being alone, especially in the dark, but a firm belief of God's presence with us in all places, and that divine protection which all good people are under, would silence those fears, and make us ashamed of them. Nay, our being alone a peculiar people, whom God has set apart for himself, (as it is here, ver. 3,) will be our security. A sober singularity will be our safety and satisfaction, as Noah's was in the old world. Israel is a people that shall dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations, and therefore may set them all at defiance, till they foolishly mingle themselves among them; "Israel shall then dwell in safety alone," Deut xxxiii. 28. The more we dwell alone, the more safe we dwell. But our translation refers it to God; "Thou alone makest me to dwell safely;" it is done by thee only. God in protecting his people needs not any assistance, though he sometimes makes use of instruments; the earth helped the woman, yet he can do it without them; and, when all our refuges fail, his own arm works salvation; "so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him," Deut. xxxii. 12. Yet that is not all, I depend on thee only to do it; therefore I am easy, and think myself safe, not because I have hosts on my side, but purely because I have the Lord of hosts on my side.

"Thou makest me to dwell in safety. It may look either backward or forward, or rather, both. Thou hast made me

to dwell in safety all day, so that the sun has not smitten me by day; and then it is the language of his thankfulness for the mercies he had received; or, thou wilt make me to dwell in safety all night, that the moon shall not smite me by night; and then it is the language of his dependence upon God for further mercies. And both these should go together; and our eye must be to God as ever the same, who was, and is, and is to come; who has delivered, and does, and will.

(2.) His composedness in himself inferred hence, *Simul*, or, *pariter in pace cubabo*—"I will both lay me down and sleep." They who have their corn and wine increasing, who have abundance of the wealth and pleasure of this world, lay them down and sleep contentedly, as Boaz at the end of the heap of corn, Ruth iii. 7. But though I have not what they have, I can lay me down in peace, and sleep as well as they. We make it to join, his lying down and his sleeping: I will not only lay me down, as one that desires to be composed, but will sleep as one that really is so. Some make it to intimate his falling asleep presently after he had laid him down: so well wearied was he with the work of the day, and so free from any of those disquieting thoughts which would keep him from sleeping.

Now these are words put into our mouths, with which to compose ourselves when we retire at night to our repose; and we should take care so to manage ourselves all day, especially when it draws towards night, that we may not be disfitted, and put out of frame, for our evening devotions; that our hearts may not be overcharged, either on the one hand with surfeiting and drunkenness, as theirs often are who are men of pleasure; or on the other hand with the cares of this life, as theirs often are who are men of business; but that we may have such a command both of our thoughts and of our time, that we may finish our daily work well; which will be an earnest of our finishing our life's work well; and all is well indeed that ends everlastingly well.

*Doct.* As we must begin the day with God, and wait upon him all the day, so we must endeavour to close it with him.

This duty of closing the day with God, and in a good frame, I know not how better to open to you, than by going over the particulars in the text in their order, and recommending to you David's example.

I. Let us retire to lay us down. Nature calls for rest as well as food; "man goes forth to his work and labour," and goes to and fro about it, but it is only till evening, and then it is time to lie down. We read of Ishbosheth, that he lay on his bed at noon, but death met him there, 2 Sam. iv. 5, 6; and of David himself, that he came off from his bed at evening-tide, but sin, a worse thing than death, met him there. We must work the works of him that sent us while it is day, it will be time enough to lie down when the night comes, and no man can work; and it is then proper and seasonable to lie down. It is promised, Zeph. ii. 7, "They shall lie down in the evening; and with that promise we must comply, and rest in the time appointed for rest; and not turn day into night, and night into day, as many do upon some ill account or other.

1. Some sit up to do mischief to their neighbours; to kill, and steal, and to destroy: "In the dark they dig through houses which they had marked for themselves in the day-time," Job xxiv. 16. David complains of his enemies, that at evening they go round about the city, Ps. lix. 6. They that do evil hate the light. Judas the traitor was in quest of his Master, with his band of men, when he should have been in his bed. And it is an aggravation of the wickedness of the wicked, when they take so much pains to compass an ill design, and have their hearts so much upon it, that they "sleep not except they have done mischief," Prov. iv. 16. It is a shame to those who profess to make it their business to do good, that they cannot find in their hearts to intrench upon any of the gratifications of sense in pursuance of it;

*Ut jugulent homines surgunt de nocte Latrones;*

*Tuque ut te serves non expergisceris?*

Robbers arise in the night that they may slay men;

And will not you awake that you may preserve yourself?

Say then, while others sit up for an opportunity to be mischievous, "I will lay me down" and be quiet, and do nobody any harm.

2. Others sit up in the pursuit of the world, and the wealth of it. They not only rise up early, but they sit up late, in the eager prosecution of their covetous practices, Ps. cxxvii. 2, and, either to get or save, deny themselves their most necessary sleep; and this their way is their folly, for hereby they deprive themselves of the comfortable enjoyment of what they have, which is the end, under pretence of care and pains to obtain more, which is but the means. Solomon speaks of those who "neither day nor night see sleep with their eyes," Eccl. viii. 16, who make themselves perfect slaves and drudges to the world, than which there is not a more cruel task-master: and thus, they make that which of itself is vanity, to be to them vexation of spirit, for they weary themselves for very vanity, Heb. iv. 3, and are so miserably in love with their chain, that they deny themselves not only the spiritual rest God has provided for them, as the God of grace, but the natural rest, which, as the God of nature, he has provided; and it is a specimen of the wrong sinners do to their own bodies, as well as their own souls. Let us see the folly of it, and never labour thus for the meat that perisheth, and that abundance of the rich which will not suffer him to sleep; but let us labour for that meat which endureth unto eternal life, that grace which is the earnest of glory, the abundance of which will make our sleep sweet to us.

3. Others sit up in the indulgence of their pleasures. They will not lay them down in due time, because they cannot find in their hearts to leave their vain sports and pastimes; their music, and dancing, and plays, their cards and dice; or, which is worse, their rioting and excess; for they that are drunk are drunk in the night. It is bad enough when these gratifications of a base lust, or at least of a vain mind, are suffered to devour the whole evening, and then to engross the whole soul, as they are apt enough to do insensibly; so that there is neither time nor heart

for the evening devotions, either in the closet, or in the family: but it is much worse when they are suffered to go far into the night too, for then of course they trespass upon the ensuing morning, and steal away the time that should then also be bestowed upon the exercises of religion. Those who can of choice, and with so much pleasure, sit up till I know not what time of night, to make, as they say, "a merry night of it," to spend their time in filthiness and foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient, would think themselves hardly dealt with, if they should be kept one half hour past their sleeping time, engaged in any good duties; and would have called blessed Paul himself a tedious preacher, and have censured him as very indiscreet, when, upon a particular occasion, he continued his speech till midnight, Acts xx. 7. And how loath would they be, with David, at midnight to rise and give thanks to God; or, with their Master, to continue all night in prayer to God.

Let the corrupt affections which run out thus and transgress, be mortified and not gratified. Those who have allowed themselves in such irregularities, if they have allowed themselves an impartial reflection, cannot but have found the inconvenience of them, and they have been a prejudice to the prosperity of the soul, and should therefore deny themselves for their own good. One rule for the closing of the day well is to keep good hours; "Everything is beautiful in its season." I have heard it said long since, and I beg leave to repeat it now, that

"Early to bed, and early to rise,  
Is the way to be healthy, and wealthy, and wise."

We shall now take it for granted, that unless some necessary business, or some work of mercy, or some more than ordinary act of devotion, keep you up beyond your usual time, you are disposed to lay you down. And let us lay us down with thankfulness to God, and with thoughts of dying; with penitent reflections upon the sins

of the day, and with humble supplications for the mercies of the night.

(1.) Let us lie down with thankfulness to God. When we retire to our bed-chambers or closets we should lift up our hearts to God, the God of our mercies, and make him the God of our praises; whenever we go to bed I am sure we do not want matter for praise, if we did not want a heart. Let us therefore address ourselves then to that pleasant duty, that work which is its own wages. The evening sacrifice was to be a sacrifice of praise.

[1.] We have reason to be thankful for the many mercies of the day past, which we ought particularly to review, and to say, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits." Observe the constant series of mercies, which has not been interrupted or broken in upon any day. Observe the particular instance of mercy with which some days have been signalized and made remarkable. It is he who has granted us life and favour; it is his visitation that preserves our spirits. Think how many are the calamities which we are every day preserved from; the calamities which we are sensibly exposed to, and perhaps have been delivered from the imminent danger of; and those which we have not been apprehensive of; many of which we have deserved, and which others, better than we are, groan under. All our bones have reason to say, "Lord, who is like unto thee?" For it is God who keepeth all our bones, not one of them is broken; it is of his mercies that we are not consumed.

Think how many are the comforts we are every day surrounded with, all which we are indebted to the bounty of the divine Providence for; every bit we eat, and every drop we drink, is mercy; every step we take, and every breath we draw, mercy. All the satisfaction we have in the agreeableness and affections of our relations, and in the society and serviceableness of our friends; all the success we have in our callings and employments; and the pleasure we take in them; all the joy which Zebulun has in his

going out, and Issachar in his tents, is what we have reason to acknowledge with thankfulness, to God's praise.

Yet it is likely that the day has not passed without some cross accidents, something or other has afflicted and disappointed us, and if it has, yet that must not indispose us for praise; however it be, yet God is good; and it is our duty in everything to give thanks, and to bless the name of the Lord when he takes away, as well as when he gives; for our afflictions are but few, and a thousand times deserved; our mercies are many, and a thousand times forfeited.

[2.] We have reason to be thankful for the shadows of the evening, which call us to retire and lie down. The same wisdom, power, and goodness which make the morning, make the evening also, to rejoice; and give us cause to be thankful for the drawing of the curtains of the night about us in favour to our repose, as well as for the opening of the eye-lids of the morning upon us in favour to our business. When God divided between the light and the darkness, and allotted to both of them their time successively, he saw that it was good it should be so; in a world of mixtures and changes, nothing more proper. Let us therefore give thanks to that God who forms the light and creates the darkness; and believe, that as in the revolutions of time, so in the revolutions of the events of time, the darkness of affliction may be as needful for us in its season, as the light of prosperity. If the hireling longs till the shadow comes, let him be thankful for it when it does come, that the burthen and heat of the day is not perpetual.

[3.] We have reason to be thankful for a quiet habitation to lie down in; that we are not driven out from among men as Nebuchadnezzar, to lie down with the beasts of the field; that though we were born like the wild ass's colt, yet we have not with the wild ass the wilderness for our habitation, and the desolate and barren land for our dwelling; that we are not put to wander in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, as many of God's dear saints and servants have been forced to do, of whom the world was

not worthy: but the good Shepherd makes us to lie down in green pastures. That we have not, as Jacob, the cold ground for our bed, and a stone for our pillow, which yet one would be content with, and covet, if with it one could have his dream.

[4.] We have reason to be thankful that we are not forced to sit up; that our Master not only gives us leave to lie down, but orders that nothing shall prevent our lying down. Many go to bed, but cannot lie down there, by reason of painful and languishing sicknesses, of that nature, that if they lie down they cannot breathe; our bodies are of the same mould, and it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not so afflicted. Many are kept up by sickness in their families; children are ill, and they must attend them. If God takes sickness away from the midst of us, and keeps it away, so that no plague comes near our dwellings, a numerous family, perhaps, and all well, it is a mercy we are bound to be very thankful for, and to value in proportion to the greatness of the affliction where sickness prevails. Many are kept up by the fear of enemies, of soldiers, of thieves. The good man of the house watches that his house may not be broken through; but our lying down is not prevented or disturbed by the alarms of war, we are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of our repose; there therefore should we rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even his righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel, which under his protection are as safe as walled cities with gates and bars. When we lie down, let us thank God that we may lie down.

(2.) Let us lie down with thoughts of death, and of that great change which at death we must pass under. The conclusion of every day should put us in mind of the conclusion of all our days; when our night comes, our long night, which will put a period to our work, and bring the honest labourer both to take his rest, and receive his penny. It is good for us to think frequently of dying, to think of it as often as we go to bed; it will help to mortify the corruptions of our own hearts, which are our daily burthens;



to arm us against the temptations of the world, which are our daily snares; it will wean us from our daily comforts, and make us easy under our daily crosses and fatigues. It is good for us to think familiarly of dying, to think of it as our going to bed, that by thinking often of it, and thinking thus of it, we may get above the fear of it.

[1.] At death we shall retire, as we do at bed-time; we shall go to be private for a while, till the public appearance at the great day; "Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more;" till then "they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep," Job xiv. 12. Now we go abroad to see and be seen, and to no higher purpose do some spend their day, spend their life; but when death comes there is an end of both, we shall then see no more in this world; I "shall behold man no more," Isa. xxxviii. 11; we shall then be seen no more; "The eye of him that hath seen me, shall see me no more," Job vii. 8; we shall be hid in the grave, and cut off from all living. To die is to bid good night to all our friends, to put a period to our conversation with them. We bid them farewell, but, blessed be God, it is not an eternal farewell; we hope to meet them again in the morning of the resurrection, to part no more.

[2.] At death we shall put off the body, as we put off our clothes when we lie down. The soul is the man, the body is but the clothes. At death we shall be unclothed, the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, the garment of the body shall be laid aside. Death strips us, and sends us naked out of the world, as we came into it; strips the soul of all the disguises wherein it appeared before men, that it may appear naked and open before God. Our grave-clothes are night-clothes.

When we are weary and hot our clothes are a burthen, and we are very willing to throw them off; are not easy till we are undressed; thus "we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened;" but when death frees the soul from the load and encumbrance of the body, which hinders its repose in its spiritual satisfactions, how easy will it be! Let us think then of

putting off the body at death, with as much pleasure as we do of putting off our clothes at night ; be as loose to them as we are to our clothes ; and comfort ourselves with this thought, that though we are unclothed at death, if we be clothed with Christ and his grace, we shall not be found naked, but be clothed upon with immortality. We have new clothes a-making, which shall be ready to put on next morning ; a glorious body like Christ's, instead of a vile body like the beasts.

[3.] At death we shall lie down in the grave, as on our bed, shall lie down in the dust, Job xx. 11. To those who die in sin, and impenitence, the grave is a dungeon ; their iniquities which are upon their bones, and which lie down with them, make it so ; but to those who die in Christ, who die in faith, it is a bed, a bed of rest, where there is no tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day, as sometimes there are upon the easiest beds we have in this world ; where there is no danger of being scared with dreams, and terrified with visions of the night ; there is no being chastened with pain on that bed, or the multitude of the bones with strong pain. It is the privilege of those who, while they live, walk in their uprightness, that when they die they enter into peace, and rest in their beds, Isa. lvii. 2 Holy Job comforts himself with this, in the midst of his agonies, that he shall shortly make his bed in the darkness, and be easy there. It is a bed of roses, a bed of spices, to all believers ever since he lay in it who is the "Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valleys."

Say then of thy grave, as thou dost of thy bed at night, "There the weary are at rest ;" with this further consolation, that thou shalt not only rest there, but rise thence shortly, abundantly refreshed ; shalt be called up to meet the Beloved of thy soul, and to be for ever with him ; shalt rise to a day which will not renew thy cares, as every day on earth does, but secure to thee unmingled and everlasting joys. How comfortably may we lie down at night if such thoughts as these lie down with us ; and how comfortably

may we lie down at death if we have accustomed ourselves to such thoughts as these.

(3.) Let us lie down with penitent reflections upon the sins of the day past. Praising God and delighting ourselves in him is such pleasant work, and so much the work of angels, that methinks it is a pity that we should have any thing else to do; but the truth is, we make other work for ourselves by our own folly, that is not so pleasant, but absolutely needful, and that is, repentance. While we are at night solacing ourselves in God's goodness, we must intermix therewith the afflicting of ourselves for our own vile-ness; both must have their place in us, and they will very well agree together; for we must take our work before us.

[1.] We must be convinced of it, that we are still contracting guilt; we carry corrupt natures about with us, which are bitter roots that bear gall and wormwood, and all we say or do is imbittered by them. "In many things we all offend," insomuch "that there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sins not." We are in the midst of a defiling world, and cannot keep ourselves perfectly unspotted from it. If we say we have no sin, or that we have passed a day and have not sinned, we deceive ourselves; for if we know the truth by ourselves, we shall see cause to cry, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse us from our secret faults;" faults which we ourselves are not aware of. We ought to aim at a sinless perfection; with as strict a watchfulness as if we could attain it: but, after all, must acknowledge, that we come short of it; that we have not yet attained, neither are already perfect: we find it by constant sad experience, for it is certain that we do enough every day to bring us upon our knees at night.

[2.] We must examine our consciences, that we may find out our particular transgressions of the day past. Let us every night search and try our ways, our thoughts, words, and actions; compare them with the rule of the word, examine our faces in that glass, that we may see our spots, and may be particular in the acknowledgment of them. It will be good for us to ask, What have we done

this day? What have we done amiss? What duty have we neglected? What false step have we taken? How have we carried it in our callings, in our converse? Have we done the duties of our particular relations, and accommodated ourselves to the will of God in every event of providence? By doing this frequently, we shall grow in our acquaintance with ourselves, than which nothing will contribute more to our soul's prosperity.

[3.] We must renew our repentance for whatever we find has been amiss in us, or has been said or done amiss by us; we must be sorry for it, and sadly lament it, and take shame to ourselves for it, and give glory to God by making confession. If any thing appear to have been wrong more than ordinary, that must be particularly bewailed; and in general, we must be mortified for our sins of daily infirmity, which we ought not to think slightly of, because they are returning daily, but rather be the more ashamed of them, and of that fountain within, which casts out these waters.

It is good to be speedy in renewing our repentance, before the heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Delays are dangerous; green wounds may soon be cured, if taken in time, but if they are corrupt, as the Psalmist complains, Ps. xxxviii. 5, it is our fault and folly, and the cure will be difficult. Though through the weakness of the flesh we fall into sin daily, if we get up again by renewed repentance at night, we are not, nor ought we to think ourselves, utterly cast down. The sin that humbles us shall not ruin us.

[4.] We must make a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our souls, for the remission of our sins, and the gracious acceptance of our repentance. We must not think that we have need of Christ only at our first conversion to God; no, we have daily need of him as our Advocate with the Father, and therefore, as such, he always appears in the presence of God for us, and attends continually to this very thing. Even our sins of daily infirmity would be our ruin, if he had not made satisfaction for them, and did not still make intercession for us. He who is washed, still needs to

wash his feet from the filth he contracts in every step; and, blessed be God, there is a fountain opened for us to wash in, and it is always open.

[5.] We must apply ourselves to the throne of grace for peace and pardon. Those who repent must pray that the thought of their heart may be forgiven them, Acts viii. 22. And it is good to be particular in our prayers for the pardon of sin; that, as Hannah said concerning Samuel, "For this child I prayed;" so we may be able to say, "For the forgiveness of this I prayed." However, the publican's prayer, in general, is a very proper one for each of us to lie down with, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

(4.) Let us lie down with humble supplications for the mercies of the night. Prayer is as necessary in the evening as it was in the morning, for we have the same need of the divine favour and care, to make the evening out-goings to rejoice, that we had to beautify those of the morning.

[1.] We must pray that our outward man may be under the care of God's holy angels, who are the ministers of his providence. God has promised that he will give his angels charge concerning those who make the Most High their refuge, and that they shall pitch their tents round about them, and deliver them; and what he has promised we may and must pray for. Not as if God needed the service of the angels, or as if he did himself quit all the care of his people, and turn it over to them; but it appears by abundance of scripture proofs, that they are employed about the people of God, whom he takes under his special protection, though they are not seen, both for the honour of God, by whom they are charged, and for the honour of the saints, with whom they are charged. It was the glory of Solomon's bed, that threescore valiant men were about it, of the valiant in Israel, all holding swords, because of fear in the night, Cant. iii. 7, 8. But much more honourably and comfortably are all true believers attended; for though they lie ever so meanly, they have hosts of angels surrounding their beds, and by the ministration of good spirits are preserved from malignant spirits. But God will for this be inquired

of by the house of Israel; Christ himself must pray the Father, and he will send to his relief legions of angels, Matt. xxvi. 53. Much more reason have we to ask, that it may be given us.

[2.] We must pray that our inward man may be under the influences of his Holy Spirit, who is the author and fountain of his grace. As public ordinances are opportunities in which the Spirit works upon the hearts of men, and, therefore, when we attend on them, we must pray for the Spirit's operations; so are private retirements, and, therefore, we must put up the same prayer, when we enter upon them. We find that in slumbering upon the bed, God opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, Job xxxiii. 15, 16. And with this David's experience concurs. He found that God visited him in the night, and tried him, and so discovered him to himself, Ps. xvii. 3. And that God gave him counsel, and his reins instructed him in the night season, and so he discovered himself to him, Ps. xvi. 7. He found that was a proper season for remembering God, and meditating upon him; and in order to our due improvement of this proper season for conversing with God in solitude, we need the powerful and benign influences of the blessed Spirit, which, therefore when we lie down we should earnestly pray for, and humbly put ourselves under, and submit ourselves to. How God's grace may work upon us when we are asleep we know not; the soul will act in a state of separation from the body, and how far it does act independent of the body, when the bodily senses are all locked up, we cannot say, but are sure, that the Spirit of the Lord is not bound. We have reason to pray, not only that our minds may not be either disturbed or polluted by evil dreams, in which, for aught we know, evil spirits sometimes have a hand, but may be instructed and quieted by good dreams; which Plutarch reckons among the evidences of increase and proficiency in virtue, and on which the good Spirit has an influence. I have heard of a good man that used to pray at night for good dreams.

II. When we lay us down, our care and endeavour must

be to lay us down in peace. It is promised to Abraham that he should go to his grave in peace, Gen. xv. 15, and this promise is sure to all his spiritual seed, for "the end of the upright man is peace;" Josiah dies in peace though he is killed in a battle: now, as an earnest of this, let us every night lie down in peace. It is threatened to the wicked, that they shall lie down in sorrow, Isa. l. 11. It is promised to the righteous, that they shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid, Lev. xxvi. 6; Job xi. 19. Let us then enter into this rest, this blessed sabbatism, and take care that we come not short of it.

1. Let us lie down in peace with God; for without this there can be no peace at all; "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," whom God is at war with. A state of sin is a state of enmity against God; they who continue in that state are under the wrath and curse of God, and cannot lie down in peace; what have they to do with peace? Hasten therefore, sinner, hasten to make thy peace with God in Jesus Christ, by repentance and faith; take hold on his strength, that thou mayst make peace with him; and thou shalt make peace, for fury is not in him. Conditions of peace are offered, consent to them; close with him who is our peace; take Christ upon his own terms, Christ upon any terms. Defer not to do this; dare not to sleep in that condition in which thou darest not die. "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee." Acquaint now thyself with him, now presently, and be at peace, and thereby this good shall come unto thee, thou shalt lie down in peace.

Sin is ever and anon making mischief between God and our souls, provoking God against us, alienating us from God; we therefore need to be every night making peace, reconciling ourselves to him and to his holy will, by the agency of his Spirit upon us, and begging of him to be reconciled to us, through the intercession of his Son for us; that there may be no distance, no strangeness, between us and God, no interposing cloud to hinder his mercies from coming down upon us, or our prayers from coming up unto him. "Being justified by faith," we have this "peace with

God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and then we may not only lie down in peace, but we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Let this be our first care, that God have no quarrel with us, nor we with him.

2. Let us lie down in peace with all men; we are concerned to go to sleep, as well as to die, in charity. Those who converse much with the world can scarcely pass a day but something or other happens that is provoking, some affront is given them, some injury done them, at least they think so; when they retire at night and reflect upon it, they are apt to magnify the offence, and while they are musing on it the fire burns, their resentments rise, and they begin to say, "I will do so to him as he has done to me," Prov. xxiv. 29. Then is the time of ripening the passion into a rooted malice, and meditating revenge; then, therefore, let wisdom and grace be set on work, to extinguish this fire from hell before it get head; then let this root of bitterness be killed and plucked up, and let the mind be disposed to forgive the injury, and to think well of, and wish well to, him that did it. If others incline to quarrel with us, yet let us resolve not to quarrel with them. Let us resolve, that whatever the affront or injury was, it shall neither disquiet our spirits nor make us to fret, which Peninnah aimed at in provoking Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 6, nor sour or im-bitter our spirits, or make us peevish and spiteful; but that we still love ourselves, and love our neighbours as ourselves, and therefore not, by harbouring malice, do any wrong to ourselves or our neighbour. And we shall find it much easier in itself, and much more pleasant in the reflection, to forgive twenty injuries, than to avenge one.

That it should be our particular care at night to reconcile ourselves to those who have been injurious to us, is intimated in that charge, Eph. iv. 26, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." If your passion has not cooled before, let it be abated by the cool of the evening, and quite disappear with the setting sun. You are then to go to bed, and if you lie down with these unmortified passions boiling in your breasts, your soul is among lions, you lie down in a



bed of thorns, in a nest of scorpions. Nay, some have observed from what follows immediately, "neither give place to the devil," ver. 27, that those who go to bed in malice have the devil for their bed-fellow. We cannot lie down at peace with God unless we be at peace with men; nor in faith pray to be forgiven unless we forgive. Let us therefore study the things that make for peace, for the peace of our own spirits, by living, as much as in us lies, peaceably with all men. I am for peace, yea, though they are for war.

3. Let us lie down in peace with ourselves, with our own minds, with a sweet composure of spirit and enjoyment of ourselves; "Return unto thy rest, O my soul," and be easy, let nothing disturb my soul, my darling.

But when may we lie down in peace at night?

(1.) If we have by the grace of God in some measure done the work of the day, and filled it up with duty, we may then lie down in peace at night. If we have the testimony of our consciences for us, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God," we have this day "had our conversation in the world;" that we have done some good in our places, something that will turn to a good account; if our hearts do not reproach us with a *diem perdidisti*, alas! "I have lost a day;" or with that which is worse, the spending of that time in the service of sin which should have been spent in the service of God; but if, on the contrary, we have abode with God, have been in his fear, and waited on him all the day long, we may then lie down in peace, for God says, "Well done, good and faithful servant;" and the sleep of the labouring man, of the labouring Christian, is sweet, is very sweet, when he can say, As I am a day's journey nearer my end, so I am a day's work fitter for it. Nothing will make our bed-chambers pleasant, and our beds easy, like the witness of the Spirit of God with our spirits, that we are going forward for heaven; and a conscience kept void of offence, which will be not only a continual feast, but a continual rest.

(2.) If we have by faith and patience, and submission to the divine will, reconciled ourselves to all the events of the day, so as to be uneasy at nothing that God has done, we may then lie down in peace at night. Whatever has fallen out cross to us, it shall not fret us, but we will kiss the rod, take up the cross, and say, "All is well that God does." Thus we must in our patience keep possession of our own souls, and not suffer any affliction to put us out of the possession of them. We have met with disappointments in husbandry perhaps, in trade, at sea, debtors prove insolvent, creditors prove severe, but this and the other proceed from the Lord; there is a providence in it, every creature is what God makes it to be, and therefore I am dumb, I open not my mouth; that which pleases God ought not to displease me.

(3.) If we have renewed our repentance for sin, and made a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our souls for the purifying of our consciences, we may then lay us down in peace. Nothing can break in upon our peace but sin; that is it which troubles the camp; if that be taken away there shall no evil befall us. The inhabitant, though he be far from well, yet shall not say, I am sick, shall not complain of sickness, for the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity, Isa. xxxiii. 24. The pardon of sin has enough in it to balance all our griefs, and therefore to silence all our complaints. A man sick of the palsy has yet reason to be easy, nay, and to be of good cheer, if Christ says to him, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" and "I am thy salvation."

(4.) If we have put ourselves under the divine protection for the ensuing night, we may then lay us down in peace. If by faith and prayer we have run into the name of the Lord as our strong tower, have fled to take shelter under the shadow of his wings, and made the Lord our refuge and habitation, we may then speak peace to ourselves, for God in his Word speaks peace to us. If David has an eye to the cherubim, between which God is said to dwell, when he says, Ps. lvii. 1, "In the shadow of thy wings will I make

my refuge;" yet, certainly, he has an eye to the similitude which Christ makes use of, of a hen gathering her chickens under her wings, when he says, Ps. xci. 4. "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust;" and the chickens under the wings of the hen are not only safe, but warm and pleased.

(5.) If we have cast all our cares for the day following upon God, we may then lay us down in peace. Taking thought for the morrow is the great hinderance of our peace in the night; let us but learn to live without disquieting care, and to refer the issue of all events to that God who may and can do what he will, and will do what is best, for those that love and fear him; "Father, thy will be done," and then we make ourselves easy. Our Saviour presses this very much upon his disciples, not to perplex themselves with thoughts what they shall eat and what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed, because their heavenly Father knows that they have need of these things, and will see that they be supplied. Let us, therefore, ease ourselves of this burden, by casting it on him who careth for us; what need he care and we care too?

III. Having laid ourselves down in peace, we must compose ourselves to sleep; "I will lay me down and sleep." The love of sleep for sleeping sake is the character of the sluggard, but as it is nature's physic for the recruiting of its weary powers, it is to be looked upon as a mercy equal to that of our food, and in its season to be received with thankfulness.

And with such thoughts as these we may go to sleep.

1. What poor bodies are these we carry about with us, that call for rest and relief so often, that are so soon tired, even with doing nothing, or next to nothing. It is an honour to man above the beasts, *Os homini sublime dedit*—"that he is made so erect;" it was part of the serpent's curse, "On thy belly shalt thou go;" yet we have little reason to boast of this honour, when we observe how little a while we can stand upright, and how soon we are burthened with our honour, and are forced to lie down. The

powers of the soul, and the senses of the body, are our honour, but it is mortifying to consider, how after a few hours' use they are all locked up under a total disability of acting, and it is necessary they should be so. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom," or the "strong man in his strength," since they both lie for a fourth part of their time utterly bereft of strength and wisdom, and on a level with the weak and foolish.

2. What a sad thing it is to be under the necessity of losing so much precious time as we do in sleep. That we should lie so many hours out of every four and twenty, in no capacity at all of serving God or our neighbour, of doing any work of piety or charity! Those who consider how short our time is, and what a great deal of work we have to do, and how fast the day of account hastens on, cannot but grudge to spend so much time in sleep, cannot but wish to spend as little as may be in it; cannot but be quickened by it to redeem time when they are awake, and cannot but long to be there where there shall be no need of sleep, but they shall be as the angels of God, and never rest day or night from the blessed work of praising God.

3. What a good Master do we serve, that allows us time for sleep, and furnishes us with conveniences for it, and makes it refreshing and reviving to us. By this it appears, the Lord is for the body, and it is a good reason why we should present our bodies to him as living sacrifices, and glorify him with them. Nay, sleep is spoken of as given by promise to the saints, Ps. cxxvii. 2, "So he giveth his beloved sleep." The godly man has the enjoyment of that in a quiet resignation to God, which the worldly man labours in vain for, in the eager pursuit of the world. What a difference is there between the sleep of a sinner, who is not sensible of his being within a step of hell, and the sleep of a saint, that has good hopes through grace of his being within a step of heaven: that is the sleep God gives to his beloved.

4. How piteous is the case of those from whose eyes sleep departs, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, and to

whom wearisome nights are appointed; who, when they lie down, say, "When shall we arise?" and who are thus made a terror to themselves. It was said, that of all the inhuman tortures used by those whom the French King employed to force his Protestant subjects to renounce their religion, none prevailed more than keeping them by violence long waking. When we find how earnestly nature craves sleep, and how much it is refreshed by it, we should think with compassion of those, who upon any account want that and other comforts which we enjoy, and pray for them.

5. How ungrateful we have been to the God of our mercies, in suffering sleep, which is so great a support and comfort to us, to be our hinderance in that which is good. As when it has been the gratification of our sloth and laziness, when it has kept us from our hour of prayer in the morning, and disfitted us for our hour of prayer at night; or when we have slept unseasonably in the worship of God, as Eutychus, when Paul was preaching; and the disciples, when Christ was in his agony at prayer. How justly might we be deprived of the comfort of sleep, and upbraided with this as the provoking cause of it! "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" Those who would sleep, and cannot, must think how often they should have kept awake and would not.

6. We have now one day less to live than we had in the morning. The thread of time is winding off apace, its sands are running down, and as time goes eternity comes; it is hastening on. Our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle; which passes and repasses in an instant. And what do we of the work of time? Oh that we could always go to sleep with death upon our thoughts, how would it quicken us to improve time! It would make our sleep not the less desirable, but it would make our death much the less formidable.

7. To thy glory, O God, I now go to sleep; whether we eat or drink, yea, or sleep, for that is included in whatever we do, we must do it to the glory of God. Why do I go to sleep now, but that my body may be fit to serve my soul,

and able for a while to keep pace with it in the service of God to-morrow. Thus common actions, by being directed toward our great end, are done after a godly sort, and abound to our account; and thus the advantages we have by them are sanctified to us. "To the pure all things are pure;" and "whether we wake or sleep, we live together with Christ," 1 Thess. v. 10.

8. To thy grace, O God, and to the word of thy grace, I now commend myself. It is good to fall asleep with a fresh surrender of our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, to God: now, "Return to God as thy rest, O my soul; for he has dealt bountifully with thee;" thus we should commit the keeping of our souls to him, falling asleep, as David did, Ps. xxxi. 5, with, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and as Stephen did, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Sleep does not only resemble death, but is sometimes an inlet to it; many go to sleep and never wake, but sleep the sleep of death; which is a good reason why we should go to sleep with dying thoughts, and put ourselves under the protection of a living God, and then sudden death will be no surprise to us.

9. Oh that when I awake I may be still with God! that the parenthesis of sleep, though long, may not break off the thread of my communion with God, but that as soon as I awake I may resume it. Oh that when I wake in the night I may have my mind turned to good thoughts! may remember God upon my bed, who then is at my right hand, and to whom the darkness and the light are both alike; and that I may sweetly meditate upon him in the night watches, that thus even that time may be redeemed, and improved to the best advantage, which otherwise is in danger not only of being lost in vain thoughts, but misspent in ill ones. Oh that when I awake in the morning, my first thoughts may be of God, that with them my heart may be seasoned for all day!

10. Oh that I may enter into a better rest than that which I am now entering upon! The apostle speaks of a rest we that have believed do enter into, even in this world, as

well as of a rest which in the other world remains for the people of God, Heb. iv. 3-9. Believers rest from sin and the world; they rest in Christ, and in God through Christ; they enjoy a satisfaction in the covenant of grace, and their interest in that covenant; "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell." They enter into this ark, and there are not only safe but easy. Now, oh that I might enjoy this rest while I live, and when I die might enter into something more than rest, even the joy of my Lord, a fulness of joy!

IV. We must do all this in a believing dependence upon God, and his power, providence, and grace. Therefore "I lay me down in peace," and compose myself to sleep, because thou, Lord, keepest me, and assurest me that thou dost so; "Thou, Lord, makest me to dwell in safety." David takes notice of God's compassing his path, and his lying down, as his observer, Ps. cxxxix. 3. He sees his eye upon him when he is retired into his bed-chamber, and none else sees him; when he is in the dark, and none else can see him. Here he takes notice of him, compassing his lying down as his preserver; and sees his hand about him to protect him from evil, and keep him safe; feels his hand under him to support him, and to make him easy.

1. It is by the power of God's providence that we are kept safe in the night, and on that providence we must depend continually. It is he that preserveth man and beast, Ps. xxxvi. 6, that upholds all things by the word of his power. That death, which by sin entered into the world, would soon lay all waste, if God did not shelter his creatures from its arrows, which are continually flying about, we cannot but see ourselves exposed to in the night. Our bodies carry about with them the seeds of all diseases. Death is always working in us; a little thing would stop the circulation either of the blood or the breath, and then we are gone; either never awake, or awake under the arrests of death. Men by sin are exposed to one another; many have been murdered in their beds, and many burned in their beds. And our greatest danger of all is from the malice of evil spirits, that go about seeking to devour.

We are very unable to help ourselves, and our friends unable to help us; we are not aware of the particulars of our danger, nor can we foresee which way it will arise; and therefore know not where to stand upon our guard; or if we did, we know not how. When Saul was asleep he lost his spear and his cruse of water, and might as easily have lost his head, as Sisera did when he was asleep, by the hand of a woman. What poor helpless creatures are we, and how easily are we overcome when sleep has overcome us! Our friends are asleep too, and cannot help us. An illness may seize us in the night, which, if they be called up and come to us, they cannot help us against; the most skilful and tender are "physicians of no value."

It is therefore God's providence that protects us night after night, his care, his goodness. That was the hedge about Job, about him and his house, and all that he had round about, Job i. 10, a hedge that Satan himself could not break through, nor find a gap in, though he traversed it round. There is a special protection which God's people are taken under, they are hid in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle, under the protection of his promise, Ps. xxvii. 5; they are his own, and dear to him, and he keeps them as the apple of his eye, Ps. xvii. 8. He is round about them from henceforth and for ever, as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, Ps. cxxv. 2. He protects their habitations, as he did the tents of Israel in the wilderness; for he has promised to create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion "a pillar of cloud by day," to shelter from heat, "and the shining of a flaming fire by night," to "shelter from cold," Isa. iv. 5. Thus he blesseth the habitation of the just, so that no real evil shall befall it, nor any plague come nigh it.

The care of the divine Providence concerning us and our families we are to depend upon, so as to look upon no provision we make for our own safety sufficient, without the blessing of the divine Providence upon it; "Except the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Be the house ever so well built, the doors and windows ever



so well barred, the servants ever so careful, ever so watchful, it is all to no purpose, unless he that keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, undertake for our safety; and if he be thy Protector, "at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh," and "shalt know that thy tabernacle is in peace," Job v. 22-24.

2. It is by the power of God's grace that we are enabled to think ourselves safe, and on that grace we must continually depend. The fear of danger, though groundless, is as vexatious as if it were ever so just. And therefore, to complete the mercy of being made to dwell safely, it is requisite that, by the grace of God, we be delivered from our fears, Ps. xxxiv. 4, as well as from the things themselves that we were afraid of; that shadows may not be a terror to us, no more than substantial evils.

If by the grace of God, we are enabled to keep conscience void of offence, and still to preserve our integrity; if iniquity be put far away, and no wickedness suffered to dwell in our tabernacles, then shall we lift up our faces without spot, we shall be steadfast, and shall not need to fear, Job xi. 14, 15; for fear came in with sin, and goes out with it. "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God," and man too, and are made to dwell securely, for we are sure nothing can hurt us but sin: and whatever does harm us, sin is the sting of it; and, therefore, if sin be pardoned and prevented, we need not fear any trouble.

If, by the grace of God, we be enabled to live by faith; that faith which sets God alway before us; that faith which applies the promises to ourselves, and puts them in suit at the throne of grace; that faith which purifies the heart, overcomes the world, and quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one; that faith which realizes unseen things, and is the substance and evidence of them: if we be actuated and governed by this grace we are made to dwell safely, and to bid defiance to death itself, and all its harbingers and terrors: "O death, where is thy sting?" This faith will not only silence our fears, but will open our lips in holy triumphs, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Let us lie down in peace, and sleep, not in the strength of a natural resolution against fear, nor merely of rational arguments against it, though they are of good use, but in a dependence upon the grace of God to work faith in us, and to fulfil in us the work of faith. This is going to sleep like a Christian under the shadow of God's wings, going to sleep in faith; and it will be to us a good earnest of dying in faith; for the same faith that will carry us cheerfully through the short death of sleep, will carry us through the long sleep of death.

#### THE APPLICATION.

1. See how much it is our concern to carry our religion about with us wherever we go, and to have it always at our right hand; for at every turn we have occasion for it, lying down, rising up, going out, coming in; and those are Christians indeed, who confine not their religion to the new moons and the sabbaths, but bring the influences of it into all the common actions and occurrences of human life. We must sit down at our tables and rise from them, lie down in our beds and arise from them, with an eye to God's providence and promise. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, even while our conversation is with the world.

And in order to this, it is necessary that we have a living principle in our hearts, a principle of grace, which, like a well of living water, may be continually springing up to life eternal, John iv. 14. It is necessary likewise that we have a watchful eye upon our hearts, and keep them with all diligence, that we set a strict guard upon their motions, and have our thoughts more at command than I fear most Christians have. See what need we have of the constant supplies of divine grace, and of a union with Christ, that by faith we may partake of the root and fatness of the good olive continually.

2. See what a hidden life the life of good Christians is, and how much it lies from under the eye and observation

of the world. The most important part of their business lies between God and their own souls, in the frame of their spirits, and the workings of their hearts, in their retirements, which no eye sees but his, that is all eye. Justly are the saints called God's hidden ones, and his secret is said to be with them, for they have meat to eat, and work to do, which the world knows not of; and joys, and griefs, and cares which a stranger does not intermeddle with. "Great is the mystery of godliness."

And this is a good reason why we should look upon ourselves as incompetent judges one of another, because we know not each other's hearts, nor are witnesses to their retirements. It is to be feared there are many whose religion lies all in the outside; they make a fair show in the flesh, and perhaps a great noise, and yet are strangers to this secret communion with God, in which consists so much of the power of godliness. And on the other hand it is to be hoped, there are many who do not distinguish themselves by anything observable in their profession of religion, but pass through the world without being taken notice of, and yet converse much with God in solitude, and walk with him in the even, constant tenor of a regular devotion and conversation. "The kingdom of God comes not with observation." Many merchants thrive by a secret trade that make no bustle in the world. It is fit, therefore, that every man's judgment should proceed from the Lord, who knows men's hearts and sees in secret.

3. See what enemies they are to themselves who continue under the power of a vain and carnal mind, and live without God in the world. Multitudes I fear there are, to whom all that has been said of secret communion with God is accounted as a strange thing, and they are ready to say of their ministers when they speak of it, "Do they not speak parables?" They lie down and rise up, go out and come in, in the constant pursuit either of worldly profits, or of sensual pleasures; but God is not in all their thoughts, not in any of them. They live upon him, and upon the gifts of his bounty from day to day, but they have no regard

to him, never own their dependence on him, nor are in any care to secure his favour.

Those who live such a mere animal life as this, do not only put a great contempt upon God, but do a great deal of damage to themselves; they stand in their own light, and deprive themselves of the most valuable comforts that can be enjoyed on this side heaven. What peace can they have who are not at peace with God? What satisfaction can they take in their hopes who build them not upon God, the everlasting foundation? or in their joys, who derive them not from him, the fountain of life and living waters? Oh that at length they would be wise for themselves, and remember their Creator and Benefactor!

4. See what easy, pleasant lives the people of God might live, if it were not their own faults. There are those who fear God and work righteousness, and are accepted of the Lord, but go drooping and disconsolate from day to day, are full of cares, and fears, and complaints, and make themselves always uneasy; and it is because they do not live that life of delight in God, and dependence on him, that they might and should live. God has effectually provided for their dwelling at ease, but they make not use of that provision he has laid up for them.

Oh that all who appear to be conscientious, and are afraid of sin, would appear to be cheerful, and afraid of nothing else; that all who call God Father, and are in care to please him, and keep themselves in his love, would learn to cast all their other care upon him, and commit their way to him as to a Father. He shall choose our inheritance for us, and knows what is best for us, better than we do for ourselves. "Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me." It is what I have often said, and will abide by, "That a holy, heavenly life, spent in the service of God, and in communion with him, is the most pleasant, comfortable life any body can live in this world."

5. See in this what is the best preparation we can make for the changes that may be before us in our present state; and that is, to keep up a constant acquaintance and com-

munion with God, to converse with him daily, and keep up stated times for calling on him, that so when trouble comes, it may find the wheels of prayer a-going. And then may we come to God with a humble boldness and comfort, and hope to speed when we are in affliction. if we have been no strangers to God at other times, but in our peace and prosperity had our eyes ever toward him.

Even when we arrive to the greatest degree of holy security and serenity, and lie down most in peace, yet, still, we must keep up an expectation of trouble in the flesh. Our ease must be grounded not upon any stability in the creature; if it be, we put a cheat upon ourselves, and treasure up so much the greater vexation for ourselves. No, it must be built upon the faithfulness of God, which is unchangeable. Our Master has told us, "In the world you shall have tribulation," much tribulation, count upon it, it is only in me that you shall have peace. But if every day be to us, as it should be, a sabbath of rest in God, and communion with him, nothing can come amiss to us any day, be it ever so cross.

6. See in this what is the best preparation we can make for the unchangeable world that is before us. We know God will bring us to death, and it is our great concern to get ready for it. It ought to be the business of every day, to prepare for our last day, and what can we do better for ourselves in the prospect of death, than, by frequent retirements for communion with God, to get more loose from that world which at death we must leave, and better acquainted with that world which at death we must remove to. By going to our beds as to our graves we shall make death familiar to us, and it will become as easy to us to close our eyes in peace and die, as it used to be to close our eyes in peace and sleep.

We hope God will bring us to heaven; and by keeping up daily communion with God, we grow more and more meet to partake of that inheritance; and have our conversation in heaven. It is certain all that will go to heaven hereafter, begin their heaven now, and have their hearts

there. If we thus enter into a spiritual rest every night, that will be a pledge of our blessed repose in the embraces of divine love in that world wherein day and night come to an end, and we shall not rest day or night from praising him who is, and will be, our eternal rest.

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### HYMN FOR THE MORNING.

AWAKE, my soul! Awake mine eyes,  
 Awake my drowsy faculties;  
 Awake, and see the new-born light  
 Spring from the darksome womb of night.  
 Look up and see th' unwearied sun,  
 Already has his race begun;  
 The pretty lark is mounted high,  
 And sings her matins in the sky.  
 Arise, my soul, and thou my voice,  
 In songs of praise early rejoice.  
 O Great Creator, Heavenly King!  
 Thy praises let me ever sing!  
 Thy power has made, thy goodness kept,  
 This fenceless body while I slept;  
 Yet one day more hast given me,  
 From all the powers of darkness free.  
 Oh keep my heart from sin secure,  
 My life unblamable and pure;  
 That when the last of all my days is come,  
 Cheerful and fearless I may wait my doom.

FLATMAN.

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### ANTHEM FOR THE EVENING.

SLEEP, downy sleep! come close mine eyes,  
 Tir'd with beholding vanities!  
 Sweet slumbers come and chase away  
 The toils and follies of the day.  
 On your soft bosom will I lie,  
 Forget the world and learn to die.

O Israel's watchful Shepherd, spread  
 Tents of angels round my bed.  
 Let not the spirits of the air  
 While I slumber me ensnare;  
 But save thy suppliant free from harms,  
 Clasp'd in thine everlasting arms.  
 Clouds and darkness is thy throne,  
 Thy wonderful pavilion ;  
 Oh dart from thence a shining ray,  
 And then my midnight shall be day :  
 Thus when the morn, in crimson drest,  
 Breaks through the windows of the east,  
 My hymns of thankful praises shall arise,  
 Like incense on the morning sacrifice.

FLATMAN.

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 MORNING HYMN.

Ps. xlix. 5, 8; lxxiii. 24, 25.

- 1 God of the morning, at whose voice  
 The cheerful sun makes haste to rise,  
 And like a giant doth rejoice,  
 To run his journey through the skies.
- 2 From the fair chambers of the east  
 The circuit of his race begins ;  
 And without weariness or rest  
 Round the whole earth he flies and shines.
- 3 Oh like the sun may I fulfil  
 Th' appointed duties of the day,  
 With ready mind and active will  
 March on, and keep my heavenly way !
- 4 But I shall rove and lose the race,  
 If God my sun should disappear,  
 And leave me in this world's wide maze  
 To follow every wand'ring star.
- 5 Lord, thy commands are clean and pure,  
 Enlight'ning our beclouded eyes,  
 Thy threat'nings just, thy promise sure,  
 Thy gospel makes the simple wise.

- 6 Give me thy counsels for my guide,  
And then receive me to thy bliss ;  
All my desires and hopes beside  
Are faint and cold compar'd with this.

WATTS.

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**EVENING HYMN.**

Ps. iv. 8 ; lli. 5. 6 ; cxliii. 8.

- 1 THUS far the Lord has led me on,  
Thus far his power prolongs my days ;  
And every evening shall make known  
Some fresh memorial of his grace.
- 2 Much of my time has run to waste,  
And I perhaps am near my home ;  
But he forgives my follies past,  
He gives me strength for days to come.
- 3 I lay my body down to sleep,  
Peace is the pillow for my head,  
While well-appointed angels keep  
Their watchful stations round my bed.
- 4 In vain the sons of earth or hell  
Tell me a thousand frightful things,  
My God in safety makes me dwell  
Beneath the shadow of his wings.
- 5 Faith in his name forbids my fear :  
Oh may thy presence ne'er depart !  
And in the morning make me hear  
The love and kindness of thy heart.
- 6 Thus when the night of death shall come,  
My flesh shall rest beneath the ground,  
And wait thy voice to rouse my tomb,  
With sweet salvation in the sound.
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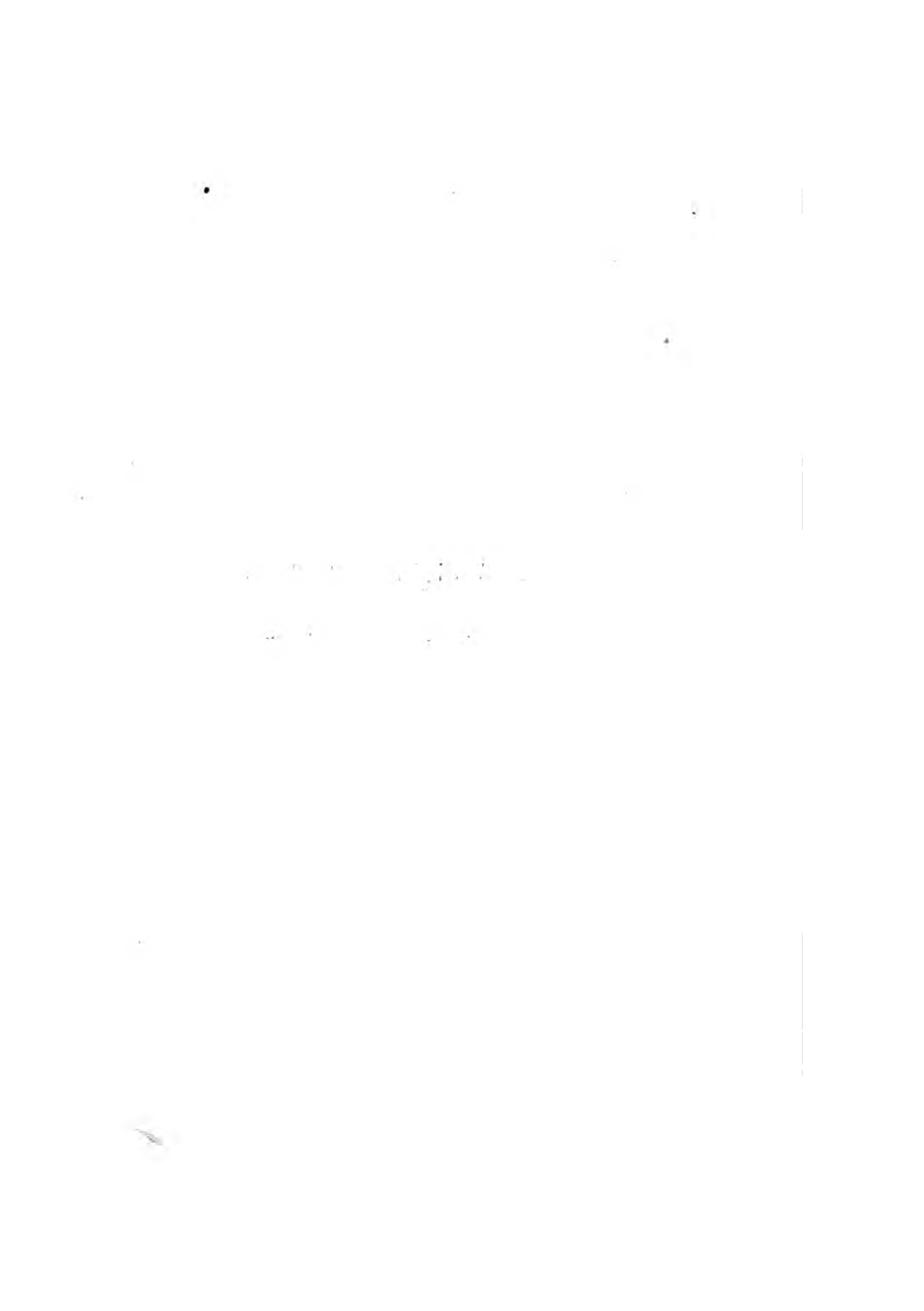
A SONG FOR MORNING OR EVENING.

Lam. iii. 23; Is. xlv. 7.

- 1 My God, how endless is thy love !  
Thy gifts are every evening new,  
And morning mercies from above  
Gently distil like early dew.
  
- 2 Thou spread'st the curtains of the night,  
Great guardian of my sleeping hours ;  
Thy sovereign word restores the light,  
And quickens all my drowsy powers.
  
- 3 I yield my powers to thy command,  
To thee I consecrate my days ;  
Perpetual blessings from thine hand  
Demand perpetual songs of praise.

CHRISTIANITY NO SECT,

AND YET EVERY WHERE SPOKEN AGAINST.



# CHRISTIANITY NO SECT,

AND YET EVERY WHERE SPOKEN AGAINST.

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“For as concerning this sect, we may know that every where it is spoken against.”—ACTS xxviii. 22.

WOULD you think that such a false and invidious representation as this should ever be given of the Christian religion, that ¹pure religion and undefiled, which came into the world supported by the strongest evidences of truth, and recommended by the most endearing allurements of grace and goodness, the ²sayings whereof are so faithful, and so well worthy of acception; that sacred institution which scatters the brightest rays of divine light and love that ever were darted from heaven to earth? That it is which is here so invidiously called a *sect*, and is said to be “every where spoken against.”

It will be worth while to observe,

1. Who they were that said this, they were the chief of the Jews who were at Rome, ver. 17. The Jews were looked upon, at least they looked upon themselves, as a very knowing people; the Jews at Rome, a place of learning and inquiry, thought themselves more knowing than the other Jews. St Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, ch. ii. 17—20, takes notice of it: “Thou art called a Jew, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will,—and art

¹ Jam. i. 27.

² 1 Tim. i. 15.

confident that thou thyself art a guide to the blind, a light of them which are in darkness," &c. And we have reason to suppose, that the chief of the Jews there, who had the greatest advantages of education and correspondence, were the most intelligent. It might also be justly expected, that upon the first notices of the gospel, the Jews should have been, of all people, most ready to acquaint themselves with a religion which was so much the honour and perfection of their own; and yet, it seems, the Jews, the chief of the Jews at Rome, knew no more of Christianity than this, that it was "a sect every where spoken against." This we know, say they, and it was all they knew concerning it.

The Jews were of all other the most bitter and inveterate enemies to the Christians. While the Roman emperors tolerated them, as they did till Nero's time,¹ the Jews with an unwearied malice persecuted them from city to city, and were the first wheel in most of the opposition that the gospel met with when it was first preached. Now one would think they would not have been so vigorous and industrious to suppress Christianity, if they had not very well acquainted themselves with it, and known it to deserve such opposition: but it seems by this, they knew little or nothing of the religion they so much maligned, had never searched into the merits of its cause, nor weighed the proofs of its divine authority; but, against all law and reason, condemned it, *δια την φημην*—"merely upon common fame," as Justin Martyr complains;² and followed the cry to run it down, because it was "every where spoken against."

2. Upon what occasion they said this. They were now appointing a time to discourse with St. Paul upon the grand question in debate, whether Jesus of Nazareth were the true Messiah or no? And they seemed willing to hear what that great man had to say in defence of the religion he

Tertullian confidently asserts, *Primum Neronem in hanc Sectam tum maxime Romæ orientem Cæsariano gladio ferocisse*.—That Nero was the first who raged with the imperial sword against this sect rising at that time into general notice at Rome.—*Apol. c. 5.*

² *Inquisitione et agnitione neglecta nomen detinetur, nomen expugnatur—vox sola prædamnat*.—All inquiry into the merits of the case is omitted; the name only is attacked, the name only consigns to condemnation.—*Tert. Ap. c. 5.*

preached: "We desire," say they, "to hear of thee what thou thinkest." Now, one would expect that so good a cause, managed by such a skilful advocate, could not but carry the day, and be victorious, and that they would all have been brought over to the belief of Christianity; but we find, ver. 24, that it proved otherwise. After all there were those that believed not, and the text intimates the reason of their infidelity, they came to hear the word under a prejudice; they had already imbibed an ill opinion of the way, which, right or wrong, they resolved to hold fast: and though some of them, by the help of divine grace, got over this stumbling-block, that like the Bereans were more noble than the rest, and of freer thought, yet many of them continued under the power of those prejudices, and were sealed up under unbelief, ver. 26, 27. Thus is the power of the word in many baffled by the power of prejudice: they do not believe because they are resolved they will not: they conclude that no good thing can ¹come out of Nazareth, and will not be persuaded to come and see. Thus do they prejudge the cause, ²"answering the matter before they hear it," and it will prove folly and shame to them.

Now in the account they here give of their knowledge of the Christian religion, we may observe,

(1.) That they looked upon it to be a *sect*, and we will prove that to be false.

(2.) A *sect* "every where spoken against," and we will grant that to be true, that it is generally spoken against, though it is most unreasonable and unjust it should be so.

(1.) The Christian religion is here called (but miscalled) a "*sect, αἵρεσις—a heresy*." "After the way which they call heresy," says St. Paul, Acts xxiv. 14, "so worship I the God of my fathers." "The sect of the Nazarenes;" so Tertullus calls it in his opening the indictment against Paul, Acts xxiv. 5. It is called "this way," Acts ix. 2,

¹ John i. 46.

² Prov. xviii. 13; John vii. 51.

³ *Electio, optio*. An opinion not forced upon us by the evidences of truth but chosen by us with some foreign design.

and "that way," Acts xix. 9, as if it were a bye-path out of the common road. The practice of serious godliness is still looked upon by many as a sect, that is, a party-business, and a piece of affected singularity in opinion and practice, tending to promote some carnal design, by creating and supporting invidious distinctions among men. This is the proper notion of a sect, and therefore the masters and maintainers of sects are justly in an ill name, as enemies to the great corporation of mankind; but there is not the least colour of reason to put this invidious and scandalous character on the Christian religion; however it may be mistaken and misrepresented, it is very far from being really a sect. There were sects of religion among the Jews; we read of the sect of the Sadducees, Acts v. 17, which was built on peculiar notions, such as overturned the foundation of natural religion, by denying a future state of rewards and punishments. There was also the sect of the Pharisees, Acts xv. 5, the "straitest sect of *their* religion," Acts xxvi. 5, which was founded in the observance and imposition of singular rites and customs, with an affected separation from, and contempt of, all mankind. These were sects; but there is nothing of the spirit and genius of these in the Christian religion as it was instituted by its great author.

[1.] True Christianity establishes that which is of common concern to all mankind, and therefore is not a sect. The truths and precepts of the everlasting gospel are perfective of, and no way repugnant to, the light and law of natural religion. Is that a sect which gives such mighty encouragements and assistances to those that "in every nation fear God, and work righteousness?" Acts x. 35. Is that a sect which tends to nothing else but to reduce the revolted race of mankind to their ancient allegiance to their great Creator, and to renew that image of God upon man which was his primitive rectitude and felicity? Is that a sect which proclaims God in Christ, ¹"reconciling the world unto himself," and recovering it

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19.

from that degenerate and deplorable state into which it was sunk? Is that a sect which publishes ¹good-will towards men, and Christ the ²“Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world?” Surely that which concurs so much with the uncorrupted and unprejudiced sentiments, and conduces much more to the true and real happiness of all mankind, cannot be thought to take its rise from such narrow opinions, and private interests, as sects owe their original to.

[2.] True Christianity has a direct tendency to the uniting of the children of men, and the gathering of them together in one,³ and therefore is far from being a sect, which is supposed to lead to a division, and to sow discord among brethren. The preaching of the gospel did indeed prove the occasion of contention. Our Saviour foresaw and foretold, Luke xii. 51–53, that his disciples and followers would be “men of strife,” in the same sense that the prophet Jeremiah was, Jer. xv. 10; not men striving, but men striven with: but the gospel was by no means the cause of this contention, for it was intended to be the cure of all contention. If there be any who, under the cloak and colour of the Christian name, cause divisions, and propagate feuds and quarrels among men, let them bear their own burthen; but it is certain that the Christian religion, as far as it obtains its just power and influence upon the minds of men, will make them meek and quiet, humble and peaceable, loving and useful, condescending and forgiving, and every way easy, and acceptable, and profitable one to another. Is that a sect which was introduced with a proclamation of “peace on earth?” That which beats swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks? Or was he the author of a sect who is the great centre of unity, and who died to break down ⁴“partition walls,” and to “slay *all* enmities,” that he might ⁵“gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad?” Was

¹ Luke ii. 14.

² John i. 29, iii 16; 1 John ii. 2.

³ *Secta dicitur a Secando*—It is called a sect from *secando*—to be separated.

⁴ Eph. ii. 14–16.

⁵ John xi. 52.

he the author of a sect who came into the world ¹“not to destroy men’s lives but to save” them; and who taught his followers not only to love one another, but to love their enemies, and to count every one their ²neighbour to whom they could be any way serviceable?

[3.] True Christianity aims at no worldly benefit or advantage, and therefore must by no means be called a sect. Those who espouse a sect are supposed to be governed in it by their secular interest, and to aim at wealth, or honour, or the gratification of some base lust. The Pharisees proved themselves to be a sect, by their thirst after the praise of men, and their greedy devouring of widows’ houses: but the professors of Christianity have not only been taught, by the law of their religion, to live above this world, and to look upon it with a holy contempt, but have been exposed by their profession to the loss and ruin of all their secular comforts and enjoyments. Are those to be accounted politic and designing sectaries who have for Christ cheerfully ³“suffered the loss of all things?” Is that a sect, which, instead of preferring a man to honour, or raising him to an estate, lays him open to disgrace and poverty, renders him obnoxious to fines and forfeitures, banishments and imprisonments, racks and tortures, flames and gibbets, which were the common lot of the primitive Christians. Cæsar Vaninus, a sworn enemy to the Christian religion, and one who was industrious in searching out objections against it, owned that he could find nothing in it that savoured of a carnal and worldly design: no, it has always approved itself a ⁴“heavenly calling,” and the strictest professors of it, even their enemies themselves being judges, have had ⁵“their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom.” Very unjustly therefore is it called a sect.

As to this, therefore, suffer a word of caution and exhortation:

First, Let us take heed lest our profession of religion

¹ Luke ix. 56.

² Luke x. 36, 37.

³ Phil. iii. 8.

⁴ Heb. iii. 1.

⁵ 2 Cor. i. 12.

degenerate into anything which may make it look like a sect. Christianity, as it was instituted by Christ, is not a sect; let not Christians then be sectaries. We make our profession of religion a sect, when we monopolize the church and its ministry and sacraments, and spend that zeal in matters of doubtful disputation which should be reserved for the weightier matters of the law; when we place our religion in ¹“meats *and* drinks,” which should be placed in “righteousness, *and* peace, *and* joy in the Holy Ghost;” when we profess religion with a conceit of ourselves, and a contempt of others, and with any worldly design; when we sacrifice the common interests of Christ’s kingdom to the particular interests of a party; and, in a word, when our profession is tainted with the ²“leaven of the Pharisees,” which is both souring and swelling; then it degenerates into a sect. Let us therefore adhere to the sure and large foundations, and be actuated by a principle of love to, and so maintain communion with, ³“all that in every place,” and under every denomination, “call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” Let us be modest in our opinions, charitable and candid in our censures, self-denying in all our converse; acting always under the influence of that “wisdom that is from above,” which is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy;” that by this well-doing we may ⁴“put to silence the ignorance of” those who call religion a sect.

Secondly, Let us not be deterred from serious godliness, or any of the requirements of it, by the invidious name of a sect, which is put upon it. If a strict, and sober, and circumspect conversation, a conscientious government of our tongue, praying and singing psalms in our families, a religious observation of the Lord’s day, a diligent attendance upon the means of grace, joining in religious societies for prayer and Christian conference, and endeavouring, in our places, the suppression of profaneness and immorality; if these, and the like, be called and counted the marks and

¹ Rom. xiv. 17, 18.² Luke xii. 1.³ 1 Cor. i. 2.⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 15.

badges of a sect, let us not be moved at it, but say as David did, 2 Sam. vi. 22, "If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile." If the practice of piety be branded as a sect, it is better for us to come under the reproaches of men for following it, than under the curse of God for neglecting it. It is a ¹"very small thing to be judged of man's judgment, but he that judgeth is the Lord:" let us therefore be more afraid of being sectaries than of being called so.

(2.) The Christian religion is here said to be "every where spoken against." That it was spoken against was evident enough; but that it was "every where" spoken against, was more than they could be sure of: they did not know all places, nor had they correspondence with, or intelligence from, every country; but we must not wonder if those who oppose the truth as it is in Jesus make no conscience of transgressing the laws of truth in common conversation. But we will suppose that the acquaintance and converse of those Jews at Rome lay mostly with those who were enemies to Christianity, and spoke against it, and they therefore concluded it every where spoken against, because they found it spoken against in all places that they came to, or had advice from. Thus apt are we to embrace that as a general sentiment and observation which we find received by those that we usually associate with, and so we run ourselves into mistakes which larger and more impartial inquiries will soon rectify.

But we will take it for granted, however, that what they said was true, not because they said it, but because the experience of all ages does confirm it, and concur with it: so that a little acquaintance with books and the world will prove the observation which we ground upon the text.

Doct. That it is, and always has been, the lot of Christ's holy religion to be every where spoken against. Or thus:

That true Christianity has all along met with a great deal of opposition and contradiction in this world.

I propose not to enter into a particular disquisition of that which has been, and is, spoken against religion, nor do

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

I undertake at present to show how false and unreasonable it is; that has been done many a time by the best hands, and so effectually, that every impartial eye must needs look upon the cause of the adversaries of religion to be a baffled cause: but I shall only make some improvement of this general observation, which cannot be unseasonable in an age wherein the gates of hell seem to be making their utmost efforts against the church; and the devil, as the calumniator and false accuser, to be ¹more wroth than ever with the woman the church, and to push on the war with an unusual vigour against the “remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

I shall therefore, I. Inquire what it is in Christianity that is spoken against. And, II. Show you why so holy and excellent a religion is spoken against; and then, III. Draw some inferences from this observation.

I. Who and what it is that is spoken against.

1. Jesus Christ, the author of our religion, is every where spoken against. When the First-begotten was brought into the world, old Simeon, among other great things, pronounced this concerning him, that he was a sign which should be spoken against, and by that means was set “for the fall of many,” Luke ii. 34. When he was here upon earth he was spoken against. ²The stone which was designed to be the head of the corner was rejected, and set at nought by the builders. It was not the least of his sufferings in the days of his flesh that he “endured the contradiction of sinners against himself,” Heb. xii. 3. They spoke against his person, as mean and contemptible, and one that had ³“no form nor comeliness:” they spoke against his preaching, as false and deceiving, John vii. 12; as factious and seditious, Luke xxiii. 2; as senseless and ridiculous, for the Pharisees derided him for it, Luke xvi. 14. They spoke against his miracles, as done in confederacy with Beelzebub the prince of the devils, Matt. xii. 24. They spoke against his morals, charging him with blasphemy against God, profanation of

¹ Rev. xii. 17.

² Ps. cxviii. 22.

³ Isa. liii. 2, 3.

the sabbath-day, and all the instances of debauchery which were usually met with in a gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners, Matt. xi. 19. They spoke against his followers as a company of ignorant despicable people, John vii. 48, 49. Pass through all the steps and stages of his sufferings, and you will find him every where spoken against. They reproached him in all his offices; in his office of teaching, when they challenged him to tell who smote him; in his office of saving, when they challenged him to save himself as he had saved others; in his office of ruling, when they challenged him to prove himself the King of the Jews, by coming down from the cross. The common people spoke against him, even they that ¹passed by reviled him. The Pharisees and chief priests, the grandees of the church, were as severe as any in their reflections on him. Princes also did sit and speak against him. ²Herod and his men of war set him at nought, *εζουζηνησας*—made nothing of him that made all things.

Nay, even now that he is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, “far above all principalities and powers,”³ that is, both good and evil angels, so as to be no more hurt by the contradictions of the one, than he is benefited by the adorations of the other, yet still he is spoken against. Besides the contempt cast upon him by the Jews and Mahometans, are there not with us, even with us, those who daringly speak against him? Arians and Socinians are daily speaking against him as a mere man, thinking that a robbery in him, which he thought none, to be ⁴equal with God. Quakers and enthusiasts speak against him as a mere name, setting up I know not what Christ within them, while they explode that Jesus that was crucified at Jerusalem. Athiests and deists speak against him as a mere cheat, accounting the religion he established a great imposture, and his gospel a jest. Profane and ignorant people speak slightly of him, as if our ⁵beloved were no more than another beloved; and some speak scornfull^v of him, as

¹ Matt. xxvii. 39.

⁴ Phil. ii. 6

² Luke xxiii. 11.

⁵ Cant. v. 2.

³ Eph. i. 20, 21.

Julian the apostate did, that called him in disdain the Galilean, and the carpenter's son. Such as these are the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him: the Lord rebuke them, even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke them.

2. God himself, the great object of our religious regards, is every where spoken against. It is not only the Christian revelation that is thus attacked by virulent and blasphemous tongues, but even natural religion also. The glorious and blessed God, the great Creator and Benefactor of the universe, that does good to all, and whose "mercies are over all his works," even he is every where spoken against. Some deny his being; though his existence be so necessary, so evident, that if he be not, it is impossible any thing else should be, yet there are fools who "say in their hearts," what they dare not speak out, that "there is no God," Ps. xiv. 1. And he that says there is no God, wishes there were none, and if he could help it there should be none. Others blaspheme the attributes of God, who charge the all-seeing eye with blindness, saying, "The Lord shall not see," Ps. xciv. 7; that charge the eternal mind with forgetfulness, saying, "God hath forgotten," Ps. x. 11; that charge the Almighty arm with impotency, saying, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" which is there called "speaking against God," Ps. lxxviii. 19, 20. Those speak against God that promise themselves impunity in sin, saying, ¹"They shall not surely die," and, ²"God will not require it." And those that boldly avow their impiety and irreligion, saying to the Almighty, "Depart from us," Job xxi. 14, 15. Some speak meanly of God, though he is infinitely great and glorious; others speak hardly of him, though he is infinitely just and good. The name of God is spoken against by the profane using of it; so it is construed, Ps. cxxxix. 20, "They speak against thee wickedly, thine enemies take thy name in vain." Can there be a greater slight put upon the eternal God, than for men to use his sacred and blessed name as a by-word, with which they give vent to their ex-

¹ Gen. iii. 4.

² Ps. x. 13.

orbitant passions, or fill up the vacancies of their other idle words? The name of God is thus abused, not only by those who utter dreadful oaths and curses, which make the ears of every good man to tingle, but by those who mention the name of God slightly and irreverently in their common conversation, in whose ¹mouths he is near when he is "far from their reins." To use those forms of speech which properly signify an acknowledgment and adoration of God's being, as "O God!" or "O Lord!" or an appeal to his omniscience, as "God knows;" or an invocation of his favour, as "God bless me," or "God be merciful to me:" I say, to use these or the like expressions impertinently, and intending thereby to express only our wonder or surprise, or our passionate resentments, or any thing but that which is their proper and awful signification, is an evidence of a vain mind, that wants a due regard to that glorious and fearful name, ²"The Lord our God." I see not that the profanation of the ordinance of praying is any better than the profanation of the ordinance of swearing. The serious consideration of this, I hope, will prevent much of that dishonour which is done to God, and to his holy name, by some that run not, with others, to an excess of riot.

The providence of God is likewise every where spoken against by ³murmurers and complainers, who quarrel with it, and find fault with the disposal of it, and, when they are ⁴"hardly bestead, curse their king and their God." Thus is the mouth of the ungodly ⁵"set against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth."

3. The Word of God, the great rule of our religion, is every where spoken against. So it was when it was first preached; wherever the apostles went preaching the doctrine of Christ they met with those that "spake against it, contradicting and blaspheming," Acts xiii. 45. So it is now that it is written. Atheists speak against the Scripture as not of authority; papists speak against it as dark and uncertain, further than it is expounded and supported by the

¹ Jer. xii. 2.

² Deut. xxviii. 58.

³ Jude xvi.

⁴ Isa. viii. 21.

⁵ Ps. lxxiii. 9.

authority of their church, which receives ¹unwritten traditions *pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia*—"with the same pious affection and reverence" that they receive the Scriptures; nay, and if we judge by their practice, with much more. Thus is the word of God blasphemed by them who call themselves "The Temple of the Lord." But if we take away revelation, as the deists do, all revelation will soon be lost; and if we derogate from the Scriptures, as the papists do, all revelation is much endangered.

Those also speak against the Scriptures who profanely jest with them; and that they may the more securely rebel against scripture laws, make themselves and their idle companions merry with the scripture language: "The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach," as the prophet complains, Jer. vi. 10. And another prophet found it so, whose serious word of the necessity of "precept upon precept" was turned into an idle song, as Grotius understands it, Isa. xxviii. 13, "The word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept." Very likely it was done by the drunkards of Ephraim, spoken of, ver. 1, and it gave occasion to that caution, ver. 22, "Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." Profligate and debauched minds relish no wit like that which ridicules the sacred text, and exposes that to contempt; as of old the insulting Babylonians must be humoured with the ²"songs of Sion;" and no cups can please Belshazzar in his drunken frolic, but the sacred ³vessels of the temple. Thus industrious are the powers of darkness to vilify the Scriptures, and make them contemptible: but He that sits in heaven shall laugh at them; for in spite of all the little efforts of their impotent malice, "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable," according to the word which he has spoken, Isa. xlii. 21.

4. The people of God, the professors of this religion, are every where spoken against. Not only those of some particular persuasion or denomination, but, without regard to that, such as have been zealous in fearing God and working righteousness, have been, in many places, very much spoken

¹ *Trident. Conc. Ses. 4.*

² Ps. cxxxvii. 3

³ Dan. v. 2

against. Our blessed Saviour has told his disciples what treatment of this kind they must expect, that they should be reviled, and have "all manner of evil said against them falsely," Matt. v. 11, 12; that they and their names should be "cast out as evil," Luke vi. 22. And if they called our Master Beelzebub, no nick-names fastened on his followers can seem strange. Mocking was an old way of persecuting the covenant seed, for thus "he that was after the flesh, betimes persecuted them that were after the Spirit." Compare Gen. xxi. 9, with Gal. iv. 29. God's heritage has always been as a ¹speckled bird, that all the birds are against, Jer. xii. 9, and his children "for signs and for wonders in Israel," that every one has a saying to, Isa. viii. 18. Even Wisdom's children have been called and counted fools, and their life madness; the quiet in the land represented as enemies to the public peace, and those who are the greatest blessings of the age, branded as the troublers of Israel. The primitive Christians were painted ²out to the world under the blackest and most odious characters that could be, as men of the most profligate lives and consciences, and that even placed their religion in the grossest impieties and immoralities imaginable. Their enemies found it necessary for the support of the kingdom of the devil, the father of lies and slanders, *fortiter calumniari*—"to characterize them as the worst of men," to whom they were resolved to give the worst and most barbarous treatment. It had not been possible to have baited them if they had not first dressed them up in the skins of wild beasts. And as then, so ever since, more or less, in all ages of the church, reproach has been entailed upon the most serious and zealous professors of Christian religion and godliness.

5. The ministers of Christ, the preachers of this religion, are with a distinguishing enmity every where spoken against. Under the Old Testament God's messengers and his prophets were generally mocked and misused, and it was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

¹ Zech. iii. 8.

² See this at large, represented by *Cæcilius* in *Minucius Felix*.

It was one of the devices they devised against Jeremiah, "to smite him with the tongue," because they would not, and they desired that others might not, "give heed to any of his words," Jer. xviii. 18. Those to whom the prophet Ezekiel was a very lovely song, and with their mouths showed much love to him, yet were still "talking against him by the walls, and in the doors of their houses," and God lets him know it, Ezek. xxxiii. 30—32. And then it is not strange if the ministers of the New Testament, in which truth shines with a stronger light, be with no less enmity spoken against by those that love darkness rather than light. The apostles, those prime ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, were so loaded with reproach, that they were made a spectacle to the world, a spectacle of pity to those that have either grace or good-nature, but a spectacle of scorn to those that had neither. They were trampled upon as the filth of the world; and whereas the off-scouring of any thing is bad enough, they were looked upon as the "off-scouring of all things, even unto this day;" after they had in so many instances approved themselves well, and could not but be made manifest in the consciences of their worst enemies, 1 Cor. iv. 9, 13. And it has all along been the policy of the church's enemies, by all means possible to bring the ministry into contempt, and to represent the church's Nazarites, even those that were "purer than snow, whiter than milk, and more ruddy than rubies," with a "visage blacker than a coal," so that they "have not been known in the streets." I allude to that complaint, Lam. iv. 7, 8. Marvel not if the standard-bearers be most struck at.

6. The Christian religion itself has been, and still is, "every where spoken against." The truths of it contradicted as false and groundless, the great doctrines of the mediation of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead, were ridiculed by the Athenian philosophers. The laws of it described as grievous and unreasonable, as *hard sayings*, which could not be borne by those who bid open defiance to the obligation of them, and say, "Let us break their bands

asunder, and cast away their cords from us," Ps. ii. 3. The ordinances of it despised as mean, and having no form nor comeliness. Sabbaths mocked at, as of old, Lam. i. 7,¹ and the sanctification of them represented as only a cloak for idleness. Sacraments reproached, and the sacred memorial of Christ's death and sufferings, by the persecutors of the primitive Christians, represented to the world, as the bloody and ²inhuman killing and eating of a child; and their love-feasts, and holy kiss, which were then in use, as only introductions to the most abominable uncleanness. Primitive Christianity was industriously put into an ill name; it was called emphatically "The Atheism," because it overthrew idolatry, and undermined the false gods and worships that had so long obtained. This was the outcry at Ephesus, that if Paul's doctrine took place, the "temple of the great goddess" would be despised, Acts xix. 26, 27. It was also branded as a novelty, and an upstart doctrine, because it took people off from that ³vain conversation which they had "received by tradition from their fathers." It was called at Athens a ⁴"new doctrine," and industriously represented in all places as a mushroom sect, that was but of yesterday.⁵ It was looked upon as nearly allied to Judaism, because it was so much supported by the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and nothing was more despicable among the Romans than the Jews and their religion. The professors of Christianity were looked upon as unlearned and ignorant men, Acts iv. 13, the very dregs and refuse of the people.⁶ Julian forbad the calling of them Christians, and would have them called nothing but Galileans, thereby to expose them to the contempt of those who are, as indeed most people are, governed more by a sound of words than by the reason of things. Thus when the devil was silenced

¹ — *Cui septima quæque fuit lux
Ignava.*——

Who made every seventh day a day of idleness.—*Juvenal.*

² *Dicimur sceleratissimi de Sacramento infanticidii, et pabulo inde et post concivium incesto.*—We are charged with murdering and eating our children at the sacrament, and we are represented as incestuous, &c.—*Tertull. Apol. c. 7.*

³ 1 Pet. i. 18.

⁴ Acts xvii. 18, 19.

⁵ See Dr. Cave's *Primitive Christianity, lib. 1. chap. 1.*

⁶ Greg Nazian. *Invect. in Julian. Orat. 1. p. (mihi) 42.*

in his oracles, as it is well known he was upon the setting up of Christianity in the world, his mouth was opened in lies and slanders; and being forced to quit his pretensions to a deity, he appears barefaced, as a *devil*, (*διαβολος*) a *false accuser*.

The reformed religion in these latter ages has been in like manner *spoken against*. Though it maintains all that (and only that) doctrine which Christ and his apostles preached, and was before Luther there, where popery, as such, never was before or since, that is, in the Holy Scriptures; yet the professors and preachers of it have been called and counted heretics and schismatics,¹ and by all possible artifices exposed to the odium of the people, that “none might buy or sell,” that is, have the benefit and comfort of civil society and commerce, that ²“had not the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Nay, even among some that profess the Christian and reformed religion, the practice of serious godliness is very much spoken against. The power of religion is not only disliked and denied, but contradicted and condemned, by those who rest in the form. They that call the evil good will call the good evil;³ and it is not strange if they who abandon themselves to work all uncleanness with greediness, speak ill of such as run not with them “to the same excess of riot,”⁴ where the “wicked walk on every side,”⁵ he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey.”⁶ The old enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is still working, and the old game every day played over again. ⁷“The truth as it is in Jesus,” and the “truth which is according to godliness,” will be contradicted by those that “lie in wait to deceive.” Bigots on all sides will have something to say against Catholic charity and moderation: they that are “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,” and “forward to every good work,” must expect to be evil spoken of by such as affect a

¹ *Lollards* from *lolium*—*tares*: so my Lord Coke from Mr. Fox.

² Rev. xiii. 17.

³ Isa. v. 20.

⁴ 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.

⁵ Psalm xii. 8.

⁶ Isa. lix. 15.

⁷ Eph. iv. 21. compared with Tit. i. 1

lukewarmness and indifferency in religion: nor can those who "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise," escape the lash of their tongues who live at large, and walk loosely, and at all adventures as the "fools in Israel."

II. I come now, in the second place, to inquire what is the reason that so holy and excellent a religion as Christianity is, meets with such hard usage, and is thus spoken against, "every where spoken against." When we hear such an outcry as this made against Christianity, it is natural for us to inquire, as Pilate did, when such a clamour was raised against its author. "Why, what evil hath it done?" Truly we may say concerning it, as Pilate did concerning him, "We find no fault in it." Which of all its opposers convinces it of sin or error? It invades no man's right, breaks in upon no man's property, is no disturbance of the peace, no enemy to the welfare of families and societies, is no prejudice at all to the interests of states and princes, but to all these highly beneficial and advantageous: why then is it thus accused, condemned, and spoken against? We will endeavour to find out the true reason of it, though it is impossible to assign a justifiable reason for that which is most unreasonable.

1. The adversaries of religion speak against it because they do not know it. Sound knowledge has not a greater enemy in the world than ignorance. Our Lord Jesus was therefore despised and hated by the world, because the world knew him not, John i. 10. If they had known the dignity of his person, the excellency of his doctrine, and the gracious design and purpose of his coming into the world, certainly they "would not have crucified the Lord of glory," 1 Cor. ii. 8. ¹They that did it, did it through ignorance, and knew not what they did. Thus they who say to the Almighty, ²"Depart from us," could not say so if they did not at the same time studiously decline the knowledge of his ways. No man will speak against religion and

¹ Acts iii. 15, 17; Luke xxiii. 34.

² Job. xxi. 14.

the power of it, that has either seriously weighed the proofs and evidences of it, or impartially tried the comfort and benefit of it. ¹ If they knew this gift, this inestimable gift of God, instead of speaking against it, they would covet it earnestly as the best gift. "He that looks at a distance upon men dancing, would think them to be mad;" (it was Peter Martyr's comparison, in a sermon which had so good an influence upon the conversion of the Marquis of Vico;) "but let him come nearer them, and observe the regularity and harmony of all their motions and postures, and he will not only admire their order, but find in himself an inclination to join with them. So he that contents himself with a distant and transient view of the practice of piety, will perhaps take up hard thoughts of it; but a better acquaintance will rectify the mistake." When the spouse in the Canticles had given a description of her beloved to the daughters of Jerusalem, the same who before had scornfully asked, ² "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" now as seriously inquire, "Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?" The people of God are called his ³ "hidden ones," and their life is a ⁴ "hidden life," their ⁵ "way above;" and therefore it is that the world speaks evil of them, because it "knows them not," 1 John iii. 1. They who "speak evil of these dignities, speak evil of those things which they know not," as the apostle speaks, Jude 8, 10. How unjust then and unreasonable is the enmity and malice of the adversaries of religion, to condemn what they never inquired into, ⁶ and to load that with the vilest reproaches, which, for ought they know, merits the highest encomiums! And how excellent then are the ways of God, which none speak ill of but those that are unacquainted with them! while those that know them, witness to the goodness of them, and "Wisdom is justified of her children," Ma't. xi. 19.

¹ John iv. 10.² Cant. v. 9. vi. 1.³ Psal. lxxxiii. 3.⁴ Col. iii. 3.⁵ Prov. xv. 24; Psalm x. 5.⁶ *Quid iniquius quam ut oderint homines quod ignorant? Tunc enim meretur, quando cognoscitur an mereatur.*—What is more unjust than for men to hate what they are ignorant of? First, let the merits of a cause be known, and then let sentence be pronounced.—*Tertul. Apol. c. 1.*

2. They speak against it because they do not like it; and we know that ill-will never speaks well. Though they have little acquaintance with religion, yet they know this concerning it in general, that it is not agreeable¹ with the way of their hearts, which they are resolved to walk in, nor with the course of this world, which is the chart and compass they steer by, and from which they take their measures. They know this, that it lays a restraint on their appetites and passions, and consists much in the mortifying their beloved lusts and corruptions; and therefore they have a secret antipathy to it; ²the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, is so against all who bear the image of God. Christ has bid his disciples to expect the hatred of the world, and not to marvel at it, John xv. 18, &c. They who hate to be themselves reformed will never love those that are reformed: out of the abundance therefore of the heart, and the malignity that is there, it is no marvel if the mouth speak; where the root of bitterness is, it will bear gall and wormwood. The daring sinner that stretches out his hand against God, finds it too short to reach him; but, ³“say they, with our tongue we will prevail, our lips are our own.” The beast that made war with heaven, in the apocalyptic vision, though he had ten horns, and those crowned, yet is not described doing mischief with them, but “opening his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven,” Rev. xiii. 5, 6. The poison of the serpent’s seed is under their tongue, Rom. iii. 13.

3. They speak against religion because it speaks against them. They who have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness hate the light which discovers them: nor do any curse the rising sun but those who are scorched by it. Why were the Pharisees so exasperated against our ⁴Saviour but because he spake his parables against them, and laid

¹ *Ante nos incipiunt odisse quam nosse, ne cognitos aut imitari possint aut damnare non possint.*—They commence their hatred before they commence their acquaintance, lest, should they commence an acquaintance with us, they should either be constrained to imitate us, or, at best, forbear condemnation.—*Min. Fel. p. (mih)* 30.

² Rom. viii. 7; 1 John iii. 13. ³ Ps. xii. 4. ⁴ Mat. xxi. 45.

them open in their own colours? Why did the world hate him who so loved the world,¹ but because he “testified of it that its works are evil?” Why had Joseph’s brethren such a spleen against him, but² because he was a witness against them, and brought to his father their evil report? Why did Ahab hate Micaiah, and call Elijah his enemy,³ but because they were the faithful reprovers of his wickedness, and “never prophesied good concerning him, but evil?” Why did the inhabitants of the earth rejoice when the witnesses were slain,⁴ but because those two prophets, by their plain and powerful preaching, “tormented them that dwelt upon the earth?”

The everlasting gospel is a testimony, either to us to convince us, or against us to condemn us; and then, no wonder if those speak against it who hate to be convinced by it, and dread to be condemned by it.⁵ The prophet complains of those that laid “snares for him that reproveth in the gate;” and why is it that faithful ministers are so much hated, but because their⁶ business is to show people their transgressions? If they would flatter sinners that flatter themselves in a sinful way, and cry peace to them to whom the God of heaven does not speak peace, they might avoid a great deal of reproach and censure; but they dare not do it. They are not to make a new law and gospel, but to preach that which is made; they have their rule in that caution given to the prophet, Jer. xv. 19, “Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.” The hearts and lives of men must be brought to comply with the word of God; the word of God can never be made to comply with the humours and fancies of men. Ministers, as they would not for the world make the way to heaven any straiter or narrower than Christ has made it; so they dare not make it any broader or easier, nor offer life and salvation on any other terms than the gospel has already settled. If they aim at

¹ John vii. 7.

² Gen. xxxvii. 2.

³ 1 Kings xxii. 8; xxi. 20.

⁴ Rev. xi. 10.

⁵ Isa. xxix. 21; lviii. 1.

⁶ *Naturale est et odissæ quem times; et quem metueris, infestare si possis.*—It is natural for us to hate, and if possible, to injure, the person whom we fear.
—*Min. Fel.*

¹pleasing men, they cannot approve themselves the servants of Christ; and therefore are they so much spoken against. And the same is the reason why the most strict and serious Christians are so much spoken against, because their piety and devotion, their justice and sobriety, their zeal and charity, are standing reproofs to the wicked world, and condemn it, ²as the faith and holy fear of Noah condemned the infidelity and security of the old world. The Sodomites were vexed at Lot's godly conversation, as much as he was at their filthy conversation. ³Wherefore does the blood-thirsty hate and revile the upright, while the just seek his soul? but for the same reason for which Cain hated Abel, because "his own works were evil, and his brothers righteous."

III. Now, for the application of this doctrine,

Let us see what good use we may make of this observation concerning the wickedness of the wicked, in speaking so much against religion and godliness, and what is our duty in reference hereunto.

1. Let us admire the patience and forbearance of the God of heaven, in that he bears so much and so long with those who thus speak against him and his holy religion. The affront hereby given him is very great, and, we would think, intolerable; even hard speeches that reflect upon an infinite majesty have in them a kind of infinite malignity. He hears and knows all that which is said against him, and against his truth and ways, and as a jealous God resents it. He has always power in his hands to punish the proudest of his enemies; nor would their immediate ruin be any loss to him: and yet, ⁴sentence against these evil words and works is not executed speedily. Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and wonder, O earth! that these wretches who rebel against the beams of such light and glory, who spurn at the bowels of such love and grace, are not immediately made the visible monuments of divine wrath and vengeance; and, like Sodom and Gomorrah, set forth for an example! That the blasphemers and scoffers of these last days are not

¹ Gal. 1. 10.

² Heb. xi. 7.

³ Prov. xxix. 10.

⁴ 1 John iii. 12.

⁵ Eccl. viii. 11.

instantly struck dumb, struck dead. That he, who has so much said against him does himself keep silence, and does not answer all these reproaches and contradictions, as he easily could, in thunder and lightning. Though his silence and forbearance are turned to his reproach, even by those that have the benefit of it, who, therefore, think him altogether such an one as themselves, and take occasion from his patience to question his faithfulness, and challenge his justice, saying, ¹ "Where is the promise of his coming?" yet he bears, and his patience is stretched out even to long-suffering, because he is ² not willing that any should perish, nor that any means should be left untried to prevent their perishing. Therefore he bears with sinners, because this is the day of his patience, and of their probation, The ³ wrath of God is revealed from heaven in the word of God, that we might be awed by faith more than in present providences, which would be an awe to sense. But there is a day coming, a dreadful day, when our ⁴ "God shall come" and shall no longer "keep silence;" a day foretold in the early ages of the world, by ⁵ Enoch, the seventh from Adam; when judgment shall be executed upon ungodly sinners, "for all their hard speeches," which day he will not anticipate, for "he knows it is coming," Ps. xxxvii. 13. It is agreeable to the regular course of justice, that all judgments be adjourned to the judgment-day, and all executions deferred till execution-day; and, therefore, now he condescends to reason with those that speak against him, for their conviction, as he does by the prophet, Ezek. xviii. 25, &c. where he fairly debates the case with those who said, "The way of the Lord is not equal;" that every mouth may be stopped with an unanswerable argument before it be stopped with an irreversible sentence, and those who have spoken against him may be sent ⁶ speechless to hell. He keeps silence now, because, when he does speak, he will be justified. When our Lord Jesus was here upon earth, with what an invincible patience did he endure the contradiction of sinners!

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.⁵ Jude 14, 15.² 2 Pet. iii. 9.⁶ Matt. xxii. 12; Matt. xxvi. 63.³ Rom. i. 8.⁴ Ps. l. 3.

When so many ill things were witnessed against him he was silent to admiration, ¹ answered not a word to all their unjust calumnies and accusations; but at the same time he bound them over to the judgment of the great day, by that awful declaration, Matt. xxvi. 64, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power," ² and still he bears with us in expectation of that same day. He does not take vengeance presently, because he has an eternity before him for the doing of it.

And, by the way, we may infer hence, that those who would be like their heavenly Father must bear reproach and contradiction patiently. When any thing is said against us, reflecting ever so little disparagement upon us, or our families, our resentments of it are very sensible, and we are apt to take it improperly; nay, and to say we do well to be angry, for it is not a thing to be endured. Not to be endured? Oh think how much God bears with the contempt and reproach cast upon his great name, and that will surely qualify our resentments of any indignity done to our little names! Who are we that we must not be spoken against? or what are our sayings, that we must not be contradicted? Such affronts as these we should learn to bear, as David did when Shimei cursed him, ³ So let him curse; and as the Son of David did when his enemies reviled him, "blessing them that curse us, and praying for them that thus persecute us, that we may be the children of our Father who is in heaven." God adjourns his vindication to the great day, and then surely we may adjourn ours to that day, as St. Paul does his, 1 Cor. iv. 5.

2. Let us acknowledge the power of divine grace, in keeping up the Christian religion in the world, notwithstanding the universal contradiction and opposition it has met with. One would think that a way thus spoken against every where should have been long ere this lost and ruined, and the Christian name cut off, to be no more in remembrance; ⁴ which its adversaries have so industri-

¹ John xix. 9.

² 2 Sam. xvi. 10.

² Heb. x. 13.

⁴ Ps. lxxxiii. 3, 4.

ously endeavoured: ¹if it had been of men, it had certainly come to nought quickly, though they had let it alone; but being of God, it was to admiration victorious over all opposition. A sect, a cheat, could never have supported itself against so much contradiction; no human power or policy could have kept it up, nor anything less than an almighty arm. The continuance of the Christian religion in the world to this ²day, is a standing miracle for the conviction of its adversaries, and the confirmation of the faith of those that adhere to it. When we consider what a mighty force was raised by the powers of darkness against Christianity when it was in its infancy; how many they were who spoke against it, learned men, great men; books were written, laws were made, against it; those that spoke for it, how few were they! and how mean and despicable! the foolish things of the world, and the weak; ³and yet, we see the word of God mightily growing and prevailing; must we not needs say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" The several false religions of the heathens, with their various superstitions and idolatries, though they gave very little opposition one to another, but agreed together well enough; yet having no foundation in truth, they all withered away, and dwindled to nothing: and after the mighty sway they had borne, and all means possible were used to support them, at length their day came to fall, their oracles were silenced, their altars were deserted, and the gods themselves were famished, Zeph. ii. 11, and perished from the earth; according to that prediction, Jer. x. 11, which is put into the mouths of the captive Jews, to retort upon their insulting enemies, and for that purpose is originally in the Chaldee dialect. We may ask triumphantly, not only, ⁴"Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Henah, and Ivah," those obscure and petty deities? But where are the gods of Babylon and Egypt, Greece and

¹ Acts v. 38.

² See this excellently enlarged upon by the learned Grotius, *de V. R. C. l. 2.*

³ Acts xix. 20.

⁴ 2 Kings xviii. 34

Rome? the illustrious names of Saturn and Jupiter, Juno and Diana? Where are the gods which our British and Saxon ancestors worshipped before they received the light of the glorious gospel? Are they not all forgotten, as dead men out of mind, and their names written in the dust? But Christ's holy religion, though for some ages it was utterly destitute of all secular supports and advantages, and was assaulted on all hands by the most vigorous attacks of its daring and most implacable enemies, yet it has strangely weathered its point, and is in being; and, thanks be to God, in some places in a flourishing state to this day; its cause is opposed, but never a baffled, cause. ¹Let us turn aside now, and see this great sight, a bush burning, and yet not consumed; and say, the Lord is in it of a truth; come and see the Captain of our salvation riding forth in the chariot of the everlasting gospel,² with his crown upon his head, and his bow in his hand, "conquering and to conquer." That which was every where spoken against Christianity was like the viper which fastened upon St. Paul's hand;³ it gave people occasion to think very ill concerning it, and to look for its speedy fall; as the barbarous people concerning him whom they concluded to be a murderer, and expected that he should have swollen, or fallen down dead. But it has in all ages shaken those venomous beasts into the fire, and taken no harm, and so has proved its own divine original. Let us herein acknowledge the wisdom and power of our Lord Jesus, who has so firmly built his church⁴ upon a rock, that the gates of hell, that is, all its powers, and policies, and numbers, could never prevail against it. Mahomet, though he industriously adapted his religion to the sensual appetites of men, whose reason only, and not their lusts,⁵ could object against it; yet he obtained no strength nor interest at all, till by a thousand artifices he had got the power of the sword, and with it forbad

¹ Exod. iii. 3, 4.

² Rev. vi. 2.

³ Acts xxviii. 3.

⁴ Matt. xvi. 18.

⁵ See the learned Dr. Humphrey Pridcaux's excellent History of the Life of Mahomet.

any, upon pain of death, to speak against him or his doctrine; charging his first followers, who were to propagate his religion, if they met with any that objected against it, not to dispute with them, but to kill them immediately: by which means that grand imposture, in a little time, got some footing in the world, and by the same barbarous and inhuman methods it has been supported now above a thousand years. And in like manner that great enemy of the church, represented in St. John's vision, maintains his interest, by causing that "as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed," Rev. xiii. 15. Thus are errors and false religions propagated; strip them of these supports and they fall to the ground of course: but, on the contrary, the Christian religion was planted and preserved not only without, but against, secular force, recommended and upheld by its own intrinsic truth and excellency, and that divine power which accompanied it. The preachers and professors of it "every where spoken against," and yet every where getting ground, and strangely victorious, merely by the word of their testimony, and by not loving their lives unto the death. ¹"Thus is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ."

3. Let us greatly lament the folly and wickedness of those who speak against Christ and his holy religion, and if we can do anything, have compassion upon them, and help to undeceive them, and rectify their mistakes. Surely this is one of the abominations committed among us, for which we should be found among those that "sigh and cry," Ezek. ix. 4; one of those instances of the pride of sinners for which our souls should "weep in secret," Jer. xiii. 17. This is that reproach of the solemn assembly which is such a burthen to all good men, Zeph. iii. 18. Our ears should tingle, and our hearts tremble, to hear the reproach and contempt cast upon Christ and his religion, or to hear of it; and looking upon ourselves as nearly con-

¹ Rev. xii. 10, 11.

cerned in sacred things, we should be sensibly touched with the profanation of them.

To affect us herewith, let us consider,

(1.) The great dishonour hereby done to our God in the world. They that reflect upon his truths and ways, his word and ordinances, reflect upon him; he that touches these, touches the apple of his eye; if, therefore, we have any love to God, or concern for his honour, and have cordially espoused the interests of his kingdom, what is an affront to him will surely be a grief to us. It cannot but be a very melancholy thought to every sensible soul, that the God who made the world is made so light of in the world; that he who does so much good to the children of men has so little honour from them; nay, and has so much dishonour done him by them every day, ¹and "his name continually blasphemed;" that the Lord Jesus, who so loved the world, is so much hated and despised by the world. ²The reproaches of them who thus reproach our Master, if we be his faithful servants, we should feel as falling upon us. ³And if he take what is said and done against his people, as said and done against himself, much more reason have they to find themselves aggrieved in that which is said and done against him. If we pray heartily that God's name may be hallowed, as we should do every day, we should grieve heartily that his name is dishonoured, as we see it is every day. And our resentments of the reproach cast upon God and religion, we should make an humble and pious remonstrance of before God in prayer, as king Hezekiah spread Rabshakch's blasphemous letter before the Lord, with that tender and affectionate request, "Lord, bow down thine ear and hear; open, Lord, thine eyes and see," 2 Kings xix. 16. How pathetically does Joshua plead, ch. vii. 9, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" And with what a concern does the psalmist, in the name of the church, insist upon this, Ps. lxxiv. 10, "O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the

¹ Isa. lii.

² Ps. lxix. 9.

³ Matt. xxv. 45.

enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?" And, ver. 18, "Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name." And how earnestly does he beg, ver. 22, "Arise, O God, plead thine own cause." Thus should the honour of God and religion lie nearer our hearts than any other concern whatsoever.

(2.) Consider the miserable condition of those who presumptuously speak against God and religion. Though they may do it with an air of assurance, as if they ran no hazard, yet, he that rolls this stone, it will certainly return upon him sooner or later. They that speak against religion speak against their own heads,¹ and their own tongues will at last fall upon them. We have reason to bewail their madness, and to pity and pray for them, for they know not what they do. Miserable souls! How will they be 'deceived at last when they shall find that ²"God is not mocked!" And that while they were studying to put contempt on religion they were but preparing eternal shame and confusion for themselves! The Lord is a jealous God, and will not hold them guiltless that thus profane his name: their wit, and learning, and figure in the world, may imbolden them in their sin, and bear them up a while in an open defiance of all that is sacred, but nothing can prevent their utter ruin except a serious and sincere repentance; which is an un-saying, with shame and self-loathing, of all that which they have proudly spoken against God and godliness. They that pervert the right ways of the Lord will certainly ³fall therein; ⁴and they that wrest the Scriptures do it to their own destruction. Religion's motto is, *Nemo me impune lacessit.*—"He who injures me, injures himself," "It is dangerous playing with edge-tools." ⁵Jerusalem will certainly be a burthensome stone to all people that burthen themselves with it. They that spurn at the Rock of Salvation, will not only be unable to remove it, but will find it ⁶"a stone of stumbling," and a "rock of offence." And we find those

¹ Ps. lxiv. 8.

⁴ 2 Pet. iii. 16.

² Gal. vi. 7.

⁵ Zech. xii. 3.

³ Hos. xiv. 9

⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 8.

who ridiculed the word of the Lord, ¹“broken, and snared, and taken.” Let all those, therefore, that mourn in Sion, weep over those that will not weep for themselves: and look with pity and compassion upon those who look upon them with scorn and contempt.

(3.) Consider the mischief that is hereby done to the souls of others. They who thus err, their error remains not with themselves, but this poisonous and malignant breath infects others. Words spoken against religion ²“eat as doth a canker;” and they who speak them seldom perish alone in their iniquity, for ³“many follow their pernicious ways.” Unwary souls are easily beguiled, and brought to conceive rooted prejudices against that which they hear every where spoken against; and few have consideration and resolution enough to maintain a good opinion of that which they who set up for wits make it their business to cry down. ¹Sergius Paulus was a prudent man, and yet St. Paul saw him in danger of being turned away from the faith by the subtle suggestions of Elymas the sorcerer, which, therefore, the apostle resented with more than ordinary keenness. It is sad to think how many young people, who, perhaps, were well educated and hopeful, when they go abroad into the world, by conversing with those who lie in wait to deceive, have their minds insensibly vitiated and debauched, and, perhaps, they are made seven times more the children of hell than those that first seduced them. Under pretence of free thought and fashionable conversation, and a generous disdain of preciseness and singularity, atheistical principles are imbibed, the restraints of conscience shaken off, brutish lusts not only indulged, but pleaded for, and serious godliness and devotion looked on with contempt; and thus the heart is impregnably fortified for Satan against Christ and his gospel, “wrath is treasured up against the day of wrath,” and those who might have been the blessing, prove the plague, of their age; which is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, to all who

¹ Isa. xxviii. 13.

³ 2 Pet. ii. 2.

² 2 Tim. ii. 17.

⁴ Acts xiii. 7-10.

wish well to the souls of men, and to those especially who are desirous of the welfare of the rising generation.

4. Let us take heed that none of us do at any time, directly or indirectly, speak against the ways of religion and godliness, or make a confederacy with those that do so. ¹Submit to divine instructions, given with a strong hand, not to walk in the way of those people who speak ill of religion. Take heed of embracing any notions which secretly tend to derogate from the authority of the Holy Scriptures, or to diminish the honour of religion in the soul; or of accustoming yourselves to such expressions as treat not sacred things with that awful regard which is due to them. Those were never reckoned wise men who would rather lose a friend than a jest; much less are they to be accounted so who will rather lose the favour of their God. How can it be expected that those, who in their common converse make themselves merry with serious things, should at any time be serious in them, or experience the influence and comfort of them? It is not likely that those who make the word of God the subject of their jests should ever make it the guide of their way, or find it the spring of their joys. Let us not choose to associate with those who have light thoughts of religion, and are ready upon all occasions to speak against it. It is not without good reason, that among the many words with which St. Peter exhorted his new converts, this only is recorded, "save yourselves from this untoward generation," Acts ii. 40. ²Those that listen to the "counsel of the ungodly, and stand in the way of sinners, as willing to walk with them, will come at length, if almighty grace prevent not, to "sit in the seat of the scornful." Let us therefore abide by that which Job and Eliphaz, even in the heat of dispute, were agreed on, that "the counsel of the wicked shall be far from us;" which protestation we have, Job xxi. 16; xxii. 18. It is dangerous making friendship with those who have an enmity to serious godliness, lest we learn^o their way, and get a snare to our souls.

There are two common pretences, and seemingly plausible

¹ Isa. viii. 11, 12.

² Ps. i. 1.

ones, under which those who speak against religion shelter themselves; but they are neither of them justifiable.

(1.) They pretend that it is only for argument sake that they object against religion, and pick quarrels with it, and, so little esteem they have of the thing called sincerity, they will not be thought to mean as they say. And are the great principles of religion become such moot points, such matters of doubtful disputation, that it is indifferent which side of the question a man takes, and upon which he may argue, *pro* or *con*—"for or against," at his pleasure? That grave and weighty ¹saying of a learned heathen is enough to silence this pretence, *Mala enim et impia consuetudo est, contra Deos disputandi, sive ex animo id sit, sive simulate;* "It is an evil thing to talk against religion, whether a man means as he says or no," or, in the language of our age, whether he speak seriously, or only banter. Julian the apostate, who, before he threw off his disguise, frequently argued against Christianity, pretended it was only for disputation sake. But "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks," and whence can such evil things come, but from an evil treasure there?

(2.) They pretend that it is not religion that they ridicule and expose to contempt, but some particular forms and modes of religious worship which they do not like. And this is one ill effect of the unhappy divisions among Christians, that while one side has laboured to make the other contemptible, religion in general has suffered on all sides. To reprove what we think amiss with prudence and meekness, is well; but to reproach and make a jest of that which our fellow-Christians look upon as sacred, and make a part of their religion, cannot be to any good purpose at all. To scoff at the mistakes or weaknesses of our brethren is the way to provoke and harden them, but not to convince and reform them. They who think to justify this way of ridiculing those that differ from them, by the instance of Elijah's jeering the priests of Baal, perhaps, ¹"know not what manner of spirit they are of, no more than those disciples did who

¹ *Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. 2, ad fin.*

² Luke ix. 55.

would have their intemperate heats countenanced by the example of that great prophet.

5. Let us who profess the Christian religion be very cautious that we do not give occasion to any to speak against it. If there are those, in all places, who are industrious to cast reproaches upon religion, then we have need to walk circumspectly, and to look well to our goings, that those who watch for our halting may have no occasion given them to blaspheme. It is certain, that though in religion there is nothing which may be justly spoken against, yet among those who profess it there is too often found that which deserves to be taxed, and which cannot pass without just and severe reflections.—*Pudet hæc opprobria nobis*—“These reproaches are a disgrace to us.”—Are there not those within the pale of the church through whom the name of God and his doctrine are blasphemed,¹ and “by reason of whom the way of truth is evil spoken of? Are there not those who wear Christ’s livery, but are a² scandal to his family, ³spots in the love-feasts, and a standing reproach to that worthy name by which they are called? Now, though it is certainly very unjust and unfair to impute the faults of professors to the religion they profess, and to reproach Christianity because there are those that are called Christians who expose themselves to reproach; yet it is, without question, the sin of those who give men occasion to do so. This was the condemnation in David’s case, and entailed the sword upon his house, though the sin was pardoned by which he had ‘given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme,’ 2 Sam. xii. 14. Let us therefore double our diligence and care to give no offence either to Jew or Gentile; that religion, which has so often been wounded in the house of her friends, may never be wounded through our misconduct.

If we inquire, as we are concerned to do, what it is that gives occasion of reflection upon religion, we shall find that

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 2.

²The foulest reproaches of the primitive Christians took rise from the vile practices of the Gnostics, and other Pseudo-christians. Of which, *Vid. Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. 4. c.7.*

³ Jude 12.

the imprudence of those that profess it gives some occasion, but their immoralities much more.

(1.) The imprudence of Christians often turns to the reproach of Christianity. There may be such over-doing, even in well-doing, as may prove undoing. When more stress is laid than ought to be upon some instances of religion, to the exclusion of others, and the exercises of devotion are either mistimed, or misplaced, or misproportioned, religion is hereby misrepresented, or looked upon to disadvantage. Rash and indiscreet zeal may give occasion to those who seek occasion to speak against all religious zeal. Therefore ¹“walk in wisdom toward them that are without.” Religion is a most sweet, and pleasant, and amiable thing: let not us, by our indiscretion, make it a task to ourselves, and a terror to others. The more the children of God ²are children of wisdom, the more they justify it, and its ways. Christian prudence is very much the beauty and strength of Christian piety. Though it will secure the welfare of our own souls if we walk in our integrity, yet it is necessary, for the preserving the credit of our profession, that we walk in wisdom, that ³“wisdom of the prudent” which is to “understand his way,” that ⁴“wisdom which is profitable to direct.” ⁵And “if any man lack this wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids us not” with our folly. Pray with David, Ps. xxvii. 11, “Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.” (Hebr. because of mine observers.) Our enemies are our observers, and will be ready to reproach our way, for the sake of the false steps we take in it; and therefore we have need to ponder the path of our feet, and let discretion guide and govern our zeal.

(2.) The immoralities of those who profess Christianity turn much more to the reproach of that holy religion, when those who are called Christians are griping and covetous, and greedy of the world; when they are false and deceitful, and unjust in their dealings; sour and morose, and unna-

¹ Col. iv. 5.

² Luke vii. 35.

³ Prov. xiv. 8.

⁴ Eccl. x. 10.

⁵ Jam. i. 5.

tural to their relations; turbulent and unquiet in societies; when they are froward and passionate, proud and haughty, hard-hearted and oppressive, loose and intemperate; when they are found guilty of lying and cheating, drunkenness or uncleanness; when it appears that they keep up some secret haunts of sin, under the cloak and covert of a specious profession; when they who profess the Christian faith indulge themselves in those things that are contrary to the light and law even of natural religion: this is that which opens the mouths of the adversaries to speak reproachfully of that religion, the profession of which is made to consist with such vile practices, which cannot possibly consist with the power of it. This makes people ready to say, as that Mahometan prince did when the Christians had broken their league with him, "O Jesus! are these thy Christians?" Or, as the complaint was upon another occasion, *aut hoc non evangelium, aut hi non evangelium*—"Either this is not gospel, or these are not to be called professors of the gospel." ¹If ministers "give offence in any thing," not they only, but their ministry, will be blamed. Nay, if servants, and Christians of the lowest rank and figure be unfaithful and disobedient to the government they are under, the ²"name of God, and his doctrine," is likely to be blasphemed. Let us, therefore, who profess relation to the eternal God, and dependence upon the blessed Jesus, and a regard to the Holy Scriptures, as we value the reputation of our religion, ³"walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Let us order our conversation so in every thing, that we may ⁴"adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." While we are called by so good a name let us not dare to do an evil thing. The disciples of Christ are as a ⁵"city upon a hill," and have many eyes upon them, and therefore have need to behave themselves with a great deal of caution, and to ⁶"abstain from all appearance of evil." Let us not do anything that is unjust, or unbecoming us; nor allow ourselves in that which we know the gospel we profess does by no

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 3.⁴ Tit. ii. 10.² 1 Tim. vi. 1.⁵ Matt. v. 14.³ Col. i. 10.⁶ Thess. v. 22.

means allow of, lest we be to answer another day for all the reproach of religion which we have occasioned. How light soever we may make of this now, we shall find that it will greatly inflame the reckoning shortly, when God will assert the honour of his own name, and will be glorified upon those by whom he was not glorified. In consideration of this, let us see to it, that we¹ have our conversation honest among the adversaries of our religion, that they who speak against us as evil-doers, may, by our good works which they shall behold, be brought to glorify God, and to entertain good thoughts of religion; or at least,² that "we may with well doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Our religion, I am sure, is an honour to us; let not us then be a dishonour to it.

6. If there be those every where that speak against religion and godliness, let us then as we have opportunity be ready to speak for it. Every Christian should be both a witness and an advocate for his religion, and the rather because it is so much opposed and contradicted; next to our care not to be a shame to the gospel, should be our resolution not to be ashamed of the gospel; you are subpoenaed by the King of kings to appear for him in the world; "Ye are my witnesses saith the Lord," Isa. xliii. 10. Do not betray this cause then by declining your testimony, how much soever you may be brow-beaten and confronted. Say with a holy boldness, as Elihu, Job xxxvi. 2, "Suffer me a little, and I will show you that I have yet to speak on God's behalf." You hear what is daringly said against God, how his holy name is trampled upon and abused, his truths contradicted, his word and ordinances vilified, and have you never a word to say for him? Is our Lord Jesus appearing for us in heaven, pleading our cause there, pleading it with his own blood, and shall not we be ready to appear for him on earth, and plead his cause, though it were with the hazard of our blood? As it is then a time to keep silence when we ourselves are spoken against,³ I as a deaf man heard not; so it is then⁴ a time to speak when God is spoken against, and the honour of our religion lies at stake: at such a time we must take

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 12.² 1 Pet. ii. 15.³ Ps. xxxviii. 13⁴ Eccl. iii. 7

heed, lest by a cowardly silence we wrong so just a cause, as if we were either ashamed or afraid to own it. Wisdom's children should take all occasions to justify wisdom, and vindicate her from the aspersions that are cast upon her. Read the doom of him that is ashamed of Christ and of his words in this adulterous generation, Mark viii. 38, "Of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father." Not confessing Christ when we are called to it, is in effect denying him, and disowning relationship to him; ¹and they who do so, except they repent as Peter did, will shortly be denied and disowned by him. If we should, with an ²angry countenance at least, drive away a backbiting tongue that reproaches our brother, much more a blasphemous tongue that reproaches our Maker. Should we hear a near relation, or a dear friend, in whose reputation it is natural for us to reckon ourselves sharers, spoken against and slandered, we would readily appear in his vindication; and have we no resentments of the contempt and contumely cast on religion? Can we sit by contentedly to hear God and Christ, and the Scripture and serious godliness, reflected on, and have we nothing to say in their behalf? Common equity obliges us to be the patrons of a just, but wronged cause. And that we may not think ourselves discharged from this duty, by our inability to defend the truths and ways of God, and so make our ignorance and unskilfulness in the word of righteousness an excuse for our cowardice and want of zeal, we ought to take pains to furnish ourselves with a clear and distinct knowledge of the ³"certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed." We must labour to understand not only the truths and principles, but the grounds and evidences, of our religion, that we may be able to ⁴give an answer (*απολογιαν*, an apology,) to every man that asks us a reason of the hope that is in us. How industrious are the profane wits of the age to find out something to say against religion! and should not that quicken us to provide ourselves with the ⁵"armour of righteousness

¹ Luke xii. 9; 2 Tim. ii. 10

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 15.

² Prov. xxv. 23. i.

⁵ 2 Cor. vi. 7

³ Luke i. 4.

both on the right hand and on the left," aiming at the ¹"riches of the full assurance of understanding!" And if we do, as there is occasion, with humility and sincerity, and from a principle of zeal for God and his honour, appear in defence of religion and its injured cause, we may doubtless take encouragement from that promise, Matt. x. 19, "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." God will own those that own him, and will not fail to furnish his faithful advocates with needful instructions, and many times ordains such ²"strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings," as strangely "stills the enemy and avenger."

7. Let none of us ever think the worse of the way of religion and godliness for its being "every where spoken against," nor be frightened hereby from walking in that way. The contempt cast on the practice of piety is with many an invincible objection against it; their good impressions, good purposes, and good overtures, are hereby crushed and brought to nothing: they have that within them which tells them that the way of sobriety and serious godliness is a very good way, and they sometimes hear that word behind them saying, ³"This is the way, walk ye in it;" but they have those about them that tell them otherwise, and thus the convictions of conscience are overruled and baffled by the censures and reproaches of men, whose praise they covet more than the praise of God.

But to take off the force of this objection let us consider these four things:

(1.) Consider who they are that speak against religion and godliness. Not only they who are mortal men, whom the ⁴"moth shall eat up like a garment; men that shall die," and the "sons of men, which shall be made as grass," all whose thoughts will shortly perish with them, and therefore why should we "fear their reproach, or be afraid of their revilings?" Not only they who are fallible men, who may be mistaken, and whose judgment is by no means decisive; nor such as will bear us out; shall we put what men say in the scale against what God says? "Let God be true, and

¹ Col. ii. 2.

³ Isa. xxx. 21.

² Ps. viii. 2.

⁴ Isa. li. 7, 8, 12.

every man a liar." We must not be judged hereafter, and therefore should not be ruled now, by the sentiments and opinions of men. Those who speak against religion are also for the most part bad men, men of unsettled heads, debauched consciences, and profligate lives. It is the fool, and none but he, that says in his heart, "There is no God." The scoffers of the last days are men that walk after their own lusts, whose carnal fleshly interest retains them on that side. David was abused by the abjects, Ps. xxxv. 15, and the Christians at Thessalonica, by "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," Acts xvii. 5. Such as these are the men that make a mock at religion; and shall we be swayed and influenced in the greatest concerns of our immortal souls by such men as these? Shall those have the government of us that have so little government of themselves? Shall the cavils and vain scoffs of those who know not what it is to be serious, carry the day against the deliberate sentiments of all wise and good men, who have with one consent subscribed to the equity and goodness of religion's ways? If we choose such as these for our leaders, surely the "blind lead the blind;" and we know the consequence.

(2.) Consider how trifling and frivolous that is which is commonly said against religion and godliness. The devil made his first fatal assault upon mankind by lies and slanders, suggesting hard thoughts of God, and promising impunity in sin; and by the same wretched methods he still supports and carries on his interest in the world. They who speak against religion, make lies their refuge, and under falsehood they hide themselves. All those bold and daring things which are spoken against religion, are either groundless and unproved calumnies, or very unjust and unfair representations. Hence the enemies of religion are said to be ¹"absurd and unreasonable men;" men who, while they cry up the oracles of reason, rebel against all the light and laws of it. Put all that together which is spoken against godliness, and weigh it in the balance of right reason, and you will write "Tekel" upon it, "weighed in the balance

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 2.

and found wanting." And, as if an overruling Providence had forced the scoffers of these last days to confess their own infatuation, some of those who have been most sharp in their invectives against religion, have been no less free in their satires against reason itself, as if they were resolved to answer the character of Solomon's fool, whose ¹ "wisdom fails him" so far, that "he saith to every one that he is a fool."

(3.) Consider how much is to be said for religion, notwithstanding it is "every where spoken against." Religion has reason on its side, its cause is a good cause; and it is the right way, whoever speaks against it. ² "It is no disparagement (as that excellent pen expresses it) to be laughed at, but to deserve to beso." You have heard religion reproached, but did you ever find that it deserved to be so? Nay, on the contrary, have you not found that it very well deserves your best affections and services? Inquire of those who have made trial of it, consult the experiences of others: ³ "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?" ⁴ "Ask thy father and he will show thee; thine elders, and they will tell ⁵ thee that the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding." They will tell thee, ⁶ that religion's ways are "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," and that all the wealth and pleasure in this world is not worth one hour's communion with God in Jesus Christ. They will tell thee that there are no truths so certain and weighty as divine truths, and that no statutes and judgments are so righteous as the divine law, which is holy, just, and good. They will tell thee that real holiness and sanctification is the perfection of the human nature, as well as the participation of the divine nature; that a firm belief of the principles of religion is the greatest improvement of our intellectual powers, a strict adherence to its rules our surest guide in all our ways, and a cheerful dependence upon its promises, the fountain of better joys,

¹ Eccl. x. 3.

² Archbp. Tillotson's Sermon on 2 Pet. ii. 3.

³ Job. v. 1.

⁴ Deut. xxxii. 7.

⁵ Job xxviii. 28.

⁶ Prov. iii. 17

and the foundation of better hopes, than any we can be furnished with in the things of sense and time. They will tell thee, that a life of serious godliness is incomparably the most sublime and honourable, the most sweet and comfortable, life a man can live in this world; and that nothing does more answer the end of our creation, better befriend society, or conduce more to our true interest in both worlds, than that holy religion which is "every where spoken against."

(4.) Consider that the cause of religion and godliness, however it be spoken against and opposed, will infallibly be the prevailing cause at last. We are sensible of a mighty struggle in the world between the "seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent;" Michael and his angels on the one side, and the dragon and his angels on the other. Many there are who speak against religion, and are very vigorous in opposing it, and some, though but a few, who are speaking for it, contending for the faith, and striving against sin. Now it is desirable to know which of these contesting interests will be victorious; and we may be assured that the cause of God and religion will certainly carry the day. Contradicted truths will be effectually cleared and vindicated; despised holiness will be honoured; mistakes rectified; reproaches rolled away; and every thing set in a true light. ¹"Then you shall return and discern" between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, which now it is not always easy to do. The day of the Lord is said to be in the "valley of decision," Joel iii. 14, because then and there will this great cause be decided, which has been so long depending; and a definitive sentence given, from which there will be no appeal, and against which there will be no exception. ²"Our God will *then* come, and will not keep silence:" whoever now speaks against religion, he will then speak for it, and will undoubtedly be ³"justified when he speaks," and "clear when he judgeth." Particular parties and interests, as such, will wither and come to nothing, but Catholic Christianity, that is, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living

¹ Mal. iii. 18.

² Ps. l. 3.

³ Ps. li. 4.

soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, in expectation of the blessed hope; this is good, and the goodness of it being founded on the unchangeable will of the Eternal Mind, it is eternally good, and no doubt will be eternally glorious, whatever is said against it. This, this is that gold and silver, and those precious stones, which will stand the test of the fire that shall "try every man's work," 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13; and will be ¹"found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Assure yourselves, Christians, there is a ²"day of recompence for the controversy of Sion coming," and it is at hand; ³"Behold, the Judge standeth before the door," Then vice and wickedness, which now appear so daring, so threatening, will be effectually and irrecoverably crushed; and such a fatal and incurable blow given to the serpent's head, that he shall never hiss, shall never spit his venom any more: then shall the "upright have the dominion," Ps. xlix. 14, and all the faithful soldiers of the Lord Jesus shall be called to ⁴set their "feet upon the necks" of principalities and powers. Then atheists and blasphemers, the debauchees and profane scoffers of the age, will have their mouths stopped with an irresistible conviction; will have all their vile calumnies visibly confuted, their hearts filled with unspeakable horror, and their faces with everlasting shame: their refuge of lies will then be swept away, and ⁵"rocks and mountains" called upon in vain to shelter them; ⁶then shall the righteous, who are now trampled upon and despised, "shine as the sun in the firmament of their Father." Wisdom and her children shall be first justified, and then glorified, before all the world: and they who through grace have ⁷"gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image," shall solace themselves, and praise their Redeemer with everlasting songs of triumph. The dust that is now unjustly thrown upon them will not only be wiped off, but will add to their glory,⁸ and every reproach for the testimony of Jesus will be a pearl in their crown. The right-

¹ 1 Pet. i. 7.⁵ Rev. vi. 16.² Isa. xxxiv. 8.⁶ Matt. iii. 43.³ Jam. v. 9.⁷ Rev. xv. 2.⁴ Josh. x. 24.⁸ Matt. x. 11, 12.

eous Judge of heaven and earth ¹“will *shortly* render to every man according to his work: To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality” in the other world, and, in pursuit of that, patiently bear disgrace and contempt in this, to them he will render eternal life, which will make them as happy as they can desire, far more happy than they can conceive. But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but contradict it, and rebel against the light and laws of it, being resolved to obey unrighteousness, to them he will render, with a just and almighty hand, indignation and wrath; the effect of which will be such tribulation and anguish to the soul, as will make them feel eternally, what now they will not be persuaded to believe, that ²“it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;” for never any hardened their hearts against him and prospered. Brethren, ³“these are the true sayings of God,” on the certainty of which we may venture our immortal souls.

They who speak and act so much against religion, design to run it down, and extirpate it, that the ⁴“name of it may be no more in remembrance,” and perhaps you hear them sometimes boast of their success herein; if they can but handsomely, as they think, ridicule the sacred text, or banter any of the divine mysteries, or hector over a good man, they are ready to triumph, as if they had run down religion. Run down religion! In the name of my great Master, I defy all the powers of hell and earth to run it down:⁵ they may sooner run down the flowing tide, or the sun when he goes forth in his strength, than run down the least of the dictates of eternal truth, not one ⁶iota or tittle of which shall fall to the ground. Dagon will certainly fall before the Ark of the Lord; ⁷and the rod of Aaron will swallow up the rods of the magicians. Do they talk of running down religion, and the Scriptures, and the ordinances of Christ? ⁸“The virgin, the daughter of Sion, hath despised them, and laughed them to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath

¹ Rom. ii. 6-9.² Heb. x. 31.³ Rev. xix. 9.⁴ Ps. lxxxiii. 4.⁵ *Magna est veritas et prævalebit*—Great is the truth, and it will prevail.⁶ Matt. v. 18.⁷ Exod. vii. 12.⁸ Isa. xxxvii. 22.

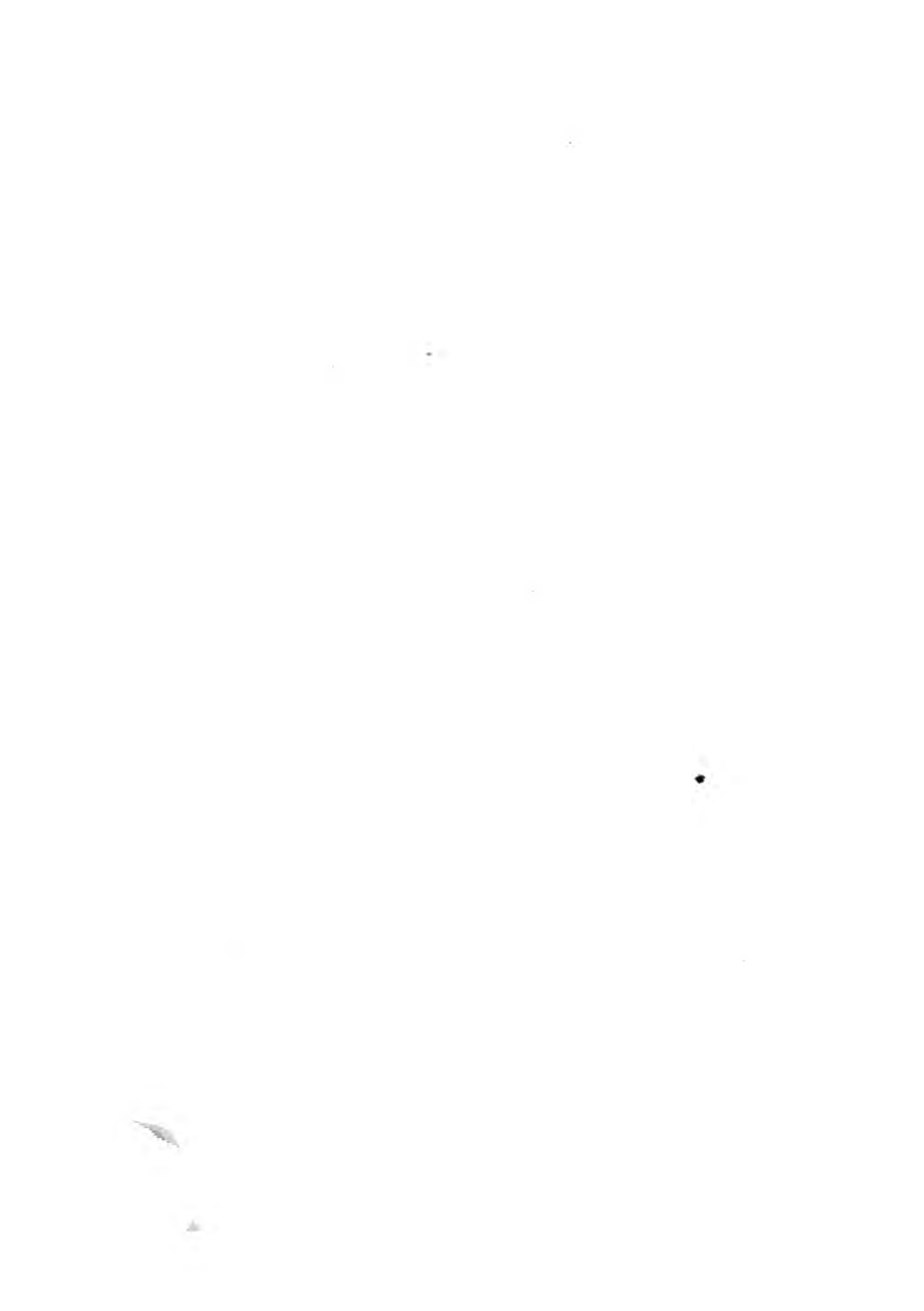
shaken her head at them ;” and has therefore “ put them to shame, because God hath despised them,” as it is said, Ps. liii. 5. ¹He that “ sits in the heavens” enjoying himself, ²“ and rides upon the heavens” for the help of his people, derides their attempts against the kingdom of his Son, as vain and fruitless. “ The Lord shall laugh at them, for he sees that his day is coming.” They have their day now, it is their hour and the power of darkness ; but God will have his day shortly, and a glorious day it will be, when our Lord Jesus shall appear in all the power and grandeur of the upper world, to the everlasting terror and confusion of all his adversaries, and the everlasting joy and honour of all his faithful servants and soldiers : with the believing hopes and prospects of which day, let all those who heartily espouse and plead religion’s righteous cause, comfort themselves and one another.

¹ Ps. ii. 4.

² Deut. xxxiii. 23.

A CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

A SERMON CONCERNING FAMILY RELIGION.



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“With the church that is in their house.”—1 Cor. xvi. 19.

SOME very good interpreters, I know, understand this of a settled, stated, solemn meeting of Christians at the house of Aquila and Priscilla, for public worship; and they were glad of *houses* to meet in where they wanted those better conveniences which the church was afterwards, in her prosperous days, accommodated with. When they had not such places as they could wish they thankfully made use of such as they could get.

But others think it is meant only of their own family, and the strangers within their gates, among whom there was so much piety and devotion that it might well be called a church or religious house. Thus the ancients generally understood it. Nor was it only Aquila and Priscilla, whose house was thus celebrated for religion, here and Rom. xvi. 5, but Nymphas also had a church in his house, Col. iv. 15, and Philemon, ver. 2. Not but that others, to whom and from whom salutations are sent in St. Paul's epistles, made conscience of keeping up religion in their families; but these are mentioned, probably because their families were more numerous than most of those other families were; which made their family devotions more solemn, and consequently more taken notice of.

In this sense I shall choose to take it ; hence to recommend family religion to you under a notion of a church in the house. When we see your public assemblies so well filled, so well frequented, we cannot but thank God, and take courage ; your diligent attendance on the ministry of the word and prayers is your praise, and I trust, through grace, it redounds to your spiritual comfort and benefit. But my subject at this time will lead me to inquire into the state of religion in your private houses, whether it flourish or wither there ? whether it be on the throne, or under foot there ? Herein I desire to deal plainly and faithfully with your consciences, and I beg you will give them leave to deal so with you.

The pious and zealous endeavours both of magistrates and ministers for the reformation of manners, and the suppression of vice and profaneness, are the joy and encouragement of all good people in the land, and a happy indication that God has yet mercy in store for us : “ If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, he would not have showed us such things as these.” Now I know not any thing that will contribute more to the furtherance of this good work than the bringing of family religion more into practice and reputation. Here the reformation must begin. Other methods may check the disease we complain of, but this, if it might universally obtain, would cure it. Salt must be cast into these springs, and then the waters would be healed.

Many a time, no doubt, you have been urged to this part of your duty ; many a good sermon perhaps you have heard, and many a good book has been put into your hands with this design, to persuade you to keep up religion in your families, and to assist you therein : but I hope a further attempt to advance this good work, by one who is a hearty wellwisher to it, and to the prosperity of your souls and families, will not be thought altogether needless, and that by the grace of God it will not be wholly fruitless : at least it will serve to remind you of what you have received and heard to this pur-

pose, that you may hold fast what is good, and repent of what is amiss, Rev. iii. 3.

The lesson then which I would recommend to you from this text, is this ;

That the families of Christians should be little churches ;
or thus, That wherever we have a house, God should have a church in it.

Unhappy contests there have been, and still are, among wise and good men about the constitution, order, and government of churches. God by his grace heal these breaches, lead us into all truth, and dispose our minds to love and peace ; that while we endeavour herein to walk according to the light God has given us, we may charitably believe that others do so too ; longing to be there where we shall be all of a mind.

But I am now speaking of churches concerning which there is no controversy. All agree that masters of families who profess religion and the fear of God themselves, should, according to the talents they are intrusted with, maintain and keep up religion and the fear of God in their families, as those who must give account ; and that families, as such, should contribute to the support of Christianity in a nation, whose honour and happiness it is to be a Christian nation. As nature makes families little kingdoms, and perhaps economics were the first and most ancient politics, so grace makes families little churches ; and those were the primitive churches of the Old Testament, before "men began to call upon the name of the Lord" in solemn assemblies, and "the sons of God came together to present themselves" before him.

Not that I would have these family churches set up and kept up in competition with, much less in contradiction to, public religious assemblies, which ought always to have the preference : "The Lord loves the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," Ps. lxxxvii. 2, and so must we ; and must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, under colour of exhorting one another daily at home. Far be it from us to offer any thing that may countenance the

invading of the office of the ministry, or laying it in common, and the usurping or superseding of the administration of sacraments. No, but these family churches, which are but figuratively so, must be erected and maintained in subordination to those more sacred and solemn establishments.

Now, that I may the more distinctly open to you, and press upon you, this great duty of family religion, from the example of this and other texts, of a "church in the house," I shall endeavour, I. To show what this church in the house is, and when our families may be called churches. And, II. To persuade you by some motives thus to turn your families into churches. And then, III. To address you upon the whole matter by way of application.

I. I am in the first place to tell you what that family religion is which will be as a church in the house, and wherein it consists, that you may see what it is we are persuading you to.

Churches are sacred societies, incorporated for the honour and service of God in Christ, devoted to God, and employed for him; so should our families be.

1. Churches are societies devoted to God, called out of the world, taken in out of the common to be enclosures for God; he has set them apart for himself; and because he hath chosen them, they also have chosen him, and set themselves apart for him. The Jewish church was separated to God for a "peculiar people, a kingdom of priests."

Thus our houses must be churches; with ourselves we must give up our houses to the Lord, to be to him for a name and a people. All the interest we have, both in our relations and in our possessions, must be consecrated to God; as under the law all that the servant had was his master's for ever, after he had consented to have his ear bored to the door-post. When God effectually called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, his family assumed the appearance of a particular church; for, in obedience to God's precept, and in dependence on God's promise, they took all the substance they had gathered, and the souls they had gotten, and put

themselves and their all under a divine conduct and government, Gen. xii. 5. His was a great family, not only numerous, but very considerable ; the father of it was the father of all them that believe ; but even little families, jointly and entirely given up to God, so become churches. When all the members of the family yield themselves to God, subscribe with their hands to be the Lord's, and surname themselves by the name of Israel,—and the master of the family, with himself, gives up all his right, title, and interest, in his house, and all that belongs to it, unto God, to be used for him, and disposed of by him ; here is a church in the house.

Baptism was ordained for the discipline of nations, Matt. xxviii. 19, that the kingdoms of the world, as such, might, by their conversion of the people to the faith of Christ, and the consecration of their powers and governments to the honour of Christ, become his kingdoms, Rev. xi. 15. Thus by baptism households likewise are disciplined, as Lydia's and the jailer's, Acts xvi. 15, 33, and in their family capacity are given up to him who is in a particular manner the God of all the families of Israel, Jer. xxxi. 1. Circumcision was at first a family ordinance, and in that particular, as well as others, baptism somewhat symbolizes with it. When the children of Christian parents are by baptism admitted members of the universal church, as their right to baptism is grounded upon, so their communion with the universal church is, during their infancy, maintained and kept up chiefly by their immediate relation to these "churches in the house ;" to them, therefore, they are, first, given back, and in them they are deposited,—under the tuition of them, to be trained up till they become capable of a place and a name in particular churches of larger figure and extent. So that baptized families, who own their baptism, and adhere to it, and in their joint and relative capacity make profession of the Christian faith, may so far be called little churches.

More than once in the Old Testament we read of the dedication of private houses. It is spoken of as a common

practice, Deut. xx. 5, "What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it?" that is, taken possession of it; in the doing of which it was usual to dedicate it to God by some solemn acts of religious worship. The 30th Psalm is entitled, "A Psalm or Song at the Dedication of the house of David." It is a good thing when a man has a house of his own, thus to convert it into a church, by dedicating it to the service and honour of God, that it may be a Bethel, a house of God, and not a Bethaven, a house of vanity and iniquity. Every good Christian who is a householder no doubt does this habitually and virtually; having first given his own self to the Lord, he freely surrenders all he has to him: but it may be of good use to do it actually and expressly, and often to repeat this act of resignation; "This stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house," Gen. xxviii. 22. Let all I have in my house, and all I do in it, be for the glory of God; I own him to be my great Landlord, and I hold all from and under him; to him I promise to pay the rents, the quit rents, of daily praises and thanksgivings; and to do the services, the easy services, of gospel obedience. Let "Holiness to the Lord" be written upon the house, and all the furniture of it, according to the word which God has spoken, Zech. xiv. 20, 21, that "every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be Holiness to the Lord of Hosts." Let God by his providence dispose of the affairs of my family, and by his grace dispose the affections of all in my family, according to his will, to his own praise. Let me and mine be only, wholly, and for ever his.

Be persuaded, brethren, thus to dedicate your houses to God, and beg of him to come and take possession of them. If you never did it, do it to-night with all possible seriousness and sincerity. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Bring the ark of the Lord into the tent you have pitched, and oblige yourselves, and all yours, to attend it. Look upon your houses as temples for God, places for worship, and all your possessions as dedicated things, to

be used for God's honour, and not to be alienated or profaned.

2. Churches are societies employed for God, pursuant to the true intent and meaning of this dedication.

There are three things necessary to the well-being of a church, and which are most considerable in the constitution of it. Those are doctrine, worship, and discipline. Where the truths of Christ are professed and taught, the ordinances of Christ administered and observed, and due care taken to put the laws of Christ in execution among all who profess themselves his subjects, and this under the conduct and inspection of a gospel ministry; there is a church. And something answerable hereunto there must be in our families, to denominate them little churches.

Masters of families, who preside in the other affairs of the house, must go before their households in the things of God. They must be as prophets, priests, and kings, in their own families; and as such they must keep up family doctrine, family worship, and family discipline; then is there a church in the house, and this is the family religion that I am persuading you to.

(1.) Keep up family doctrine. It is not enough that you and yours are baptized into the Christian faith, and profess to own the truth as it is in Jesus, but care must be taken, and means used, that you and yours be well acquainted with that truth, and that you grow in that acquaintance, to the honour of Christ and his holy religion, and the improvement of your own minds, and theirs who are under your charge. You must deal with your families "as men of knowledge," 1 Pet. iii. 7, that is, as men who desire to grow in knowledge yourselves, and to communicate your knowledge for the benefit of others, which are the two good properties of those who deserve to be called "men of knowledge."

That you may keep up family doctrine,

[1.] You must read the Scriptures to your families, in a solemn manner, requiring their attendance on your reading, and their attention to it; and inquiring sometimes whether

they understand what you read. I hope you are none of you without Bibles in your houses, store of Bibles, every one a Bible. Thanks be to God we have them cheap and common in a language that we understand. The book of the law is not such a rarity with us as it was in Josiah's time. We need not fetch this knowledge from afar, nor send from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, to seek the word of God; no, the Word is nigh us. When Popery reigned in our land English Bibles were scarce things; a load of hay, it is said, was once given for one torn leaf of a Bible. But now Bibles are every one's money. You know where to buy them; or if not able to do that, perhaps in this charitable city you may know where to beg them. It is better to be without bread in your houses than without Bibles, for the words of God's mouth are and should be to you more than your necessary food.

But what will it avail you to have Bibles in your houses if you do not use them? to have the great things of God's law and gospel written to you, if you count them as a "strange thing?" You look daily into your shop-books, and perhaps converse much with the news-books, and shall your Bibles be thrown by as an almanac out of date? It is not now penal to read the Scriptures in your families, as it was in the dawning of the day of reformation from Popery, when there were those who were accused and prosecuted for reading in a certain great heretical book, called an English Bible. The Philistines do not now stop up these wells, as Gen. xxvi. 18, nor do the shepherds drive away your flocks from them, as Exod. ii. 17, nor are they as a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed; but the gifts given to men have been happily employed in rolling away the stone from the mouth of these wells. You have great encouragements to read the Scripture; for notwithstanding the malicious endeavours of atheists to vilify sacred things, the knowledge of the Scripture is still in reputation with all wise and good men. You have also a variety of excellent helps to understand the Scripture, and to improve your reading of it; so that if you or yours perish for lack

of this knowledge, as you certainly will if you persist in the neglect of it, you may thank yourselves, the guilt will lie wholly at your own doors.

Let me, therefore, with all earnestness press it upon you to make the solemn reading of the Scripture a part of your daily worship in your families. When you speak to God by prayer, be willing to hear him speak to you in his word, that there may be a complete communion between you and God. This will add much to the solemnity of your family worship, and will make the transaction the more awful and serious, if it be done in a right manner; which will conduce much to the honour of God, and your own and your family's edification. It will help to make the word of God familiar to yourselves, and your children and servants, that you may be ready and mighty in the Scriptures, and may thence be thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. It will likewise furnish you with matter and words for prayer, and so be helpful to you in other parts of the service. If some parts of Scripture seem less edifying, let those be most frequently read that are most so. David's psalms are of daily use in devotion, and Solomon's proverbs in conversation; it will be greatly to your advantage to be well versed in them. And I hope I need not press any Christian to the study of the New Testament, nor any Christian parents to the frequent instructing of their children in the pleasant and profitable histories of the Old Testament. When you only hear your children read the Bible, they are tempted to look upon it as no more than a school-book; but when they hear you read it to them in a solemn, religious manner, it comes, as it ought, with more authority. Those masters of families who make conscience of doing this daily, morning and evening, reckoning it part of that which the duty of every day requires, I am sure they have comfort and satisfaction in so doing, and find it contributes much to their own improvement in Christian knowledge, and the edification of those who dwell under their shadow; and the more, if those who are ministers expound, them-

selves, and other masters of families read some plain and profitable exposition of what is read, or of some part of it.

It is easy to add under this head, that the seasonable reading of other good books will contribute very much to family instruction. In helps of this kind we are as happy as any people under the sun, if we have but hearts to use the helps we have, as those who must give an account shortly of them among other talents which we are intrusted with.

[2.] You must also catechise your children and servants, so long as they continue in that age of life which needs this "milk." Oblige them to learn some good catechism by heart, and to keep it in remembrance; and by familiar discourse with them help them to understand it, as they become capable. It is an excellent method of catechising which God himself directs us to, Deut. vi. 7, to teach our children the things of God, by talking of them as we sit in the house, and go by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up. It is good to keep up stated times for this service, and be constant to them, as those who know how industrious the enemy is to sow tares while men sleep. If this good work be not kept going forward, it will of itself go backward. Wisdom also will direct you to manage your catechising, as well as the other branches of family religion, so as not to make it a task and burthen, but as much as may be a pleasure to those under your charge, that the blame may lie wholly upon their own impiety, and not at all upon your imprudence, if they should say, "Behold what a weariness is it!"

This way of instruction by catechising does in a special manner belong to the "church in the house;" for that is the nursery in which the trees of righteousness are reared, that afterwards are planted in the courts of our God. Public catechising will turn to little account without family catechising. The labour of ministers in instructing youth, and feeding the lambs of the flock, therefore, proves to many labour in vain, because masters of families do not do their duty in preparing them for public instruction, and examin-

ing their improvement by it. As mothers are children's best nurses, so parents are, or should be, their best teachers. Solomon's father was his tutor, Prov. iv. 3, 4, and he never forgot the lessons his mother taught him, Prov. xxxi. 1.

The baptism of your children, as it laid a strong and lasting obligation on them to live in the fear of God, so it brought you under the most powerful engagements imaginable to bring them up in that fear. The child you gave up to God to be dedicated to him, and admitted a member of Christ's visible church, was in God's name given back to you, with the same charge that Pharaoh's daughter gave to Moses's mother, "Take this child and nurse it for me;" and in nursing it for God you nurse it for better preferment than that of being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. It is worth observing, that he to whom God first did the honour of entailing the seal of the covenant upon his seed, was eminent for this part of family religion: "I know Abraham," says God, "that he will command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord," Gen. xviii. 19. Those, therefore, who would have the comfort of God's covenant with them and their seed, and would share in that blessing of Abraham which comes upon the Gentiles, must herein follow the example of faithful Abraham. The entail of the covenant of grace is forfeited and cut off, if care be not taken, with it, to transmit the means of grace. To what purpose were they disciplined if they be not taught? Why did you give them a Christian name, if you will not give them the knowledge of Christ and Christianity? God has owned them as his children, and born unto him, Ezek. xvi. 20, and therefore he expects that they should be brought up for him; you are unjust to your God, unkind to your children, and unfaithful to your trust, if, having by baptism entered your children in Christ's school, and enlisted them under his banner, you do not make conscience of training them up in the learning of Christ's scholars, and under the discipline of his soldiers.

Consider what your children are now capable of, even in

the days of their childhood. They are capable of receiving impressions now which may abide upon them while they live ; they are turned as clay to the seal, and now is the time to apply to them the seal of the living God. They are capable of honouring God now, if they be well taught ; and by their joining, as they can, in religious services with so much reverence and application as their age will admit, God is honoured, and you in them present to him living sacrifices, holy and acceptable. The Hosannas even of children well taught will be the perfection of praise, and highly pleasing to the Lord Jesus.

Consider what your children are designed for, we hope, in this world ; they must be a seed to serve the Lord, which shall be accounted to him for a generation. They are to bear up the name of Christ in their day, and into their hands must be transmitted that good thing which is committed to us. They are to be praising God on earth, when we are praising him in heaven. Let them then be brought up accordingly, that they may answer the end of their birth and being. They are designed for the service of their generation. and to do good in their day. Consult the public welfare then, and let nothing be wanting on your parts to qualify them for usefulness, according as their place and capacity is.

Consider especially what they are designed for in another world : they are made for eternity. Every child thou hast has a precious and immortal soul, that must be for ever either in heaven or hell, according as it is prepared in this present state ; and, perhaps, it must remove to that world of spirits very shortly : and will it not be very mournful, if, through your carelessness and neglect, your children should learn the ways of sin, and perish eternally in those ways ? Give them warning, that, if possible, you may deliver their souls, at least, that you may deliver your own, and may not bring their curse and God's too, their blood and your own too, upon your heads.

I know you cannot give grace to your children, nor is a religious conversation the constant consequent of a religious

education; "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong:" but if you make conscience of doing your duty, by keeping up family doctrine; if you teach them the good and the right way, and warn them of by-paths; if you reprove, exhort, and encourage them as there is occasion; if you pray with them, and for them, and set them a good example, and at last consult their souls welfare in the disposal of them, you have done your part, and may comfortably leave the issue and success with God.

(2.) Keep up family worship. You must not only as prophets teach your families, but as priest must go before them, in offering the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise. Herein likewise you must tread in the steps of faithful Abraham; whose sons you are while thus you do dwell; you must not only like him instruct your household, but like him you must with them call on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God, Gen. xxi. 33. Wherever he pitched his tent, there he built an altar unto the Lord, Gen. xii. 7, 8; xiii. 4, 18, though he was yet in an unsettled state, but a stranger and a sojourner; though he was among jealous and envious neighbours, for the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land, yet, wherever Abraham had a tent God had an altar in it, and he himself served at that altar. Herein he has left us an example.

Families, as such, have many errands at the throne of grace, which furnish them with matter and occasion for family prayer every day; errands which cannot be done so well in secret, or public, but are fittest to be done by the family, in consort, and apart from other families. And it is good for those who go before the rest in family devotions, ordinarily to dwell most upon the concerns of those who join in their family capacity, that it may be indeed a family prayer, not only offered up in and by the family, but suited to it. In this and other services we should endeavour not only to say something, but something to the purpose.

Five things especially you should have upon your heart in your family prayer, and should endeavour to bring something of each, more or less, into every prayer with your families.

[1.] You ought to make family acknowledgments of your dependence upon God and his providence, as you are a family. Our great business in all acts of religious worship, is to give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; and this we must do in our family worship. Give honour to God as the founder of families by his ordinance, because "it was not good for man to be alone;" as the founder of your families by his providence, for he it is "who buildeth the house, and setteth the solitary in families." Give honour to him as the Owner and Ruler of families; acknowledge that you and yours are his, under his government, and at his disposal, "as the sheep of his pasture." Especially adore him as the "God of all the families of Israel," in covenant relation to them, and having a particular concern for them above others, Jer. xxxi. 1. Give honour to the great Redeemer as the head of all the churches, even those in your houses; call him the Master of the family, and the great upholder and benefactor of it; for he it is in whom all the families of the earth are blessed, Gen. xii. 3. All family blessings are owing to Christ, and come to us through his hand by his blood. Own your dependence upon God, and your obligations to Christ, for all good things pertaining both to life and godliness; and make conscience of paying homage to your chief Lord, and never set up a title to any of your enjoyments in competition with his.

[2.] You ought to make family confessions of your sins against God; those sins you have contracted the guilt of in your family capacity. We read in Scripture of the "iniquity of the house," as of Eli's, 1 Sam. iii. 13, 14. Iniquity visited upon the children; sins that bring wrath upon families, and a curse that enters into the house to consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, Zech. v. 4. How sad is the condition of those families who sin together, and never pray together! who, by concurring in frauds, quarrels, and excesses, by strengthening one another's hands in impiety and profaneness, fill the measure of family guilt, and never agree together to do any thing to empty it!

And even religious families, that are not polluted with

gross and scandalous sins, yet have need to join every day in solemn acts and expressions of repentance before God for their sins of daily infirmity. Their vain words and unprofitable conversation among themselves; their manifold defects in relative duties, provoking one another's lusts and passions, instead of provoking one another to love and to good works: these ought to be confessed and bewailed by the family together, that God may be glorified, and what has been amiss may be amended for the future. It was not only in a time of great and extraordinary repentance that families mourned apart, Zech. xii. 11, but in the stated returns of the day of expiation the priest was particularly to make atonement for his household, Lev. xvi. 17. In many things we, all, offend God, and one another; and a penitent confession of it in prayer together, will be the most effectual way of reconciling ourselves both to God and to one another. The best families, and those in which piety and love prevail most, yet in many things come short, and do enough every day to bring them upon their knees at night.

[3.] You ought to offer up family thanksgivings for the blessings which you, with your families, receive from God. Many are the mercies which you enjoy the sweetness and benefit of in common; which if wanting to one, all the family would be sensible of it. Has not God made a hedge of protection about you and your houses, and all that you have? Job i. 10. Has he not created a defence upon every "dwelling place" of Mount Zion, as well as upon her assemblies? Isa. iv. 5. The dreadful alarms of a storm, and the desolations made, as by a fire, once in an age, should make us sensible of our obligations to the Divine Providence for our preservation from tempests and fire every day and every night. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed," and buried in the ruins of our houses. When the whole family comes together safe in the morning from their respective retirements, and when they return safe at night from their respective employments, there having been no disaster, no "adversary," no evil occurrence,

—it is so reasonable, and as I may say, so natural, for them to join together in solemn thanksgivings to their great Protector, that I wonder how any who believe in a God, and a providence, can omit it. Have you not health in your family, sickness kept or taken from the midst of you? Does not God bring plentifully into your hands, and increase your substance? Have you not your table spread, and your cup running over, and manna rained about your tents? and does not the whole family share in the comfort of all this? Shall not then the voice of thanksgiving be in those tabernacles where the voice of rejoicing is? Ps. cxviii. 15. Is the vine by the house-side fruitful and flourishing, and the olive plants round the table green and growing? Are family relations comfortable and agreeable, not broken or imbittered, and shall not that God be acknowledged herein who makes every creature to be that to us that it is? Shall not the God of your mercies, your family mercies, be the God of your praises, your family praises, and that daily?

The benefit and honour of your being Christian families, your having in God's house, and within his walls, a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters, and the salvation this brings to your house, furnishes you with abundant matter for joint thanksgivings. "You hath he known above all the families of the earth," and, therefore, he expects in a special manner to be owned by you. Of all houses, the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, and the house of Levi, have most reason to bless the Lord, and to say, "His mercy endureth for ever."

[4.] You ought to present your family petitions for the mercy and grace which your families stand in need of. Daily bread is received by families together, and we are taught not only to pray for it every day, but to pray together for it, saying, "Our Father," give it "us." There are affairs and employments which the family is jointly concerned in the success of, and, therefore, should jointly ask of God wisdom for the management of them, and prosperity therein. There are family cares to be cast upon God by prayer, family comforts to be sought for, and family

crosses which they should together beg for the sanctification and removal of. Hereby your children will be more effectually possessed with a belief of, and regard to, the Divine Providence, than by all the instructions you can give them; which will look best in their eye when thus reduced to practice, by your daily acknowledging God in all your ways.

You desire that God will give wisdom and grace to your children, you "travail in birth again till you see Christ formed in them," you pray for them; it is well, but it is not enough; you must pray with them; let them hear you pray to God for a blessing upon the good instructions and counsels you give them; it may perhaps put them upon praying for themselves, and increase their esteem both of you, and of the good lessons you teach them. You would have your servants diligent and faithful, and this perhaps would help to make them so. Masters do not give to their servants that which is just and equal if they do not continue in prayer with them. They are put together, Col. iv. 1, 2.

There are some temptations which families, as such, lie open to. Busy families are in temptation to worldliness, and neglect of religious duties; mixed families are in temptation to discord, and mutual jealousies; decaying families are in temptation to distrust, discontent, and indirect courses to help themselves; they should therefore not only watch, but pray together, that they be not overcome by the temptations they are exposed to.

There are family blessings which God has promised, and for which he will be sought unto, such as those on the house of Obed-edom for "the ark's sake;" or the mercy which St. Paul begs for the house of Onesiphorus, 2 Tim. i. 16. These joint blessings must be sued out by joint prayers. There is a special blessing which God commands upon families that dwell together in unity, Ps. cxxxiii. 1, 3, which they must seek for by prayer, and come together to seek for it, in token of that unity which qualifies for it. Where God commands the blessing, we must beg the blessing. God by promise blesses David's house, and, therefore, David by prayer blesses it too, 2 Sam. vi. 20.

[5.] You ought to make family intercessions for others also. There are families you stand related to, or which by neighbourhood, friendship, or acquaintance, you become interested in and concerned for; and these you should recommend in your prayers to the grace of God, and your family that are joined with you in the alliances should join with you in those prayers. Evil tidings perhaps are received from relations at a distance, which are the grief of the family; God must then be sought unto by the family for succour and deliverance. Some of the branches of the family are, perhaps, in distant countries, and in dangerous circumstances, and you are solicitous about them; it will be a comfort to yourselves, and perhaps of advantage to them, to make mention of them daily in your family prayers. The benefit of prayer will reach far, because he who hears prayer can extend his hand of power and mercy to the utmost corners of the earth, and to them that are afar off upon the sea.

In the public peace likewise we and our families have peace; and therefore, if we forget thee, O Jerusalem, we are unworthy ever to stand in thy courts, or dwell within thy walls. Our families should be witnesses for us that we pray daily for the land of our nativity, and the prosperity of all its interests; that praying every where we make supplication for the Queen, and all in authority, 1 Tim. ii. 2, 8. That we bear upon our hearts the concerns of God's church abroad, especially the suffering parts of it. Thus keeping up a spiritual communion with all the families that in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

In a word, let us go by this rule in our family devotions; whatever is the matter of our care, let it be the matter of our prayer; and let us allow no care which we cannot in faith spread before God. And whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, let it be the matter of our thanksgiving; and let us withhold our hearts from all those joys which do not dispose us for the duty of praise.

Under this head of family worship, I must not omit to

recommend to you the singing of psalms in your families, as a part of daily worship, especially sabbath worship. This is a part of religious worship which participates both of the word and prayer; for therein we are not only to give glory to God, but to teach and admonish one another; it is, therefore, very proper to make it a transition from the one to the other. It will warm and quicken you, refresh and comfort you; and, perhaps, if you have little children in your houses, they will sooner take notice of it than of any other part of your family devotion; and some good impressions may thereby be fastened upon them insensibly.

(3.) Keep up family discipline, that so you may have a complete church in your house, though in little. Reason teaches us that every man should bear rule in his own house, Esth. i. 22. And since that as well as other power is of God, it ought to be employed for God; and they who so rule must be just, ruling in his fear. Joshua looked further than the acts of religious worship when he made that pious resolution, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord," Josh. xxiv. 16. For we do not serve him in sincerity and truth, which is the service he there speaks of, ver. 14, if we and ours serve him only on our knees, and do not take care to serve him in all the instances of a religious conversation. Those only who have clean hands, and a pure heart, are accounted the generation of them that seek God, Ps. xxiv. 4, 6. And without this those who pretend to seek God daily, do but mock him, Isa. lviii. 2.

The authority God has given you over your children and servants is principally designed for this end, that you may thereby engage them for God and godliness. If you use it only to oblige them to do your will, and so to serve your pride; and to do your business, and so to serve your worldliness; you do not answer the great end of your being invested with it; you must use it for God's honour, by it to engage them, as far as you can, to do the will of God, and mind the business of religion. Holy David not only blessed his household, but took care to keep good

order in it, as appears by that plan of his family discipline, which we have in the 101st Psalm, a psalm which Mr. Fox tells us that blessed martyr Bishop Ridley often read to his family, as the rule by which he resolved to govern it.

You are made keepers of the vineyard, be faithful to your trust, and carefully watch over those who are under your charge, knowing you must give account.

[1.] Countenance every thing that is good and praiseworthy in your children and servants. It is as much your duty to commend and encourage those in your family who do well, as to reprove and admonish those who do amiss; and if you take delight only in blaming that which is culpable, and are backward to praise that which is laudable, you give occasion to suspect something of an ill nature, not becoming a good man, much less a good Christian. It should be a trouble to us when we have a reproof to give, but a pleasure to us to say, with the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 2, "Now I praise you."

Most people will be easier led than driven, and we all love to be spoken fair to: when you see anything that is hopeful and promising in your inferiors, anything of a towardly and tractable disposition, much more anything of a pious affection to the things of God, you should contrive to encourage it. Smile upon them when you see them set their faces heavenwards, and take the first opportunity to let them know you observe it, and are well pleased with it, and do not despise the day of small things. This will quicken them to continue and abound in that which is good, it will hearten them against the difficulties they see in their way; and, perhaps, may turn the wavering, trembling scale the right way, and effectually determine their resolutions to cleave to the Lord. When you see them forward to come to family worship, attentive to the word, devout in prayer, industrious to get knowledge, afraid of sin, and careful to do their duty, let them have the praise of it, for you have the comfort of it, and God must have all the glory. Draw them with the cords of a man, hold them with the bands of love; so shall your rebukes, when they

are necessary, be the more acceptable and effectual. The great Shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads them; and so should you.

[2.] Discountenance every thing that is evil in your children and servants. Use your authority for the preventing of sin, and the suppressing of every root of bitterness, lest it spring up, and trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Frown upon every thing that brings sin into your families, and introduces any ill words, or ill practices. Pride and passion, strife and contention, idleness and intemperance, lying and slandering; these are sins which you must not connive at, nor suffer to go without a rebuke. If you return to the Almighty, this among other things is required of you, that you "put away iniquity," all iniquity, these and other the like iniquities, "far from your tabernacle," Job xxii. 23. Make it to appear, that in the government of your families you are more jealous for God's honour, than for your own authority and interest; and show yourselves more displeased at that which is an offence to God, than at that which is only an affront or damage to yourselves.

You must indeed be careful not to provoke your children to wrath, lest they be discouraged; and as to your servants, it is your duty to "forbear, or moderate, threatening:" yet you must also, with holy zeal and resolution, and the meekness of wisdom, keep good order in your families, and set no wicked thing before their eyes, but witness against it. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Be afraid of having wicked servants in your houses, lest your children learn their way, and get a snare to their souls. Drive away with an angry countenance all that evil communication which corrupt good manners, that your houses may be habitations of righteousness, and sin may never find shelter in them.

I come now, II. to offer some motives to persuade you thus to turn your families into little churches. And oh that I could find out acceptable words with which to reason

with you, so as to prevail! "Suffer me a little, and I will show you" what is to be said "on God's behalf," which is worth your consideration.

1. If your families be little churches, God will come to you, and dwell with you in them; for he has said concerning the church, "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell." It is a very desirable thing to have the gracious presence of God with us in our families, that presence which is promised where two or three are gathered together in his name. This was it that David was so desirous of, Ps. ci. 2, "O when wilt thou come unto me!" His palace, his court, would be as a prison, as a dungeon to him, if God did not come to him, and dwell with him in it; and cannot your hearts witness to this desire, you who have houses of your own, would you not have God come to you, and dwell with you in them? Invite him then, beg his presence, court his stay. Nay, he invites himself to your houses by the offers of his favour and grace; "Behold he stands at your door and knocks:" it is the voice of your beloved, open to him, and bid him welcome; meet him with your "Hosannas, blessed is he that cometh." He comes peaceably, he brings a blessing with him, a blessing which he will cause to rest upon the habitations of the righteous, Ezek. xliv. 30. He will command a blessing, which shall amount to no less than "life for evermore," Ps. cxxxiii. 3. This presence and blessing of God will make your relations comfortable, your affairs successful, your enjoyments sweet; and behold, by it all things are made clean to you. This will make your family comforts double comforts, and your family crosses but half crosses; it will turn a tent into a temple, a cottage into a palace. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," are the houses in which God dwells.

Now the way to have God's presence with you in your houses, is to furnish them for his entertainment. Thus the good Shunammite invited the prophet Elisha to the chamber she had prepared for him, by accommodating him there with a bed and a table, a stool and a candlestick, 2 Kings iv. 10. Would you furnish your houses for the presence of God, if

is not expected that you furnish them as his tabernacle was of old furnished, with blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen; but set up and keep up for him a throne and an altar, that from the altar you and yours may give glory to him, and from the throne he may give law to you and yours; and then you may be sure of his presence and blessing, and may solace yourselves from day to day in the comfort of it. God will be with you in a way of mercy while you are with him in a way of duty; "If you seek him he will be found of you." The secret of God shall be in your tabernacle, as it was in Job's, ch. xxix. 4; as it is with the righteous, Ps. xxv. 14; Prov. iii. 32, 33.

2. If you make your houses little churches, God will make them little sanctuaries; nay, he will himself be to you as a little sanctuary, Ezek. xi. 16. The way to be safe in your houses, is to keep up religion and the fear of God in your houses; so shall you dwell on high, and "the place of your defence shall be the munition of rocks," Isa. xxxiii. 16. The law looks upon a man's house as his castle, religion makes it truly so. If God's grace be the "glory in the midst" of the house, his providence will make a wall of fire round about it, Zech. ii. 5. Satan found it to his confusion, that God made a hedge about pious Job, about his house, and about all that he had on every side, so that he could not find one gap by which to break in upon him, Job i. 10. Every dwelling place of Mount Sion shall be protected as the tabernacle was in the wilderness, for God has promised to create upon it a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, which shall be a defence upon all the glory, Isa. iv. 5. If we thus dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, by making *our* houses *his* houses, we shall be hid in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide us, Ps. xxvii. 4, 5.

Wherever we encamp, under the banner of Christ, the angels of God will encamp round about us, and pitch their tents where we pitch ours; and we little think how much we owe to the ministration of the good angels, that we and ours are preserved from the malice of evil angels, who are

continually seeking to do mischief to good people. There are terrors that fly by night and by day, which they only who abide under the shadow of the Almighty can promise themselves to be safe from, Ps. xci. 1, 5. Would you insure your houses by the best policy of insurance, turn them into churches, and then they shall be taken under the special protection of him who keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps; and if any damage come to them, it shall be made up in grace and glory. The way of duty is without doubt the way of safety.

Praying families are kept from more mischiefs than they themselves are aware of. They are not always sensible of the distinction which a kind Providence makes between them and others; though God is pleased sometimes to make it remarkable, as in the story which is credibly related of a certain village in the Canton of Bern in Switzerland, consisting of ninety houses, which in the year 1584, were all destroyed by an earthquake, except one house, in which the good man and his family were at that time together praying. That promise is sure to all the seed of faithful Abraham, "Fear not, I am thy shield," Gen. xv. 1. Wisdom herself has passed her word for it, Prov. i. 33, "Whoso hearkeneth to me," wherever he dwells, he "shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from" all real evil itself, and from the amazing, tormenting "fear of evil." Nothing can hurt, nothing needs frighten, those whom God protects.

3. If you have not a church in your house, it is to be feared that Satan will have a seat there. If religion do not rule in your families, sin and wickedness will rule there. "I know where thou dwellest," says Christ to the angel of the church of Pergamos, Rev. ii. 13, "even where Satan's seat is; that was his affliction: but there are many whose sin it is; by their irreligion and immorality they allow Satan a seat in their houses, and that seat a throne. They are very willing that the strong man armed should keep his palace there, and that his goods should be at peace; and the surest way to prevent this, is by setting up a church in the house. It is commonly said, that where God has a

church, the devil will have his chapel : but it may more truly be said in this case, where God has not a church, the devil will have his chapel. If the unclean spirit find the house in this sense empty, empty of good, though it be swept and garnished, he "taketh to himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there."

Terrible stories have been told of houses haunted by the devil, and of the fear people have had of dwelling in such houses ; verily those houses in which rioting and drunkenness reign, in which swearing and cursing are the language of the house, or in which the more spiritual wickedness of pride, malice, covetousness, and deceit have the ascendancy, may truly be said to be haunted by the devil, and they are most uncomfortable houses for any man to live in ; they are holds of foul spirits, and cages of unclean and hateful birds, even as Babylon the great will be when it is fallen, Rev. xviii. 2.

Now the way to keep sin out of the house, is to keep up religion in the house, which will be the most effectual antidote against Satan's poison. When Abraham thought concerning Abimelech's house, "Surely the fear of God is not in this place," he concluded no less but "they will slay me for my wife's sake," Gen. xx. 11. Where no fear of God is, no reading, no praying, no devotion, what can one expect but all that is bad ? Where there is impiety there will be immorality ; they who restrain prayer cast off fear, Job xv. 4. But if religious worship have its place in the house, it may be hoped that vice will not have a place there. There is much of truth in that saying of good Mr. Dod, "Either praying will make a man give over sinning, or sinning will make a man give over praying." There remains some hope concerning those who are otherwise bad, as long as they keep up prayer. Though there be a struggle between Christ and Belial in your houses, and the insults of sin and Satan are daring and threatening, yet as long as religion keeps the field, and the weapons of its warfare are made use of, we may hope the enemy will lose ground.

4. A church in the house will make it very comfortable

to yourselves. Nothing more agreeable to a gracious soul than constant communion with a gracious God; it is the "one thing" it desires, to "dwell in the house of the Lord;" here it is as in its element, it is its rest for ever. If therefore our houses be houses of the Lord, we shall for that reason love home, reckoning our daily devotion the sweetest of our daily delights, and our family worship the most valuable of our family comforts. This will sanctify to us all the conveniences of our houses, and reconcile us to the inconveniences of it. What are Solomon's gardens, and orchards, and pools of water, and other delights of the sons of men, Eccl. ii. 5, 6, 8, in comparison with these delights of the children of God?

Family religion will help to make our family relations comfortable to us, by promoting love, preventing quarrels, and extinguishing heats that may at any time happen. A family living in the fear of God, and joining daily in religious worship, truly enjoys itself; "Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren" thus to dwell "together;" it is not only like ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart, but like the holy ointment, the holy perfume, wherewith Aaron the saint of the Lord was consecrated; not only like the common dew to the grass, but like the dew which descends upon the mountains of Sion, the holy mountains, Ps. cxxxiii. 1—3. The communion of saints in that which is the work of saints, is without doubt the most pleasant communion here on earth, and the liveliest representation, and surest pledge, of those everlasting joys which are the happiness of the spirits of just men made perfect, and the hopes of holy souls in this imperfect state.

Family religion will make the affairs of the family successful; and though they may not in every thing issue to our mind, yet we may by faith foresee that they will at last issue to our good. If this beauty of the Lord our God be upon us and our families, it will prosper the work of our hands unto us, yea, the work of our hands it will establish; or, however, it will establish our hearts in that comfort which makes every thing that occurs easy, Ps. xc. 17; cxii. 8.

We cannot suppose our mountain to stand so strong but that it will be moved; trouble in the flesh we must expect, and affliction in that from which we promise ourselves most comfort; and when the Divine Providence makes our houses houses of mourning, then it will be comfortable to have them houses of prayer, and to have had them so before. When sickness, and sorrow, and death come into our families, (and sooner or later they will come,) it is good that they should find the wheels of prayer going, and the family accustomed to seek God; for if we are then to begin this good work when distress forces us to it, we shall drive heavily in it. They who pray constantly when they are well, may pray comfortably when they are sick.

5. A church in the house will be a good legacy, nay, it will be a good inheritance, to be left to your children after you. Reason directs us to consult the welfare of posterity, and to lay up in store a good foundation for those who shall come after us to build upon; and we cannot do this better than by keeping up religion in our houses. A family altar will be the best entail; your children will for this rise up and call you blessed, and it may be hoped they will be praising God for you, and praising God like you, here on earth, when you are praising him in heaven.

You will hereby leave your children the benefit of many prayers put up to heaven for them, which will be kept, as it were, upon the file there, to be answered to their comfort when you are silent in the dust. It is true of prayer, what we say of winter, "It never rots in the skies." The seed of Jacob know they do not seek in vain, though perhaps they live not to see their prayers answered. Some good Christians, who have made conscience of praying daily with and for their children, have been encouraged to hope that the children of so many prayers should not miscarry at last: and thus encouraged, Joseph's dying word has been the language of many a dying Christian's faith, "I die, but God will surely visit you," Gen. l. 24. I have heard of a hopeful son, who said he valued his interest in his pious father's prayer far more than his interest in his estate, though a considerable one.

You will likewise hereby leave your children a good example, which you may hope they will follow when they come into houses of their own. The usage and practice of your families is commonly transmitted from one generation to another; bad customs are many times thus entailed. They who burnt incense to the queen of heaven learnt it of their fathers, Jer. xlv. 17. And a vain conversation was thus received by tradition, 1 Pet. i. 18. And why may not good customs be in like manner handed down to posterity? Thus we should make known the ways of God to our children, that they may arise and declare them to their children, Ps. lxxviii. 6, and religion may become an heirloom in our families. Let your children be able to say, when they are tempted to sit loose to religion, That it was the way of their family, the good old way, in which their fathers walked, and in which they themselves were educated and trained up; and with this they may answer him who reproaches them. Let family worship, besides all its other pleas for itself, be able in your houses to plead prescription. And though to the acceptableness of the service it is requisite that it be done from a higher and better principle than purely to keep up the custom of the family, yet better so than not at all: and the form of godliness may by the grace of God at length prove the happy vehicle of its power; and dry bones, whilst unburied, may be made to live. Thus "a good man leaves an inheritance to his children:" and "the generation of the upright shall be blessed."

6. A church in the house will contribute very much to the prosperity of the church of God in the nation. Family religion, if that prevail, will put a face of religion upon the land, and very much advance the beauty and peace of our English Jerusalem. This is that which I hope we are all hearty well-wishers to; setting aside the consideration of parties, and separate interests, and burying all names of distinction in the grave of Christian charity, we earnestly desire to see true catholic Christianity, and serious godliness in the power of it, prevailing and flourishing in our land; to see knowledge filling the land, as the waters cover the sea;

to see holiness and love giving law, and triumphing over sin and strife; we would see cause to call your city, "A city of righteousness, a faithful city, its walls salvation, and its gates praise." Now all this would be effected if family religion were generally set up and kept up.

When the wall was to be built about Jerusalem, it was presently done by this expedient, every one undertook to repair over against his own house, Neh. iii. 10, &c. And if ever the decayed walls of the gospel Jerusalem be built up, it must be by the same method. Every one must sweep before his own door, and then the street will be clean. If there were a church in every house, there would be such a church in our land as would make it a praise throughout the whole earth. We cannot better serve our country than by keeping up religion in our families.

Let families be well catechised, and then the public preaching of the word will be the more profitable, and the more successful. For want of this, when we speak ever so plainly of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, to the most we do but speak parables. "The book" of the Lord is delivered to them who are not catechised, saying, "Read this," and they say, "We are not learned;" learned enough in other things, but not in the one thing needful, Isa. xxix. 12. But our work is easy with those who from their childhood have known the Holy Scriptures.

If every family were a praying family, public prayers would be the better joined in, more intelligently, and more affectionately; for the more we are used to prayer, the more expert we shall be in that holy and divine art of "entering into the holiest" in that duty. And public reproofs and admonitions would be as a "nail in a sure place," if masters of families would second them with their family discipline, and so clench those nails.

Religious families are blessings to the neighbourhood they live in, at least by their prayers. A good man thus becomes a public good, and it is his ambition to be so. Though he see his children's children, he has small joy of that if he do not see peace upon Israel, Ps. cxxviii. 5, 6. And therefore

postponing all his own interests, and satisfactions, he sets himself to seek the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life. Happy were we if we had many such. That which now remains, is to address myself to you upon the whole matter by way of exhortation; and I pray you let my counsel be acceptable to you; and while I endeavour to give every one his portion, let your consciences assist me herein, and take to yourselves that which belongs to you.

III. THE APPLICATION.

1. Let those masters of families who have hitherto lived in the neglect of family religion be persuaded now to set it up, and henceforward to make conscience of it. I know it is hard to persuade people to begin even a good work that they have not been used to; yet, if God by his grace apply this word, who can tell but some may be wrought upon to comply with the design of it? We have no ill design in urging you to this part of your duty; we aim not at the advantage of a party, but purely at the prosperity of your families. We are sure we have reason on our side, and if you will but suffer that to rule you, we shall gain our point; and you will all go home firmly resolved, as Joshua was, that whatever others do themselves, and whatever they say of you, "You and your houses will serve the Lord." God put it into, and keep it in, the imagination of the thought of your heart, and establish your way therein before him!

Proceed in the right method; first set up Christ upon the throne in your hearts, and then set up a church for Christ in your house. Let Christ dwell in your hearts by faith, and then let him dwell in your houses; you do not begin at the right end of your work if you do not first give your own selves unto the Lord; God had respect first to Abel, and then to his offering. Let the fear and love of God rule in your hearts, and have a commanding sway and empire there, and then set up an altar for God in your tents; for you cannot do that acceptably till you have first consecrated yourselves as spiritual priests to God, to serve at that altar.

And when your hearts, like Lydia's, are opened to Christ,

let your house, like hers, be opened to him too, Acts xvi. 14, 15. Let there be churches in all your houses; let those who have the stateliest, richest, and best furnished houses, reckon a church in them to be their best ornament: let those who have houses of the greatest care and business, reckon family religion their best employment; and not neglect the one thing needful, while they are careful and cumbered about many things; nor let those who have close and mean habitations be discouraged; the ark of God long dwelt in curtains. Your dwelling is not so strait, but you may find room for a church in it. Church work is often chargeable, but you may do this church work cheap: you need not make silver shrines as they did for Diana, nor lavish gold out of the bag, as idolaters did in the service of their gods, Isa. xlvi. 6, no, "An altar of earth shall you make to your God," Exod. xx. 24, and he will accept it. Church work is accustomed to be slow work, but you may do this quickly. Put on resolution, and you may set up this tabernacle to-night, before to-morrow.

Would you keep up your authority in your family? You cannot do it better than by keeping up religion in your family. If ever a master of a family looks great, truly great, it is when he is going before his house in the service of God, and presiding among them in holy things. Then he shows himself worthy of double honour, when he teaches them the good knowledge of the Lord, and is their mouth to God in prayer, blessing them in the name of God.

Would you have your family relations comfortable, your affairs successful, and give an evidence of your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ? Would you live in God's fear, and die in his favour, and escape that curse which is entailed upon prayerless families? Let religion in the power of it have its due place, that is, the uppermost place in your houses.

Many objections your own corrupt hearts will make against building these churches, but they will all appear frivolous and trifling to a pious mind that is steadfastly resolved for God and godliness: you will never go on in your

way to heaven if you will be frightened by lions in the street. Whatever is the difficulty you dread, the discouragement you apprehend in it, I am confident it is not insuperable, it is not unanswerable. But "he that observes the wind shall not sow, and he that regards the clouds shall not reap."

Be not loath to begin a new custom, if it be a good custom, especially if it be a duty, as certainly this is, which, while you continue in the neglect of, you live in sin; for omissions are sins, and must come into judgment. It may be that you have been convinced that you ought to worship God in your families, and that it is a good thing to do so; but you have put it off to some more convenient season. Will you now at last take occasion from this sermon to begin it? And do not defer so good a work any longer. The present season is without doubt the most convenient season. Begin this day; let this be the day of your laying the foundation of the Lord's temple in your house; and then consider from this day and upward—as God by the prophet reasons with the people who neglected to build the temple, Hag. ii. 18, 19, take notice—whether God do not from this day remarkably bless you in all that you have and do.

Plead not your own weakness and inability to perform family worship; make use of the helps that are provided for you; do as well as you can when you cannot do so well as you would, and God will accept of you. You willingly write what is necessary for the carrying on of your trade, though you cannot write so fine a hand as some others can; and will you not be as wise in the work of your Christian calling to do your best, though it be far short of the best, rather than not do it at all? To him who has but one talent, and trades with that, more shall be given; but from him who buries it, it shall be taken away. Be at some pains to make the Scriptures familiar to you, especially David's Psalms, and then you cannot be to seek for a variety of apt expressions proper to be used in prayer, for they will be always at your right hand. "Take with you" those "words, words which the Holy Ghost teaches," for you cannot find more acceptable words.

And now shall I prevail with you in this matter? I am loath to leave you unresolved, or but almost persuaded; I beg of you, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for your own precious souls' sake, and for the children's sake of your own bodies, that you will live no longer in the neglect of so great, and necessary, and comfortable a duty as this of family worship is. When we press upon you the more inward duties of faith and love, and the fear of God, it cannot be so evident that we succeed in our errand as it may be in this. It is certain that you get no good by this sermon—but it is wholly lost upon you—if after you have heard it, or read it, you continue in the neglect of family religion; and if still you “cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God.” Your families will be witnesses against you that this work was undone; and this sermon will witness against you, that it was not for want of being called to do it, but for want of a heart to do it when you were called. But I hope better things of you, my brethren, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak.

2. Let those who have kept up family worship formerly, but of late have left it off, be persuaded to revive it. This, perhaps, is the case of some of you; you remember the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals; time was when you sought God daily, and delighted to know his ways, as families who did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of your God; but now it is otherwise. The altar of the Lord is broken down and neglected, the daily sacrifice is ceased; and God has kept an account how many days it has ceased, whether you have or no, Dan. viii. 13, 14. Now God comes into your houses seeking fruit, but he finds none, or next to none: you are so eager in your worldly pursuits that you have neither hearts nor time for religious exercises. You began at first frequently to omit the service, and a small matter served for an excuse to put it by, and so by degrees it came to nothing.

Oh that those who have thus left their first love, would now remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works! Inquire how this good work came to be

neglected ; was it not because your love to God cooled, and the love of the world prevailed ? Have you not found a manifest decay in the prosperity of your souls since you let fall this good work ? Has not sin got ground in your hearts and in your houses ? And though, when you dropt your family worship, you promised yourselves that you would make it up in secret worship, because you were not willing to allow yourselves time for both, yet have you not declined in that also ? Are you not grown less frequent, and less fervent, in your closet devotions too ? Where is now the blessedness you have formerly spoken of ? I beseech you to lay out yourselves to retrieve it in time. Say as that penitent adulteress, Hos. ii. 7, " I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now." Cleanse the sanctuary, and put away the strange god. Is money the god, or the belly the god, that has gained possession of thy heart and house ? Whatever it is, cast it out. Repair the altar of the Lord, and begin again the daily sacrifice and oblation. Light the lamps again, and burn the incense. Rear up the tabernacle of David which is fallen down, lengthen its cords and strengthen its stakes, and resolve it shall never be neglected again as it has been. Perhaps you and your families have been manifestly under the rebukes of Providence since you left off your duty,—and Jacob was while he neglected to pay his vow ; I beseech you, hear at length the voice of the rod, and of him who has appointed it, for it reminds you of your forgotten vows, saying, " Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there," Gen. xxxv. 1. Let the place thou dwellest in ever be a Bethel, so shall God dwell with thee there.

3. Let those who are remiss and negligent in their family worship be awakened to more zeal and constancy. Some of you perhaps have a church in your house, but it is not a flourishing church ; it is like the church of Laodicea, neither cold nor hot ; or like the church of Sardis, in which the things that remain are ready to die ; so that it hath little more than a name to live. Something of this work of the Lord is done for fashion sake, but it is done deceit-

fully : you have in your flock a male, but you vow and sacrifice unto the Lord a corrupt thing ; you grow "customary" in your accustomed services, and bring the torn and the blind, the lame and the sick, for sacrifice ; and you offer that to your God which you would scorn to offer to your governor ; and though it is but little you do for the church in your house, you think that too much, and say, "Behold what a weariness is it !" You put it off with a small and inconsiderable scantling of your day, and that the dregs and refuse of it. You can spare no time at all for it in the morning, nor any in the evening, till you are half asleep. It is thrust into a corner, and almost lost in a crowd of worldly business and carnal conversation. When it is done, it is done so slightly, in so much haste, and with so little reverence, that it makes no impression upon yourselves or your families. The Bible lies ready, but you have no time to read ; your servants are otherwise employed, and you think it is no matter for calling them in ; you yourselves can take up with a "word or two of prayer," or rest in a lifeless, heartless tale of words. Thus it is every day, and perhaps little better on the Lord's day ; no repetition, no catechising, no singing of psalms, or none to any purpose.

Is it thus with any of your families ? Is this the present state of the church in your house ? My brethren, "These things ought not to be so." It is not enough that you do that which is good, but you must do it well. God and religion have in effect no place in your hearts or houses if they have not the innermost and uppermost place. Christ will come no whither to be an underling ; he is not a guest to be set behind the door. What comfort, what benefit can you promise to yourselves from such trifling services as these ; from an empty form of godliness without the power of it ?

I beseech you, sirs, make a business of your family religion, and not a by-business. Let it be your pleasure and delight, and not a task and drudgery. Contrive your affairs so that the most convenient time may be allotted both

morning and evening for your family worship, so that you may not be unfit for it, or disturbed and straitened in it; herein wisdom is profitable to direct. Address yourselves to it with reverence and seriousness, and a solemn pause; that those who join with you may see and say, that God is with you of a truth, and may be struck thereby into a like holy awe. You need not be long in the service, but you ought to be lively in it; not slothful in this business, because it is the business for God and your souls, but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

4. Let those who have a church in their house be very careful to adorn and beautify it in their conversation. If you pray in your families, and read the Scriptures, and sing psalms, and yet are passionate and forward with your relations, quarrelsome and contentious with your neighbours, unjust and deceitful in your dealings, intemperate and given to tippling, or allow yourselves in any other sinful way, you pull down with one hand what you build up with the other. Your prayers will be an abomination to God, and to good men too, if they be thus polluted. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked."

See that you be universal in your religion, that it may appear that you are sincere in it. Show that you believe a reality in it, by acting always under the commanding power and influence of it. Be not Christians upon your knees, and Jews in your shops. While you seem saints in your devotions, prove not yourselves sinners in your conversations. Having begun the day in the fear of God, be in that fear all the day long. Let the example you set your families be throughout good, and by it teach them not only to read and pray, for that is but half their work, but by it teach them to be meek and humble, sober and temperate, loving and peaceable, just and honest; so shall you adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour; and those who will not be won by the word, shall be won by your conversation. Your family worship is an honour to you, see to it that neither you nor yours be in any thing a disgrace to it.

5. Let those who are setting out in the world set up a church in their house at first, and not defer it. Plead not youth and bashfulness ; if you have confidence enough to rule a family, I hope you have confidence enough to pray with a family. Say not, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built," as they did who "dwelt in their ceiled houses," while God's house lay waste, Hag. i. 2, 4. It ought to be built immediately ; and the longer you put it off, the more difficulty there will be in the doing of it, and the more danger that it will never be done.

Now you are beginning the world, as you call it, is it not your wisdom as well as duty to begin with God ? Can you begin better ? or can you expect to prosper if you do not begin thus ? The fuller your heads are of care about setting up house, and setting up shop, and settling in both, the more need you have of daily prayer, that by it you may cast your care on God, and fetch in wisdom and direction from on high.

6. In all your removals be sure you take the "church in your house" along with you. Abraham often removed his tent, but wherever he pitched it, there the first thing he did was to build an altar. It is observable concerning Aquila and Priscilla, of whose pious family my text speaks, that when St. Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans they were at Rome ; for he sends salutations to them thither, and there it is said they had a church in their house, Rom. xvi. 5. But now, when he wrote this epistle to the Corinthians, they were at Ephesus, for thence it should seem this epistle bore date, and here he sends salutations from them ; and at Ephesus also they had a church in their house. As wherever we go ourselves we must take our religion with us ; so wherever we take our families, or part of them, we must take our family religion with us ; for in all places we need divine protection, and experience divine goodness. "I will therefore that men pray every where."

When you are in your city-houses, let not the business

of them crowd out your family religion ; nor let the diversions of your country-houses indispose your minds to these serious exercises. That care and that pleasure are unseasonable and inordinate which leave you not both heart and time to attend the service of the church in your house.

Let me here be an advocate also for those families whose masters are often absent from them, for their health or pleasure, especially on the Lord's day, or long absent upon business. And let me beg these absent masters to consider with whom they leave those few sheep in the wilderness, 1 Sam. xvii. 28, and whether they do not leave them neglected and exposed. Perhaps there is not a just cause for your absence so much, nor can you give a good answer to that question, "What dost thou here, Elijah?" But if there be a just cause, you ought to take care that the church in your house be not neglected when you are abroad, but that the work be done when you are not at home to do it.

7. Let inferior relatives help to promote religion in the families where they are. If family worship be not kept up in the houses where you live, let so much the more be done in your closets for God and your souls: if it be, yet think not that will excuse you from secret worship. All is little enough to keep up the life of religion in your hearts, and help you forward toward heaven.

Let the children of praying parents, and the servants of praying masters, account it a great privilege to live in houses that have churches in them, and be careful to improve that privilege. Be you also ready to every good work ; make the religious exercises of your family easy and pleasant to those who perform them, by showing yourselves forward to attend on them, and careful to attend to them ; for your backwardness and carelessness will be their greatest discouragement. Let your lives also be a credit to good education, and make it appear to all with whom you converse, that you are every way the better for living in religious families.

8. Let solitary people, who are not engaged in families,

have churches in their chambers, churches in their closets. When every man repaired the wall of Jerusalem over against his own house, we read of one that repaired over against his chamber, Neh. iii. 30. Those who live alone, out of the way of family worship, ought to take so much the more time for their secret worship, and, if possible, add the more solemnity to it. You have not families to read the Scriptures to, read them so much the more to yourselves. You have not children and servants to catechise, nor parents or masters to be catechised by; catechise yourselves then, that you may hold fast the form of sound words which you have received. "Exhort one another;" so we read it, Heb. iii. 13, *παρακαλεῖτε εαυτους*—*exhort yourselves*, so it might as well be read. You are not made keepers of the vineyards, and therefore the greater is your shame if your own vineyard you do not keep. When you are alone, yet you are not alone, for the Father is with you, to observe what you do, and to own and accept you if you do well.

9. Let those who are to choose a settlement consult the welfare of their souls in the choice. If a church in the house be so necessary, so comfortable, then be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers, who will have no inclination for the church in the house, nor assist in the support of it, but instead of building this house, pluck it down with their hands, Prov. xiv. 1. Let apprenticeships and other services be chosen by this rule, that "that is best for us which is best for our souls;" and therefore it is our interest to go with those, and be with those, with whom God is, Zech viii. 23. When Lot was to choose a habitation he was determined therein purely by secular advantages, Gen. xiii. 11, 13, and God justly corrected his sensual choice, for he never had a quiet day in the Sodom he chose till he was fired out of it. The Jewish writers tell of one of their devout rabbins, who being courted to dwell in a place which was otherwise well accommodated, but had no synagogue near, he utterly refused to accept the invitation, and gave that text for his reason, Ps. cxix.

72, "The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

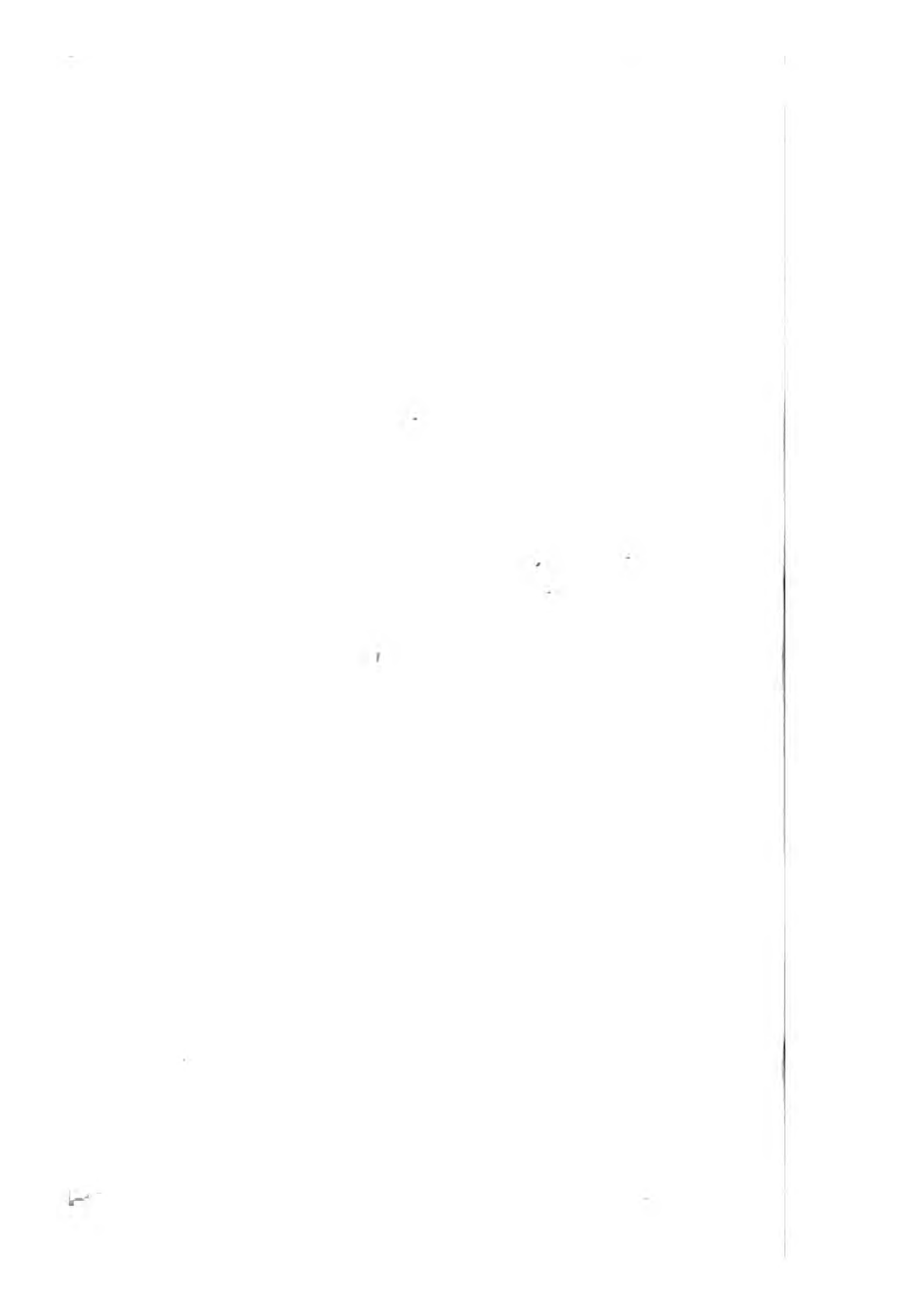
10. Let religious families keep up friendship and fellowship with each other, and as they have opportunity assist one another in doing good. The communion of churches has always been accounted their beauty, strength, and comfort, and so is the communion of these domestic churches. We find here, and in other of St. Paul's epistles, kind salutations sent to and from the houses that had churches in them. Religious families should greet one another, visit one another, love one another, pray for one another, and, as becomes households of faith, do all the good they can one to another; forasmuch as they all meet daily at the same throne of grace, and hope to meet shortly at the same throne of glory, to be no more, as they are now, divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel.

Lastly, let those houses that have churches in them, flourishing churches, have comfort in them. Is religion in the power of it uppermost in your houses? And are you and yours serving the Lord, serving him daily? Go on and prosper, for the Lord is with you while you be with him. See your houses under the protection and blessing of heaven, and be assured that all things shall work together for good to you. Make it to appear by your holy cheerfulness that you find God a good master, Wisdom's ways pleasantness, and her paths peace; and that you see no reason to envy those who spend their days in carnal mirth, for you are acquainted with better pleasures than any they can pretend to.

Are your houses on earth God's houses? Are they dedicated to him, and employed for him? Be of good comfort, his house in heaven shall be yours shortly: "In my Father's house are many mansions;" and there is one, you may be sure, for each of you, who thus "by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality.

THE SABBATH;

A SERIOUS ADDRESS TO THOSE WHO PROFANE THE LORD'S DAY



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THOSE I reckon guilty of profaning the Lord's day, and to them in the name of God direct this paper, who neglect the appointed work of that day, and who violate the prescribed rest of that day.

1. It is a profanation of the Lord's day, and a breach of the law of it, to neglect and omit the proper duty and business of that day, which is the immediate service and worship of our God. If we leave undone that which on this day ought to be done, we are transgressors; for omissions are sins, and must come into judgment.

That the eternal God is to be solemnly and religiously adored by the children of men, and that we are all bound, by acts of piety and devotion, to give unto him the glory due unto his name, and pay our homage to him, none will question who really believe that there is a God, who is a being infinitely perfect and blessed, and the fountain of all being and blessedness, our Creator, Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor, on whom we have a necessary and constant dependence, and to whom we lie under the highest obligations imaginable. Never did reasonable creatures speak more unreasonably than they did who said, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him?" Job xxi. 15.

Something of this work ought to be done every day ; no day must pass without some solemn acts of religious worship, both morning and evening ; when we address ourselves to the work of the day, and when we compose ourselves to the rest of the night, we ought actually to acknowledge God, both by our prayers and praises, as our Protector, Guide, and Benefactor. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work ;" and is this no part of our work ? Is it not the most needful and excellent work we have to do ? Those who live without daily worship live without God in the world. As God allows us time for works of necessity and mercy out of his day, so we ought to allow time for works of piety and devotion out of our days, else we are not only undutiful, but very ungrateful.

But besides the morning and evening sacrifice, which the duty of every day requires, the wisdom of God, for the preserving and securing of divine worship in the world, has instituted and appointed a particular time for the special solemnities of it, which is one day in seven. The body of a seventh day, that is, the working hours of it, are by this institution appointed to be spent in the acts of religion and devotion, as the other days of the week are intended for secular business, and the works of our particular calling.

Now this instrumental part of religion, (give me leave to call it so,) though it be not equally necessary with the essentials of it, the love of God, and faith in Christ, yet it is undoubtedly necessary, both as a duty in obedience to the divine law, which requires us thus to consecrate a seventh day to the services of religion, and as a means of keeping up communion with God in holy ordinances, and preparing ourselves, by his grace, for the vision and fruition of him. It is so necessary, that revealed religion, and with it all religion, would in all probability have been lost and forgotten long ere this if it had not been kept up by the observation of Sabbaths.

Now, forasmuch as it is the work of the Lord's day to worship God, not only in public solemn assemblies, which we ought conscientiously to attend upon both the former

and the latter part of the day, but in secret and in our families, morning, evening, and at noon, those do certainly profane the day who do not spend the best part of it, and much more those who scarce spend any part of it, in pious exercises; either not attending on them at all, or with such a constant and allowed carelessness and indifference as discovers a great contempt of the God they pretend to honour.

Those profane this sacred day who waste the precious hours of its morning in sleep and sloth, and proud and needless dressing, and the rest of the day in idle chat and perfect sauntering, as if Sabbath time hung upon their hands and they knew not what to do with it, nor how to idle it away and pass it off fast enough, till they have that which is their heart's desire, "When will the Sabbath be gone?"

Such as these, how innocent soever they may think themselves, are to be counted Sabbath-breakers, who, instead of keeping the Sabbath day, lose it, and throw it away, and wilfully suffer it to run waste; and instead of sanctifying it, and advancing it above other times, vilify it, and make it the most idle, insignificant, and unprofitable day of the week; for the days that are spent in worldly business serve to some purpose, but this, that should be spent in the business of religion, being trifled away, and the work of it undone, serves to no purpose.

2. It is a profanation of the Lord's day to violate and break in upon the holy rest of that day, and to do that from which we are bound up and restrained by the law of the day, in order to our more close application to that which is the work of the day. On that day we are to rest both from those worldly employments of our particular callings which on other days are our duty, and the work of the day, and from those sports and recreations which on other days are lawful, as the entertainment of our spare hours, and the preparatives for our busy ones; from both we are to rest on the Lord's day; for certainly carnal pleasure is as great an enemy to spiritual joy as the sorrow of

the world is, and sport is as inconsistent with the Sabbath rest as labour is.

Rest from worldly business on the Sabbath day was, under the Old Testament, more primarily required as a duty, and a great stress laid upon it, according to the nature of that dispensation; to all the purposes of this rest we are not now so strictly tied up as the Jews then were: but it is still secondarily requisite as a means, in order to the due performance of the work of the day; and so far it is a duty.

Then, when the more solemn worship of God was appropriated to one place, where the ark was, the place which God chose to put his name there, which the people were appointed generally to attend but thrice a year, the rest of those who were at a distance was required and accepted as a tacit joining with the temple service on the Sabbath day; by a strict cessation from other work they testified an implicit concurrence in that work. But now, under the gospel, we are not so confined to one place as they then were; it is God's will that men pray every where, and that in every place the spiritual incense be offered; we have now larger opportunities and better helps for doing the work and enjoying the comforts of that day than they then had; and therefore, now the bare rest from worldly labour is not in itself so much a sanctification of the Sabbath as it was then. Yet we cannot think ourselves less obliged than they were to rest from worldly employments and recreation, as far as that rest will contribute to our attendance on the work of the day with more solemnity, and with greater freedom and closeness of application, and without distinction.

Those, therefore, undoubtedly profane the Lord's day, who absent themselves from the public worship of God, either the former or the latter part of the day, that they may underhand follow their callings, settle their accounts, drive bargains, push on journeys, make visits, or the like, unless when the occasion is urgent, and mercy comes to take place of sacrifice.

Yet, not they only are guilty of the breach of the Sabbath rest, who spend that part of the day, which we call "church time," in worldly employments and recreations; but they also who spend the time before, between, and after public worship, so as either to intrench upon that full scope of time that they ought to take on that day, for their secret and family worship, and to abridge themselves of that, or so as to unfit themselves and put themselves out of frame for holy duties, or obstruct their profiting by them, do violate the Sabbath rest. Works of necessity, which yet ought not to be a self-created necessity, we are allowed time for, the body must be fed, and clothed, and rested, that it may be fit to serve the soul in the service of God on this day. But no more of the time than is convenient for these must be alienated from the business of the day; if it be, we break in upon the appointed rest.

Those who go to their shops and exercise their trades openly or secretly on the Lord's day, thereby show that they mind the world more than God, and that they are more solicitous for the meat that perishes, than for that which endures to eternal life; and those who go to the ale-house, or follow their sports, and divert themselves or others with idle walking and talking, show that they mind the flesh more than God, and that they are wholly taken up with the mere animal life, and wretchedly estranged from the principles, powers, and pleasures of the spiritual and divine life.

If any pretend that they can perform the work of the Lord's day well enough, though they do not observe the rest of the day, they suppose themselves wiser than God, who has instituted the Sabbath rest in order to the better and more solemn management of the Sabbath work, both public and private.

We find now who are chargeable with the sin of profaning the Lord's day; let the conscience of every one that is guilty herein deal faithfully with him in the reading of this, and say, "Thou art the man;" thou art the man, the woman, that makest the day of the Lord either a day of

idleness, or a day of worldly business, and dost not spend it in the service of God and communion with him. Either thou dost not diligently attend the public worship in its season, or but one part of the day, or without any just cause stayest at home, or walkest abroad, when thou shouldst be in the holy convocation; or, if thou go to church for fashion sake, thou thinkest when that service is over thou hast no more to do, and dost not spend the remaining part of the day as thou oughtest, in prayer, reading, meditation, and other religious exercises, alone and with thy family. God's time, which is devoted to him, and should be employed for him, thou givest to the world, and thy worldly business, or, which is perhaps more common, to the body, and to the ease and pleasure of it, and to the entertainments of a vain and foolish conversation. Art thou verily guilty in these or any of these things? This paper comes with an humble request to thee, that thou wouldst consider thy ways and amend them.

This is one of those sins which the public attempts for the reformation of manners at this day are levelled against, at least in some instances of it; and justly, for the profanation of God's Sabbaths, which he is very jealous for the honour of, is a sin that brings judgments upon a land perhaps as soon as any other. It is a sin that "kindles fires in the gates of Jerusalem," Jer. xvii. 27, a sin that "brings yet more wrath upon Israel," Neh. xiii. 17, 18. And therefore all who wish well to the public peace, and those especially who are intrusted with the preservation of it, are concerned in interest, as well as duty, to take care of the due sanctification of the Sabbath, as far as it falls within their cognizance, so that whatever guilt of this kind particular persons may contract, it may not become national.

Now, in our dealing with this sin, as we have this advantage, that we are not struggling with the violent impetus of a particular lust, appetite, or passion, which is commonly deaf to reason and expostulation, so, on the other hand, we labour under this difficulty, that they who are guilty of this sin, are commonly more ready to insist upon their own jus-

tification, than any other sort of sinners. It is a way that seems right, and they who walk in it say, "They have done no wickedness;" and not only so, but they are forward to censure and condemn those who allow not themselves the same latitude, as needlessly and superstitiously precise.

I should transgress the designed limits of this paper if I should enter into the dispute concerning the perpetual obligation of the fourth commandment, which, as to the substance of it, the keeping of one day in seven holy to God, is, I hope, no dispute with us, since we are all agreed to pray to God to "have mercy upon us," and "incline our hearts to keep this law."

I shall therefore only in a few lines, that I may hasten to what I principally intend, endeavour to make out the divine appointment of the Christian Sabbath, as a day of holy rest in order to holy work, by these three steps:—

(1.) It appears by the light of nature that there must be some such day observed. If God is to be worshipped by us solemnly and in comfort, there must be some fixed and stated times for the doing of it, the designation of which is necessary both to preserve the thing itself, and to put a solemnity upon it.

The Gentiles had days set apart to the honour of their gods, which they spent, accordingly, in rest from worldly labour, and, by the solemnities of their religion, looking upon those as peculiar days, distinguished from and dignified above other days. Does not even nature teach men thus to own God the Lord of time, and to constitute opportunities for the public solemn worship of him? Now, if all people will thus walk in the name of their god, should not we walk in like manner in the name of the Lord our God? Mic. iv. 5.

(2.) It appears by the Old Testament that one day in seven should be thus religiously observed. It is plain that a Sabbath was instituted from the beginning, it was a positive institution in paradise, as marriage was; the former necessary to the preserving of the church and sacred fellowship, as the latter to the support of families and human

fellowship, Gen. ii. 2, 3; when the Scripture says expressly there, "that God rested on the seventh day," and that "he blessed and sanctified it because he so rested," we wrest the Scripture if we suppose it recorded there as a thing done long after. By this management the plainest evidence of Scripture may be turned off and evaded. To suppose that Sabbaths were not kept in the patriarchal age, because no mention is made of them in the history of that age, is absurd; since we have a record of the institution of the Sabbath in the beginning, and an account of the religious observation of a Sabbath before the giving of the law upon Mount Sinai, viz. when the manna was given, Exod. xvi. 23, 26. As at the first planting of religion in the world, so now at the revival of it out of its ruins in Egypt, one of the first things taken care of is the Sabbath, and it is spoken of, not as a new institution, but as an old law, which, when Moses had notified the day to them, they having lost their reckoning in Egypt, they are sharply rebuked for the violation of, ver. 28, "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?"

The first word of the fourth commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day," plainly shows that it was the revival of an old commandment, which had been forgotten, viz. That one day in seven should be sanctified to God. It is the solemn declaration of an ancient institution, and is of perpetual obligation, that the seventh day, not the seventh from the creation, which in the revolution of so many ages, we cannot be infallibly certain of, but the seventh day, after six days worldly labour, is the "Sabbath of the Lord our God," and is so to be sanctified. And though God rested the seventh day from the creation, yet in the fourth commandment it is not said he blessed the seventh day, or a Sabbath day, in that proportion of time, and sanctified it: and this part of the blessing of Abraham's seed comes upon the Gentiles through faith.

Very much stress was laid, in the times of the Old Testament, upon the observation of the Sabbath, more than on any institution purely ceremonial: and the Old-Testament

prophecies, that point at gospel times, make it part of the description of converted strangers, that they make conscience of keeping the Sabbath from polluting it, Isa. lvi. 6.

(3.) It appears by the New Testament that the first day of the week should be observed and sanctified as a Christian Sabbath. It is evident to any who read the New Testament without prejudice.

[1.] That a weekly Sabbath is to be religiously observed in the Christian church. We not only find no repeal of the fourth commandment in the New Testament, nor any reason for the repeal of it; but, on the contrary, we find it expounded by our Saviour, and vindicated from the corrupt glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees, who, as in other things they were profanely loose, so in this they were superstitiously strict. Several occasions Christ took to show that works of necessity and mercy are no violations of the Sabbath rest; as Luke xiii. 14; John v. 18; ix. 14; and especially Matt. xii. 1, &c. Had the law of the fourth commandment been to expire presently our Saviour would not have been so careful to explain it; but it is plain he designed to settle a point which would afterwards be of use to his church, and to teach us that our Christian Sabbath, though it is under the direction of the fourth commandment, yet, it is not under the arbitrary injunctions of the Jewish elders.

Our Saviour has likewise told us that the Sabbath was made for man, and not for the Jews only; and that he himself was "Lord of the Sabbath day," that is, that it should be in a special manner his day, and devoted to him. He likewise supposed the continuance of a Sabbath, to be so religiously observed by his disciples, at the very time of the destruction of Jerusalem, which put a final period to all the peculiarities of the Jewish economy, that he bids them pray that their then flight might not be in the winter, nor on the Sabbath day, Matt. xxiv. 20. And the apostle, Heb. iv. 9, plainly speaks of a Sabbath, or day of rest, which believers have now under the gospel, like that day of rest which God instituted when he had finished the work of creation.

[2.] It is likewise evident that the day which the Christian church has in all ages observed, and does still, which is commonly reckoned the first day of the week, is the day which it is the will of Christ we should observe as our Christian Sabbath. It is certain that the apostles were authorised and appointed to teach the churches of Christ those things pertaining to the kingdom of God wherein he had instructed them; the Spirit was poured out upon them to enable them rightly and duly to execute their commission, so as to answer all the great ends of it. Now, it is plain that the apostles and first Christians did religiously observe the first day of the week as the day of their solemn assemblies for divine worship, Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2, and that with a regard to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This they called "The Lord's day," Rev. i. 10, as a day that answers all the intentions of a weekly Sabbath; as such it has been received and observed by the churches of Christ. "It is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it," Ps. cxviii. 24.

What there was in the Old-Testament Sabbath, which was typical, has had and will have its accomplishment in the spiritual and eternal rest of true believers; but that which was the main scope of the fourth commandment, that the seventh day, after six days' labour, should be kept holy to God, remains still in full force. But now, under the New Testament, a greater stress is laid upon the holy work of the day than upon the holy rest, and upon the rest only in order to the work, and worship, and the ends of it. When the church was in its infancy and childhood it was dealt with accordingly; a bodily rest was then mainly insisted on as the sanctification of the Sabbath, which was so called because it was a day of rest, for so Sabbath signifies. But now, under the gospel, the church is grown up to full age, and, therefore, now more notice is taken of the business to which the day is devoted, viz. joy in God, Ps. cxviii. 24, communion with Christ, John xx. 19, 26, and with the Spirit, Rev. i. 10, and with our fellow Christians, Acts xx. 7. And as to the rest, this general rule is to be observed,

that nothing be done to derogate from the solemnity and honour of the day, and to lay it common with other days, nor any thing to divert us from, or distract us in, any part of the work of the day. Yet, still it is not improper to call it the Christian Sabbath, because it is a day of rest from the world, and rest in God.

Having thus endeavoured to set this matter in a true and convincing light, I come now to reason the case a little with the consciences of those who make light of the Lord's day. Those I mean who spend it, or any part of it, in idleness, sport, tipping, or secular business, and turn their backs upon the public worship of God in religious assemblies; or, if not that, yet, either wholly neglect, or very carelessly and superficially perform, their secret and family worship. And oh that I could offer something now, which, by the grace of God, might help to convince and awaken such.

I will take it for granted, sirs, that you have not abandoned religion, that you are not desirous to disengage yourselves from its sacred bonds, nor willing to disclaim its joys and hopes; you are not arrived to that desperate resolution of living without God in the world; no, it is not come to that with you. You have not renounced the Christian faith, nor abjured your baptismal covenant, nor by searing your consciences as with a hot iron, marked them for the devil and hell; what I shall say will have little influence upon those who are of such a character as this; but, "to you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men;" not to such incarnate devils: I speak to those who I hope have some sense of religion, and of whose consciences God has still some hold.

Give me leave, therefore, to recommend to your serious consideration the two great intentions and designs of the Lord's day, which are, as far as lies in you, defeated and frustrated by your profanation of it, and your constant neglect of the duties of it.

The Lord's day was appointed to be kept holy and religiously observed,

I. For the glory and honour of God.

II. For the good and happiness of man. So that all those who profane the Lord's day do a great dishonour to God to whom it is dedicated, and no less an injury to themselves, for whose benefit and comfort it was intended.

I. In profaning the Lord's day you sin against heaven, and put a daring affront upon the divine authority and grace. Here let me speak boldly, let me speak warmly, as an advocate for God. I beseech you consider seriously what I have to say, and give me your patient hearing while I reason with you.

You are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and it is your honour and privilege that you are so; you say you adhere to it, and you would not for all the world be unbaptized, nor renounce your Christian name. Suffer me then a little to expostulate with you upon the acknowledged principles of your baptism, which, I think, you are not true to while you continue to profane the Lord's day as you do.

1. Have you no regard to the Eternal God, even the Father, that made you and all the world? The Sabbath was first ordained to be celebrated by the reasonable creatures in this lower world, for in the upper world they keep an everlasting Sabbath, to the honour of the great Creator, as a standing memorial of the finishing of the work of creation; that in the observance of it we may give him praise for the wonders we see in all the creatures, and may give him thanks for the favours and comforts we receive by them. This is specified in the fourth commandment, as the ground of that ancient institution, which bore date before the entrance of sin into the world.

The Author and spring of all the movements of time justly claims to be the Lord of time, and he has wisely appointed one day in seven to be consecrated to him, as an acknowledgment that he is so, and that our times are both from his hand and in his hand. And dare you sacrilegiously rob him of this tribute, and demand to have even this also, as well as the rest of the days of the week, at your own disposal, to be given away to the world and the flesh?

Consider, sirs, you are God's creatures, and the work of his hands; you are his reasonable creatures, the priests of the visible creation, the collectors of his praises, to gather them in from the inferior creatures, which do all praise him objectively, and to pay them in by actual adorations. For this noble purpose you were endued with noble powers, those of reason; you were taught more than the beasts of the earth, and were made wiser than the fowls of heaven. All the supports and comforts of your lives are likewise the creatures of God's power, and the gifts of his providence; so that you are bound both in duty and gratitude to serve and praise him. And dare you then prostitute that time to the world and the flesh which is consecrated to the honour of your great Lord, the author of your beings, the protector of your lives, and the giver of all your comforts? You do thus in effect say to the Almighty, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," like those impudent sinners, Job xxi. 14. And "do ye thus requite the Lord, oh foolish creatures and unwise?" Oh faithless creatures and unjust?

In your idle walks on the Lord's day, and the diversion you take abroad, while you find your own pleasure in them, I wonder how you can look either to the heavens above, or the earth beneath, or the ornaments of either, and not be ashamed to think, that when they observe their time of serving you, and contributing to your comfort, in the proper season of the day, the proper season of the year, according to the law of their Creator, you do not observe your time of serving God, and contributing to his praise, according to the law given you, but are playing abroad when you should be praying at home. The sun does the work of the day in its day, but you do not. The stork in the heavens knows her appointed time, and comes in her season to wait upon you; but you observe not the time God has appointed for your approaches to him. To say, can we not meditate, and praise our Creator, like Isaac, in the fields as well as in our closets, is no good reply to this reproof, unless your own hearts can witness for you, that indeed you do so, which I fear they cannot; for

your walks are plainly chosen to befriend your diversion by society, not to befriend your devotion by solitude.

When you spend any part of the Lord's day in the ale-house or tavern, do not the good creatures of God, which there you abuse, upbraid you with the basest ingratitude, that when you have been receiving the comfort of those gifts of God's bounty the rest of the days of the week, you grudge to spend the Lord's day in humble and thankful acknowledgments of the goodness of God to the whole creation, and to you in particular. Do all God's works praise him every day, and will you think much this day, to join with his saints in blessing him? Ps. cxlv. 10.

Was it the will of God that his glorious rest from the work of creation, wherein the Eternal Mind took a complacency in the copies of its own wisdom, and the products of its own power, should be thus commemorated here on earth, by a holy rest every seventh day from worldly employments, while it is continually celebrated in heaven, by those blessed spirits there, who rest not day nor night from praising him? And will you in effect tell him to his face, that it does not deserve such a frequent and solemn commemoration? And is the will and law of the eternal God nothing with you? Is his authority and honour of so small account in your eyes? Shall the service of the flesh, to which you are not debtors, be preferred before the service of your God, to whom you are infinitely indebted?

You have your lives from God, your bodies, your souls, all your powers, and all your comforts, and therefore you ought to be his subjects, and to pay him tribute; you are his tenants, and must not withhold his rent: this is his tribute, this is his rent. Sabbath time is demanded as his part of your time; let this then that is his due be justly and faithfully paid him in full: for "will a man rob God?" Your receivings from him are rich and constant; grudge him not these poor returns in their season.

2. Have you no regard to the Lord Jesus who redeemed you, and who gave his life a ransom for many? The New-Testament Sabbath, being observed on the first day of the

week, is without doubt designed particularly for the honour of Christ, and to be celebrated as an abiding memorial of his resurrection from the dead, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and our accepted surety; for as by dying he paid our debt, for he was delivered for our offences, so by his resurrection he took our acquittance, for he was raised again for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. The advancement of that despised stone to be the head of the corner was that which made this day remarkable, Ps. cxviii. 22, 24; and they who despise this dignified, distinguished day, do in effect still trample upon that exalted stone. It is for the Redeemer's sake that it is called, "The Lord's day," an honourable title, and we ought to call it so, that we may show we look upon it as "holy of the Lord and honourable," and may so honour it. It bears Christ's image, and his superscription; we ought, therefore, to render to him the things that are his.

You are called Christians; you profess relation to the blessed Jesus; you are baptized into his name, and wear his livery, and you say you hope to be saved by him; you are enrolled among his followers, and you have in his house, and within his walls, a place and a name; and can you find in your hearts, so treacherously, and so very disingenuously, to alienate from him any part of that time which he claims a special property in? Shall he to whom you owe your all be defrauded of that little which he demands from you? You name Christ's name, you do well; but you contradict yourselves, and will be found liars and dissemblers if you dare to profane his day, and grudge to spend it in his service to his praise.

Let me beg of you seriously to consider how much you are indebted to the Redeemer; from what a bondage, to what a liberty, and at what an expense, you were redeemed; think what were the kind intentions of the Redeemer's love, and what the blessed fruits of his undertaking; and you will see that you owe him even your ownselves, all you are, all you have, all you can do, all little enough, and too little; and will you then grudge him the whole of his own day,

which is instituted in remembrance of that blessed work for which we are so much indebted, and should be ever studying what we shall render?

As the Old-Testament Sabbath was appointed to be a solemn memorial, not so much of the work of creation itself as of the finishing of it, so the Christian Sabbath was appointed to preserve in remembrance Christ's resurrection, which gave the finishing stroke to his undertaking on earth. Now, consider, if he had not finished his undertaking what had become of us? If he had left it no other could have taken it up; if he that laid the foundation stone, as the Author of our faith, had not brought forth the top-stone, as the Finisher of it, we had been undone, for ever undone. Unworthy, therefore, for ever unworthy, art thou of an interest in and benefit by this undertaking, if really thou make so light a matter as thou seemest to do of that weekly solemnity in which the remembrance of it is celebrated, not only for the advancing of the Redeemer's honour, but for the advancing of the Redeemer's designs and interests.

Let me therefore, with all earnestness, beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, if you have any regard to the sweet and blessed name of JESUS, into which you were baptized; that name which is above every name, and which is as ointment poured forth; that name which is your strong tower, and your best plea for the best blessings; have a conscientious regard to that day which bears his name. As ever you hope to see the face of Christ with comfort, and expect he shall stand your friend in the day of your extremity, testify your veneration for him now, by a veneration for his day, and dare not to break in upon that sacred rest, which is instituted to his honour, nor trifle away any of those precious hours which he expects and requires should be employed in his service.

Shall we think one day in seven too much, when eternity itself will be too little, to be spent in the joyful contemplations, and thankful praises, of the height and depth, the length and breadth, of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge? Do the holy angels attend the Redeemer with

their constant adorations, and praise him without intermission? and shall we who are more immediately interested in, and benefited by, his undertaking, convert to other purposes any of those few hours of the week which are consecrated to his praise? Is our Lord Jesus continually appearing in heaven for us, always mindful of our concerns there, and shall we make thus light of his glory, and care so little to appear before him, and before the world for him? Might but the love of Christ command us, and that love constrain us, surely we should love the Lord's day for his sake whose day it is, would bid it welcome, and call it a delight.

3. Have you no regard to the blessed Spirit of grace, into whose name also you were baptized, and in honour of whom the Christian Sabbath is celebrated? The first day of the week was observed by the disciples as a day of solemn meeting from the very day that Christ rose, for we find them together again that day seven-night, probably by his appointment, John xx. 26. The day of Pentecost that year fell on the first day of the week, and on that day they were together in a solemn meeting, all with one accord in one place, when the Spirit descended upon them, Acts ii. 1, &c.

Now the pouring out of the Spirit was the great promise of the New Testament, as the incarnation of Christ was of the Old Testament, and was a gift to the church no less necessary and valuable than the resurrection of Christ. He rose to carry on the good work in us, without which we could have no benefit by his mediation. The influences and operations of the Spirit are as necessary to our salvation as the satisfaction and intercession of the Son. When Christ rose he retired to heaven, to receive his kingdom and to prepare ours; but when he sent the Spirit, he did in effect return to his church on earth; for thus the want of his bodily presence was supplied, abundantly to the advantage of his disciples. It was expedient for us that he should go away, that he might send the Comforter, John xvi. 7.

To the descent of the Spirit we owe those gifts of tongues which spread the gospel to distant nations, and to ours

among the rest; and those inspired writings which propagated the gospel to after ages, and will perpetuate it to the end of time. Without this the earth, even within the church's pale, had been still a wilderness and a barren land; for it is only the pouring out of the Spirit upon us from on high that turns the wilderness into a fruitful field, Isa. xxxii. 15. To the gift of the Holy Ghost is owing the conviction of conscience, the regeneration of the soul, its progress and advances in holiness, and all those consolations of God which are our songs in the house of our pilgrimage: had not the Spirit been given to apply the redemption, we had never been the better for Christ's purchase of it.

Now it is in remembrance of these gifts given to men, after the Redeemer was ascended on high, that we celebrate the Lord's day; and therefore, to the right sanctification of it, it is necessary that we be in the Spirit, Rev. i. 10; that is, that we compose ourselves into a spiritual frame, and submit ourselves to the Spirit's workings. The greatest honour we can do to the Spirit is to walk after the Spirit. We then give glory to the Holy Ghost when we diligently attend to that word which was given by his inspiration, and lay our souls under the commanding power and influence of it; when we pray in the Holy Ghost, under the conduct of the Spirit of adoption, teaching us to cry, Abba, Father; and when we carefully hearken to the checks, and follow the dictates, of a well-informed conscience. Thus the Sabbath must be sanctified to the praise of the blessed Spirit.

And is it nothing to you who profane the Lord's day that thereby you reflect dishonour upon the eternal Spirit, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and who with the Father and the Son together is and ought to be worshipped and glorified on the Lord's day? You struggle against him who is given to strive with you for your good; you check your Monitor, you resist your Sanctifier, and grieve your Comforter.

Do you not indeed think it worth your while to spend so many hours every week, as the working part of the

Lord's day amounts to, in the joyful, thankful commemoration of so great a blessing bestowed upon the church, which still remains a real benefit to all its ministers, and to all its members, and is the quickening root of all their fruitfulness and flourishing?

It was on the first day of the first week of time that the blessed Spirit moved upon the face of the waters to produce a world, a world of beauty and plenty, out of confusion and emptiness; and it was upon the first day of another week that he descended on the apostles, and inspired them to produce a church; justly, therefore, is the first day of the week consecrated to the honour of that Divine Person, to whom we owe both our being, and our new-being, in order to our well-being. Profane not that then which is thus sanctified, to the praise of the great Sanctifier. How can you expect the comfort of his sacred influences if thus you violate and break in upon his sacred interests? Our Saviour speaks of an affront put upon the Holy Ghost as more criminal, more dangerous, and of more fatal consequence to the sinner, than an affront put upon the Lord Jesus himself, Matt. xii. 31, 32. Not as if every sin against the Holy Ghost contracted the indelible stain of an unpardonable sin, God forbid! but it is intimated that there is a peculiar malignity and provocation in those sins which put a slight upon the blessed Spirit, as this certainly does, which not only profanes the time which is sacred to his honour, but neglects the opportunity of receiving his promised gifts in the way of instituted ordinances.

If there be, therefore, any fellowship of the Spirit, value it, improve it, be not strangers to it. As ever you look for any comfort from the Holy Ghost, living or dying, here or hereafter, call it not a task, and a burthen, and a weariness, to separate yourselves from the world one day in a week to an attendance upon the Spirit, that you may give honour to him, and may receive grace and comfort from him; but rejoice in those stated opportunities, not only of professing but of improving, your faith in the Holy Ghost.

You see, brethren, how great and honourable, how holy and reverend, these names are by which we plead with you, and beseech you not to profane the Lord's day. I am willing to hope that in what you do you intend not an affront to the eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; you still honour God with your lips, and call yourselves by his name; but whether you intend it so or no, you see it is with good reason so interpreted. Every contempt of the day of the Lord is, if not designedly, yet constructively, a contempt of him who is the Lord of the day; and so he will resent it, and reckon for it, for in the matters of his worship the Lord whose name is Jealous "is a jealous God." I beseech you, therefore, brethren, for the sake of the blessed God, whose you are, and whom you are bound to serve, and to whom you are accountable, if you have any respect to the honour of his name, and the interests of his kingdom, and desire of his favour and grace, or any dread of his wrath and curse, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, for it is the Sabbath of the Lord your God." Do not alienate to the world and the flesh any of those precious minutes which he challenges a special property in; but by a double care and diligence for the future, endeavour to make restitution of those which by your neglects hitherto you have embezzled. God fills up your time with mercy, look upon yourselves, therefore, as bound in gratitude to fill up his time with duty; so shall God have the praise and you the comfort.

II. In profaning the Lord's day you sin against your own souls, and throw away that good and benefit which is designed both to others and to yourselves by the institution of it. Our Saviour has told us that "the Sabbath was made for man," and it is reckoned among the favours God showed to his Israel, that he made known unto them his holy Sabbath, Neh. ix. 14. And if the Old-Testament Sabbath was so great a privilege, much more is our Christian Sabbath so, for the New Testament begins with a proclamation of goodwill toward men. If the ministration of death was glorious, much more the ministration of the Spirit. We

solicit you for your own good, and beg of you to consider for what end the Lord's day was appointed in your favours, and if you will but consult yourselves, and the comfort of your own souls, you will study to comply with the intentions of it; if thou be wise herein thou shalt be wise for thyself.

1. The Lord's day was appointed for the benefit of the church and Christian societies. It was wisely designed, that by the religious observance of that day, and a visible difference made between it and other days, a face of religion and godliness might be kept up, and a profession of Christianity maintained, published, and propagated. This is the show of that substance; and though the show without the substance, the form of godliness without the power of it, will not avail particular persons that rest in it, yet it is for the advantage of the church in general, and helps to support it in the world.

It would have been hard for all Christian churches, by a common consent among themselves only, to have agreed upon such a badge and token of the communion of saints as the solemnizing of the Lord's day is; and therefore the wisdom of the church's Head and Lawgiver has appointed it. Thus still the Sabbath is a sign, a distinguishing sign, as it was to Israel of old, Exod. xxxi. 13. In the primitive times when a Christian was examined by the heathen judges, "Hast thou kept the Lord's day?" his answer was, "I am a Christian;" intimating, that being a Christian he durst not do otherwise. By this might all men know who were Christ's disciples; it was one of the badges of their profession; so that in sanctifying the Lord's day we testify our relation to, and concurrence with, all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. Since all Christians cannot possibly meet in one and the same place, by meeting thus on one and the same day, and that the Lord's day, they testify their communion with each other in faith, hope, and love, and that though they are many, yet they are one. Those, therefore, who violate and profane the Lord's day, do as much as lies in them to thwart and defeat this intention.

I beseech you consider it seriously, you are baptized into the great body, and by virtue of that you are called Christians, and it is your honour; but unworthy, for ever unworthy, are you of that honour, while you manifestly do disservice to the Christian name and cause, stain the beauty of its profession, stop the progress of its interest, and endanger the cutting off of the entail of it, by putting the Lord's day upon a level with other days, and in effect trampling upon it as a common thing: hereby you pluck up some of the best ranges of the church's pale, and lay all in common. Take away the conscience of Sabbath sanctification, and you open a gap at which all religion quite runs out, and an inundation of wickedness breaks in of course; they who make no difference between God's day and other days, will not long make any difference between God's name and other names, and between God's book and other books. If Sabbaths be generally neglected, Bibles and ministers, and other institutions, will not be duly prized; and if these hedges of religion be broken down, religion itself will soon become an easy prey to the boar of the wood, and the wild beast of the forest.

And is it nothing to you whether the Lord Jesus has a church in the world or no? and whether his religion has a place and an interest among men or no? Are you indeed in confederacy with those who have said, "Come and let us cut off the Christian religion, that the name of it may be no more in remembrance," Ps. lxxxiii. 3, 4. Certainly if all should make as light of the Lord's day as you do, it would come to this in a little time; the light of the gospel would be put out, its coal would be quenched, and there would remain to it neither root nor branch. If these outworks be betrayed to the enemy, the main forts cannot long be maintained; but the gates of hell will prevail against the church.

Let me, therefore, beg of you for the church's sake, as you value its being and welfare, its continuance and prosperity in the world, if you have any regard to its bleeding cause, to its dying interests, and would help to revive it, do

what you can to support the honour of the Lord's day. Let not Sion's friends deal treacherously with her, nor betray her to those who seek her ruin; let them not join with her enemies in mocking at her Sabbaths; for if those fall into contempt, and the sanctification of them be disused, she soon sits solitary, becomes as a widow, and all her beauty is departed from her. I refer to those complaints, Lam. i. 1, 2, 6, 7. You would willingly see the good of Jerusalem, and religion in a flourishing state; help then to maintain the honour of God's Sabbaths, and thereby show before the churches your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ.

2. The Lord's day was appointed for the weaning of us from this present world, and the taking off of our affections from the things of it, by giving a stop and pause once a week to our secular pursuits; and we lose this benefit of it if we neglect it, and violate the appointed rest of that day. It is certain that much of the power of godliness lies in our living above the world, and being dead to it; those are Christians indeed who look upon the things that are seen with a holy indifference and contempt, as those who know their felicity and portion lie in the things that are not seen.

But it would be very hard, and even impossible, to attain to this heavenly mind, if we were to be constantly in the crowd and hurry of worldly employments and recreations, and in an uninterrupted converse with the things of sense and time: if every day were to be entirely for the world, without any intermission, every thought and intent of the heart will be for it too, and the whole soul will be plunged and lost in it.

And, therefore, he who knows our frame, and that we are, in mind as well as body, dust, apt to move toward the dust of this earth, and to mingle with it; he who knows where we dwell, even where Satan's seat is, the prince of this world, Rev. ii. 13, has wisely and graciously appointed us some rest from our worldly pursuits. His providence has appointed us the natural rest of every evening, which calls us in from our work and labour, and gives us some advantageous minutes, if we have but wis-

dom to improve them, for retirement into ourselves, and reflection upon ourselves; for communing with our own hearts, and meditating on God and his word. But this is not all; his grace has also provided for us the instituted rest of every Sabbath, which gives us a longer breathing time; that while our hands rest from the business of the world, our minds may rest from the cares of it, and so we may be saved from the inordinate love of it.

Six days thou shalt labour and do all thy work, all that work that must be done for the body thou carriest about with thee, that that may be supported, and for the world thou livest in, that thou mayst pass comfortably through it; but thou must shortly put off this body, and bid adieu to this world; and therefore, one day in seven thou shalt rest from this work and labour, and lay it aside, that thou mayst recall thy thoughts and affections from the world and the body; and so learn to sit loose to them, and by these frequent acts confirm the habit of heavenly-mindedness. By our weekly retirements from the world, it will be made the more easy to us always to live above the world, as those who are strangers and sojourners in it.

And do you not find, sirs, that there is need of such pauses, such parenthesis, as these? Do you not find the world encroaching upon you, and gaining ground in your hearts? Do you not experience the insinuating nature of these present things, even of care and toil about them, which are strangely bewitching; and that by constant converse with the things of the earth, we grow in love with them and become earthly? And will you not then take the advantage which this institution gives you, to recover the ground you lose all the week, by a total cessation of worldly business on the Lord's day? By a close application of yourselves to the proper business and pleasure of the Lord's day, you will find yourselves so well employed, and so well entertained by your religion, that you will look with a holy contempt upon the employments and entertainments of the world.

Let me add under this head, that your accustoming of yourselves to a strict retirement from the world on the

Lord's day will make your final removal out of it at death more easy and less formidable. Brethren, you are dying, your souls are continually in your hands; death will shortly seal up your hands, it will cut off all your purposes, and put a full stop to all your pursuits; yet a little while, and the place that knows you will know you no more; yet a little while, and you must bid an eternal farewell to your houses and lands, your farms and merchandise, and this will be a hard task if you never knew what it was to intermit these cares and pleasures. If you will not think it worth your while to leave them at the bottom of the hill while you go up to worship, with a purpose to return to them again, as Abraham, Gen. xxii. 5, what a difficulty will it be to you to leave them not to return to them again! You cannot find in your hearts to keep from your shops or sports, to lay aside your worldly business and diversions, one day in seven; how then will you persuade yourselves willingly to quit all at death? which yet you must do whether you will or no. We must forsake these things shortly; to prepare us for which it is good for us, at least as often as God hath appointed us, to forget them now, and lay aside the thoughts of them. If we would make a virtue of the necessity we shall be under of leaving the world when we die, let us make a necessity of the virtue of retiring from the world, and putting off the care and business of it, every Lord's day.

3. The Lord's day was appointed for our communion and fellowship with God, with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, and we are enemies to ourselves if we neglect to improve it for this purpose; we are on that day not only called off from the world, but called up into the "holiest," into which, by the blood of Jesus, we have access with humble boldness. We are invited from on high, "Come up hither," to the highest degrees of comfort and honour that man on earth is capable of, and will you choose to tarry below, to converse with earthly things, when you are invited to a conversation with things heavenly and divine? How much soever this may seem a paradox to those who are

strangers to the life of God, and to the power of godliness, all who are serious and devout know what it is.

This is a day in which we are with all humility to make visits to God, and with all reverence and observance to receive visits from him; to hear what he speaks to us out of his word, and to speak to him by prayer. This is the proper conversation of that day, for this it was instituted and intended; and therefore to spend it in idle visits, and in impertinent talk, either foolish in itself, and which would be culpable any day, or, at least, in that which is foreign to the business of this day, is to put a great slight upon God Almighty, and upon the provision he has made for our communion with him. It is as if a prince or some great or wise man should invite you into his company, offer to entertain you with the most pleasant and edifying discourse, and appoint a time and place for the interview, and you should leave him, and turn your back upon him, to go and talk with some idle beggar or buffoon at the door. Would not this justly be construed an intolerable affront? Would you not blush to think that you should ever be guilty of such a piece of rudeness? Would you not expect to be forbidden the house and presence of the person you had thus slighted? Yet you do ten thousand times worse than this when you trifle away that day in common conversation and business which God has appointed you to spend in communion with himself, according as your opportunities are.

The whole life of a Christian ought to be a life of communion with God; our eyes must be ever toward the Lord, we must walk with him, and set him always before us, and in all our ways we must acknowledge him. Now, in order to the keeping up of this habitual regard to God, wherein consists so much of the power of godliness, it is requisite that we be frequent and constant at stated times in the solemn acts of devotion. We contract an acquaintance with our friends, and an affection for them, by being often in their company, interchanging knowledge and love; thus our acquaintance with God is cultivated by religious worship, and without that it withers and dies, and comes to nothing.

The divine life is supported and maintained by the receiving and digesting of the bread of life, and not otherwise.

Communion with God is in short this: it is to admit into our minds the discoveries God has been pleased to make of himself, and of his will and grace, and to dwell upon them in our thoughts, and to make returns of agreeable affections and motions of soul suited to those discoveries. It is to delight ourselves in the pleasing contemplation of the beauty, bounty, and benignity of our God, and to employ ourselves in the pious exercises of faith, love, and resignation to him, and in the joyful praises of his name.

And is one day in seven too much to be spent in such work as this? Or shall we break in upon the bounds which the divine law has set about that mountain on which God has promised to come down, and lay it common with the wilderness? Should we not rather wish that every day were a Sabbath day, and that we might always dwell in God's house, with them who are there still praising him?

If we did indeed love God as we ought, with all our heart and soul, we would not say when we have been attending upon him two or three hours in public worship, now we have surely done enough for this day, when we are invited, encouraged, and appointed still to continue our communion with him, still to feast upon his holy word, and repeat our addresses at the throne of his grace in our closets and families. Would we be so soon weary of an intimate conversation with a friend we love and take pleasure in? No, with such a friend we contrive how to prolong the time of conversation, and when the hours of sitting together are expired, we stand together, and, as those who are loath to part, bid often farewell, and we add to this a walk together for further discourses. "Is this thy kindness to thy friend," and wilt thou say of communion with thy God, "Behold what a weariness is it?" and contrive excuses to contract it, to break it off, or cut it short?

Reading the Holy Bible and other good books, repetition, catechising, singing psalms, praying, praising, profitable discourse; these are the exercises which, if they meet with a

heart piously and devoutly affected toward God, will furnish us with such a pleasing variety of good works, to fill up those hours of the Lord's day which are not spent in public worship, or in works of necessity and mercy, and will turn so much to our advantage that we shall complain of nothing so much as the speedy returns of the Sabbath evening, and the shadows thereof. Did we call the Sabbath a delight, as we ought, and the work of it a pleasure, we would be ready to say, "Sun, stand thou still upon this Gibeon," let the day be prolonged, and the minutes of it doubled, for "it is good to be here," here let us "make tabernacles;" or rather let us endeavour, by the grace of God, to do a double work in a single day, and long to be there where we shall spend an everlasting Sabbath in communion with God, a Sabbath that will have no night at the end of it, nor any week-day to come after it.

You who trifle away Sabbath time, I beseech you consider this seriously; "Seemeth it a small thing to you that the God of Israel" has "separated you to bring you near to himself?" That he has not only admitted you into covenant, but invited you into communion with himself? And is this a favour that must go a-begging with you, and that after all the court it makes to you, you will not be persuaded to accept of? And shall the conversation of a vain companion in an ale-house or tavern, the entertainments of a coffee-house, or an idle walk into the fields, be preferred before the honour and pleasure of communion with God in Christ! And will you indeed choose these broken cisterns rather than the fountain of living waters; these lying vanities rather than your own mercies? God in mercy open your eyes and show you your folly! Would David rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of wickedness! and will you rather be door-keepers, slaves, and drudges, in the tents of wickedness, than dwell in liberty, ease, and honour in the house of your God?

Oh that I could now prevail with you to look upon it as your main business on the Lord's day, from the beginning to the end of the day, to converse with God, and to mind it

accordingly. If God will condescend to meet with you in your secret, as well as public, addresses to him, and has appointed you a set time for them, be not you so rude to him, and so unjust to yourselves, as to neglect them, or make but a short and slighting business of them.

4. The Lord's day was appointed for our furtherance and increase in holiness, and the carrying on of the work of sanctification in us; in the due performance of the work of the Lord's day, and the due observance of its rest. In order thereunto there is not only the pleasure of maintaining communion with God, but the real benefit of increasing our conformity to him. This profit we shall have if we pray to him and keep his ordinances; while thus we behold the glory of the Lord, we are through grace changed into the same image. By worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness we come to be partakers of his holiness, and so the beauty of the Lord our God is upon us. And is it not worth while to oblige ourselves to the strictest and most careful observance of the Lord's day, in prospect of those advantages by it?

The Sabbath day is a market day, a harvest day for the soul; it is an opportunity,—it is time fitted for the doing of that which cannot be done at all, or not so well done, at another time: now, if this day be suffered to run waste, and other business minded than that which is the proper work of the day, our souls cannot but be miserably impoverished and neglected, and the vineyards we are made keepers of cannot but be like the field of the slothful, and the vineyard of the man void of understanding. While you make no conscience of keeping the Sabbath day, and improving the precious minutes of it, no wonder that you are ignorant in the things of God, fools, or at least but babes in knowledge, for that is the time of getting understanding; no wonder that your lusts and corruptions are so strong as they are, and you so unable to resist Satan's temptations, your graces so weak, and you so unready to every good word and work; for when you should be furnishing yourselves with what is needful for the support of your spiritual

life, and the carrying on of your spiritual warfare, you are doing something else that is not only foreign and impertinent, but prejudicial and inconsistent.

Solomon has long since pronounced it, not only as the sentence of a wise king, but of a righteous God, that he who sleeps or plays in harvest is a "son that causeth shame," and when he "begs in winter he shall have nothing." This is your character, and this, if you do not repent and amend your doings, will be your case. If at last you perish eternally, under the power of a vain and carnal mind, and go down to hell in impenitence and unbelief, your contempt and profanation of the Lord's day will greatly aggravate your condemnation; because your due improvement of that sacred day would have been a means to prevent your coming to that place of torment without a messenger sent to you from the dead.

Sirs, it is better to think of this now, when lost Sabbaths may be redeemed by an after care and diligence, than remember it in the bottomless pit, when the reflection upon it will but pour oil into the flames, and it will be too late to retrieve the precious hours that you are now so prodigal of. Oh what a cutting, what a killing remembrance will it be hereafter, to think, if I had spent that time on the Lord's day in reading and meditation, in prayer and praise, and the study of the Scriptures, and other religious exercises, public, private, and secret, which I spent in tippling, or sporting, or working at my calling, or in idle or unprofitable conversation, I might have got that knowledge and grace, and kept up that communion with God which would not only have prevented my misery in this land of darkness, but would have prepared me for the inheritance of the saints in light! If I had been as eager to get wisdom as I was to get wealth, and as solicitous and industrious to please God as I was to gratify my own sensual appetite, and to recommend myself to a vain world, I might have been eternally happy, and equal to the angels of light, who am now likely to be for ever miserable, a companion with devils, and a sharer with them in their endless pains and horrors

Then, oh then, thou wouldst give a thousand worlds if thou hadst them, for one of those days of the Son of man thou art now so prodigal of. But the impassable gulf between thee and that grace which is now offered thee will then be immovably fixed, the bridge of mercy will then be drawn, and the door of hope will be shut for ever. Sabbaths cannot then be recalled, nor will the offers of life be made thee any more; now God calls and thou wilt not hear, then thou shalt call and he will not hear. Thou art now called once a-week to rest; to rest from the world, and rest in God; but thou callest even this rest a weariness, and snuffest at it; justly, therefore, will he swear in his wrath that thou shalt never enter into that rest of which this is a type, and if thou be shut out from it thy condition will be for ever restless. Surely thy heart is desperately hardened if this consideration make no impression on thee.

5. The Lord's day was appointed to be an earnest and sign of our everlasting rest; the rest that remains for the people of God. It is intended to remind us of heaven, to fit us for heaven, and to give some comfortable pledges and foretastes of the joys and glories of that blessed state to all those who have their conversation in heaven, and their affections set upon things above. These are the days of heaven, and if heaven be an everlasting Sabbath, surely Sabbaths are a heaven upon earth, in them the "tabernacle of God is with men."

And have you no value for eternal life, sirs, no concern about it? Is heaven nothing to you, or not worth the thinking of? Do you indeed despise the pleasant land, and prefer Egypt's garlic and onions before Canaan's milk and honey, and a mess of pottage before such a birthright and the privileges of it? Your profanation and contempt of the Lord's day plainly says that you do so, and according to your choice you shall have your lot, "so shall your doom be."

You say you hope to be saved; but what ground have you for those hopes while you plainly show that you

neglect this great salvation, by your neglect to commemorate Christ's resurrection, by which it was wrought out, and your neglect to improve the means of grace by which you are prepared for it? If you had indeed any good hope of eternal life you would not think much to spend one day in seven in the joyful contemplation of it, and in getting yourselves ready for it.

You say you hope to go to heaven; but what pleasure can you take in the expectations of an everlasting Sabbath, and of the employments and enjoyments of that world, when you are so soon weary of these short Sabbaths which are types of that, and are ready to say, "When will they be gone?" What pleasure can it be to you to be for ever with the Lord, to whom it is a pain and a penance to be an hour or two with him now? What happiness will it be to you to dwell in his house, and to be still praising him in heaven, who, by your good-will, would be never praising him on earth, but grudge the few minutes that are so employed? Heaven will not be heaven to a Sabbath-breaker, for there is no idle company, no vain sports, no foolish mirth or unprofitable chat there; and these are his delights now, which he prefers before that communion with God, which is both the work and bliss of that world. All who shall go to heaven hereafter begin their heaven now; as in other things, so, particularly, in their cheerful conscientious observance of the Lord's day.

And now lay all this together, and then tell me if there be not a great deal of reason why you should keep holy the Sabbath day, "call it a delight, holy of the Lord," and therefore truly honourable, and why you should therefore honour and sanctify him on that day; not doing your own ways but his; not finding your own pleasure, but aiming to please God; not speaking your own words as on other days, but speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, Isa. lviii. 13.

Can the entanglements of custom, company, carnal pleasure, or worldly profit, be more powerful with you than all those sacred cords and bonds? Can the pleasing of a cus-

toomer, the obliging of a friend, much less the gratifying of a base lust, balance the displeasing of God, the dishonouring of Christ, and the wronging of your own souls? I beseech you to consider it seriously, and be wise for yourselves.

After these considerations which I have urged surely I need not insist upon any other. I am confident the reigning love of God in your hearts, and a deep and serious concern about your precious souls and their eternal welfare, will furnish you with considerations sufficient to oblige you to as much strictness and care in the sanctification of the Lord's day as the word of God requires, and as is necessary to answer the intentions of the institution: and more than this we do not insist on. Think much of that of the Pharisees, which though blasphemously misapplied to the Saviour, was grounded upon a great truth; "This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath day," John ix. 16.

Will it be to any purpose to suggest this further consideration to you; That the way to prosper in your affairs all the week, and to have the blessing of God upon you in them, is to make conscience of the Lord's day? That truly great and good man, the Lord Chief Justice Hale, writes very solemnly to his children; "I have found by a strict and diligent observation, that a due observance of the duties of the Lord's day hath ever had joined to it a blessing upon the rest of my time, and the week that hath been so begun hath been blessed and prosperous to me; and on the other side, when I have been negligent of the duties of this day, the rest of the week hath been unsuccessful and unhappy to my own secular employments the week following. This I write," saith he, "not lightly or inconsiderately, but upon long and sound observation and experience."¹

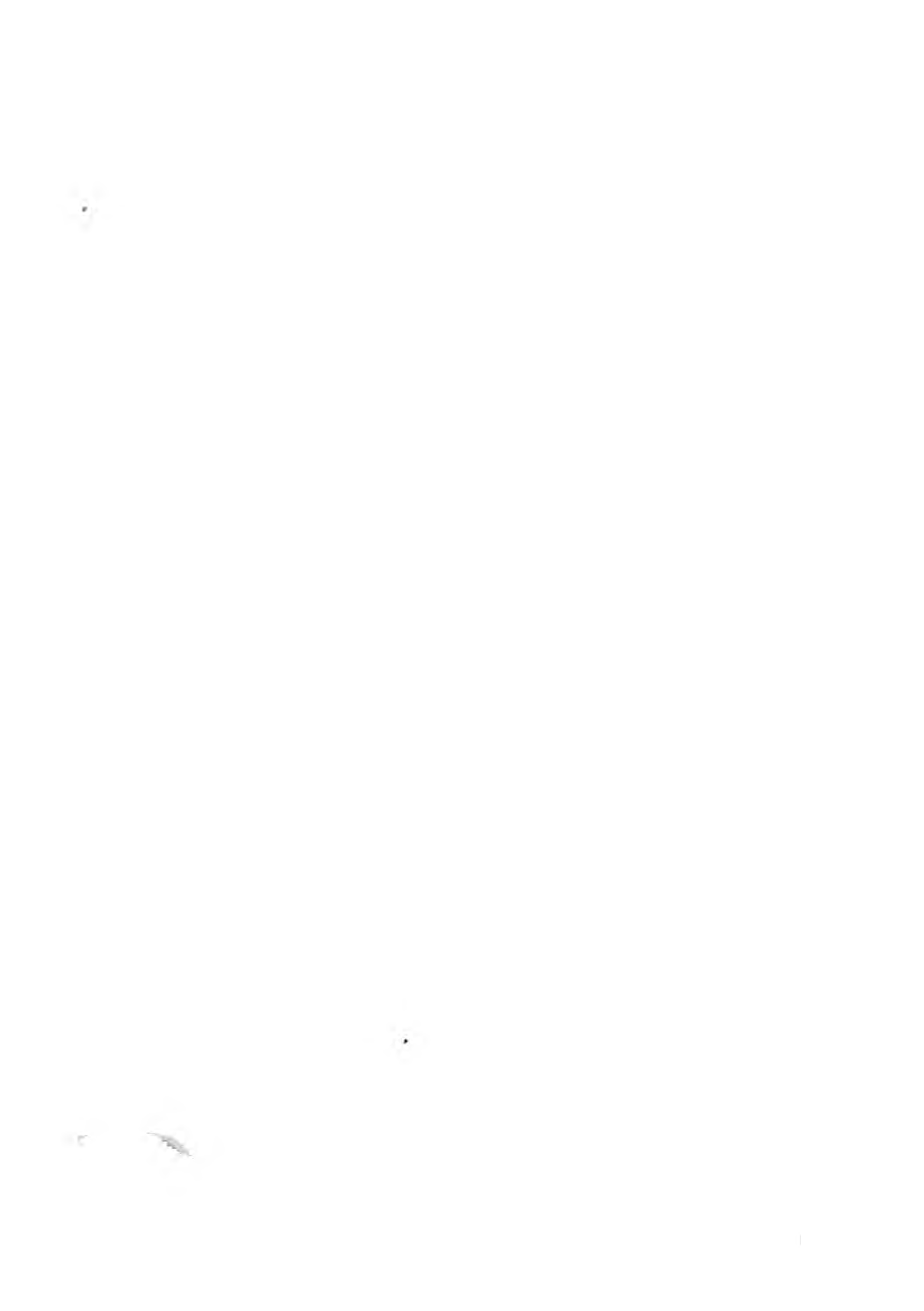
Shall I remind you how much it will be for your credit with all wise and good people? Those who honour God he will honour. Shall I tell you with what comfort you may lie down at night in the close of a Sabbath, after you have carefully done the work of the day in its day? Yea, thou

¹ Lord Hale's Contemplations, vol. i. p. 323.

“ shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.” Especially, think how sweet and easy your reflections upon well-spent Sabbaths will be when you come to die, and with what pleasure you will then look forward upon the everlasting Sabbath you hope to keep within the veil.

Wonder not that I am thus earnest with you in this matter ; I see how much depends upon it, and I persuade as one who desires and hopes to prevail with you ; let me not be disappointed, as you value the glory of your Creator, the honour of your Redeemer, and your own comfort and happiness in both worlds. I beseech you, “ Remember the Sabbath day,” the Christian Sabbath, “ to keep it holy.” Most certainly true that saying is which I have somewhere met with ; “ That the stream of all religion runs either deep or shallow according as the banks of the Sabbath are kept up or neglected.”

THE PROMISES OF GOD.



THE PROMISES OF GOD.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”—2 COR. vii. 1.

It is the unspeakable privilege of all believers to have, as a certain possession, the precious promises of God. But under what notion have we the promises of God?

1. We have them as manifest tokens of God’s favour towards us; and every one of them are yea, amen, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. We have them as fruits of Christ’s purchase. The Lord having purchased us with his own blood we have these promises produced by that inestimable grace.

3. They are plain and ample declarations of the good-will of God towards men, and therefore as God’s part of the covenant of grace.

4. They are a foundation of our faith, and we have them as such; and also of our hope, on these we are to build all our expectations from God; and in all temptations and trials we have them to rest our souls upon.

5. We have them as the directions and encouragements of our desires in prayer. Seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Wherefore they are the guide of our desires, and the ground of our hope in prayer.

6. We have them as the means by which the grace of God works for our holiness and comfort, for by these we are made partakers of a divine nature, and faith, applying these promises, is said to work by love.

7. We have the promises as the earnest and assurance of future blessedness. By these eternal life and glory is secured to all true believers.

And now, having observed these things, let us review the blessed promises of God ; and

The first is,—He hath promised that we shall be his people.

The Scripture,—“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people ; for all the earth is mine,” Exod. xix. 5.

The second promise,—That all our sins shall be pardoned.

“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins,” Isa. xliii. 25.

The third,—That our corruptions shall be subdued.

“For sin shall not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace,” Rom. vi. 14.

The fourth,—That the Spirit of grace shall be given us, to enable us for our duty in every thing.

“I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them,” Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

The fifth,—That God will put it particularly into our hearts, or circumcise our hearts to love him.

“The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live,” Deut. xxx. 6.

The sixth,—That he will give us the knowledge of his truth, and the comfort and benefit of it.

“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John viii. 32.

The seventh,—That he will unite our hearts to himself and to each other.

“I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them, Jer. xxxii. 39.

The eighth,—That he will be tender of those that are weak.

“He shall feed his flock like a Shepherd : he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young,” Isa. xl. 11.

The ninth,—That he will direct us in the way of our duty.

“Good and upright is the Lord : therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way,” Ps. xxv. 8, 9.

The tenth,—That he will protect us from every thing that is really evil.

“The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil : he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and even for evermore,” Ps. cxxi. 7, 8.

The eleventh,—That he will supply us with all good.

“The young lions do lack and suffer hunger ; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,” Ps. xxxiv. 10.

The twelfth,—That he will answer our prayers.

“Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son,” John xiv. 13.

The thirteenth,—That he will silence our fears.

“I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee,” Isa. xli. 13.

The fourteenth,—That he will bear us up under our burthens.

“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms,” Deut. xxxiii. 27.

The fifteenth,—That he will give us a sure and lasting peace.

“The work of righteousness shall be peace ; and the

effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever," Isa. xxxii. 17.

The sixteenth,—That he will admit us into fellowship and communion with himself.

"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple," Ps. lxxv. 4.

The seventeenth,—That he will give us the comfortable enjoyment of ourselves.

"His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth," Ps. xxv. 13.

The eighteenth,—That he will deliver us in and under our troubles.

"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him," Ps. xci. 14, 15.

The nineteenth,—That he will afflict us in measure and in mercy when we have need of it.

"I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee," 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15.

The twentieth,—That he will spare us with the tenderness of a fatherly compassion.

"They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," Malachi iii. 17.

The twenty-first,—That he will not persist in his controversy with us.

"I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirits should fail before me, and the souls which I have made," Isa. lvii. 16.

The twenty-second,—That he will speak comfort to us when we are in sorrow.

“I will hear what God the Lord will speak : for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints : but let them not turn again to folly,” Ps. lxxxv. 8.

The twenty-third,—That he will proportion our trials to our strength.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man : but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it,” 1 Cor. x. 13.

The twenty-fourth,—That he will put true honour upon us.

“Them that honour me I will honour,” 1 Sam. ii. 30.

The twenty-fifth,—That he will feed us with food convenient for us.

“Trust in the Lord and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed,” Ps. xxxvii. 3.

The twenty-sixth,—That he will clear up our injured reputation.

“He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day,” Ps. xxxvii. 6.

The twenty-seventh,—That he will comfort and relieve us in sickness.

“The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing : thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness,” Ps. xli. 3.

The twenty-eighth,—That he will prevent our apostasy from him.

“I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and I will not turn away from them to do them good ; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me,” Jer. xxxii. 40.

The twenty-ninth,—That he will make all events conduce to our real welfare.

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose,” Rom. viii. 28.

The thirtieth,—That he will perfect the work of grace in us.

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,” Phil. i. 6.

The thirty-first,—That he will be with us when we are old, to bear us up under all our infirmities.

“Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoary hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you,” Isa. xlvi. 4.

The thirty-second,—That he will never desert us in any exigence whatsoever.

“For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” Heb. xiii. 5.

The thirty-third,—That he will give us victory over our spiritual enemies.

“The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly,” Rom. xvi. 20.

The thirty-fourth,—That he will recompense our charity to the poor.

“He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again,” Prov. xix. 17.

The thirty-fifth,—That he will make up all our losses for his name’s sake.

“Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life,” Matt. xix. 29.

The thirty-sixth,—That he will let us live long enough in this world, and give us a comfortable prospect of a better.

“With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation,” Ps. xci. 16.

The thirty-seventh,—That he will be with us when we come to die.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,” Ps. xxiii. 4.

The thirty-eighth,—That he will receive our souls into the arms of his love.

“But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah!” Ps. xlix. 15.

The thirty-ninth,—That he will take care of our posterity when we are gone.

“The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee,” Ps. cii. 28.

The fortieth,—That he will raise our bodies to life again.

“This is the will of him that sent me, That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day,” John vi. 40.

The forty-first,—That he will own us in the judgment of the great day.

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven,” Matt. x. 32.

The forty-second,—That he will put us into possession of everlasting bliss.

“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life,” 1 John ii. 25.

REPETITION TEXT.

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

And now what shall we say to these things?

I.—1. Let us be thankful to God for all these great and precious promises, that God should not only do us good, but engage himself by promises to do so.

2. Let us be ashamed of ourselves that we have not lived more upon these promises.

3. Let us encourage ourselves with these promises to go on cheerfully and resolutely in the way of our duty.

4. Let us acknowledge the truth of God, and his faithfulness to his promises. “There hath not failed one word of all his good promise,” &c., 1 Kings viii. 56.

5. We are concerned to treasure up these promises, that we may have them ready to use when we have occasion for them, to silence our fears, and to strengthen our faith.

6. Behold, what need we have to live by faith, through which, and by which, we make use of these promises. God gives by promise that we may take by faith; therefore set about that work, and be much in the exercise of it.

II. Here is our duty inferred from this privilege. Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; by which is understood,

1. We must abhor that which is evil, and abandon all sin with an holy detestation.

2. We must cleave to that which is good; we must perfect holiness in the fear of God. Observe, The consideration of God's promises to us should strongly engage us against all sin, and to all duty. To show you what strength there is in this argument taken from the promises, to abhor that which is evil, observe, (1.) We are bound in gratitude to please him who has given us so many, so great and precious promises, Ps. cxvi. 12. What shall I render? Oh, how great is his goodness which he hath laid up for them that fear him! God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice, Ps. cviii. 7. Observe, (2.) We forfeit the benefit of God's promises if we do not make conscience of, and endeavour to keep, his commands. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it, Heb. iv. 1.

III. We are taught the blessed fruits of these promises.

1. These promises furnish us with strength and grace sufficient against sin, and for duty. Turn you at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you.

2. These promises speak the language of Caleb and Joshua, who said, We are well able to overcome the people, when they are about to enter into Canaan; while the other spies discouraged the tribes. Thus we may say, through the strength of divine grace, we shall be enabled to overcome

all our spiritual enemies, namely, the world, flesh, and devil, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Observe it.

3. God is faithful to these promises which he has made to us. Therefore we must not be false to those promises which we have made to him, Heb. x. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised.

4. In having these promises we have great honour put upon us, and we ought to carry it as becomes us. God has promised to be to us a faithful God, a loving, a tender Father. Let us not wander out of the way of duty. If we have received the promise, as Abraham did, we ought to do some great act, in our obedience to his commands, as he did.

5. The promises secure to us an abundant reward for our obedience; therefore let us be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

And now, having observed these things concerning the promises, let us explain fully the duty which is inferred. It contains two parts.

I. To be cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.

II. To perfect holiness in the fear of God.

I. We must be cleansed, &c.

1. Therefore let us look upon sin as filthiness; let the grace of God, and the purity, not only of his nature, but also of his word and promises, make sin more odious and terrible than in the threatenings it appears dangerous. In the promises sin appears loathsome, and filthiness itself. For, observe, (1.) It is odious to God, contrary to that purity of nature which appears in his promises, which should deter us from sin, Jer. xliv. 4. Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate, Gen. xxxix. 9. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God! Observe, (2.) Look upon sin as that which unfits us for communion with God; therefore, upon this account, let sin become odious to us. Observe, (3.) Sin in Scripture is called and

compared to a wound, to a plague, to leprosy, &c., and all to make us fear and loath it.

2. Let us cleanse ourselves from this filthiness, by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ; for it is he that is made to us both righteousness and sanctification. It is our duty to cleanse ourselves, but we cannot do this without God's grace, and he will not do it without our endeavours. This implies, (1.) That we truly repent of the sins which we have committed, and loath ourselves for them. Whenever we go to worship God, we must lie down in our shame, and abhor ourselves, repenting in dust and ashes. (2.) That by faith we apply the blood of Christ to our consciences, and sprinkle them with it, and that we wash in that fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. We read that the Ammonites made themselves odious in the nostrils of David, and so they hardened themselves, that is, strengthened themselves, against him. Let us not act so against God, but let us lie low before the Lord, and make the Lord Jesus Christ our friend to reconcile us to God.

3. Let us mortify the habits of sin, and purge out the old leaven, both in the head and in the heart. Get clear of our bad principles, that we may not make so light of sin as we have done; cleanse ourselves from all filthiness that is in the imagination. Great pains must be taken with the heart, to get it clear of all corrupt inclinations. Wash ye, make ye clean, indulge no evil thoughts in your hearts.

4. Let us watch against all occasions of sin, that is, all those things by which you have contracted pollutions. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Keep at a distance from every thing which has the appearance of evil.

5. Let us resolve for the future to have no more to do with sin. Refrain from all acts of sin. Let him that has stole steal no more, Eph. iv. 28. Let him that has been drunk or unclean, be so no more, Isa. iv. 4. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the

spirit of burning, that is, by a saving knowledge of, and a sincere love to, God and his commandments, submit to the Spirit's influences, or you will never get the mastery over your sins and corruptions. Therefore you must put on a holy resolution, and take the kingdom of heaven by violence, for the violent take it by force.

6. Our care herein must be universal. We must cleanse ourselves, (1.) From all filthiness of the flesh, from slothfulness and the love of ease, from sensuality and the love of pleasure, from gratifying the desires of the body with forbidden fruit, or indulging them too much, to the damage of the soul; for even lawful pleasures may turn into sin without due care and watchfulness over ourselves, such as gluttony, drunkenness, or seventh-commandment sins. (2.) We must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the spirit, from pride, covetousness, and the love of the world, from fraud, deceit, and injustice, Job xxxi. 7, from all sinful anger, malice, hatred, and desire of revenge; for these are spiritual filthiness, from all which we must be cleansed.

II. We must perfect holiness in the fear of God.

1. We must be holy.

That is taken for granted; for we cannot perfect holiness unless we begin it. We must be holy. What is that? (1.) We must be devoted to God, as all holy persons and things under the law were. We must be holiness to the Lord. (2.) We must be conformed to God's likeness, and to his will. God's holiness is his agreement with himself; our holiness is our agreeableness to him. We must act in everything as becomes our relation to God, Col. i. 10. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, &c., and the image of God must be renewed upon us; be ye holy, saith the Lord, for I am holy. (3.) We must be employed in the services and worship of God; we must engage our hearts in all our approaches to him; we must employ our minds, and all the powers of our souls, in all the inward acts of inward worship, and in all outward worship also we must not only bow the knee, but also the heart, before the Lord; for heartless worship is vain

worship, God will not accept it, and we ourselves shall be no gainers by it, so it must be in vain. (4.) We must be engaged in the interests of God's kingdom amongst men. To be holy is to be on the Lord's side, and to espouse his cause, to be his witnesses, to be courageous and valiant for the truth, to contend earnestly for it, for great is the truth and it shall prevail; God will own and honour those that do own and honour him.

2. We must be sincere in our holiness, or perfecting holiness. For sincerity is our gospel perfection, as a good man said. I know no religion but sincerity, this is uprightness. Walk before me and be thou upright. By this is understood, (1.) We must be sanctified throughout. The whole man must be sanctified. The understanding must be enlightened, the will bowed and brought into obedience to the will of God, both to the will of his precepts to do them, and to the will of his providences to submit to them; and thus we stand complete in the whole will of God, that we may be sanctified in body, soul, and spirit, and so be perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2.) The whole law of God must be regarded, and a respect had to it. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments, Ps. cxix. 6. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes that I be not ashamed, ver. 80. I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way, ver. 128. Oh let us labour to be sincere to the day of Christ, like good and faithful servants waiting for the coming of the Lord.

3. We must be growing and making progress in holiness; though we cannot perfect it in this world, yet we must be perfecting it, that is, adding a greater degree to a lesser, pressing forwards towards perfection. (1.) The habits of grace must grow more confirmed and rooted, our resolutions against sin more settled, and our resolution for God and duty more steady. This is to perfect what is lacking in our faith, 1 Thess. iii. 10. (2.) The acting of grace must grow more and more vigorous and lively.

We must be more ready for every good work. We must have more spiritual success in a lively exercise to resist sin, and all temptations that would insnare us. (3.) We must be more and more watchful, and upon our guard. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Therefore be not high minded, but fear, Rom. xi. 20. We must never think ourselves good enough, and safe enough, but must be still growing wiser and better. (4.) We must be actuated and animated therein by the fear of God. That is, [1.] We must keep up a constant worship of God in our families, and in our closets; we must be frequent in holy adorings and admirings of God. This will be a good means of perfecting holiness, to be in the fear of the Lord every day, and all the day long. [2.] We must maintain a reverent regard to his majesty and authority, and this will keep us from sin; when others make bold with sin, we must stand in awe of God, as Nehemiah did, chap. v. 15. But so did not I, because of the fear of God. 3. We must have a continual dread of his wrath and vindictive justice. A fear of God's wrath and displeasure will be a means of keeping ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

To conclude. The apostle directs his exhortation to his dearly beloved, so do I to you, my dearly beloved.

1. Apply the promises to yourselves, live upon them, take them to be your heritage for ever. Both you that are young, and you that are old, treasure up the promises.
2. Apply the precepts to yourselves, and live up to them, and be holy in all manner of conversation. Keep a conscience always void of offence both towards God and towards man.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified, Acts xx. 32. And may you be always looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, till you come to be for ever with him. Amen.

THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.



“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—MATT. xvi. 26.

THE soul of man is a jewel of inestimable value. This is plainly intimated here, where the loss of the soul is represented as such a loss that the gain of all the world will not be a compensation for it. Observe here,

1. What those things are that are here compared—“the whole world,” and “thy own soul;” these are here put into the scales against one another. The world here means not the universe, or the whole creation, that is more excellent than any one part, but the things that are seen, that are temporal, 2 Cor. iv. 18; the riches, honours, and pleasures, of this present time. See a map of this world, 1 John ii. 16. Now the “whole world” is here set in the balance against one soul, if that one be thy one. It is not a small estate, or a lordship, that is here supposed to be of less value than the soul, but the world, the whole world. Our temporal concernments are compared with our spiritual, the “life that now is, and that which is to come,” 1 Tim. iv. 8.

2. What judgment is here passed upon them—That our own souls are of infinitely more value than the whole world. The value of a thing is reckoned partly by its nature and intrinsic dignity, and partly by its use. That is most

valuable, that is most delightful, most profitable and most necessary. We reckon that is most worth that is most worth to us. Now our own souls are more to us than all the world is or can be. The design of this is to show of what little worth the world is, and the things of the world they are weighed in the balance and found wanting; not worthy to be compared, or to be named, with the soul; Rom. viii. 18.

3. Who it is that passeth this judgment. It is our Lord Jesus himself, one who had reason to know the worth of souls, for he made them, and bought them; and who, we may be sure, would not under-rate the world, for by him "the worlds were made," Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2. This doctrine I shall endeavour,

I. To prove—The true worth of the soul, and that it is more to us than all the world. Consider,

1. The *production* of the soul. Trace it up to its original; and it is breathed into us by the breath of God: it is a spark of heaven; it is that part of man by which he is allied to the world of spirits; it is the master-piece of God's workmanship in this lower world, Gen. ii. 7. The image of God is stamped upon it, Gen. i. 26, 27. When it returns to God, it doth but as all the waters do, return to the place from whence it came. It is of a noble extraction. That which makes up the world, that men covet so much, is but of the earth, earthy:—honour is a shadow; the pleasures of the world, and the wealth of the world, are of the earth; gold and silver are but refined earth—Man found thee poor and dirty in a mine, *Herbert*. But man was made last of all the creatures, as the chief of the works of God. It is good for us often to ask whence we came; and being so nobly descended, disdain to serve the base and sordid lusts of the flesh, and to prostitute an immortal soul to the drudgery of this world.

2. The *powers* of the soul. These are very great; its apprehensions are not confined by the horizon of sense, but rove far beyond it. The faculties of the human soul are such as above any other creature prove the eternal power

and wisdom of the Creator. It is the soul that knows right well how marvellous God's works are, Ps. cxxxix. 14, by reflection upon itself. Think what the soul of man is capable of, and you will say that it is of inestimable value.

(1.) It is capable of glorifying God in this world. It has a power of knowing God, as he has been pleased to reveal himself. It is that which is within us, that renders us capable of blessing and praising God, Ps. ciii. 1, 2. It is capable of "knowledge," in which, especially, the image of God consists, Col. iii. 10. It is capable of reasoning and "bringing to mind," Isa. xlvi. 8. It is capable of receiving a divine revelation to this purpose, and in the use of instituted ordinances is capable of "having fellowship" with God—of being wrought upon, and witnessed with, by the Holy Spirit of God, Rom. viii. 16. It is capable of being "sanctified."

(2.) It is capable of being glorified with God in the other world; of seeing and enjoying him within the veil; of conversing with angels and glorified spirits, and drinking in the sweet and glorious rays of divine grace and love; things which are above, out of the sight of sense. It has a power of doing that, which the body, till it is refined and become a spiritual body, is not able to attain. It is capable of seeing God face to face, which an embodied soul, till stripped of this veil, cannot possibly do, Exod. xxxiii. 20.

(3.) The *perpetuity* of the soul. This is one great thing which speaks the worth of the soul—that it is to last for ever, it is an immortal spirit. It is a flame that can never be extinguished. It will survive the body, and will live and act in a state of separation from it. It is one of those things which are not seen, but are eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18. It is an awful consideration, when a child is born, to think, here is the beginning of a being that will outlive all the ages of time. The world is but for a moment, Prov. xxiii. 5, the fashion of it, the scheme, the outside of it, (for it is but a superficies,) "passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 31; 1 John ii 17. But the soul is perpetual; the things themselves

towards which its desires extend, and those desires that are so formed, are eternal. The brute creatures are mortal, but man will be immortal. This makes it such a serious thing for a man to die, above what it is for a beast to die, Eccl. iii. 21. Things are reckoned valuable according to their duration. Gold therefore is the most precious metal, because it will not rust nor waste; but the utmost of the duration of this world's goods is within time.

(4.) The *propriety* of our souls—"thy own soul." In order to ascertain the right value of a thing it must be considered, not only what the thing is in itself, but what interest we have in it. The loan of a thing is nothing so valuable as the possession of it. Now the world is but lent us; whatever we have in it, it is not to be called our own; but our souls are our own. We brought them into the world, and we shall carry them out—they are our own, they are, in fact, ourselves. The soul is the man. What is man but a "living soul?" Gen. ii. 7. Abstract the soul as living, and the body is a lump of clay; abstract the soul as rational, and the man is as the beasts that perish. It is a certain truth that the soul is the man. "Persons," in Scripture, are often reckoned by souls, as Acts ii. 41. What we are is more to us than what we have. It is the spirit that is the substance of the man; and what is the chaff to the wheat, the shell to the kernel, the clothes to the body? This is one of the first things that the convinced sinner is made sensible of—that the soul is the man; and if he would do well for himself, he must do well for his soul.

(5.) The *projects* that are laid about souls. There is great work about souls, more than you think of. That is valuable which those that are intelligent are concerned about. This speaks the soul of man to be of very great value. Consider, [1.] What projects the love of God has to save souls. The God of infinite wisdom, whose the worlds are, has been pleased to concern himself with a peculiar care about the world of mankind, the world of souls. Some observe, that in Scripture, God is never brought in consulting with himself but when man is concerned. God has thoughts "to us

ward," Ps. xl. 5. Infinite Wisdom was from eternity, devising means that poor banished souls might not be forever expelled, Eph. i. 11, compare ver. 9. God had thoughts of love to the sons of men, *i. e.* the souls of men, before the worlds were.

[2.] What projects the malice of Satan has to destroy souls. It is a sign the soul of man is very precious, when God and Satan, those two adverse powers, are as it were contending for it. He seeks to get and keep possession of the soul, that he may devour it, 1 Pet. v. 8. The great dispute between Michael and the dragon is, who shall rule the souls of men. The devil's agents trade in the "souls of men," Rev. xviii. 13. The devil saith, as the king of Sodom, Gen. xiv. 21, "Give me the souls." There is great striving about the soul.

(6.) The *price* that was paid to redeem souls. We reckon the value of a thing by that which a wise man will give for it, who is not ignorant of it, nor under necessity. Christ the Wisdom of God, gave himself, his own precious blood, to redeem souls, and he knew what they were, and had no need of them. The redemption of the "soul is precious," Ps. xlix. 8. Corruptible things, as silver and gold, would not do: then did Christ, for us men and for our salvation, make his soul an offering, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. "His soul was an offering" for ours, his life a "ransom" for many, Matt. xx. 28. See here the worth of souls—nothing could be a ransom for forfeited souls but the blood of the Son of God. Lo I come, saith he—for us men and for our salvation, saith the Nicene creed. Neither the fruit of the body, nor the fruit of the estate, would atone for the "sin of the soul," Mic. vi. 7, but Christ gave himself. Blood of bulls and goats would not do. God proves the excellency of his people by this, Isa. xliii. 4, "I will give men for thee;"—much more doth it demonstrate the excellency of souls, when God gave his Son for them. The blood of Christ is precious blood, of immense value.

(7.) The *pains* that are taken to renew souls. God hath manifested his favour to man in the provision made for his

body, that that might be put into, and kept in, a capacity to answer the end of its creation. See the first instance of this care, Gen. i. 29, and afterwards, Gen. ix. 3. But there is a great deal more done to provide for the soul, and to put that into, and keep that in, a capacity to answer the ends of its creation. The power of God is wonderfully exerted in this important work, to sanctify a soul, to recover it from its degenerate state, to reduce it to its integrity, and to prepare it for glory. The word of God is given for these ends, that mighty word, which is so quick and powerful, Heb. iv. 12. The Spirit of God is at work for the good of the soul—the arm of the Lord is revealed—and the work of faith fulfilled with power. These things show what a value God puts upon souls. A word made us, but far more is required to new-make us.

(8.) The *preparations* that are made to receive souls. There is much in progress for them in the other world. Souls being immortal, have immortal things provided for them.

There are preparations of wrath for sinful souls, to which they are “reserved,” 2 Pet. ii. 9. There is a Tophet that is ordained of old, Isa. xxx. 33, an everlasting fire, that is prepared for the devil and his angels, is reserved for wicked men, Matt. xxv. 41. It is sealed up among his treasures, treasures of wrath, after the long season of his patience.

And there are preparations of glory for sanctified souls. These must needs be of great value when there is so much laid out to make them great and happy. They have a glory proportioned to their capacities. Knowledge and love are the principal faculties of the soul; and these are sources of bliss in heaven.

II. I shall improve this subject. The serious consideration of the worth of our souls should have a mighty influence upon us to make us religious; for what is religion but a concern about the present and the future state of our souls? The practice of serious godliness is that, and that only, which befriends the soul both in its present and its

eternal interests. What is it that we are persuading you to in all our preaching, but to mind your souls and do well for your souls?

Be convinced that you have souls, every one of you. Consider thyself. Thou hast a mortal body and an immortal soul. Most men live as if they had no souls, no souls by which to be "governed," and no souls for which to "provide." They discover nothing truly rational, they have no concern for what is immortal. But I hope better things of you, or else I shall never hope any good of you. It is not enough to gainsay this truth, but you must consider it.

Be convinced of the worth of your souls. It is no breach of the law of humility to put a value upon our own souls, and to think so well of ourselves as to think ourselves too good to serve sin. Value the body less and the soul more, and it would be better for you. There are some important inferences which may be drawn from these things.

1. If the soul be so precious, then those are our best friends that are friends to our souls, and we should look upon them as such. The best friend to souls that ever was is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the soul. Look upon him as a good friend, and prize him accordingly. Study what you shall render for his love. The good shepherd is the "Shepherd of our souls," 1 Pet. ii. 25. He laid down his life for our souls, and has provided food, and healing, and rest for them: let our souls love him. Faithful ministers are friends to your souls, Heb. xiii. 17. Their work is to watch for them. Look upon reprovers as friends to your souls, and reckon friendly rebukes as kindness. They are so, Ps. cxlv. 5. They help to prevent sin, and save the soul from death. Let them find more favour now, for they will afterwards appear more kind than flatterers. Those that instruct you and comfort you are friends to your souls. Show yourselves to be friends to the souls of others. Do all the good you can to the souls of those with whom you are connected. Be concerned for the souls of your

children and servants; gain their souls by guiding them to God.

2. If the soul be so precious, then those are our worst enemies that are enemies to our souls. The devil is the great enemy to our souls; he is the tempter, and so is the destroyer, and he has his agents, that are busy to ruin souls. There are persons and things that war against the soul, 1 Pet. ii. 11, the worst war that can be: those that seduce the soul and beguile it, 2 Pet. ii. 54, that tempt us to sin; that lay stumbling-blocks before us; that entice us secretly, though they pretend love;—look upon them as enemies to your souls. David complains often of those that did persecute his soul. Wicked companions are real enemies to the soul; therefore say to such, “Depart,” Ps. cxix. 115. Enemies to the soul are very subtle, Eph. vi. 12. Therefore we have the more need to stand upon our guard. Consider how precious that soul is which they would injure and destroy.

3. If the soul be so precious, then mercies to the soul are the choicest mercies, for which we should pray most earnestly. This is the favour that God bears unto his chosen. The hallowing of God’s name by us, and the coming of his kingdom into us, are mercies to the soul which are to be desired above all others,—that is the order in the Lord’s prayer, Matt. v. 33. The renewing of the soul, and the saving of the soul, are things that must have the pre-eminence in our desires and prayers. Other mercies must be begged with a proviso, but mercies to the soul absolutely. Be more earnest for these than for corn, and wine, and oil, Ps. iv. 6, 7; wrestle with God for these, as Jacob did. Be more concerned in prayer about your sins than your afflictions. So likewise we must be most thankful to God for spiritual mercies, Eph. i. 3,—redeeming love, gospel grace, Ps. ciii. 3, &c. Value every mercy by the reference that it has to the soul, and be thankful for it accordingly, Isa. xxxviii. 17. “In love to my soul.” Go by this rule in your valuation of public mercies;—reckon those the best times that are op-

portunities for the soul, in which there are plenty of the means of grace.

4. If the soul be so precious, then judgments upon the soul are the sorest judgments. Spiritual plagues are of all others the worst, and to be most dreaded, as "lean-ness in the soul," Ps. cvi. 15, when the mind is blinded, the conscience seared, the heart hardened, and the reins laid on the neck of sinful passions. These are spiritual judgments, Isa. vi. 9, 10; Ps. lxxxii. 12, the worst condition a man can be in on this side hell. How sad would our condition be if we were deprived of both the bodily senses of seeing and hearing, (such instances have rarely been heard of,) but much worse to have the soul blind and deaf. Do not provoke God to deny and withdraw his grace. There are judgments upon the soul too, that sometimes befall God's own children, and they are very painful; as—when the terrors of God set themselves in array against them, Job vi. 4; Ps. lxxxviii. 3, &c., and he wounds the spirit, Prov. xviii. 14. If God has kept us from these terrors, we must be thankful, but not secure. Our Lord Jesus suffered in his soul that he might have compassion, Matt. xxvi, 38.

5. If the soul be so precious, then the prosperity of the soul is the best prosperity. There is such a thing as soul prosperity, 3 John 2, and it is that which we should most earnestly desire of God, both for ourselves and for our friends. The soul prospers when it is in a good state, and in a good frame, when it is in the right way, and when it grows in grace; as the body prospers that is in health, and as the estate prospers that increases. That is a prosperous soul that is adding grace to grace, and securing not only an entrance, but an abundant entrance, into the kingdom of God, 2 Pet. i. 5. The soul prospers when its holy dispositions are lively, its comforts strong, and its evidences clear—when it is walking in the light, and singing in the ways, of the Lord. Seek this as the best prosperity. Soul prosperity either brings outward prosperity along with it, Matt. vi. 33, or sweetens

the want of it; and it is that which all the malice of hell and earth cannot disturb or take away.

6. If the soul be so precious, then we are to look upon that condition as best for us which is best for our souls. That is best for us that is most free from temptations, and that gives us the greatest advantages for spiritual things. That relation is best for us that is best for our souls. Look upon this as a reason why we should be content under afflictions, because they tend to the good of our souls. Though the flesh be destroyed, yet if the spirit be thereby saved, it is well enough, 1 Cor. v. 5; Heb. xii. 9. Sanctified afflictions are the soul's promotions;—the chastening is bad for the body, but the teaching that attends it is good for the soul, Ps. xciv. 12; cxix. 71. Submit willingly to that which is for the good of the soul, though it be displeasing to flesh and blood.

7. If the soul be so precious, then they are fools that "despise their own souls." There are those that do so, Prov. xv. 32. This is the fundamental error of sinners,—they despise this jewel of value, which Christ put such a value upon. Let us see who they are that despise their own souls:

(1.) Those that make a light matter of sin despise their own souls, Prov. xiv. 9. It is certain that sin is a wrong to the soul, Prov. viii. 36. How do people regard their souls that abuse them thus every day? Those that expose their precious souls to the wrath and curse of the eternal God every day, by wilful sin, do not value them as they should. Those despise their souls that continue in unbelief and impenitency, and will not be awakened to see the misery in which their souls are; they feel nothing from sin, the sins of so many years; they are not concerned though their souls be ready to drop into everlasting burnings. They despise their souls that rush into sin, Jer. viii. 6, that run upon God, Job xv. 25, 26. There are some so daring as to challenge God himself to damn them. They despise their souls that, when they have fallen into sin, make no haste to repent and turn from it.

(2.) Those that take up with a cheap and easy religion despise their own souls; that are afraid of doing too much for their own souls. Did we put a right value upon our souls, we should object to no pains or care for the securing of their welfare. We should go from strength to strength; we should give diligence to add to our graces, and thus make our calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 5-10. But those that only inquire, will not less serve? manifest that they despise their souls: they labour at the world, and sleep at an ordinance; they crowd their religion into a corner, and make not a business, but a by-business, of it. What account do such make of their souls who will scarce go over the threshold to hear a sermon? they "refuse instruction." He that is slothful in work for his soul is brother to him that is a great waster.

(3.) Those that are prodigal of their time despise their own souls. Time is an opportunity of doing something for the soul, and is to be redeemed accordingly, Eph. v. 16, because there is an eternity depends upon it. Time may be well spent, either in doing something for God with the soul, or in getting something from God for the soul; yet with many their time is a drug. What value do those put upon their souls that fill up their time with mere recreation, and all this while neglect their souls? Every day might be a harvest day for the soul, but it is idled away; the time of the morning and evening sacrifice stolen away by one idle companion or other. Value your souls and you will value your time.

(4.) Those that make themselves drudges to the world despise their own souls. The soul should be our darling, but many make it a slave, and send it to feed swine, Luke xv. 15, and to provide for the flesh, Rom. xiii. 14. Those that are eager in pursuit of worldly wealth despise their souls, not only because the soul is neglected and the body preferred before it, but because it is employed in these pursuits, Ps. cxxvii. 2. Care about the world fills the soul and disquiets it. It is a great disparagement to an immortal soul to be thus wholly employed.

(5.) Those that by sin unfit their bodies to aid souls in the service of God despise them. Drunkenness especially does this, it overcharges the heart, Luke 34. Those put a great slight upon their souls that drink them in wine and strong drink, and suffer their bodies thus to be taken away, and themselves to be put out of possession of them. They make beasts of themselves only to please a sensual appetite. They are not to govern themselves, and by degrees to become their own masters—to understand themselves.

(6.) Those that venture their souls upon a false and deceitful foundation despise them. What we value we shall be sure to lay up in a safe place, and that which we despise we shall venture any where. Those that build their hopes upon the sand, Matt. vii. 26, that presume upon their visible profession, and are willing to take it for granted, without any strict scrutiny, that all is well with them, Rev. iii. 17. Such have a low opinion of their own souls, and must necessarily end in a painful manner; their hope must perish.

(7.) Those that take up with a portion in this life despise their own souls—who think that will serve them for a happiness which neither suits the nature of a soul, nor will last so long as the soul will last; that take up with that for a portion which doth but fill the belly, Ps. xvii. 14. And when they have a great deal of the world, say, "Soul, take thine ease," Luke xii. 19. And take these for their good things, Luke xvi. 25. Let not us despise our own souls, let us desire a better portion for them than the world, even an interest in His love, whose favour is the safety and the felicity of all who truly seek him.

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