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**Practical Divinity**

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AN  
EXTRACT  
FROM  
MR. COWLEY'S ESSAYS.

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VOL. XX.

B



# ESSAYS, IN PROSE AND VERSE.

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## I.

### ON SOLITUDE.

*NUNQUAM minus solus, quam cum solus,*—“Never less alone than when alone,”—is now become a very vulgar saying. Every man, for these seventeen hundred years, has had it in his mouth. But it was as at first spoken by the excellent *SCIPIO*, who was without question a most eloquent and witty person, as well as one of the most happy and the greatest of mankind. His meaning no doubt was, that he found more satisfaction to his mind, and more improvement of it by solitude than by company; and to show that he spoke not this loosely, or out of vanity, after he had made Rome mistress of almost the whole world, he retired himself from it by a voluntary exile, and at a private house, in the middle of a wood near *Linternum*, passed the remainder of his glorious life no less gloriously. This house *SENECA* went to see so long after with great veneration, and among other things describes his baths to have been of so mean a structure, that now, says he, the basest of the people would despise them, and cry out, “Poor *SCIPIO* understood not how to live.” The greatest part of men are so far from the opinion of that noble Roman, that if they chance at any time to be without company, they are like a becalmed ship; they never move but by the wind of other men’s breath, and have no oars of their own to steer withal. It is very fantastical and contradictory in human nature, that

men should love themselves above all the rest of the world, and yet never endure to be with themselves. When they are in love with a mistress, all other persons are importunate and burdensome to them. *Tecum vivere amem, tecum obeam lubens*: They would "live and die with her alone."

*Sic ego secretis possem benè vivere silvis,  
 Quà nullâ humanâ sit via trita pede.  
 Tu mihi curarum requies, tu nocte vel atrâ  
 Lumen, et in solis tu mihi turba locis.*

With thee for éver I in woods could rest,  
 Where never human foot the ground has press'd ;  
 Thou from all shades the darkness canst exclude,  
 And from a desert banish solitude.

And yet our dear self is so wearisome to us, that we can scarcely support its conversation for an hour together. This is such an odd temper of mind as CATULLUS expresses towards one of his mistresses, whom we may suppose to have been of a very unsociable humour.

*Odi et amo, quânam id faciam ratione requiris  
 Nescio, sed fieri sentio, et excrucior.*

I hate, and yet I love thee too ;  
 How can that be? I know not how ;  
 Only that so it is I know,  
 And feel with torment that 'tis so.

This is a deplorable condition, and drives a man sometimes to pitiful shifts, in seeking how to avoid himself.

The truth of the matter is, that neither he who is a fop in the world, is a fit man to be alone ; nor he who has set his heart upon the world, though he have ever so much understanding ; so that solitude can be well fitted, and sit right but upon a very few persons. They must have knowledge enough of the world to see the vanity of it, and virtue enough to despise all vanity. If the mind be possessed with any sinful desires or passions, a man had better be in a fair, than in a wood alone. They may, like

petty thieves, cheat us, perhaps, and pick our pockets in the midst of company; but like robbers, they use to strip and bind, or murder us, when they catch us alone. This is but to retreat from men, and fall into the hands of devils.—The first work therefore that a man must do to make himself capable of the good of solitude, is the very eradication of sinful desires; for how is it possible for a man to enjoy himself, while his affections are tied to things without himself?—In the second place, he must learn to think. Now, because the soul of man is not by its own nature or observation furnished with sufficient materials to work upon, it is necessary for it to have recourse to books for fresh supplies. Life will grow indigent, and be ready to starve without them; but with them, instead of being wearied with the length of any day, we shall only complain of the shortness of our whole life.

*O vita, stulto longa, sapienti brevis!*

O life, long to the fool, short to the wise!

The first Minister of State has not so much business in public, as a wise man has in private. If the one have little leisure to be alone, the other has less leisure to be in company; the one has but part of the affairs of one nation, the other all the works of God and nature under consideration. No saying shocks me so much as that which I hear very often, “That a man does not know how to pass his time.” It would have been but ill spoken by METHUSELAH, in the nine hundred and sixty-ninth year of his age. So far it is from us, who have not time enough to attain to the perfection of any part of any science, to have cause to complain that we are forced to be idle for want of work. “But this,” you will say, “is only work for the learned; others are not capable either of the employments or diversions that arise from letters.”—I know they are not; and therefore cannot recommend such retirement to a man totally illiterate.



## I.

Hail! old Patrician trees, so great and good ;  
 Hail! ye Plebeian underwood ;  
 Where the poetic birds rejoice,  
 And for their quiet nests and plenteous food,  
 Pay with their grateful voice.

## II.

Here Nature does a house for me erect,  
 Nature the fairest architect,  
 Who those fond artists do despise,  
 That can the fair and living trees neglect,  
 Yet the dead timber prize.

## III.

Ah wretched, and too solitary he,  
 Who loves not his own company !  
 He'll feel the weight of't many a day,  
 Unless he call in sin or vanity  
 To help to bear't away.



## II.

## ON GREATNESS.

“SINCE we cannot attain to greatness,” says the SIEUR DE MONTAGUE, “let us have our revenge by railing at it.” This he spoke but in jest. I believe he desired it no more than I do ; and had less reason,—for he enjoyed so plentiful a fortune in a most excellent country, as allowed him all the real conveniences of greatness, separated from the incommodities. If I were but in his condition, I should think it hard measure, without being convicted of any crime, to be sequestered from it, and made one of the principal Officers of State. But the Reader may think that what I now say is of small authority, because I never was,

nor ever shall be, put to the trial. I can therefore only make my protestation :—

If e'er ambition did my fancy cheat  
 With any wish so mean, as to be great,  
 Continue, Heaven, still from me to remove  
 The humble blessings of that life I love.

I know very many men will despise, and some pity me, for this humour, as a poor-spirited fellow : but I am content ; and, like HORACE, thank GOD for being so. *Dii bene fecerunt, inopis me quodque pusilli finxerunt animi.* I confess, I love littleness almost in all things ;—a little convenient estate, a little cheerful house, a little company, and a very little feast.

How tedious would it be, if we were always bound to be great. I believe there is no King who would not rather be deposed, than endure every day of his reign all the ceremonies of his Coronation. The mightiest Princes are glad to flee often from these majestic pleasures, (which is, methinks, no small disparagement to them,) as it were for refuge, to the most contemptible diversions, and meanest recreations of the vulgar, nay, even of children. One of the most powerful and fortunate Princes of the world, of late, could find out no delight so satisfactory, as that of keeping little singing birds, and hearing them, and whistling to them. What did the Emperors of the whole world ? If ever any men had the free and full enjoyment of all human greatness, (nay, that would not suffice, for they would be gods too,) they certainly possessed it. And yet one of them, who styled himself “ Lord and God of the earth,” could not tell how to pass his whole day pleasantly, without spending constantly two or three hours in catching flies, and killing them with a bodkin,—as if his godship had been Beelzebub. One of his predecessors, NERO, (who never put any bounds, nor met with any stop, to his appetite,) could divert himself with no pastime more agreeable, than to run about the streets all night in a disguise, and insult the women, and affront the men,

whom he met; sometimes beating them, and sometimes being beaten by them. This was one of his imperial pleasures. His chiefest in the day was to sing and play upon a fiddle, in the habit of a minstrel, upon the public stage; he was prouder of the garlands that were given in honour of his "divine voice," (as they then called it,) in those kinds of prizes, than all his forefathers were of their triumphs over nations. He did not at his death complain, that so mighty an Emperor, and the last of the Cæsarian race of deities, should be brought to so shameful and miserable an end; but only cried out, "Alas! what pity it is that so excellent a musician should perish in this manner!" His uncle CLAUDIUS spent half his time in playing at dice;—that was a main fruit of his sovereignty. I omit the madness of CALIGULA's delights, and the execrable sordidness of those of TIBERIUS. Would one think that AUGUSTUS himself, the highest and most fortunate of mankind, a person endowed too with excellent parts, should be so hard put to it sometimes, for want of recreations, as to be found playing at nuts, and bounding stones, with little Syrian and Moorish boys.

Was it for this that his ambition strove,  
 To equal CÆSAR first, and after Jove?  
 Greatness is barren sure of solid joys;  
 Her merchandise (I fear) is all in toys;  
 She could not else sure so uncivil be,  
 To treat his universal majesty,  
 His new created deity,  
 With nuts, and bounding stones, and boys.

But we must excuse her for this meagre entertainment: she has not really wherewithal to make such feasts as we imagine: her guests must be contented sometimes with but slender fare, and with the same cold meats served over and over again, until they become nauseous. When you have pared away all the vanity, what solid contentment does there remain, which may not be had with a small fortune? Not so many servants or horses; but a few

good ones, which will do all the business as well: Not so many dishes at every meal; but at several meals, which makes them both more healthful and more pleasant: Not so rich garments, nor so frequent changes; but as warm and as comely, and so frequent change too, as is every jot as good for the master, though not for the tailor: Not such a stately palace, nor gilded rooms, nor costliest sorts of tapestry; but a convenient house, with decent wainscot. Lastly, (for I omit all other particulars, and will end with that which I love most, in both conditions,) not whole woods cut in walks, nor vast parks, nor fountains, nor cascade gardens; but herb, and flower, and fruit gardens, which are more useful, and the water of which is every whit as clear and wholesome, as if darted from the breasts of a marble nymph, or the urn of a river-god. If, for all this, you like better the substance of that former estate of life, do but consider the inseparable accidents of both. Servitude, disquiet, danger, and commonly guilt, are inherent in the one; in the other, liberty, tranquillity, security, and innocence. When you have thought upon this, you will confess that to be a truth, which appeared to you before but a ridiculous paradox,—that a low fortune is better guarded than a high one. If indeed we look upon the flourishing head of the tree, it appears a most beautiful object;

. . . . . *Sed quantum vertice ad auras*  
*Æthereas, tantum radice ad Tartara tendit.*

As far as up tow'rds heaven the branches grow,  
 So far the root sinks down to hell below.

Another horrible disgrace to greatness is, that it is for the most part in pitiful want and distress. What a wonderful thing is this? Unless it degenerate into avarice, and so cease to be greatness, it falls perpetually into such necessities, as drive it into borrowing, cozenage, or robbery. *Mancipiis locuples eget æris Cappadocum Rex.* This is the case of almost all great men, as well as of the poor

King of Cappadocia. They abound with slaves, but are indigent of money. The ancient Roman Emperors, who had the riches of the whole world for their revenue, had wherewithal to live (one would have thought) pretty well at ease, and to have been exempt from the pressures of poverty. But yet, with most of them it was much otherwise; and they fell perpetually into such miserable penury, that they were forced to devour or squeeze most of their friends or servants, to cheat with infamous projects, to ransack and pillage all their provinces. This fashion of imperial grandeur is imitated by all inferior and subordinate sorts of it, as if it were a point of honour. They must be cheated of a third part of their estates; and two other thirds they must expend in vanity; so that they remain debtors for all the necessary provisions of life, and have no way to satisfy those debts, but out of the succours and supplies of rapine. "As riches increase," says Solomon, "so do they that eat them." The master-mouth has no more than before. The owner, methinks, is like Ocnus in the fable, who is perpetually winding a rope of hay, and an ass at the end perpetually eating it. Out of these inconveniencies arises naturally one more, which is, that no greatness can be satisfied or contented with itself. Still, if it could mount up *a little higher*, then it would be happy; if it could but gain that point, it would obtain all its desires. But yet at last, when it is got up to the very top of the Peak of Teneriffe, it is in very great danger of breaking its neck downwards; but in no possibility of ascending upwards into the seat of tranquillity above the moon. The first ambitious men in the world, the old giants, are said to have made an heroic attempt to scale heaven in despite of the gods; and they cast Ossa upon Olympus, and Pelion upon Ossa; two or three mountains more they thought would have done the business; but the thunder spoiled all the work, when they were come up to the third story.

A famous person of their offspring, the late giant of our nation, when, from the condition of a very inconsiderable

captain, he had made himself Lieutenant-General of an army of little Titans, which was his first mountain,—and afterwards General, which was his second,—and after that, absolute tyrant of three kingdoms, which was the third,—and almost touched the heaven which he affected,—is believed to have died with grief and discontent, because he could not attain to the honest name of a King, and the old *formality* of a Crown, though he had before exceeded the *power*. If he could have compassed that, he would perhaps have wanted something else, and pined away for want of the title of an Emperor, or a god. The reason of this is, that greatness has no reality in nature, but is a creature of the fancy, a notion that consists only in relation and comparison. It is indeed an idol; but ST. PAUL teaches us that “an idol is nothing in the world.” There is in truth no rising or meridian of the sun, but only in respect to several places. There is no right or left, or upper hand, in nature: every thing is little, and every thing is great, according as it is differently compared. There may be perhaps some village in Scotland or Ireland, where I might be a great man; and in that case I should be like CÆSAR, (you would wonder how CÆSAR and I should be like one another in any thing,) and choose rather to be the first man of the village, than the second at Rome. Our country is called Great Britain, in regard only of a lesser of the same name; it would be but a ridiculous epithet for it, when we consider it together with the kingdom of China. That too, is but a pitiful rood of ground in comparison of the whole earth besides; and this whole globe of earth, which we account so immense a body, is but one point or atom, in relation to those numberless worlds that are scattered up and down in the infinite space of the sky which we behold.

## I.

We look at men, and wonder at such odds  
     'Twixt things that were the same by birth ;  
 We look on Kings as giants of the earth :  
 These giants are but pigmies to the gods.  
     The humblest bush, and proudest oak,  
 Are but of equal proof against the thunder-stroke.  
 Beauty, and strength, and wit, and wealth, and power,  
     Have their short flourishing hour ;  
     And love to see themselves, and smile,  
 And joy in their pre-eminence a while :  
     Ev'n so, in the same land,  
 Poor weeds, rich corn, gay flowers, together stand ;  
 Alas ! death mows down all with an impartial hand.

## II.

And all you men, whom greatness does so please,  
     Ye feast (I fear) like DAMOCLES :  
     If you your eyes could upwards move,  
 (But you, I fear, think nothing is above,)  
 You would perceive by what a little thread  
     The sword still hangs over your head.  
 No tide of wine could drown your cares ;  
 No mirth or music over-noise your fears.  
 The fear of death would you so watchful keep,  
 As not to admit the image of it, sleep.

## III.

Sleep is too proud to wait in palaces ;  
 And yet so humble too, as not to scorn  
     The meanest country cottages :  
     His poppy grows among the corn.  
 The halcyon sleep will never build his nest  
     In any stormy breast.  
     'Tis not enough that he does find  
     Clouds and darkness in their mind ;  
     Darkness but half his work will do,  
     'Tis not enough, he must find quiet too.

### III.

#### THE DANGER OF AN HONEST MAN IN MUCH COMPANY.

IF twenty thousand naked Americans were not able to resist the assaults of but twenty well-armed Spaniards, I see but little possibility for one honest man to defend himself against twenty thousand knaves, who are all furnished *cap-a-pé*, with the defensive arms of worldly prudence, and the offensive ones too, of craft and malice. He will find no less odds than this against him, if he have much to do in human affairs. The only advice therefore which I can give him, is, to be sure not to venture his person any longer in the open campaign; to retreat and entrench himself; to stop up all avenues, and draw up all bridges, against so numerous an enemy. The truth of it is, that a man in much business must either make himself a knave, or else the world will make him a fool: and if the injury went no farther than the being laughed at, a wise man would content himself with the revenge of retaliation; but the case is much worse, for these civil cannibals too, as well as the wild ones, not only dance about such a taken stranger, but at last devour him. A sober man cannot get too soon out of drunken company, though they be ever so kind and merry among themselves: it is not unpleasant only, but dangerous to him. Do ye wonder that a virtuous man should love to be alone? It is hard for him to be otherwise: he is so, when he is among ten thousand. Neither is the solitude so uncomfortable, to be alone without any other creature, as it is to be alone in the midst of wild beasts. Man is to man all kinds of beasts,—a fawning dog, a roaring lion, a thieving fox, a robbing wolf, a dissembling crocodile, a treacherous decoy, and a rapacious vulture. The civilest, methinks, of all nations, are those whom we account the most barbarous. There is some moderation and good nature in the Toupinambaltians, who eat no men but their enemies; whilst we



learned, and polite, and *Christian* Europeans, like so many pikes and sharks, prey upon every thing that we can swallow. It is the great boast of eloquence and philosophy, that they first congregated men dispersed, united them into societies, and built up the houses and the walls of cities. I wish they would unravel all they have woven ; that we might have our woods and our innocence again, instead of our castles and policies. They have assembled many thousands of scattered people into one body : it is true, they have done so ; they have brought them together into cities to cozen, and into armies to murder one another. They found them hunters and fishers of wild creatures, they have made them hunters and fishers of their brethren : they boast to have reduced them to a state of peace, when the truth is, they have only taught them the art of war. They have framed, I must confess, wholesome laws for the restraint of vice ; but they raised first that Devil which now they conjure and cannot bind ; though there were before no punishments for wickedness, yet there was less committed, because there were no rewards for it. But the men who praise philosophy from this topic are much deceived ; let oratory answer for itself, the tinkling perhaps of that may unite a swarm ; it never was the work of philosophy to assemble multitudes, but to regulate only, and govern them, when they were assembled,—to make the best of an evil, and bring them, as much as is possible, to unity again. Avarice and ambition only were the first builders of towns and founders of empire ; *they* said, “ Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven ; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth.” What was the beginning of Rome, the metropolis of all the world ? What was it but a concourse of thieves, and a sanctuary of criminals ? It was justly named by the augury of no less than twelve vultures, and the Founder cemented his walls with the blood of his brother. Not unlike to this was the beginning of the first town too in the world, and

such is the original sin of most cities; their actual increase daily with their age and growth. The more people, the more wicked all of them: every one brings in his part to inflame the contagion, which becomes at last so universal and so strong, that no precepts can be sufficient preservatives, nor any thing secure our safety, but flight from among the infected. We ought, in the choice of a situation, to regard above all things the healthfulness of the place; and the healthfulness of it for the mind rather than for the body. But suppose (which is hardly to be supposed) we had antidote enough against this poison; nay, suppose farther, we were always armed and provided both against the assaults of hostility, and the mines of treachery; it will be but an uncomfortable life to be ever in alarms. Though we were compassed round with fire, to defend ourselves from wild beasts, the lodging would be unpleasant, because we must always be obliged to watch that fire, and to fear no less the defects of our guard, than the diligence of our enemy. The sum of this is, that a virtuous man is in danger to be trod upon and destroyed in the crowd of his contraries; nay, which is worse, to be changed and corrupted by them, and that it is hard to escape both these inconveniences, without so much caution, as will take away the whole quiet, that is, the happiness of his life. Ye see, then, what he may lose; but, I pray, what can he get there? *Quid Romæ faciam? Mentiri nescio.* What should a man of truth and honesty do at Rome? He can neither understand, nor speak the language of the place. A naked man may swim in the sea, but it is not the way to catch fish there; they are likelier to devour him than he them, if he bring no nets, and use no deceits.

Nay, if nothing of all this were in the case, yet the very sight of uncleanness is loathsome to the cleanly; the sight of folly and impiety vexatious to the wise and pious.

LUCRETIVS, by his favour, though a good poet, was but an ill-natured man, when he said, It was delightful to

see other men in a great storm : and no less ill-natured should I think DEMOCRITUS, who laughed at all the world,—but that he retired himself so much out of it, that we may perceive he took no great pleasure in that kind of mirth. I have been drawn twice or thrice by company to go to Bedlam, and have seen others very much delighted with the fantastical extravagancy of so many various madnesses, which upon me wrought so contrary an effect, that I always returned, not only melancholy, but even sick with the sight. My compassion there was perhaps too tender, for I meet a thousand madmen abroad, without any perturbation, though to weigh the matter justly, the total loss of reason is less deplorable than the total deprivation of it. An exact judge of human blessings, of riches, honours, beauty, even of wit itself, should pity the abuse of them more than the want.

Briefly, though a wise man could pass never so securely through the great roads of human life, yet he will meet perpetually with so many objects and occasions of compassion, grief, shame, anger, hatred, indignation, and all passions but envy, (for he will find nothing to deserve that,) that he had better strike into some private path ; nay, go so far, if he could, out of the common way, *Ut nec facta audiat Pelopidarum* ; that he might not so much as hear of the actions of the sons of ADAM.

*Quâ terra patet fera regnat Erynnis,  
In facinus jurâsse putes.*

One would think that all mankind had bound themselves by an oath to do all the wickedness they can ; that they had all (as the Scripture speaks) “sold themselves to sin :” the difference only is, that some are a little more crafty (and but a little, GOD knows!) in making the bargain. I thought, when I went first to dwell in the country, that without doubt I should there have met with the simplicity of the old poetical golden age : I thought to have found no inhabitants there, but such as the Shepherds of SIR PHILIP SYDNEY, in Arcadia ; and began to consider with

myself, which way I might recommend no less to posterity the happiness and innocence of the men of Chertsey : But to confess the truth, I perceived quickly, by infallible demonstrations, that I was still in Old England, and not in Arcadia ; that if I could not content myself with any thing less than exact fidelity in human conversation, I had almost as good go back and seek for it in the Court, or the Exchange, or Westminster-Hall. I ask then, whither shall we fly, or what shall we do? The world may so come in a man's way, that he cannot choose but salute it, he must take heed though not to go a whoring after it. If by any lawful vocation, or just necessity, men happen to be married to it, I can only give them ST. PAUL'S advice. "Brethren, the time is short : it remains, that they that have wives be as though they had none. But I would that all men were even as I myself."

In all cases they must be sure that they do *Mundum ducere*, and not *Mundo nubere*. They must retain the superiority and headship over it : happy are they who can get out of the sight of this deceitful beauty, that they may not be led so much as into temptation ; who have not only quitted the metropolis, but can abstain from ever seeing the next market-town of their country.

#### IV.

#### THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE, AND UNCERTAINTY OF RICHES.

IF you should see a man who was to cross from Dover to Calais, run about very busy and solicitous, and trouble himself many weeks before in making provisions for his voyage, would you commend him for a cautious and discreet person, or laugh at him for a timorous and impertinent coxcomb? A man who is excessive in his pains

and diligence, and who consumes the greatest part of his time in furnishing the remainder with all conveniences and even superfluities, is to angels and wise men no less ridiculous; he does as little consider the shortness of his passage, that he might proportion his cares accordingly. It is, alas! so narrow a strait betwixt the womb and the grave, that it might be called the *Pas de Vie*, as well as that the *Pas de Calais*. We are all Ἐφήμεροι, (as PINDAR calls us,) creatures of a day; and therefore our SAVIOUR bounds our desires to that little space; as if it were very probable that every day should be our last, we are taught to demand even bread for no longer a time. The sun ought not to set upon our covetousness, any more than upon our anger. But as to ALMIGHTY GOD, “a thousand years are as one day:” so in direct opposition, one day to a covetous man, is as a thousand years; *Tam brevi fortis jaculatur ævo multa*; so far he shoots beyond his butt: one would think he was of the opinion of the Millenaries, and hoped for so long a reign upon earth. The Patriarchs before the flood, who enjoyed almost such a life, made, we are sure, less stores for the maintaining of it; they who lived nine hundred years scarcely provided for a few days: we who live but a few days, provide at least for nine hundred years: what a strange alteration is this of human life and manners? And yet we see an imitation of it in every man’s particular experience; for we begin not the cares of life till it be half spent, and still increase them as that decreases. What is there among the actions of beasts so illogical and repugnant to reason? When they do any thing which seems to proceed from that which we call reason, we disdain to allow them that perfection, and attribute it only to a natural instinct? If we could but learn to “number our days,” (as we are taught to pray that we might,) we should adjust much better our other accounts: but whilst we never consider an end of them, it is no wonder if our cares for them be without end too. HORACE advises very wisely, and in excellent good words, *Spatio brevi spem longam reseces*; from a short life cut off

all hopes that grow too long. They must be pruned away like suckers that choke the mother-plant, and hinder it from bearing fruit. And in another place to the same sense, *Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam*; which SENECA does not mend when he says, *O quanta dementia est spes longas inchoantium!* But he gives an example there of an acquaintance of his named SENEPIO, who from a very mean beginning, by great industry, in turning about of money through all ways of gain, had attained to extraordinary riches, but died on a sudden, after having supped merrily, *In ipso actu benedentium rerum, in ipso procurrentis fortunæ impetu*, in the full course of his good fortune, when she had a high tide, a stiff gale, and all her sails on; upon which occasion he cries, out of VIRGIL,

*Inserere nunc Melibææ pyros, pone ordine vites.*

. . . . . Go MELIBÆUS, now,  
Go graft thy orchards, and thy vineyards plant:  
Behold the fruit!

For this SENEPIO I have the less compassion, because he was taken, as we say, in *ipso facto*, still labouring in the work of avarice; but the poor rich man in ST. LUKE, seems to have been satisfied at last: he confesses he had enough for many years, he bids his soul take its ease, and yet for all that, GOD says to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee;" and the things thou hast laid up, whom shall they belong to? Where shall we find the causes of this bitter reproach and terrible judgment? We may find, I think, two, and GOD perhaps saw more. First, That he did not intend true rest to his soul, but only to change the employments of it from avarice to luxury; his design is to eat, and to drink, and to be merry. Secondly, That he went on too long before he thought of resting; the fulness of his old barns had not sufficed him; he would stay until he was forced to build new ones; and GOD meted out to him the same measure:

Since he would have more riches than his life could contain, GOD destroyed his life, and gave the fruits of it to another.

Thus GOD takes away sometimes the man from his riches, and no less frequently riches from the man. What hope can there be of such a marriage, where both parties are so fickle and uncertain? By what bonds can such a couple be kept long together?

## I.

Why dost thou heap up wealth, which thou must quit,  
Or, what is worse, be left by it?  
Why dost thou load thyself, when thou'rt to fly,  
O man! ordain'd to die?

## II.

Why dost thou build up stately rooms on high,  
Thou who art under ground to lie?  
Thou sow'st and plantest, but no fruit must see,  
For death, alas! is sowing thee.

## III.

Ev'n aged men, as if they truly were  
Children again, for age prepare;  
Provisions for long travel they design,  
In the last point of their short line.

## IV.

Wisely the ant against poor winter hoards  
The stock which summer's wealth affords;  
In grasshoppers, that must in autumn die,  
How vain were such an industry?

## V.

Of power and honour the deceitful light  
Might half excuse our cheated sight,  
If it of life the whole small time would stay,  
And be our sun-shine all the day.

## VI.

Like lightning that, begot but in a cloud,  
 (Though shining bright, and speaking loud,)  
 Whilst it begins, concludes its violent race,  
 And where it gilds, it wounds the place.

## VII.

O scene of fortune, which dost fair appear,  
 Only to men that stand not near!  
 Proud poverty, that tinsel brav'ry wears!  
 And, like a rainbow, painted tears!

## VIII.

Be prudent, and the shore in prospect keep,  
 In a weak boat trust not the deep.  
 Plac'd beneath envy, above envying rise;  
 Pity great men, great things despise.

## IX.

The wise example of the heavenly lark,  
 Thy fellow-poet, COWLEY, mark;  
 Above the clouds let thy proud music sound.  
 Thy humble nest build on the ground.

## V.

## THE DANGER OF PROCRASTINATION.

## A LETTER TO MR. S— L.

I AM glad that you approve and applaud my design of withdrawing myself from all tumult and business of the world; and consecrating the little rest of my time to those studies to which Nature had inclined me, and from which Fortune has so long detained me. But nevertheless (you say, which, *But*, is, *Ærugo mera*; a rust which spoils the good metal it grows upon; but you say) you would advise



me not to precipitate that resolution, but to stay a while longer with patience and complaisance, until I had gotten such an estate as might afford me (according to the saying of that person whom you and I love very much, and would believe as soon as another man) *Cum dignitate otium*. This were excellent advice to JOSHUA, who could bid the sun stay too. But there is no fooling with life, when it is once turned beyond forty. The seeking of a fortune then, is but a desperate after-game: it is an hundred to one if a man fling two sixes, and recover all; especially if his hand be no luckier than mine. There is some help for all the defects of fortune, for if a man cannot attain to the length of his wishes, he may have his remedy by cutting of them shorter. EPICURUS writes a letter to IDOMENEAS, (who was then a very powerful, wealthy, and it seems bountiful person,) to recommend to him who had made so many men rich, one PYTHOCLES, a friend of his, who he desired might be made a rich man too: But I entreat you, that you would not do it just the same way as you have done to many less deserving persons, but in the most genteel manner of obliging him, which is not to add any thing to his estate, but to take something from his desires. The sum of this is, that for the uncertain hopes of some conveniences, we ought not to defer the execution of a work that is necessary, especially when the use of those things which we would stay for, may otherwise be supplied, but the loss of time never recovered: nay, farther yet, though we were sure to obtain all that we had a mind to, though we were sure of getting never so much by continuing the game, yet when the light of life is so near going out, and ought to be so precious, *Le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*,—The play is not worth the expense of the candle. After having been long tossed in a tempest, if our masts be standing, and we have still sail and tackling enough to carry us to our port, it is no matter for streamers and top-gallants: *Utere velis, totos pande sinus*. A gentleman in our late civil wars, when his quarters were beaten up by the enemy, was taken prisoner, and lost his life afterwards,

only by staying to put on a band, and adjust his periwig. He would escape like a person of quality, or not at all, and died the noble martyr of ceremony and gentility. I think your counsel of *festina lente* is as ill to a man who is flying from the world, as it would have been to that unfortunate well-bred gentleman, who was so cautious as not to fly undecently from his enemies; and therefore I prefer HORACE'S advice before yours.

. . . *Sapere aude, Incipe* . . .

Begin; the getting out of doors is the greatest part of the journey. VARRO teaches us that Latin proverb, *Portam itineri longissimam esse*: But to return to HORACE,

. . . . . *Sapere aude,  
Incipe; vivendi qui recte prorogat horam,  
Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis, ac ille  
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise;  
He who defers this work from day to day,  
Does on a river's bank expecting stay,  
Till the whole stream, which stopp'd him, should be gone.  
That runs, and, as it runs, for ever will run on.

CÆSAR, the man of expedition above all others, was so far from this folly, that whensoever in a journey he was to cross any river, he never went one foot out of his way for a bridge, or a ford, or a ferry, but flung himself into it immediately, and swam over; and this is the course we ought to imitate, if we meet with any stops in our way to happiness. Stay until the waters are low; stay until some boats come by to transport you; stay until a bridge be built for you: you had as good stay until the river be quite passed. PERSIUS (who, you use to say, you did not know whether he be a good poet or no, because you cannot understand him, and whom therefore, I say, I know to be not a good poet) has an odd expression of these procrastinators, which, methinks, is full of fancy:—

*Jam Cras Hesternum consumpsimus, Ecce aliud Cras  
Egerit hos annos.*

PERS. Satyr. 5.

Our yesterday's tomorrow now is gone,  
And still a new tomorrow does come on ;  
We by tomorrows draw up all our store,  
Till the exhausted well can yield no more.

MART. *Lib. v. Epigr. 59.*

Tomorrow you will live, you always cry :  
In what far country does this morrow lie,  
That 'tis so mighty long ere it arrive ?  
Beyond the Indies does this morrow live ?  
'Tis so far fetch'd this morrow, that I fear  
'Twill be both very old, and very dear.  
Tomorrow I will live, the fool does say ;  
Today itself's too late, the wise liv'd yesterday.

MART. *Lib. ii. Epigr. 90.*

Wonder not, Sir, (you who instruct the town  
In the true wisdom of the sacred gown,)  
That I make haste to live, and cannot hold  
Patiently out, till I grow rich and old.  
Life for delays and doubts no time does give,  
None ever yet made haste enough to live.  
Let him defer it, whose preposterous care  
Omits himself, and reaches to his heir :  
Who does his father's bounded stores despise,  
And whom his own too never can suffice.  
My humble thoughts no glittering roofs require,  
Or rooms that shine with aught but constant fire.  
I will content the av'rice of my sight,  
With the fair gildings of reflected light :  
Pleasures abroad, the sport of nature yields,  
Her living fountains, and her smiling fields :  
And then at home, what pleasure is't to see  
A little cleanly cheerful family ?  
Which if a chaste wife crown, no less in her,  
Than fortune, I the golden mean prefer.  
Too noble, nor too wise, she should not be ;  
No, nor too rich, too fair, too fond of me.  
Thus let my life slide silently away,  
With sleep all night, and quiet all the day.

## EPITAPHIUM VIVI AUCTORIS.

*Hic, O Viator, sub lare parvulo,  
Couteius Hic est conditus, Hic jacet  
Defunctus humani laboris  
Sorte, supervacuaque vita,  
Non indecora pauperie nitens,  
Et non inertis nobilis otio,  
Vanoque dilectis popello  
Divitiis animosus hostis.  
Possis ut illum dicere mortuum,  
En terra jam nunc quantula sufficit?  
Exempta sit curis, viator,  
Terra sit illa levis, precare.  
Hic sparge flores, sparge breves rosas,  
Nam vita gaudet mortua floribus,  
Herbisque odoratis corona  
Vatis adhuc cinerem calentem.*





AN

EXTRACT

FROM

DR. GOODMAN'S

WINTER EVENING CONFERENCE.



IN THREE PARTS.





## THE CHARACTER

OF THE

PERSONS IN THE FOLLOWING CONFERENCES.

---

**SEBASTIAN**; a learned and pious gentleman, who takes all advantages of engaging those he converses with, in sobriety, and a sense of religion.

**PHILANDER**; a genteel and ingenious person, but too much addicted to the lightnesses of the age, until reclaimed by the conversation of **SEBASTIAN**.

**BIOPHILUS**; a sceptical person, who had no settled belief of any thing; but especially was averse to the great doctrines of Christianity, until at length awakened by the discreet reasoning of **SEBASTIAN**, and the affectionate discourses of **PHILANDER**, he begins to deliberate of what before he despised.





A

WINTER EVENING CONFERENCE,

AT

PHILANDER'S HOUSE.

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PART I.

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THE ARGUMENT OF THE FIRST CONFERENCE.

SEBASTIAN visiting his neighbour PHILANDER, after a little time spent in civil salutation, is quickly pressed by him to the too usual entertainment of liberal drinking; which SEBASTIAN at first modestly declines; but afterwards, more directly shows the folly and unmanliness of it. He is then invited to gaming; which he also excusing himself from, and giving his reasons against, PHILANDER complains of the difficulty of spending time without such diversions. Whereupon SEBASTIAN represents to him sundry entertainments of time, both more delightful and more profitable, amongst which, that of friendly and ingenious intercourse: And from thence, they are led on to debate about Religious Conference: the usefulness, easiness, prudence, and gentility, of which are largely demonstrated: of which PHILANDER being convinced, inquires the way of entering into it, of continuing and managing of it. In which being instructed by SEBASTIAN, he resolves to put it in practice.

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SEBASTIAN. Good evening to you, PHILANDER. I am glad to find you in health, and I hope all your family is so too.

PHILANDER. I humbly thank you, Sir, we are all well; (God be praised;) and the better to see you here: for I hope you come with intentions to give us your good company this long evening.

SEBAST. If that will do you any pleasure, I am at your

service : for to deal plainly, I came with the resolution to spend an hour or two with you ; provided it be not unreasonable for your occasions, nor intrench upon any business of your family.

PHIL. Business, Sir ! At this time of the year we are even weary with rest, and tired with having nothing to do.

SEBAST. It is a time of leisure, I confess ; the earth rests, and so do we ; yet, I thank God, my time never lies upon my hands, for I can always find something or other to employ myself in. When the fields lie dead, and admit of no husbandry, I then can cultivate the little garden of my own soul ; and when there is no recreation abroad, I have a company of honest old fellows in leathern coats, which find me divertisement at home.

PHIL. I know the company you mean, though I confess I have not much acquaintance with them ; but do you not find it a melancholy thing to converse with the dead ?

SEBAST. Why should you say they are dead ? No, they are immortal ; they cannot die ; they are all soul ; reason without passion, and eloquence without noise or clamour. Indeed, they do not eat and drink, by which only argument some men prove themselves to be alive, as CYRUS proved the divinity of his god Bel. But these are kept without cost, and yet retain the same countenance, and are always cheerful and diverting. Besides, they have this peculiar quality, that a man may have their company, or lay them aside at pleasure, without offence. Notwithstanding, I must needs acknowledge, I prefer the company of a good neighbour before them ; and particularly am well satisfied, that I cannot spend this evening better than in your conversation.

PHIL. You doubly oblige me, SEBASTIAN, first in your great condescension to make me this kind visit, and then in forsaking so good company for mine.

SEBAST. Your great courtesy, PHILANDER, interprets that to be an obligation upon yourself, which is but self-love in me ; for truly I am sensible that so great a part of the comfort of life depends upon a man's good correspond-

ence with those that are near about him, that I think I cannot love myself, unless I love my neighbour also. And now, Sir, if you please, let us upon this occasion improve our neighbourhood to a more intimate friendship; so that you and I, who have hitherto lived peaceably and in-offensively by each other, may henceforth become useful to one another.

PHIL. You talk of self-love; but I shall be so far from it, that I must hate myself, and that deservedly too, if I lay not hold of so advantageous a proposal.

SEBAST. No compliments, I beseech you; that will spoil our design, and continue us strangers to each other.

PHIL. If I were used to compliment, yet I should be ashamed to make so superficial a return to an overture of so much kindness and reality; but I am plain and hearty, and I heartily embrace both yourself and your motion.

Come, Sir, what will you drink?

SEBAST. All in good time, Sir.

PHIL. Nay, never in better time; now is the season of drinking; we must imitate the plants, and now suck in sap to serve us all the year after. If you will flourish in the spring, you must take in good juices in the winter.

SEBAST. You seem, PHILANDER, to dream of a dry summer; however, I will pledge you, for I am sure the winter is cold.

PHIL. Well, Sir, here is what will abate the edge of the weather, be it as sharp as it can. This drink will make the evenings warm, and the nights short, in spite of the season. But then you must take the full dose. Come, fear it not; this will breed good blood, cure melancholy, and is the only cement of good neighbourhood.

SEBAST. Why then I hope our friendship will be lasting, for the cement (as you call it) is strong.

PHIL. You are pleasant, SEBASTIAN. But now you and I are together, and under the rose too, (as they say,) why should not we drink somewhat briskly? We shall

know one another, and love one another the better ever after. For, let me tell you, this will open our hearts, and turn our very insides outward.

SEBAST. That trick, PHILANDER, I confess I have seen played, but I thought it a very unseemly one.

PHIL. I doubt you mistake me; I mean only, that a liberal glass will take off all reservedness.

SEBAST. I understand you; but with your pardon, I must needs tell you, that I have never been able to observe the glass you speak of to be so exact a mirror of minds, but as often to disfigure and disguise men, as truly to represent them. Have you not found some men, who upon an infusion in strong liquor, have seemed for the present to be totally dissolved into kindness and good nature; and yet as soon as ever the drink is squeezed out of these sponges, they become again as dry, as hard, and as rough as a pumice. Others you shall observe to hector in their drink, as if they were of the most redoubted courage, whose spirits nevertheless evaporating with their wine, they prove as tame errant cowards as any in nature. Perhaps also you may have taken notice of a kind of soakers, who commonly relent when they are well moistened, as if they shrunk in the wetting; and will at such times seem to be very religious; and yet for all they continue as sottish as ever, as impenitent as a weeping wall. Contrariwise, there are some men, who, in the general habit of their lives, appear to be very discreet and ingenious persons; yet, if contrary to their custom, they have the misfortune to be surprised with drink, they become as dull as dormice, as flat and insipid as pompions.

I cannot think, therefore, that this drink-ordeal is so infallible a test of men's tempers as you imagine; or if it were, yet there is no need of it between you and me. We can candidly and sincerely lay open our bosoms to each other, without having a confession of our sentiments forced from us by this new-fashioned Dutch torture.

PHIL. I am not for scandalous and debauched drinking,

but in a civil way between friends, to make our spirits light, and our hearts cheerful.

**SEBAST.** And I am not of that morose humour, to condemn all cheerfulness; neither do I take upon me to prescribe to every man his just dose, or think a man must divide by a hair, or be intemperate. Yet, on the other side, I am persuaded that a man may love his house, though he doth not ride upon the ridge of it; and can by no means be of their opinion, who fancy there is no freedom but in a debauch, no sincerity without a surfeit, or no cheerfulness whilst men are in their right wits: and I look upon the very conceit of this as reproachful both to God and man; but the practice of it, I am sure, is the bane of all manly conversation.

**PHIL.** I have known some men oppose one vice with another as bad, or worse; and who, whilst they railed at drinking, have only made apologies for ill nature; but you, **SEBASTIAN**, that have so much good nature yourself, will, I presume, make some allowances to complaisance in others.

**SEBAST.** Far be it from me to undervalue good-nature, which I have in so great esteem, that I scarcely think any thing is good without it. It is the very air of a good mind, the sign of a large and generous soul, and the peculiar soil on which virtue prospers. And as for that genuine fruit of it, complaisance, I take it (if it be rightly understood) to be that which above all things renders a man both amiable and useful in the world; but the mischief is, (as it generally happens to all excellent things,) there is a counterfeit, which, assuming the name, passes current for it in the world, by which men become impotent, and incapable of withstanding any importunities, be they never so unreasonable, or resisting any temptations, be they never so dangerous; but as if they were crippled in their powers, or crazed in their minds, are wholly governed by example, and sneakingly conform themselves to other men's humours and vices; and, in a word, become every man's fool that hath the confidence to impose upon them. Now this is so far from that lovely masculine

temper of true complaisance, that it is indeed no better than a childish bashfulness, a silly softness of mind, which makes a man first the slave and property, and then the scorn of his company. Wherefore it is the part of a good-natured man, neither so rigidly to insist upon the punctilios of his liberty or property, as to refuse a glass recommended to him by civility; nor yet, on the other side, to be either hectorred or wheedled out of his christian name, (as we say,) and sheepishly submit himself to be taxed in his drink, or other indifferent things, at other men's pleasure. And if he shall fall into the company of those who shall assume to themselves such an arbitrary power as to assess him at their own rate, and prescribe their measures to him, I do not doubt but that with a salvo both to good-nature and civility, he may and ought so far to assert his own dominion over himself, as with a generous disdain to reject the imposition, and look upon the imposers as equally tyrannical and impertinent with those who would prescribe to me to eat their proportions of meat, or to wear my clothes just of their size.

PHIL. O Sir, your discourse is brave and wise, but I doubt it is not practicable. You cannot certainly but be sensible how difficult a thing it is for modesty and good-nature to oppose the prevailing humour of the age, which, in plain truth, is such, that now-a-days a man looks very oddly that keeps any strict measures of drinking.

SEBAST. I am afraid it is too true which you say: I confess to you, it is a matter of regret and disdain to me to observe skill in good liquors ambitiously pretended to, as if they were a considerable point of knowledge; and good drinking looked upon as so important an affair, that that time seems to be lost, in which the glass goes not round, and the cup and bottle seem to be the hour-glass, or the only measure of time. And this I the more wonder at, because the air, the climate, and constitutions of men's bodies are not changed, and the laws of temperance are the same they were wont to be: I would therefore fain know, what hath brought this tippling humour into fashion.

· PHIL. It is the observation of wise men, that generally the customs of people were taken up at first, upon the account of some natural necessity or defect; as we see generally art supplies and perfects nature. Now you know we live in a cold climate, and consequently must needs have dull phlegmatic bodies, the influence of which upon our minds is easily discernible; so that it should seem, drinking is more necessary to us, than to most other people, if it were but to make us sprightly and conversable.

SEBAST. NOW, PHILANDER, you have mended the matter finely: to avoid my censure of the good fellows, you have censured the whole nation as a generation of dull sots, and represented your countrymen as a sort of people newly fashioned out of clay, that have no soul at all, until it is extracted out of the spirit of wine. But in the mean time, I wonder what became of all our sober ancestors, and particularly of the dry race of QUEEN ELIZABETH-men, as they are called. I cannot find but they had as much soul and spirit as the present generation, (however they came by it,) though they never made alembicks of themselves. But why do you smile, PHILANDER?

PHIL. Even at myself. In plain truth, I am such a spot of earth, as will bear nothing unless it be well watered; and to countenance myself in this condition, though I cannot pretend to learning, yet I remember I have heard, that the gravest Philosophers did use to water their plants, (as we say,) and sometimes philosophized over a glass of wine.

SEBAST. And why not over a glass of wine, as well as by a fire-side? Provided a man take care, that as by the one he does not burn his shins, so by the other he doth not over-heat his head; or, to follow your metaphor, provided a man only water the soil, and do not drown it.

PHIL. But I have heard some say, they have always found their reason to be strongest, when their spirits were most exalted.



SEBAST. But sure they did not mean that their reason was strongest, when the wine was too strong for them? If they did, then either their reason was very small at the best, and nothing so strong as their drink, or else we are quite mistaken in the names of things; and so in plain English, drunkenness is sobriety, and sobriety drunkenness: for who can imagine that that which clouds the head, should enlighten the mind; and that which wildly agitates the spirits, should strengthen the understanding; or that a coherent thread of discourse should be spun by a shattered vertiginous brain?

But if I should grant, that men well whetted with wine (as they love to speak) are very sharp and piquant, very jocose, and ready at a repartee; yet besides that, this edge is so thin, and razor-like, that it will serve to no manly purposes; it is also very dangerous, since at that time a wise man hath it not in keeping.

PHIL. Well, but one thing I am sure you will grant, *vis.*, that wine suppresses cares and melancholy; and this, I suppose, sufficiently commends the liberal use of it.

SEBAST. That which you now say is undeniably true; but yet I know not how it comes to pass, that this remedy is seldom made use of by those to whom it was peculiarly prescribed: I mean, the melancholy and dejected have ordinarily the least share of it. It is commonly taken by the prosperous, the sanguine, and debonair, and such as have least need of it; and these frequently have it in such large proportions, that it makes them not only forget their sorrows, if they had any, but themselves and their business too: so that, upon the whole matter, I see no tolerable account can be given of the way of drinking now in fashion; for it appears to be taken up upon no necessity; it is recommended by no real advantage, either to the body or mind; and therefore must owe its rise to no better causes than dulness or idleness; a silly obsequiousness to other men's humours, or epicurism and wantonness of our own inclinations. And for the habit of it, it is no better than a lewd artifice to avoid thinking; a way

for a man to get shut of himself, and of all sober considerations.

Shall I need after all this, to represent the sin committed against **GOD ALMIGHTY**, by this vain custom, in the breach of his laws, deforming his image, and quenching his **SPIRIT**; or the injury it doeth to human society, in the riotous and profuse expense of so comfortable a cordial; or shall I but reckon up the mischiefs a man hereby incurs to his own person, the danger of his health, the damage to his fortune, the——

**PHIL.** O no more, no more, good **SEBASTIAN**. You have silenced, you have vanquished me. I am not able to resist the evidence of truth. You have quite marred a good fellow, and spoiled my drinking.

But how then shall I treat you? Come, you are for serious things; what say you to a game at tables? Methinks that is both a grave and a pleasant entertainment of the time.

**SEBAST.** Truly, Sir, I am so unskilful at that and most other games, that I should rather give you trouble than diversion at it. But what need you be solicitous for my entertainment? It is your company only which I desire: and methinks it looks as if friends were weary one of the other, when they fall to gaming.

**PHIL.** But I should think a man of your temper might have a fancy for this game, because it seems to be a pretty emblem of the world.

**SEBAST.** How, I pray you, Sir?

**PHIL.** Why, in the first place, the casual agitation of the dice in the box, which unaccountably produceth such or such a lot, seems to me to represent the disposal of that invisible Hand which orders the fortunes of men. And then the dextrous management of that lot or cast resembles the use and efficacy of prudence and industry in the conduct of a man's own fortunes.

**SEBAST.** I perceive, **PHILANDER**, that you play like a philosopher, as well as a gamester; but, in my opinion, you have forgotten the main resemblance of all; which is,

That the clatter and noise in tossing and tumbling the dice and table-men up and down, backward and forward, lively describes the hurry and tumult of this world, where one man goes up, and another tumbles down ; one is dignified and preferred, another is degraded ; that man reigns and triumphs, this man frets and vexes ; the one laughs, the other repines ; and all the rest tug and scuffle to make their advantage of one another. Let this, if you please, be added to the moral of your game. But when all is done, I must tell you, for my part, I am not so much taken with the original, as to be fond of the type or effigies. I mean, I am not so in love with the world, as to take any great delight in seeing it brought upon the stage, and acted over again ; but had much rather retreat from it when I can, and give myself the contentment of repose, and quiet thoughts.

PHIL. However, I hope you are not offended at my mention of that game. Do you think it unlawful to use any diversion ?

SEBAST. No, dear PHILANDER ; I am sensible that whilst men dwell in bodies, it is fit they not only keep them up in necessary reparation by meat and drink, but also make them lightsome and cheerful, otherwise the mind will have but an uncomfortable tenancy. I would therefore as soon universally forbid all physic, as all kinds of exercise and diversion ; and indeed rather of the two, for I think the latter may, in a great measure, save the trouble of the former ; but that will do little or no good without this.

But to deal freely with you : I cannot very much commend these kinds of sports ; for indeed I scarce think them sports, they are rather a counterfeit kind of business, and weary one's head as much as real study and business of importance ; so that in the use of them a man only puts a cheat upon himself, and tickles himself to death : for by applying himself for delight to these busy and thoughtful games, he becomes like a candle lighted at both ends, and must needs be quickly wasted away between jest and

earnest, when both his cares and his delight prey upon him.

Besides, I observe that diversions of this nature having so much of chance and surprise in them, generally too much raise the passions of men, which it were fitter by all arts and endeavours to charm down and suppress. For, to say nothing of the usual accidents of common gaming houses, which (as I have heard from those that knew too well) are the most lively pictures of hell upon earth; I have seen sad examples of extravagance in the more modest and private, but over-eager pursuits of these recreations; insomuch that sometimes a well-tempered person hath quite lost all command of himself at them: so that you might see his eyes fiery, his colour inflamed, his hands tremble, his breath to be short, his accents of speech fierce and violent; by all which, and abundantly more ill-favoured symptoms, you might conclude his heart hot, and his thoughts solicitous; and indeed the whole man, body and soul, to be in an agony. Now will you call this a recreation, or a rack and torture rather? A rack certainly, which makes a man seek to conceal, and heightens those passions which every good man endeavours to subdue.

To which we add, that gaming (and especially at such games as we are speaking of) doth insensibly steal away too much of our time from better business, and tempts us to be prodigals and bankrupts of that which no good fortune can ever redeem or repair. And this is so notoriously true, that there is hardly any man who sets himself down to these pastimes, (as they are called,) that can break off and recall himself when he designed so to do. Forasmuch as either by the too great intention of his mind, he forgets himself; or the anger stirred up by his misfortunes, and the indignation to go off baffled, suffers him not to think of any thing but reparation of his losses, or the hopes he is fed withal trowls him on, so that business, health, family, friends, and even the worship of God itself, are all superseded and neglected for the sake of this paltry game.

All which considered, I am really afraid there is more

of the Devil in it than we are ordinarily aware of, and that it is a temptation of his to engage us in that, where he that wins most is sure to lose that which is infinitely of more value. Therefore, upon the whole matter, I think it much safer to keep out of the lists than to engage, where, besides the greatness of the stake, a man cannot bring himself off again without so great difficulty.

PHIL. I thank you heartily for the freedom you have used with me. We good-natured men, (as the world flatters us, and we love to be styled,) considering little or nothing ourselves, and having seldom the happiness of discreet and faithful friends, that will have so much concern for us as to admonish us of our imprudence and our dangers, as if we were mere machines, move just as other men move and prompt us, and so drink, play, and do a thousand follies for companion-sake, and under the countenance of one another's example. God forgive me! I have too often been an instance of that which you now intimated: I therefore again and again thank you for your advice, and hope I shall remember, as long as I live, what you have said.

But that you may work a perfect cure upon me, I will be so true to myself as to acquaint you faithfully with what I apprehend to be the cause of this epidemical distemper. I find the common temptation both to drinking and gaming is the unskilfulness of such men as myself to employ our time without such kind of diversions, especially at this season of the year, when the dark and long evenings, foul ways, and sharp weather, drive us into clubs and combinations. If, therefore, you will deal freely with me herein, and by your prudence help me over this difficulty, you will do an act worthy of yourself, and of that kindness which brought you hither.

SEBAST. There is nothing within my power which you may not command me in. Nor is there any thing wherein I had rather serve you (if I could) than in a business of this nature. But all I can do, and as I think all that is needful in this case, is, to desire you to consider it again,

and then I hope you will find the difficulty not so insuperable as you imagine. It is very true, idleness is more painful than hard labour, and nothing is more wearisome than having nothing to do ; besides, as a rich soil will be sure to bring forth weeds if it be not sown with more profitable seed ; so the active spirits in man will be sure to prompt him to evil, if they be not employed in doing good.

But this difficulty which you represent, generally presses young men only. These indeed having more sail than ballast ;—I mean, having a mighty vigour and abundance of spirits, but not their minds furnished with a sufficient stock of knowledge and experience to govern and employ those active spirits upon ;—no wonder if such persons, in defect of real business, greedily catch at those shadows and resemblances of it. But what is all this to men that are entered into real business, and have concerns under their hand, and the luxuriancy of whose spirits is taken off by cares and experience, and especially who cannot (without unpardonable stupidity) but be sensible how daily the time and age of man wear away ?

PHIL. Make what reflections upon it you please, however the matter of fact is certainly true in the general, that a gentleman's time is his burthen, (whether he be young or old,) and the want of employment for it is his great temptation to several extravagances.

SEBAST. I believe it to be as you say : but really, it is very strange it should be so : and I am sure it cannot be verified without very ungrateful returns to the Divine bounty, which hath made so ample provisions for the delight and contentment of such persons far above the rate of others. It is true, they have less bodily labour, and no drudgery to exhaust their time and spirits upon ; (and that methinks should be no grievance ;) but then the prudent management of a plentiful fortune (if things be rightly considered) doth not take up much less time than the poor man's labour for the necessities of life. For what with securing the patrimony, and husbanding the revenue,

what with letting and setting his lands, and building and repairing his houses; what with planting walks; and beautifying his gardens; what with accommodating himself according to his quality, and hospitably treating his friends and neighbours according to theirs; and, to say no more, what with keeping accounts of all this, and governing a numerous and well-fed family; I am of opinion, that the gentleman hath indeed the more pleasant, but a no less busy employment of his time than other men; insomuch, that I cannot but suspect that he must be deficient in some principal branch of good husbandry, and defraud his business, that surfeits on leisure.

Moreover, as divine bounty hath exempted such men from the common sweat and anxieties of life, by those large patrimonies provided to their hands, so the same Divine Majesty hath thereby obliged them, and it is expected from them by the world, that they be more publicly serviceable to their Prince and country, in Magistracy, in making peace, and several ways assisting government, and promoting the ends of human society; upon which account, as it is very unjust that others should envy and malign them for their enjoyments, so it is apparent also, that they are so far from having less to do than their inferiors, that, on the contrary, the gentleman's life seems to be far the busier of the two.

Besides all this, gentlemen having usually more ingenious education, and consequently are presumed to have more exercised and improved minds, may therefore be able to employ themselves, if all other business ceased, and fill up the vacant spaces of their time with such delightful and profitable entertainment as others are incapable of.

PHIL. That last point is the thing I would fain learn, namely, how to fill up the vacant spaces of life, (as you call it,) so as to leave no room for temptation to debauchery.

SEBAST. I am heartily glad to see you of that mind; we will then, if you please, examine this matter between us, and by that time we have compared the period of our

lives with the variety of business that occurs in it, I am out of all doubt you will be satisfied, that we have neither so much time as to be a burthen to us ; nor if it were more than it is, should we be at a loss for the bestowing of it : and this, without resorting to any of the extravagances afore-mentioned.

Let us then, in the first place, suppose that the lives of men at this age of the world, and particularly in this climate and country, amount commonly to seventy years ; for though it is possible here and there one outlives that term, yet it is pretty evident, by the most probable calculations, that there is not above one man in thirty, or thereabouts, who arrives at that age : However, I say, let us at present suppose that to be the common standard.

Now to discover what an inconsiderable duration this is, let us but ask the opinion of those that have arrived at it, and they will assuredly tell us, that all the whole term, when it is past, seems to be a very short stage, and quickly over ; or, if we had rather trust to our own experience, let us look back upon twenty or thirty years of our own lives, which though it bear a very great proportion towards the lease of our whole lives, yet when it is over, seems to be but a little while to us ; as if time, as it is usually pictured, fled upon wings—

PHIL. I pray pardon me, if I a little interrupt the thread of your discourse ; you may easily continue it again. That which I would say is this : I can verify the truth of what you were supposing, by my own experience, and have often wondered what should be the reason of it, that men have quite different apprehensions of time past, and time to come. When we look back (as you well observe) upon twenty or thirty years which are gone, they seem but a trice to us ; but if we look forward, and fore-think so many years to come, we are apt to fancy we have an ocean before us, and such a vast prospect that we can see no end of it. Now I ask your opinion, what it is that puts such a fallacy upon us, for other it cannot be : Forasmuch as the same term of years, whether it be



reckoned forward or backward, past or to come, must needs really be of the same length and duration ?

SEBAST. It is so as you say. But to give you an account of the reason of that different estimate, I can say but these two things, *viz.*, Either as it is in the nature of hope to flatter us, so all things seem bigger at a distance, and whilst they are in expectation only, than what we find them to be in fruition. Or else it must be, that what is past of our lives we have fresh and lively remarks upon, by remembering the notable passages that have fallen out within that compass, by which means those equally remote portions of time are brought nearer to our eye.

But on the contrary, in the time which is to come, we can have no remarks upon it : because, not knowing what shall happen, we have nothing to fix our thoughts upon ; and so it looks like a vast ocean to us. For you know that things which are in confusion, seem to be more than the same things when they are digested into just order and method. And in travelling, you observe that twenty or thirty miles, which we are well acquainted with, and have frequently traced, seem short and inconsiderable ; but the same length of journey in an unknown way, seems very tedious to us. Thus, I think, it is in the case you have propounded ; but now, if you please, let us pass on where we were going.

I say, then, suppose the term of our lives be about seventy years ; yet, in the first place, we must subduct from this sum a very considerable part, as taken up in childhood and youth, and which slips away we know not how, so as to escape our observation, being wholly spent in folly and impertinency, but certainly lost to all manly purposes : To which if you add the infirmities of old age, which, though it do not equally in all men, yet always more or less renders some part of our time useless ; you will think it no unreasonable *postulatum*, if I suppose, that both together take up a third part of the whole.

In the next place, let us consider how great a proportion is taken up in sleep, in eating and drinking, in dressing

and undressing, in trimming and adorning, and, to be short, in the mere necessity of the body. I have read of a brave Saxon Prince of our country, who allowed only eight hours in the day, or one third part of his time, to these uses; but I doubt few men follow his example: And if we take measures from common experience, we shall find, that these meaner offices take up near, if not altogether, half the time of most persons. And so another third of the whole is gone, and only one poor third remaining for all other occasions.

Then again, out of that remainder, a very great share will be challenged by necessary business, the affairs of our estate or calling, and the concerns of our families; and these occasions are so importunate, that they will not be denied without culpable ill husbandry, nor gratified without a large proportion of the aforesaid remainder.

Moreover, whether we will or no, another part will be ravished from us by sickness and physic, in visiting and being visited, in journeys and news, and a thousand impertinencies; so that he must be a very good and wary husband, that suffers not great expenses this way.

And after all this, here is nothing for reading and study, for meditation, and the improvement of our own minds; nay, not for religion and devotion towards God, and the unspeakable concerns of another world, which in all reason may most justly put in for their shares.

PHIL. All this is very true; but what do you infer from this account?

SEBAST. I dare trust your judgment to make inferences from the premises: For, in the first place, I know you cannot fail to observe, that the lightest matters of our life have the greatest share of our time spent in them. Folly and infirmity, infancy and dotage, take up the greatest room of all: Then worldly business and pleasure exhaust the most of that which is left, and the mind, and noblest interests, have least of all left for them.

And then, secondly, you cannot but note, with admiration, how very little share God hath even from the best of

men; and you cannot but adore his goodness, which rewards with eternal life that little time in which men work in his vineyard. But that which I aim at in this calculation is, to demonstrate to you, that there is a great deal more reason that men should rather redeem time from lesser occasions, than lavish it in impertinencies; that so our weightier concerns may have the more tolerable allowances: and to be sure he must be a very soft and feeble man that, after all these ends are served, can complain, that time lies upon his hands; which was the thing to be proved.

PHIL. I am now amazed at my own stupidity, that could put such a case to you. What vain fools are we that complain of plenty, when we are rather straitened and in want? What silly prodigals are we, that are so far from sparing betimes, that we are not so much as frugal, when all these claims and demands come in so thick upon us? I have often heard it said, that by keeping a strict account of incomes and expenses, a man might easily preserve an estate from dilapidation; but now I perceive, that for the want of a little of your arithmetic to number our days, we run out our lease of life before we are aware; and fancying we have enough to squander away upon every trifle, we have ordinarily little or nothing left to defray the most weighty occasions.

And, with your pardon, let me tell you, I think now I have found where the shoe pinches. It is not (I perceive now) a surplusage of time which tempts us to seek those diversions, but the mere vanity of our mind, which hath a fondness for them; and then custom and example have made them so natural to us, that we think the time long we are at them. Not that we have much to spare; God knows, we have little enough; but because we think much of all that is otherwise employed. And this, I doubt, is the true reason why we are impatient of long prayers, and offended with a long sermon; which whoso observes, would perhaps charitably suppose, that the urgency of business would not permit us to attend them; but we

utterly deprive ourselves of the pretence, when we complain that time lies upon our hands. To speak truth therefore, we can hardly spare time for **God**, because we love him too little : But we have abundance of spare time for our idle diversions, because we love them too much.

**SEBAST.** You have hit the very mark ; but let us go on, and suppose, that our spare time were more than it is, or possibly can be, yet it will be no hard matter to find out more pleasant, as well as more innocent entertainments of it, than those now in request.

For, in the first place, there are some employments every whit as delightful ; such as, in particular, planting and gardening, in which a man may not only have the pleasure to contemplate the admirable beauty and variety of the works of **God**, but by improving the nature of plants, by altering the species, by mixture and composition of several beauties and perfections into one, by deducing one out of another, exalting one by another, and, in a word, by giving being and continuance to several things, he becomes a kind of creator himself, if I may use such an expression. This kind of business ministers so many, and so ravishing delights, that I remember **CATO** preferred it before all the pleasure of youth, and thought the entertainment of his elder, a good exchange for the voluptuousness of younger years. Nay, **EPICURUS** himself placed a good part of his felicity in the delights of his garden. And, above all, I am certain that **God** who knew best what satisfactions were to be found within the whole sphere of his creation, and was not niggardly towards men, made choice of this for the entertainment of our first parents in their state of innocency, and before their folly and sin had damned them to care and toil, and the sweat of their brows.

Again, there are some exercises both of body and mind, which are very ingenious as well as divertive ; such as singing, painting, and the like : and they are so far from debauching the mind, or raising the passions, that they compose the temper, even to admiration.

Besides all these, there are offices of humanity and charity, which afford a man unspeakable delight : Such as comforting a friend or neighbour in his affliction, or assisting and counselling him in his difficulties ; promoting peace, and making an end of controversies ; relieving a poor man in his hunger. In all which, besides the satisfaction a man hath in his own mind, he, as it were by reflection, participates of the pleasure those persons find by his good offices towards them : For, to say nothing of any of the other, what a refreshment is it to our own bowels, to observe the appetite with which a poor hungry man feeds upon that which you supply him with. And it will do a man's heart good to take notice of the strange change wrought in such a person by a bountiful entertainment ; his countenance more cheerful, his spirits brisk, his heart light, his whole temper sweet and ingenious. All which, who can be accessory to, without a kind of virtuous epicurism.

All these which I have named are sincere and manly pleasures, without noise, and without danger ; which neither raise a man's passions, nor drown his reason : They are neither so fine and spiritual, that the body can have no participation of them ; nor so gross, that the mind should be ashamed of them. And in some or other of these every man that pleases may spend his vacant hours with satisfaction.

But let me now go a little higher ; and what if we take in somewhat of the other world to sweeten the present life ? What think you, after all, of prayer to God, and reading the Scripture ? May not a man bestow some of his time in these with as much pleasure as devotion, and so (to allude to modern philosophy) fill up the void spaces of his life with celestial matter ?

As for the former of them, prayer, I remember you well observed, that several of those men who complain as if they were over-burthened with time, yet love to make as short work with this as they can ; wherein they betray either some measure of atheism in their hearts, or a great

deal of sensuality in their affections : and I cannot tell whether they more contradict themselves, or discover their shameful ignorance of the noblest pleasures of life. For besides that it is highly agreeable to the best reason of a man, that he should daily pay his homage to his greatest Benefactor : Prayer is the known way to obtain the Divine blessing, upon which all the pleasure and comfort of our lives depend.

Yea, and it is the very pulse of the soul, which keeps the spirits florid and vital ; it answers to the motion of the lungs in the body, and exhales those melancholy vapours that would suffocate our hearts. By it we put ourselves under the Divine protection, and our spirits are heightened and fortified by the patronage of Him who can secure us against all assaults and dangers whatsoever. When we have commended ourselves to the Divine Providence by prayer, our hearts are at rest ; we are secure sleeping and waking ; we are never alone, but have always one to second us ; whatever the success of our endeavours be, our minds are quieted ; if things answer our wishes, we have a double satisfaction, that God favours us, as well as that our labours are successful ; if things miscarry, we impute no folly nor omission to ourselves ; we have done all that was fit for us to do, but it pleased Divine wisdom to disappoint us. Besides, the frequent approach of the Divine Majesty, puts a gravity upon a man's countenance, checks and keeps down all exorbitancy of passions, begets an ingenuous modesty, and makes men as well ashamed as afraid to do an unworthy action.

To all which, add, that by the advantage of our prayers, we are enabled to become a public blessing, and every private man a benefactor to the whole world ; than which, what can be either greater in itself, or more acceptable to a great and generous mind ? Consequently, what can a brave and public spirited man employ his time in with more delight, than in that which (whatsoever his external condition be) will make him a blessing, not only to his friends and neighbourhood, but to the country and times

he lives in; that even Kings and Princes are really beholden to him? Nor is it necessary that much time be taken up herein, to serve all these great ends; nor much less is it my intention to commend affectedly long prayers. A little time and a great deal of heartiness best do the business of religion; and that little, so employed, will make all the rest pass away the more sweetly and comfortably.

And then for reading and meditating upon the Holy Scriptures, the Psalmist hath told us, that the good man's "delight is in the law of God, and" that "therein he meditates day and night:" and surely any man may be able to entertain a few moments in it. If curiosity sway with us, there are as admirable things in the Holy Scriptures as the mind of man can desire. If we affect history, we have there the most ancient and faithful monuments in the world; those, without which all mankind had continued in their nonage and childhood to this day, as being so far from able to give an account of the beginning of the world, and original of things, that they could not have looked backward many ages, but they would have been utterly bewildered in mists and fables, as absurd as the wildest fictions of poets. Besides, without this record, all the wonderful methods of Divine Providence (which are the comfort of the present age, and the obligation to virtue, and foundation of piety and religion) had been buried in oblivion.

If we seek after knowledge, either natural, moral, or prudential, where is there such another treasury of it to be found as this, where we have not only the relations and observations of the wisest men in all ages past, but the discoveries of the Divine Majesty, the depths of Infinite Wisdom, (that know the true reason of things,) laid open.

If we are pleased with this foreknowledge of things to come, (as what man of soul can choose but desire to see beyond the curtain,) then all the presages, prognostics, and divinations, all the most rational inductions of the wisest men, are but silly surmises and idle dreams to the predictions of the holy Prophets, which give us light to

the world's end, and a view of another world; and have both assured their own credit, and warranted our belief of what is yet to come, by the well known accomplishment of their former predictions.

If we would approve ourselves in virtue, what surer rule can we have than the express declaration of **God** himself? Who can prescribe to Him what shall please Him, or prescribe to us better than He that made us, and knows what is fit for us to do? And what more full, plain, compendious, and higher institution of religion can there be than the **Holy Scripture**?

This brings **God** near to us, and us near to him: here you know his mind, you see his nature, and hear him speak; here you may stand as it were upon an isthmus or promontory, and take a view of both worlds: this is the light of our eyes, the rule of our faith, the law of our conscience, and the foundation of all our hopes. All this together, sure, cannot choose but make the reading the **Scripture** become a very serious and yet a very delightful employment. And now, upon the whole matter, what think you, may not a gentleman entertain himself and his time, without the relief of drinking and gaming.

**PHIL.** What think I, say you? Why I think worse of myself than ever I did. I do not wonder now at what you said when we first came together, *viz.*, That you could always find employment for your time; but I wonder at my own folly: For I plainly see that no man can have time to be a burthen upon him that hath come honestly by it: I mean, that hath not stolen it from nobler entertainments, to bestow it upon a debauch.

**SEBAST.** But yet this is not all neither. Besides all the forementioned, (and those which I have supposed, without naming them particularly,) there is a way of entertaining ourselves, called study and meditation. Study, I say, in general; not confined to any subject, but only directed to the time **God** hath given us in the world.

For why should we abject ourselves that have rational souls; an active, vigorous, intellectual spirit in us? Is not



this able to employ itself, our time, and our bodily spirits too? Is not our mind large enough to embrace the whole world? Can we not bring upon the theatre of our imagination all the occurrences of time past, as well as present? Must we needs only pore upon the things just before our eyes? Must our understandings be fallow and barren, unless they be continually stirred up by our senses? Are our souls only given us for salt to keep the body sweet, or servilely to cater for our inferior powers; and not rather to subdue and govern them?

Why should we not remember we are men, and improve our best talent, sharpen the sense of our minds, and enlarge and greaten our spirits? What hinders, but that a man may converse with himself, and never have better company than when he is most solitary? How can a man want company that hath an angelical nature within him; or need diversion, that hath the whole world before him to contemplate?

What should discourage or hinder men from this course? Is it the pains and difficulty? Nothing in the world is pleasanter when a man is once used to it. Is it for fear we should exhaust ourselves, and, like the spider, spin out our own bowels in our web? There can be no danger of that, an immortal soul never wears out. And should there be no great fruit from our study, at least, this is gotten by it, that we employ our time and keep ourselves out of harm, which is as much as we now seek for.

PHIL. It is generally the fault of contemplative men to outshoot the mark, and whilst they talk finely, to deliver very unpracticable things. Pardon me, dear SEBASTIAN, if I suppose this infirmity hath accompanied you at this time. No doubt but meditation is a noble entertainment of time; and questionless, he that hath once got the knack of it, nothing in the world is so pleasant to him: But you must consider, there are very few who have so much command over themselves, as to hold their minds long steady and intent; and perhaps fewer that have sufficient knowledge to employ their thoughts at home: it requires a

stock for a man to be able to set up this trade by himself. Your advice therefore is very good for them that can receive it; but this is no Catholicon, no general receipt.

SEBAST. I thank you, Sir, most heartily for the modest and seasonable check you gave to the career of my discourse. I must confess, upon second thoughts, that all men are not fit for meditation; yet, I must tell you withal, I suspect more are unwilling than incapable; and I doubt some are more afraid of awakening their conscience, than stirring their spleen by it. However, I have another expedient to propound, (for the purpose we are upon,) which will supply the place of the former, and which, I am sure, can be liable to no objection; and that is, conference or discourse: which when I have recommended to you, I shall have delivered my whole mind.

GOD hath given us speech to express ourselves to one another. We are not left alone in the world so, but that every man hath some friend or neighbour to hold correspondence with. Why should we not then entertain ourselves, our friend, and our time, in friendly communication, without the help of the bottle? This requires no great intention of mind, no great stock is required in this case; and by this way we may not only divert ourselves, but clear our thoughts, enlarge our experience, resolve one another's difficulties, and mutually please and profit one another.

And the more effectually to recommend this expedient to you, I will first take the confidence to affirm, and do not doubt but I shall, by and by, make it appear, that this is not only a very genteel and creditable way of conversation, but also, if it be rightly practised, a most pleasant and delightful, and (which perhaps may seem the greatest paradox of all) one of the most healthful exercises in the world.

The first of these you will easily grant me, when you consider, that discourse is that which principally distinguishes a wise man from a fool. For, what else do we take our measures of one another by? If a man discourse

of weighty matters, and keep close to the point, and speak sharply in the case, we account him a worthy man : But, contrariwise, if he talk flatly, insipidly, and impertinently, we have no esteem or reverence for such a person.

It is certain we cannot know a man's thoughts until he expresses them : a fool, we say, is a wise man so long as he holds his peace, and man differs nothing from a fool until he speaks. For a man's actions may be by rote, or custom, or the direction of some other person ; but a man's discourse is his own. " Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," said our SAVIOUR. The tongue will betray not only the inclinations of the heart, but the very sense and capacity, and the latter much more than the former ; as the liquor will carry the tincture of the vessel. It is possible, indeed, for an evil man to talk virtuously, and a silly man may get into a road of wise sayings ; but the lesson he hath conned will soon be at an end ; and then he will no more be able to hold out at that rate, than a flawed vessel to make the same sound with a good one. Wisdom and folly are widely different in their natures ; but it is discourse that lays them open, and makes the distinction conspicuous.

But now for the vulgar methods of conversation, which commonly consist of drinking and gaming, they are no better than levelling practices, that observe no distance, nor make any distinction among men ; the master and servant are at *hail fellow* ; the gentleman and the clown are upon the square with one another ; the man of parts and learning, the veriest idiot and coxcomb, are upon even ground in those entertainments.

As for Drinking, I cannot sufficiently wonder at that abjection of mind in persons of quality, who, as if they consented to their own degradation, will contend for victory with their inferiors at equal glasses ; when it is notorious, that a porter shall bear more than a gentleman ; and a fine wit shall be baffled and disordered with that which a thick-skulled sot will carry away well enough, and come off as wise a man as he entered. But, suppose

the gentleman should out-do the clown, and the wit the dunce ; yet, as the match was made very imprudently, so the victory would be inglorious.

And then for Gaming. I have heard of an ape that has been too hard for his master at that most ingenious game of chess : But I have known one very near to a natural, that hath been a great master at it. And certainly, it is very easy to imagine, that in those other games that are governed by chance, the victory may fall to the less worthy person. It seems therefore, a very mean thing to be eagerly intent upon that to which a wise man hath no better title than a fool, and if we believe the Proverb, much less. To be sure, no man can be so vain as to think himself the wiser or better man for his conquest. But now, discourse discriminates men's real abilities, and bears an impartial testimony to a man's worth ; and the contests of reason are therefore truly honourable, because the wiser man is sure to have the victory.

But then, Secondly, for the pleasure of Discourse, it cannot be doubted, but that the higher powers in a man are attended with the sweetest delights in the exercise of them ; and the more strong and vigorous those powers are, the more quick must the sense of their peculiar pleasure be. This the experience of all studious men bears testimony to, among whom one truth sifted out by reason, is more pleasant than all the entertainments of an epicure.

And now, in the last place, for that seeming paradox concerning the wholesomeness of discoursing. It is observed, that they who are curious of the health of their bodies, to the end that they may invigorate all their powers and faculties, have to that purpose found out appropriate exercises to all the principal parts : for so, they say, Walking is peculiarly good for digestion, by gently agitating the stomach and bowels ; riding is singularly beneficial to the head ; the use of the long bow is especially commended for opening the breast and lungs. Now I think I may be bold to say, that whatsoever each of these is to its respective part and member, that will vigorous conference perform to the whole man. For as to the very

bodily powers, it warms the heart and stomach, dries the brain, opens the lungs, quickens the motion of the blood, and brings a fresh and florid colour into the face and whole habit. And then, as for the better part of man, discourse raises the fancy, exercises the memory, clears the thoughts, enlightens the judgment, and improves the reasoning.

And now, I appeal to you, judge whether I have performed my promise or no. If I have, then, besides all the afore-mentioned, here is a manly employment of time always at hand; an exercise that every one is capable of that hath a tongue in his head, and a soul in his body. Thus we may treat our neighbour, and cost us nothing but what we (it seems) have too much of, I mean, time. And thus we may profit ourselves, and oblige him too, beyond all other entertainments.

PHIL. I have a great reverence for your judgment; but, in truth, I cannot tell what to say to this gossiping kind of diversion, and until this moment, I never thought lip-labour had been of such value. As for thinking men, the world is content to let them enjoy the reputation of being wise, or at least, to suspend their judgment of them till they see the contrary. But as for talkative men, (I need not tell you,) they have ever been accounted troublesome and impertinent. And for our own part, good SEBASTIAN, give me leave to say, that your practice confutes your doctrine; for after all you have spoken in the commendation of conversation, and notwithstanding that every one who knows you, knows your singular dexterity in managing any subject, yet, you, of all men, are generally observed to be the most silent and reserved.

SEBAST. I see plainly, that there is a wrong as well as a right handle to every thing, and a continual proneness in men to mistake one another. Whenssoever any vice is censured, or exposed, men presently think the contrary extreme must needs be the virtue: So whilst I have been recommending friendly conference, you represent me as if I had pleaded for impertinent talkativeness; which, truly, I am so far from, that I think the world doth that sort of men no wrong in the censure it passes upon them; amongst

whom, (if it be a wise man's lot to be cast,) he will think himself in the region of parrots; and for his deliverance, be tempted to pray for deafness as a great blessing. No, PHILANDER, no; I would neither have men say all they can, nor much less talk whether they can or no; but I would have them first think, to direct their speaking, and then speak that a judgment may be made of their thoughts. I would that men should bend their minds whenever they relax their tongues, and try the strength of one another's heads in reasoning, rather than in drinking.

But then, as for what yourself or others have observed of my carriage in company, I confess the observation is rightly taken, and I will ingenuously assign you the occasions of it; which are (as far as I know myself) such as these: In the first place, it sometimes falls out, that the subject which other men are discoursing of, is not very agreeable to my mind. Now in this case I am generally silent; at least, till I can turn the stream of discourse some other way.

Again, sometimes I am in the company of those who are every way my betters; and there I think it is much more adviseable to hear than to speak, as it is better to reap than to sow.

Sometimes also I meet with a company of desultorious wits, who skip so hastily from one thing to another that they overrun me; and whilst I am meditating what to say pertinently to the question in hand, they are gotten into another subject. A man must ride post, or be left behind by such discoursers.

But let that be as it may, or however my practice falls short of my counsel, I am certain my example is not sufficient to counterbalance the reasons I have given. Wherefore let me again heartily recommend it to you, not only for its own benefit, but if it were, to supersede those other soft and silly diversions, which have of late so far usurped upon human society, as well nigh to engross to themselves all men's vacant hours, and a great deal more.

PHIL. You have the ascendant of me, and may persuade me to what you will. But, good Sir, do not convert me from a good fellow to a prating fool. If I had been used to study as you have, I might have been in a capacity to please myself, and perhaps the company too, with discourse; but for want of that education, silence will generally be my best discretion.

SEBAST. Books! It is neither books, nor much reading, that makes a wise man. How many shrewd men have you known, and very well accomplished in most parts of conversation, that never had any great matter of clerkship? And, on the other side, amongst the great number of those that have had the advantages of bookish education, how few are those that are really the better for it? With many men, reading is nothing better than a dozing kind of idleness, and the book is a mere opiate that makes them sleep with their eyes open. It is perverted into an antidote against thinking wisely, and made a creditable pretence for dismissal of business. Such men's studying is only an artifice to reconcile the ease and voluptuousness of sloth with the reputation of wisdom; a gentle and wary kind of epicurism, that surfeits without pain or shame, and in which men spend their time without profit to themselves, or usefulness to the world.

Again, there are some with whom bookishness is a disease: for by overmuch reading they surcharge their minds, and so digest nothing. They stuff themselves so full of other men's notions, that there is no room for their faculties to display themselves. Such as these, after all their reading, can no more be accounted learned, than a beast of burden may that carries a student's books for him. Only so much meat is nourishment to the body as a man can digest, as he can apply to the reparation of his body, when he can separate the superfluities, and be stronger and lightsomer after it: more than this breeds ill humours, obstructs the passages, and impairs the health, instead of advancing it: and so much study only is profitable as will excite a man's thoughts, as well as afford hints to the

mind, or as will furnish him with matter for meditation and discourse; which two last things are the two great instruments of improving ourselves, and therefore are to prescribe the measures of our study and reading.

Wherefore it is well said by a great man of our country, that reading indeed might make a full and copious man, but meditation made a sound man, and discourse a clear, distinct, and useful man. For reading, at most, doth but make a man's mind equal to that of the author he reads; but meditation sets a man upon the shoulders of his author, by which means he sees further than he did or could do. Or whereas the one may fill up the present capacity of a man's mind, the other, *viz.*, meditation, stretches and enlarges those capacities. And then for discourse, (which is that we are now speaking of,) besides the advantages which it hath in common with meditation, it opens and unfolds a man's thoughts, and so brings his notions to a test, and makes proof of the solidity or weakness of his conceptions; by which means, as on the one hand he shall not run away with the shadows of things instead of the substance, so on the other hand, when his apprehensions are sifted, and approved to be right and sound, his mind will be confirmed against wavering, and he will become constant and consistent with himself. I have often observed, with equal pleasure and wonder, that by the mere propounding a difficulty to another, I have been presently able to resolve that which was too hard for me, whilst I revolved it in my own breast: for, by that opening and unfolding of our thoughts, we let in light to our own judgments, and see clearer than we did before.

Besides, a man is too apt to have a partial fondness to the issue of his own brain; but when he hath brought his conceptions to the impartial touchstone of other men's judgments, and, as it were, tried them by the light, he will neither be apt to be upon all occasions over-confident, peremptory, and dogmatical; nor, on the other side, will he stumble at every rub, and stagger at every objection,



and so give up the best cause upon the slightest (but unforeseen) attack.

And there is one thing more very considerable in this matter : namely, That by conference a man is accustomed to methodise and digest his thoughts in order ; by which means his notions are not only rendered more beautiful, but are more at hand, and also more perspicuous and fitter for use. Whereas contrariwise, (let a man have read ever so much, and meditated too into the bargain,) without this expedient all his notions will lie very oddly and confusedly, and come out all in a heap or huddle. In sum, he that uses himself only to books, is fit for nothing but a book ; and he that converses with nobody, is fit to converse with nobody.

PHIL. In truth, SEBASTIAN, though I am very sensible of my own defects in point of learning, yet in that little experience which I have had in the world, I have seen so many instances of the ill use, or rather no use that some men have made of it, that I am not only convinced there is some truth in what you say, but am the better inclined to be content with my own education. I have known some mighty bookish men like full vessels without vent ; their notions ferment in them, but they cannot utter them either to their own ease, or the profit of others. And again, some men's learning hath served only to make them pedantic and troublesome. Notwithstanding, by your favour, it cannot be doubted but learning hath mighty advantages ; and I verily think you should speak against your own conscience, if you condemned it in the general. Wherefore, you must excuse me if I continue of the opinion, that it is next to impossible, without more of it than I can pretend to, to hold such conversation as you are putting me upon.

SEBAST. Excuse me, I do not put a slight upon learning, or the means of it, books and study. I know well it is of admirable use in a wise man's hand, because it gradually opens men's minds, and both gives them a quicker

sight, and affords them a larger prospect. All I was saying was only this, That neither you nor any man of your capacity, ought to discourage yourselves upon the pretence of your lesser advantages that way ; forasmuch as a wise and good man may (though perhaps not with the same ease) with a very little of it, maintain an ingenuous and profitable conversation.

PHIL. Perhaps it may be so as you say ; but then certainly a man must have very extraordinary natural abilities to supply that defect.

SEBAST. That needs not neither ; for discourse will both supply the want of acquired abilities, and also improve the natural. I suppose you remember the saying of SOLOMON, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." I confess I have heard that passage of the wise man applied to the comforting a friend in adversity, which certainly doth mightily support a man's spirits, when he finds that he is not forsaken of his friend, but owned by him in the lowest ebb of his fortunes. But I think it is every whit as true and applicable to that we are speaking of, as if he had said that the company and conversation of a friend doth as well quicken a man's wits, and improve his understanding, as one iron instrument is sharpened by another. For, as I said before, conference and discourse give us the advantage of whatsoever he, we converse with, hath read or thought upon that subject ; and so we reap the benefit of his reading and of his meditations too. And then besides that, we exercise our own judgment upon the matter so digested and prepared for us ; the very presence and attention of our friend sharpens the attention of our minds ; his question prevents our extravagance and wandering, and keeps us in a method, and his expectation from us holds our thoughts close and steady to the point in debate. By all which, not only the stock of our knowledge is improved, but the patrimony also : I mean the very powers of the soul. In consideration of all which, that great man of our country, whom I

cited but now, doth not stick to pronounce, that if it should be a man's hard fortune to have nobody to converse withal, it were better he should talk to a post than not to open his mouth at all.

PHIL. I begin to think something better of myself, and am resolved to try what may be done. But what would you have a man discourse about? I am afraid, if there be not some care in the choice of a subject, all will degenerate into gossipping and impertinent chat.

SEBAST. There is no need of solicitude in that particular, forasmuch as any, even the most obvious subject will enable us to attain the end we aim at, provided it be followed home. I mean, talk of what matter you will, if you do not talk flatly and carelessly about it, but set your thoughts on work, they will bring forth both pleasure and profit; for the exercise of our minds improves them, as well as that of the body doth the state of bodily health; and whilst our thoughts are intent, though we are insensible how time slips away, yet we shall be sensible in the conclusion that we have not quite lost it.

Besides, you have observed musicians to make the most curious descant upon the plainest ground. It is not therefore the theme, but the prosecution of it that is considerable; for, as I said, let that be what you will, if you pursue it with a train of thoughts, and especially if you be vigilant to take notice of, and apprehend those hints that will thence be occasionally started, you shall quickly be amazed to find yourself led, before you were aware, into some spacious and beautiful field of contemplation.

Notwithstanding, I acknowledge to you, that the pitching upon some good and useful subject at first, is both the shortest and the surest way to attain our end. For the very importance of a weighty affair naturally rouses up our minds, and collects and fixes our loose and scattered thoughts; as you shall seldom see any man drowsy and inattentive whilst a matter of consequence to his life, or credit, or fortune is in agitation.

Therefore, if indeed you would awaken your senses, and improve yourself and your time together, let me, above all things in the world, commend to you religious communication,—talk of the concerns of a soul, and of another world. This is a subject of that weight and moment, that it cannot fail either to make you intent, or the company you shall be in grave and serious; and it is withal so vast and so large, that you can never fear to be run on ground; for it will always afford you fresh matter of discourse.

PHIL. It is true, the subject is copious enough, and I may be sure to have it all to myself, because nobody will talk with me about it. Who is there now-a-days that troubles his head with religion, or especially makes it any part of conversation? If, perhaps, any mention of it fall in by the by, it is presently let fall again, as if it were too hot for men's fingers; and at most it is made but a kind of parenthesis, which may be kept in, or left out of the discourse, without interruption of the sense. You have found me out a subject indeed, but now you must seek me out company to treat upon it; for as the world now is, this will seem so irksome a business, that no time will be so tedious as that which is spent upon it, and so we have lost the whole design we were levelling at.

SEBAST. Who (say you) will discourse of religion? Why every body sure that thinks of it. For, tell me, is there any man so absurdly vain as to think he shall not die? Can any man, that observes the frail contexture of his body, and the innumerable accidents he is subject to, think himself immortal? And when he sees men daily drop away, and die in their full strength, can he be so fond as to imagine he shall escape the common lot? And seeing what happens to another man to-day, may befall himself tomorrow; or however, he is certain that he cannot be of any long continuance in this world; who, I say, that is sensible of this, can choose but pry beyond the curtain, and bethink himself what shall come after?

Doth not every wise man provide for what may be? And do not even the most cold and incredulous suspect at

least there may something concern us after the present life? And is there any man that can, if he would never so fain, quite rid his thoughts of it? Sure, therefore, every man that thinks he shall die, (that is, every man that lives,) thinks something of religion, if it be but for fear of the worst. Perhaps you will say, there are some men, who though they know they shall die, yet think they shall die as the beasts die, and have no concern hereafter; but are they worthy to be accounted men that can fancy such a thing? Is it probable, that a creature of this admirable make should be only designed to be a pageant for a day, and be totally dissolved at the date of this short life; especially if he consider withal, that these powers and capacities which man is endued with, not only put him upon the thoughts, and expectations, and desires of another state, but render him marvellously fit for it, and capable of it; insomuch that several of the noblest of these endowments are wholly in vain, if there be no such thing, and that a man died as the beasts do.

Besides all this, doth not every man that hath eyes in his head, to observe the admirable structure of the world, conclude that it must be the workmanship of a God, and he a great, a wise, a good, and a just Being; and can he think so, and not resolve there must be a great necessity of, and reality in, religion? That is, in the reverend observance of that great Majesty that deserves it, and who hath both made us capable of performing it to him, and obliged us thereunto.

Now if all, or but any part of this be true, who is so mad as to have no concern for this God, religion, and another world; and who is there that having any concern for them, can choose but think fit to make it some part of his business, the employment of some part of his time, and the subject of his most serious debates?

PHIL. I readily consent to you that the business of religion is a most serious affair, and worthy of the greatest consideration; but besides that there are few will correspond with a man in discourse about it. To tell you truly,

I am somewhat of opinion that it is not fit for that kind of treatment. As it is a sacred, so it is a secret thing, transacted only between GOD and a man's own conscience, and therefore is rather the theme of a man's thoughts, the solitary employment of his own heart; and so fit to be kept up in the closet of his breast, and not so proper matter for discourse.

SEBAST. I readily yield that the soul and spirit of religion is very retired and inward; and so inaccessible to other men, that they can neither see it, nor judge of it. But though the first source and springs of it lie very deep, yet why the streams of it should not issue forth, both in words and actions, I cannot comprehend. The Apostle saith expressly, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation."

PHIL. O pardon me, Sir! I make no question, but that when a man is called to make profession of his faith, and to discover what religion he is of, then to dissemble is to betray it, and to be silent on such a critical occasion is to apostatize from it; and in that sense, I take it, another Apostle hath required us "to render to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us." But this is not the case. We are not now speaking of what must be done upon an authoritative inquisition into our consciences; but what is to be done in times of peace, and in common conversation: and then, and there, I am still of opinion, that at least it is not an express duty to talk of religion.

SEBAST. Nor do I differ from you therein. For I do not assert it as an universal duty to make religion the matter of our discourse; but my meaning is, that it will exceedingly become us to do so sometimes: and I assure myself, that he that hath a quick sense of GOD upon his mind, will have savoury expressions of him upon ordinary occasions, (if a foolish modesty do not overcome him,) as well as witness a good confession in times of persecution;

for, as our SAVIOUR said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And it seems to me more easily conceivable, that there should be a great fire without any smoke, or a great light without any heat, than that such a man as is inwardly principled with the fear and love of GOD, should be either able or willing altogether to stifle and suppress his sentiments. "Can a man carry fire in his bosom," said the wise man, "and not be burned?" Such a holy fervour as I speak of, will assuredly both seek and find a vent for itself, and break out, upon all fitting occasions, in reverend and affectionate expressions; by which means, a man in the first place eases his own breast, and besides, thus this holy fire not only preserves itself from extinction, but propagates itself also, warming and inflaming others.

You have heard, I suppose, of an odd superstition among the Jews, who out of a pretended reverence to the name of GOD, so long forbade the common pronounciation of it, till at length they had quite forgotten how to pronounce it: and thus I am afraid it will fare with religion, if men should (out of I know not what conceit) forbear all discourse of GOD and another world; the result would be, that in time both would be forgotten. Nor is it, as you seem to imagine, only times of persecution that ought to rouse up our spirits, and call for expressions of our zeal; for the road of business, the successively flowing tide of entertainments in this world, and the rust upon our minds, contracted by lying still in ease and security, more endanger the state of religion than those trying times you speak of; and therefore Atheism is well known to be a weed that thrives most in the best weather. The seed that was sown upon stony ground fell away when the hot sun scorched it, because it had no depth of earth; but that which was sown among the thorns was choked too, though the soil was never so good. In a word, stormy weather in the Church may tempt men to be false and treacherous, but I believe it never made an Atheist: that

and profaneness are the ill fruit of prosperity. So that you see there is need that the spirit of piety should exert itself as well in the one season, as in the other.

Neither will the publicly stated times, or forms and exercises of religion, sufficiently secure it against this danger, without such voluntary efforts and sallies of it as we are speaking of: for in regard God is not to be seen, and the world is before us; the world to come is at distance, and the present world at hand; ill examples are numerous, and good ones few and rare: and, in a word, we dwell in so cold a region, that we had need not only to use a great deal of exercise, but frequently to rub up one another. Therefore, as SOCRATES is said to have brought down philosophy (*è cælo in urbes*) from speculation to practice, from high notions to the common affairs of life; so it seems necessary to us, not only to be religious at church, in our closets, but in our daily and ordinary converse.

And I verily believe the Apostle, when he forbids “that any corrupt communication shall proceed out of our mouths;” and enjoins, “that it be such as is good, to the use of edifying,” intended we should interpret the latter expression by the former, *viz.*, that instead of rotten and filthy talk, we should tend so earnestly to the contrary, that we might turn the stream of men’s discourse to that which is virtuous and profitable. And when he adds, “that it may minister grace to the hearers,” I think he requires that very thing which I have been recommending to you; namely, that we should take all fair opportunities of bringing religion into play, and of suggesting good meditations to one another.

PHIL. Give me leave to go a little farther with you. What kind of religious conference is it you would be at? Would you have men enter into disputes about divine matters? This I the rather ask, because there is a sort of men, who seem to be mighty zealous of religion; but their heat breaks out wholly this way, and they fill the place



wherever they are, with noise and clamour, with dust and smoke.

SEBAST. It is not disputing in religion that I would provoke you to ; but the improvement of the indisputable rules of it, *viz.*, to make yourself, and those you converse with, sensible of the vital principles and powers of Christianity ; not to chase one another into a passion, but to warm one another's hearts with devotion : By wise and affectionate applications to beget an equal fervour of spirit. And, in a word, that when friends are met together, they should, like flint and steel, raise both light and heat by their mutual and amicable collisions.

And why, I pray you, should not religion have its turn in our conversation ? What reason can be given that pious men should not discourse as freely of holy things, as they, or other men, concerning common affairs ? Why should our lesser concerns for this world, our secular business, be the only subject of our communication ? Why, when some talk of their trades, their pleasures, and of news, should we not talk of our callings ; as we are Christians, of the interests of our souls, and another world ? Why may not we discourse of our heavenly country, whither we are going, as well as other men busy themselves about foreign countries, which, perhaps, they never saw, nor ever shall be concerned in ?

You yourself acknowledge religion to deserve the most serious and attentive consideration ; and upon the same account (if you be consistent with yourself) you will be induced to believe it the most commendable subject of discourse, as having all those advantages that can recommend any subject to the debate of ingenious men ; as it were easy to make appear if it were necessary.

PHIL. Sir, I value your judgment, but must make use of my own : if therefore it be not too troublesome to you, let me entreat you to make out that more fully ; and then, I promise you, I will either comply with the reasons you give, or will show you mine to the contrary.

SEBAST. With all my heart, Sir: and to do it with as much brevity as may be, I will desire you to consider, in the first place, whether this subject, religion, does not contain in it the most noble and excellent points of inquiry, and consequently, be not the most worthy, not only to take up the affections, but to exercise the wits of men upon; such as, for instance, about the nature and attributes of God; the wisdom of that Providence that manages and governs the world; the nature of spirits, and particularly the soul of man; of conscience, and freedom of will; of the nature and obligation of laws; of the grounds of faith, and the efficacy of it; of the nature of repentance; of redemption, and the way of propitiating God to man; of the judgment to come, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life; with abundance more of the like nature. Points all vastly great and copious, profound and difficult, yet equally necessary and discoverable; such as are able to stir up and provoke the greatest capacities, and yet invite and encourage the meanest: In a word, such things, as that there is nothing else within the whole sphere of knowledge, that either requires or deserves such serious debates.

And if you will please to consider well the aforesaid particulars, especially if you make trial of the course I am advising you, you will find these subjects every whit as pleasant, as they are necessary and important. For what can be imagined able to administer more delight, than the lively representation of another world, when men modestly reason together, and endeavour to affect one another's hearts with the certainty and unspeakable felicity of living for ever? Of the ravishing contentment of enjoying everlasting friendship; of being out of the sphere of mortality, sickness, and pain, care and vexation; of being exempted from all weakness, silliness, passion, and infirmity; of being exalted above all temptation, and secured against all possibility of apostasy: If discourse of this nature do not affect a man beyond all other, it must be, because either he hath not the sense of a man, or not the faith of a Christian.

Or suppose men should take a subject somewhat lower, and confer together about the providence of God, that governs the present world: What a beautiful thing is it to observe all the variety of second causes move in a just order under the first, towards certain and uniform ends, the glory of God, and good of men! And that though the divine wisdom may lose and confound us in that admirable maze it seems to make, yet there is nothing defective or redundant in the whole world, no room for chance, nothing unforeseen, no cross accident that hinders the projections; the same design is all along carried on, and at last certainly attained: But especially, if we confine our contemplations of Divine Providence to that more peculiar object of his, his Church, it will become yet more visible, and more comfortable; where, if we wisely consider times past with the present, and view the whole process, we shall find that even schisms, heresies, persecutions, and the greatest calamities of the Church, tend to its advantage in the conclusion. But, above all, that which comes nearest to a man, and must needs affect him most in the affair of Providence, is, that thereby he finds himself under the protection of a mighty being, that nothing befalls him without the consent of his great patron, that he is not left to himself to scuffle with ill fortune, and second causes, as well as he can; but he is the charge of ALMIGHTY God, the favourite of Heaven. This, certainly, is highly pleasant and satisfactory above any thing in the world.

Or, if we go lower, and make the subject of our discourse peace of conscience, the bravery of a victory over a man's passions or temptations, the unspeakable comfort and satisfaction in doing good; any of these will afford us an entertainment beyond the flavour of wine, or the odd variety of chance in a game; and indeed, to speak to the point, above all other subjects of discourse and conversation: and although it be true that there is none of these, but a man may contemplate with great satisfaction by himself alone, and in solitude; yet, as all social exercises of the body are more refreshing than those that are solitary,

so it is here ; the comfort that results from these contemplations, is doubled and multiplied by reflection in friendly conferences : and all this together, shall be my first argument, by which I recommend discourse of religion. What think you of this, PHILANDER ?

PHIL. I think very well of it : But, I pray you, let me hear out the whole cause, and then I will give my answer.

SEBAST. Why then, my second plea for religious discourse, is, from the consideration that it is far the more safe, prudent, and inoffensive matter of communication ; and that in several respects. In the first place, it kindles no coals, stirs up no strife, inflames nobody's choler, and touches upon no man's interest or reputation. You cannot talk of yourself without vanity or envy ; you can hardly talk of your neighbours, without some suspicious reflection ; nor of those that are farthest off, but you are in danger that some body present may be concerned for them. It is very difficult to talk of news, but you will make yourself of some party or other ; and of opinions, without giving offence where you did not intend it ; and you can scarcely speak of your governors and superiors, so as to avoid all imputation either of flattery or pragmatism. But here you may talk securely, and have this assurance, that if you profit nobody, you shall hurt nobody ; if you do not benefit others, you shall not prejudice yourself. And then, in the second place, and in consequence of the former, this kind of discourse will invite no eaves-droppers to listen and carry tales of what passed amongst friends in their families and privacies. For although there be hardly any place so inaccessible, or any retirement so sacred, as to be a sufficient sanctuary against this pestilent sort of vermin ; yet besides, that matters of religion afford them the least hold or handle ; the discoursing gravely of it, is the most effectual charm in the world to lay them ; so that they shall either not be able or not be willing to mis-report you. To which add, in the third place, that this course is one of the most effectual and unexceptionable ways of ridding ourselves of the

company of impertinent people ; which I reckon no small advantage of this kind of conversation : for this serious way will certainly make them better, or make them weary of our company ; that is, we shall either gain them, or gain our time from them, the least of which two is very desirable.

Are not then all serious and sensible men bound to put to their endeavour to turn the stream of conversation from froth and folly, to this great and important concern ? If this be out of fashion, the more is the shame ; and it is a thousand pities, but that we should strive to bring it into fashion ; and to repair the dishonour to the Divine majesty by those scurrilous libertines, who, with equal madness and folly, let their tongues run riot against him.

What ! shall we be meally-mouthed in a good cause, when they are impudent in a bad one ? Shall we be ashamed to own GOD, when they defy him ? Is GOD so inconsiderable a being, that we dare not stand by him ? Are piety and virtue things to be blushed at ? Is eternal salvation become so trivial a thing, that we should be unconcerned about it ? Do we yield the cause to these half-witted profligates ? Do we acknowledge the Gospel to be indeed ridiculous ? Or, do we confess ourselves the greatest cowards in the world, and judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life ? For shame ! let us be so far from being either cowed, or biassed by such examples, that we resolve to make better where we cannot find them.

Besides, I persuade myself, this will be no very hard thing to do, if we consider the authority and majesty of sincere and generous piety, and the guilt and base-spiritedness of vice and profaneness. If we be soft and timorous, that grows rampant and intolerable ; but if virtue shines out in its own rays, it dazzles and baffles all those birds of night. If men will be persuaded to assert their own principles manfully, to talk of GOD worthily and courageously, the greatest ruffians will presently be gagged and tongue-tied : as in conjurations, they say, name but GOD, and the Devil vanishes ; so enter resolutely into pious conference, and it

will presently lay all the oaths, and blasphemies, and scurrilous talk of those desperate wretches.

And (by the way) this is the most genteel, and also the most effectual way of reproving that kind of persons; namely, to deal with them as scholars deal by one another; when any one speaks false Latin, they only repeat it after him in true Latin, and as it ought to be: so here, let us speak right things of God when they speak amiss, and there needs no more to damp them; they will either turn on your side, and speak as you do, or leave the field to you.

PHIL. I thought, when we first entered on this particular, it was impossible that I should ever be of your opinion therein; but now I am so far from having any thing material to object, that I am clearly satisfied it would be a very wise thing, and well worthy of our endeavours, to bring it into practice: I mean, as much as possibly we can, to exclude idle tales and drollery out of our converse, or at least to confine them to a narrower compass, and so make way for this great affair of religion.

But yet, let me tell you, though you have convinced me, you have not silenced others: There are those who elude the arguments they cannot answer, and expose what they are resolved not to comply with. They will say, this talking of religion is a mountebank trick, to impose upon the people; that it is a design of vain glory, or an artifice to seem better than we are. They will tell you, that sincerely good men use to be modest and silent, and to enjoy their sense of piety in secret. In short, when you have said all you can to recommend this way of conversation, they will say, it is no better than Puritanism, or enthusiasm; and having affixed such a name upon it, they will run both you and it down presently.

SEBAST. Hearty thanks for putting me in mind of that danger, which otherwise I should not have been aware of. I acknowledge, I am so far unskilled in the world, that I was apt to think it was sufficient to a cause to be backed with good proofs; and that when a business had recom-

mended itself to the reason and conscience of men, the work was done. I little thought men must be wheedled into a compliance with their own judgments; and much less, that they would be so disingenuous towards themselves, as to put a cheat upon their own senses: nor did I sufficiently consider the power of names, to make good evil, and evil good; and that the best thing in the world may be run down by the mere blast of an odious nickname. O what a venomous breath hath common fame, that it can change the nature of things! What a huge leviathan is vulgar opinion, that it should be able to oppose itself to the best reason of mankind, and to ALMIGHTY GOD too!

But yet, it looks like a confession of the insuperable strength of my arguments, when men resort to such subterfuges. It is a sign they dare not encounter me on the square, that use such foul play; and that men are destitute of reason, when they betake themselves to libels and reproaches.

That which I contend for is, that it becomes men to take all fit and fair occasions to speak worthily of GOD, and to make advantage of friendly conversation, towards the improvement of one another in morals, as well as in secular, or any other concerns. And can any one be so absurdly malicious, as to call this fanaticism? Doth that deserve the odious name of a party, which is the great and universal concern of all mankind? Is that to be accounted the peculiar Shibboleth of a sect, which speaks a good man and a Christian? Is that to be made a mark of infamy, which the best men in the world wear as a badge of honour? Are we minded that this word, fanaticism, should have the power of an ostracism, and put a disgrace upon men for being too good?

If men, in their intercourse and communications, deliberated about setting forth of some new god, or at least some new religion, there were just cause of such an odious imputation; but to take an opportunity to speak of the true GOD, and the old religion, gravely and piously,

it cannot be that this should be Puritanism, unless it be so to be in earnest in religion. Sure it is not the character of any mere sect amongst us to love God: and if it be not, then neither can it be so to talk of him affectionately; since the latter is the easy and natural issue of the former. DAVID, I remember, called his tongue his glory: and is that alone, of all the powers of soul and body, exempted from any part in doing honour to the Creator?

And now, PHILANDER, what is become of that formidable objection, as you and I thought at first? May not we now adventure to talk of religion, without the danger of fanaticism?

PHIL. Yes, I see clearly we may: but at the worst, if there were some danger that I should incur the rash censure of some that I value, and were likely to be called fanatic for my pains, I would not stick to serve so many great and excellent ends at that hazard, if I could.

SEBAST. Bravely resolved, my good friend! Now you speak like a man and a Christian: there is the very point of virtue. He that is too tender and delicate, hath not the courage to be good; and he that will venture nothing here, will win nothing in the other world. You know my sense already, that good nature is an excellent and useful companion of virtue; but, as the case may happen, a little steadiness is necessary to preserve them both. But, I pray you, why did you put an *if* at the last? After all, do you question whether it be possible to discourse piously?

PHIL. No, good SEBASTIAN, that is not it; for you have convinced me of the feasibility, as well as the excellency of that kind of conversation: But you know, (as I have said before,) that is out of the road of discourse; and besides the difficulty of bringing those one converses with to it, it is natural for a man to follow out his own bias. If I were once entered into such a communication, I am sure I should embrace it, and I think I could continue it. But there is a sheepish kind of modesty in this, (as well as in other things,) that checks and restrains a man from beginning that which neither he nor his companions have



been used to. If therefore you can help me to conquer myself, as well as to answer objections; to overcome my temper, as well as to submit my judgment; I would then set about it as well as I could.

SEBAST. With all my heart, only with this condition, as well as I can: (as you say.) But I pray give me leave to ask you a question, by the by, and not decline that which you have put to me. The case is this: It is commonly observed, that good men find such a modesty (as you speak of) to restrain them, when they are setting themselves to begin some good discourse; insomuch, that sometimes, with great difficulty, if at all, they can screw themselves up to it; but contrariwise, lewd and profane men rant and hector at an intolerable rate; they will blaspheme and burlesque religion without regard to God or man. Now seeing the former have all the reason in the world on their side, and the other as much against them; what is it that makes this difference in their spirit and temper?

PHIL. That I may come the sooner at the solution of my difficulty, I will answer your question as briefly as I can; and I think there are several causes: First, profane men are generally very grossly ignorant: for I cannot imagine, that any thing else should make them bold with ALMIGHTY GOD. The second cause I assign is, that these men having abandoned virtue, they have therewith lost all good nature and civil respect; and are delivered up to insolence, and an affronting humour. And thirdly, I make no great doubt, but the Devil, whose work they do, assists them in it. And now you will easily think there needs no other concurrence; yet I will add another, and that is drunkenness: for methinks, it should be out of the power of the Devil himself to tempt a sober man to such a villany; but in the rage of drink, God is defied, and every thing that is sacred. But now to my question.

SEBAST. The plain truth is, (as I have acknowledged to you before,) I have been in that oven, and therefore cannot wonder to find another man there; and though I

cannot always conquer my bashfulness, yet in such cases I always endeavour it, and I will tell you by what methods; and so I hope the same remedies may relieve us both.

First then, when I enter into company, with design to engage them in good discourse; I endeavour, if it be possible, to make some friend privy to my plot, who, perhaps shall sit at some distance from me; but understanding his cue, shall be always ready to second me in what I undertake; and so, by an honest confederacy, we can carry on the business. And this I do especially, if I apprehend the company to consist either of profane persons, or captious wits: for if a modest man should, in such a case, begin an unusual discourse, and have nobody to follow him, he will not only miscarry of his purpose, but be ashamed and confounded. But if he have one prepared to comply with him, they shall both have time to recollect themselves, and to carry the ball of discourse whither they please.

In the next place, when I am destitute of such an associate, then, if I apprehend I have an opportunity of discoursing usefully, I resolve to begin whatever comes of it; that is, I forcibly break silence, though it be with trembling, and paleness, and faltering, and without any well-contrived expressions; and when once the ice is broken, the worst is past: then presently my colour, and speech, and spirits, will return; for to proceed is very easy then, because (as I have noted before) the objects of religion lie so ready to a man's thoughts, that he cannot be at loss in the sequel of his discourse.

In order hereto, I endeavour to raise in my own heart, a great zeal of God's glory, and a generous design of doing good to those I converse with: And therefore I think with myself, I am not only to stand upon my guard, and secure myself from infection; nor much less to be a mere negative, and content myself to do no hurt to my acquaintance; but it is expected from me, I should benefit them, and season their intercourse with something virtuous and graceful.

Moreover, I endeavour in the whole conduct of myself, to arrive at a seriousness of spirit, and a deepness of thought, without which, neither shall I be in temper to begin or carry on such weighty discourse with others, nor will they expect it from me. A light, trifling, jesting spirit is good for nothing but sport and May-game. Such as can ordinarily find in their hearts to step aside to a quibble, or a clinch, are generally men so unfit for religion, that they are seldom useful to themselves in a secular business : but a serious man hath his thoughts about him, and his very mien and countenance raise the expectation of the company, and so they are half prepared to receive his impressions. Now to bring myself to this temper, I think frequently of the judgment to come, and the wonderful accuracy and solemnity of it ; of the unspeakable concerns of hell and heaven, and the whole affair of another world. By these considerations, I curb the levity and wantonness of my spirit, and so become both furnished with fit thoughts to communicate, and also with a proper temper to communicate them.

Besides this, I make it my earnest endeavour to be as much above the world as I can ; I mean, to have as indifferent an esteem of riches, fame, &c., as is possible : for I find by woeful experience, that whensoever it warps that way, I am listless and formal in any such enterprise as we are speaking of. But whensoever I can contemn them, then I am, as it were, all spirit, and have so lively impresses of another world upon me, that I can almost make it visible to my companions.

Amongst all these, I pray daily and earnestly for God's grace and assistance, that he will every where be present to me by his HOLY SPIRIT, and put useful thoughts into my heart, and give me courage to express them, so as to beget the like in others.

This, Sir, is the method I take with myself ; and having, I thank God, often succeeded well with it, against a cowardly heart of my own, I cannot but expect it will have the greater and more signal effects upon you.

PHIL. GOD verify the omen! However, I thank you most heartily for the receipt, which I will keep as long as I live.

But I must tell you as my confessor, or physician, which you will, of another disease I labour under, so shameful and scandalous, that scarce any body will own it; and that is, ignorance. If I had courage enough for the business, (we have all this while been speaking of,) yet I am afraid by my unskilfulness I shall spoil all. Let me therefore pray you to afford me your advice in this case also.

SEBAST. I will tell you the effect of my observation in this matter.

And the first thing to our purpose, which I remark, is, the example of our SAVIOUR: (and who can we better learn of?) And he, I observe, had a dexterity of applying every accidental occurrence to his holy purposes, as it were by a kind of chemistry, separating the gross matter, and subliming ordinary affairs to heavenly doctrine: inso-much, that there was scarcely any common affair of life, such as eating, or drinking, or recreation; no disease or infirmity of the body, no trade and occupation, such as merchandise or husbandry, no building or planting, ploughing or sowing; nay, not so mean employments as women's leavening their bread, grinding at the mill, or sweeping a house, but he spiritualized them, and applied them to his designs.

Now if we would learn of him, and endeavour to imitate this dexterity, we might, with great ease, and without all violence, surprise men into religion; and not only at every turn introduce pious discourse, but render the subject of it intelligible to the meanest capacities; and withal, by those sensible resemblances give such lively touches upon the minds of men, that what we delivered upon those occasions would stick and remain with them.

And there is no great pains or skill required for the doing of this; the principal requisite to it is, a zeal of God's glory, and such a constant and fixed eye upon it as shall make us apprehensive of the opportunities that present

themselves, and then a little humility to condescend to the weakness of people.

As for instance, when we visit a sick friend, or neighbour, what a fair opportunity have we to discourse of the immortality of the soul? And what an easy transition is it from a Physician to a Saviour? Or why may we not as well cheer up our afflicted friend with the comforts of religion, as amuse him with impertinent stories? Or suppose friends be together, why may not some word come in of the everlasting friendships in heaven, or of the continual feast of a good conscience? Why may not the common chat about news be elevated to the consideration of the good tidings of the Gospel? What hinders but our dishes of meat may be seasoned with a gracious word or two about the food of our souls? When men are talking of old age, it would be no great strain if thence our thoughts rise up to eternal life: nor any great flight of fancy is requisite to improve all the accident of our lives, to the contemplation of Divine Providence, which orders and governs them. In a word, every thing is capable of improvement, if we be not wanting; we shall never want opportunity if we embrace it; any thing will serve an intent mind, and a devout heart to these purposes.

My second remark is, upon the custom of those several persons in the Gospel, that upon divers occasions entered into conference with our SAVIOUR; which, I note, they always began by way of question, or doubt, as men desirous to be informed, rather than affecting to teach or dictate. This was not only the way of NICODEMUS, (*John iii.*), of the woman of Samaria, (*John iv.*), and of the young rich man, (*Matt. xix.*), who came in earnest to be instructed; but of the Scribes, and Pharisees, and Sadducees, who came to dispute. This modest way of propounding a question, and expecting and replying to the answer, was the old way of disputation. And certainly this is of great use in our case, for the more easy introduction of religion into ordinary conversation. When we do not violently break in upon the company, but civilly

make our way ; nor abruptly obtrude our sentiments, but insinuate them ; not malapertly reprove other men's errors, or superciliously dictate our own opinions ; not throw down our gauntlet, and challenge the company to a combat ; but modestly appear in the garb of learners, and propound a case as to men wiser than ourselves, for our own satisfaction : This course, instead of offending, exceedingly obliges those we apply ourselves to ; for as much as every man is glad to be accounted wise, and fit to be consulted with.

As, suppose you should ask the persons you are with, what they think of such or such an argument for the immortality of the soul, or for the proof of a particular Providence ; or ask their advice, how to answer such an objection that comes in your way, against either of those, or any other fundamental point of religion : And though such questions may at first seem merely speculative ; yet, if they be pursued wisely, and with that intention, they will infallibly lead to practice.

Or, suppose you put a case about temperance ; as, namely, what are the measures of sobriety, so as also to avoid scrupulosity ? How far is worldly care evil, and how far innocent and allowable ?

Or, more generally, how a man may discern his own proficiency in virtue ; and what preparation is necessary against the uncertainty of life, and to secure the great stake in another world.

Or, to name no more, what the company thinks of such or such a passage in a sermon you lately heard, or in such a book ? These, and a thousand more such easy inlets there are into good discourse, which a little presence of mind will improve to what purposes we desire.

Another thing I have learned from the custom of prudent men ; to insinuate that by a story, which would not be so well received if it were directly and bluntly delivered. Telling of stories, you know, is common ; and if a man have any graceful way of telling them, and use prudence in the choice of them, he hath the company in his power,

and may lead them to what discourse he will. And, besides, men will admit of that to be said in the third person, which they will not bear in the second.

To this purpose, suppose a man should have in readiness a story of some remarkable judgment of GOD, upon some notorious sin, that he would deter those he converses with from, nobody could take offence at the story, and yet every man's conscience would make application of it. Or, suppose a man should, in lively colours, describe some excellent person, he would not only put all the hearers into the thoughts of those virtues that were so described, but stir up a modest shame in them for their own shortness, and an emulation of so brave an example. These, and many such other ways there are, which your own prudence and observation will represent to you better than I can, by which a discreet person may engage any company (in which it is fit for an honest man to be found) in good discourse.

But I will not omit, upon this occasion, to tell you a story, which I have from very good hands, of two very eminent men, both for learning and piety, in the last age; (or rather the beginning of the present;) the one of them a great Prelate, (indeed a Primate,) and the other a Churchman of great note. These two great men, as they often met together, to consult the interest of learning, and the affairs of the Church; so when they had dispatched that, they seldom parted from one another without such an encounter as this; 'Come, good Doctor,' saith the Bishop, 'let us now talk a little of JESUS CHRIST.' Or, on the other side, said the Doctor, 'Come, my Lord, let me hear your Grace talk of the goodness of GOD, with your wonted eloquence. Let us warm one another's hearts with heaven, that we may the better bear this cold world.' And this they performed with that holy reverence and ardent zeal, with that delightful sense and feeling, that afforded matter of admiration to those of their friends or servants that happened to be present, or to overhear them. Here is now an example of holy Conference, without a preface,

and yet without exception : a precedent, not only justifying all I have said, but easy to imitate wherever there is a like spirit of piety. A few such men would put profaneness out of countenance, and turn the tide of conversation.

PHIL. I doubt I shall never be able to imitate ; but I am resolved to write after so fair a copy as well as I can : Therefore I pray you, if you have any farther directions for the guiding of my hand, let me have them.

SEBAST. All that I have to say more, may be summed up in these four following cautions :—

*First,* You must remember that other discourse, so it be manly and pertinent, is not only lawful, but necessary in its season.

*Secondly,* That when men are in drink, or in passion, it is no fit time to enter on this subject, for it will be but to “ cast pearls before swine ; ” it can do those persons no good at such times, and it may do us hurt, and religion too. But when men are in the calmest and soberest methods, then is the time for this intercourse.

*Thirdly,* It is very adviseable that we make a distinction of persons, as well as times, for this business. You know the world is not all of a size ; some are our superiors, others are our inferiors, or equals ; there are some very acute and learned men, some dull and ignorant ; some are captious, others sincere and plain hearted ; some profane, and others pious : In a word, there are old and young, rich and poor, cheerful and melancholy, and abundant other such differences in men’s circumstances ; all which require a peculiar address, if we intend to fasten any good thing on them.

*Fourthly,* It is a matter of prudence, that our essays of this kind be rather perfective, than destructive ; that is, that we do not take upon us, authoritatively to quash and control other discourse ; but rather take advantage of any occasional passages and hints, from whence to improve and raise it insensibly.

*Lastly,* We should not always harp upon one string ;



but sometimes designedly lay aside our business, and then resume it again : as in music, we sing and let fall a note, and by and by get it up again ; that by such variety we may afford the more delightful entertainment to those that are our companions. And now, I doubt, I have quite tired you ; therefore it is time to bid you a good night.

PHIL. Dear SEBASTIAN, shall I tell you a plain truth ? When we first came together this evening, your conversation methought was so much out of the mode, that though I considered you as an honest gentleman, yet I suspected I should have uneasy company with you : but now I fancy you are like some of those old stately buildings I have seen, which are a little rough and weather beaten without, but for all that, are substantially strong, and express very admirable art within.

SEBAST. Nay, then, good night again, if you be for compliments ; but if you have any real value for me, I hope you will now do me the favour of your company at my house some other evening.

## PART II.

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### THE ARGUMENT OF THE SECOND CONFERENCE.

IN the former conference SEBASTIAN having convinced PHILANDER of the great importance of religion, and the wisdom of making it as well the subject of social communication, as of retired meditations; accordingly, they two meet on purpose, this second time, to confer about it. But BIOPHILUS, a sceptical person, being in their company, at first diverts them from their design, by other discourse; until after a while, under the disguise of news, he is brought into this subject before he was aware: and then he puts them upon the proof of those principles, which they would have supposed. Upon this occasion, the foundations of religion are searched into, and particularly, that great point concerning a judgment to come: which being done, and BIOPHILUS thereby rendered somewhat more serious, they pursue their first intention, and discourse warmly and sensibly of another world, and of the necessary preparations for it.

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PHILANDER. You see, SEBASTIAN, I am 'as good as my promise; and at this time so much better, as I have brought my neighbour BIOPHILUS along with me.

SEBASTIAN. I always took you for a man of your word, but now you have not only acquitted yourself, but obliged me.

BIOPHILUS. Your humble servant, good SEBASTIAN: I know you are a studious person; yet I thought company would not be unacceptable to you at this season.

SEBAST. You are heartily welcome, Sir: I love my books well, but my friends better. Come, Gentlemen, will it please you to draw near the fire? The weather is very sharp still.

PHIL. The cold continues; but, thanks be to God, the evenings are not so tedious since I saw you last.

BIOPH. How can that be, PHILANDER? The weather, indeed, may change on a sudden, and become colder or

warmer upon several accidents : but seeing the sun keeps his constant course, the interim of a few days can make no discernible difference in the length or shortness of the evenings.

PHIL. But here is a friend hath taught me an art for that, a way to make time longer or shorter, at pleasure ; nay, (which perhaps will increase your wonder,) both these seeming contraries should be coincident. A man shall have more time to spend, and less to spare ; more for his use and pleasure, and none to be a burthen to him.

BIOPH. Can art do that ? That is a noble skill indeed, (if it be possible,) to shorten a man's time, and yet prolong his life. Sure you speak riddles : however, I pray, make me a partaker of the mystery.

PHIL. There is no secret but this : Good company and profitable conversation, redeem time from folly and impertinency ; and so we really live longer, and also spend the time pleasantly ; and so our lives seem to be shorter.

BIOPH. That is pretty, I confess ; but I had rather it had been literally true.

SEBAST. I believe BIOPHILUS remembers a proverbial saying they have in Italy to this purpose : ' He that would have a short Lent, let him borrow money to be repaid at Easter.' So he that forecasts the account which every man must one day make, how he hath expended the time of this life, will not be apt to think the term of it to be over long. And he, on the other side, who improves his time as he ought, and hath his accounts in readiness, will not think the day of reckoning too soon or sudden.

BIOPH. Very good again : but, nevertheless, with your pardon, gentlemen, I should argue quite the contrary from your premises. For, if there be a judgment to come, (as you are pleased to suppose,) and that a man must render an account of all his actions another day : This, methinks, should curdle all his delights ; and the very thoughts of such a thing filling him with perpetual fears and solicitude about it, must needs make life very tedious to him. But if there be no such thing to be feared hereafter, then a man

shall, in effect, live a great while in a little time, when there is nothing to disturb his thoughts, to impeach his pleasures, or interrupt the enjoyment of himself.

PHIL. Yes, even in the case which you put, death will be sure to come shortly, and that will spoil his sport.

BIOPH. That is very true, and very sad. If therefore you would find out a remedy for that, you would do something to the purpose. But when you cannot but observe that there are several sorts of brute creatures that outlive mankind, continue longer in the world; and have as well a quicker sense of pleasure, as a more unlimited and uncontrollable enjoyment of it; if mankind, after all this, must be perpetually tormented too with suspicions of what may come after, they are doubly miserable, and under the hardest fate of all creatures.

SEBAST. That very thing which you now observe, is to me a very great argument of what you oppose. For upon those very considerations, *viz.*, that the life of man in this world is shorter than that of other less considerable creatures, and that the pleasure thereof is interrupted also by the expectation of the future; upon those very grounds there is great reason to believe that there is another world, wherein he may have amends made him for whatever was amiss or defective here. For it is not credible with me, that such power and wisdom as are plainly displayed in the constitution of man, should be so utterly destitute of goodness, as to contrive things so ill, that the noblest being should be finally the most unfortunate.

To which I must add, that therefore the apprehension of a judgment to come, neither is, nor can be, mere matter of dread and horror, (as you seem to suppose,) but is either terrible or comfortable, respectively to men's preparations for it. I cannot wonder if the thoughts of it so fright and discompose evil men, that they could with all their hearts wish there was no such thing. But, most certainly, to wise and virtuous men, it is so far from being formidable, that contrariwise, the hope of it is the very joy of their hearts, the support of their spirits, their greatest

security against all the cross accidents of this world, and, in a word, their port and sanctuary.

**BIOPH.** These are fine sayings, **SEBASTIAN**; but when it comes to the proof, I do not find men in love with dying; nor to have so comfortable an opinion of that other world you speak of, but that they could, with all their hearts, be content to quit their interest in the latter, so they might put off the former.

Indeed I have often observed men, when they have been past all hopes of life, to set a good face on the matter, and welcome the approach of death with seeming courage: but in this juncture, let but a physician appear that gives them any hopes of recovery, they presently start back from the brink of another world, and smile upon the messenger that brings the good tidings of life. I cannot see, therefore, that men do indeed believe themselves in this matter.

**SEBAST.** There is no doubt, but some men may talk only, and set a good face upon that which they have no comfortable sense of: And no wonder if such men's courage fails them when they have most need of it. But this is no more reproach to true faith in **God**, than it is to generous courage, that now and then you shall see a huffing, swaggering hector, turn recreant when he is put to it in earnest. It is acknowledged to be very easy to vapour when no danger is near; but it requires real bravery to stand to it when a man is briskly encountered. Now, as you will not say there is no such thing as valour, because there are some cowards that pretend to it; so neither (I presume) will you think fit to suppose there is no faith, because there is some hypocrisy.

But, notwithstanding all, there are certainly, and have been, sundry persons in the world, who, though they have had the same natural affection to themselves, and to the present life, with others, yet have as heartily wished and longed for the great day as it was lawful for them to do. They know it is their duty to maintain the station **God** hath set them in, until they have a fair dismissal; but

bating that consideration, I doubt not but many a good man would sue out his *Quietus est*, and gladly embrace an opportunity of bidding farewell to the world.

BIOPH. You say well : But how shall this case be decided ? Where may a man find such a person as you speak of ?

SEBAST. Perhaps you have not heard any man sing his *Nunc dimittis*, or if you had, it may be, you would not have believed him to be in earnest : But what think you of ST. PAUL, who professes, “ he desires to be dissolved, and to be with CHRIST ? ” And particularly, (2 *Tim.* iv. 7,) he foresees a violent death approaching him, and upon that occasion, by way of contemplation, places himself, as it were, upon a promontory, where he could look backward and forward, and take a view of both worlds ; and when he reflects upon that which he was leaving, he finds that he had discharged his part well and worthily whilst he was in it. “ I have fought the good fight,” saith he, “ I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” But then, when he looks forward, and takes a prospect of what was to come, here he triumphs and exults with joy : “ Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which GOD the righteous judge shall give me.”

Or what do you think of so many thousand martyrs, who have not only gone out of the world with smiles on their faces, and songs in their mouths, but have chosen death when they might have lived as freely, as happily, and as long, as other men ? They were not worn out with age, nor vexed and wearied with poverty, nor distracted by any disaster : they had as tender and sensible constitutions as other men, as much natural affection to themselves, and as sound reason to judge what was best ; and yet despised the present life and world, in comparison of that to come.

BIOPH. Nay, as for those men of old, which you speak of, I cannot tell what to make of them : But I would fain see such a man now.

SEBAST. I make no question but I could direct you to such men now ; but it may be you will not believe they despise death, because you see them yet living : however,

what think you of the man that hath the bravery to deny himself those profits and pleasures which other men allow themselves? (so long as they see no infamy or external danger attend them.) What think you of the man that dares be virtuous in a lewd age, and in an evil company; and hath the courage to confront a whole world with his example? What think you of the man that sits so loose to the world, that he can bear prosperity without being supercilious, and adversity without being dejected? that can be in want without repining, and can be liberal without upbraiding? Such men as these are to be found in the present age: and wherever you find any such man, assure yourself, there is a person that believes himself, or rather, that believes in God, and hath as real a persuasion of the world to come, as other men have of that which they see with their eyes, and touch with their fingers.

BIOPH. I believe there are some such men as you speak of; and I account them brave and worthy persons: But, gentlemen, let us waive this uncomfortable subject. Come, what good news is there stirring?

PHIL. O Sir, that is a prohibited commodity you inquire for: neither of us deal in it.

BIOPH. Nay, truly, for my part, I wish it had been prohibited sooner; for there hath been so much knavery and sophistication in it, that several well meaning men have been cheated of their peace, their loyalty, and almost out of their wits too by it.

But so long as we are not bound to believe all that we hear, we may hear what men talk of, for our diversion.

SEBAST. Hearing and telling of news seem to me to be just such another diversion as tippling is. And it is much the same thing, whether a man's head be full of vapours or proclamations. Wind in the brain makes men giddy, as well as wine; and men reel and stagger to and fro, as unseemly, by the impulse of uncertain rumours, as those that are intoxicated with the strongest liquors. Besides, just as he that knows not how to entertain himself at home, usually applies himself to the tavern, or the ale-house, for

his relief; so it is the custom of idle people, and such as are negligent of their own affairs, to busy themselves in matters that do not belong to them. And there is yet another thing worse than all this, namely, Whereas the tavern drunkard sleeps and evaporates his wine, and comes to himself again, the coffee-house drunkard scarcely ever dispels those vapours of news that have filled his crown.

But after all, now I think better of it, I have a very remarkable story to tell you: But you are so great a critic you will believe nothing, and therefore I had as good hold my peace.

BIOPH. Nay, good SEBASTIAN, let us have it. You are a person of good intelligence, if you will please to communicate.

SEBAST. It is so very strange and wonderful news, that I suspect your faith; but yet it is such as puts me almost into an ecstasy every time I think upon it.

BIOPH. Do not tantalize us with expectation, whilst you raise the value of your story, nor tempt our fancies to anticipate it.

SEBAST. Why then it is the discovery and description of a certain country, which is (by relation) the very garden and paradise of the whole world, so transcendantly admirable, that Italy, Thessaly, or whatsoever you have seen or heard of, in all your life, is nothing to it.

BIOPH. Pugh! Who would have expected foreign news after such a preface? And all but some Island of Pines, I warrant you! Or suppose it should be true, what can it be to us? However, go on SEBASTIAN; perhaps it may afford us some diversion.

SEBAST. I presaged what entertainment my news would have with you. What can it be to us, say you? Why, when you understand all, you will bless yourself that there is such a place in the world, which you may go to if you please, where you may find retreat from all troubles at home, and be happy beyond imagination: nay, let me tell you, you must, you will go to it, if you love yourself.

BIOPH. You speak at a strange rate, SEBASTIAN: a



man would think you were either strangely imposed upon yourself, or else that you had very mean apprehensions of our discretion. But let it suffice to say, that, soberly speaking, there is no country upon the face of the earth that can deserve this encomium; besides, when all is said that can be said, every man's own home is his best country.

SEBAST. Why do not you understand me? This which I am speaking of, is or will be your home too; at least if you will but take the pains to travel thither.

BIOPH. I marry, thank you for that; but I wist it is better to believe than to go look, in this case. What, change my native country! Transplant myself at these years! No; I am too old, and have taken too deep root where I am for that.

PHIL. Assure yourself, BIOPHILUS, there is something extraordinary that SEBASTIAN expresses himself thus. He is no hypochondriac, nor whimsical enthusiast, but a man of the dryest and best tempered understanding.

BIOPH. I have always thought no less, which raises my wonder now. Come, pray you, SEBASTIAN, tell us plainly what you have to say, upon good grounds, concerning this place which you are in rapture about.

In the first place, let me ask you what is the name of this strange country?

SEBAST. It is called Urania.

BIOPH. A romantic name! But, I pray you, in what longitude and latitude is it situate? that a man may know where to find it, if he should have a mind to go thither.

SEBAST. I am not skilful in that kind of learning, neither do I remember that it was told me, in those terms, how the country lies; but perhaps this may tend to your satisfaction: I am assured that they have no night, or darkness there, for the sun never goes off their horizon, nor are there any long evenings, and tedious nights, which we complain of in England. By this character, I suppose, you may guess at the latitude of the place.

BIOPH. Well, I will consider of that at leisure; in the mean time, tell us what is said to be the temper of the air.

SEBAST. O Sir, the air is sweet and temperate beyond compare: it is ether rather than air; there is neither violent heat nor cold, no distinction of summer and winter, and indeed no such thing, but a perpetual spring; so that flowers blossom, and fruits ripen all the year long: and by reason of this serenity and constancy of the air, the country is so healthful, that there is never any epidemical or reigning disease, no man feeble and languishing; nay, not so much as wrinkles or grey hairs upon any man's head or face, insomuch that you would think the inhabitants were all absolutely immortal.

BIOPH. If that one thing alone be true, I warrant you the country wants no people.

SEBAST. O very populous; yet by reason of its prodigious fruitfulness it can never be overstocked, for it yields a fresh harvest of all kinds of fruits every month, and that a most abundant one, forasmuch as no weeds, nor thorns and briers, grow there, but only that which is good for the use of man; and all this is brought forth spontaneously, without the toil and labour of man.

They say also, there are no kinds of wild beasts there, either to affright and annoy the people, or to devour the fruits of the land; nay, not so much as any serpents, or other venomous creatures, or troublesome insects; and all this is owing to the clemency of the air, the peculiar nature of the soil, together with God's blessing upon both.

BIOPH. I perceive a man may eat well, and when he hath so done, may sleep in a whole skin there; that I like, and I would to God it were not a romance which you give us. But go on, SEBASTIAN. What is the polity and government of the country.

SEBAST. The government is perfectly monarchical, and the Prince is absolute; yet all his subjects enjoy their liberty and property as securely and fully as in any commonwealth in the world.

There is no squabbling about privileges, no interfering between prerogative and immunities, dominion and common right. The King commands what he will, and the

people willingly obey him ; for his wisdom and goodness moderate his will and power better than all the boundaries of written laws.

And this I am informed of too, that though there be several degrees of subjects, as there are amongst us ; yet from hence arise no emulations amongst the nobility, nor any oppression of the commons. The people do not envy and murmur against the great ones ; nor, on the other side, do they as greater fish devour the lesser.

ΒΙΟΡΗ. A rare temper of government this ! and not less admirable than that of the air you spoke of before. You amaze me strangely. But what are the staple commodities of the country.

SEBAST. As for that, you must know it is not with Urania as with most other countries ; where usually one province abounds with what another wants, and the other needs what that can spare, and so there is a necessity of reciprocal intercourse between them, both to relieve their necessities mutually, and to discharge their superfluities. And herein, you know, lie both the reason of trade, and the security of alliances between several countries in our parts of the world. But Urania being (as was wont to be said of Egypt) a country self-sufficient, depends not at all upon foreign commerce ; and therefore, as it needs nothing from abroad, so consequently it sends out few or none of those commodities it abounds with, but rather invites foreigners to come over to them, and reside amongst them, and so to partake freely of the advantages of that happy land.

Yet I must tell you they have very great rarities in those parts, and such as are exceedingly desired by all other people that understand the worth of them. As, in particular, to specify some few, which are not at all to be found any where else :—

In the first place, they have the true *Elixir Vitæ*, a very precious balm, far beyond that of Gilead, that perfectly cures all diseases, both inward and outward, I had almost said, of body and mind. This operates without

any pain to the patient ; and in outward applications heals all kind of wounds, and leaves no scar or mark behind it.

They have also an admirable water, which so quickens all the senses, and peculiarly the sight, that a man by the help of it shall see farther than by a telescope, and pierce into the very secrets of nature.

The common food of the country is somewhat answerable to the description of manna, and hath the peculiar taste which every man affects, and satisfies all the powers of nature. They have also a delicious wine, called *Lacrymæ Christi*, which, amongst other virtues, makes men forget all sorrows whatsoever ; and this they usually drink in an amethyst cup, which preserves them from surfeits or intemperance, what proportion soever they drink.

Amongst the rest, they have a sort of nitre, so very powerful and abstersive, that it takes away all spots, blemishes, and aspersion, and makes those that use it so very beautiful, that they ravish the eyes of beholders.

It were endless to go about to enumerate the commodities of this country, which clearly outgoes the Holy Land, though it was said that in SOLOMON'S days, gold and silver were there as common as the stones of the street. And for proof of it, the inhabitants are so rich and prosperous, that there is not one poor man in the whole land ; not one to be found that doth need, or will ask an alms. The hungry and naked, those grievous spectacles, too sadly common in most other places, are not to be seen there ; of which amongst other causes, these are assigned, *viz.*, There is no miser there, who hoards up what others should live upon ; nor is there any wasteful glutton or epicure, who devours his own and other folks' portion too. In short, all desirable things are there in such abundance, that every man is as rich, as full, and as happy as he pleases.

BIOPH. If all this was possible to be true, which I have not faith enough to believe, yet the felicity of this country could not be long-lived ; for it will certainly derive upon

itself the envy of all its neighbours; and the effect of that will be, that those who have the best iron will quickly become masters of this wealth.

SEBAST. Nay, BIOPHILUS, as for that there is no danger, for the country is altogether inaccessible, save only by one narrow way, and that is so well guarded, that to this day no enemy hath ever had the confidence to assail it. And besides, all the inhabitants are in such perfect peace and amity one with another, and maintain so inviolably their allegiance towards their Sovereign, that as no foreigner hath any encouragement to enterprise upon them by treachery, so neither can he, without mighty folly, think himself considerable enough to prevail by force against such an united strength.

BIOPH. Now you speak of that, I pray give me leave to ask you one question more. What is the humour of the people, both amongst themselves, and towards strangers?

SEBAST. This is admirable in its kind, as any thing I have told you yet. The people are sprightly and cheerful, ingenious and complaisant, open-hearted and yet grave, without fraud, and without jealousy; they neither intend any hurt, nor do they suspect any. Amongst other instances of their sedate cheerfulness, they are exceedingly addicted to music; and their songs are observed to be composed, for the most part, in praise of their Prince, the splendour of his court, the glory of his achievements, and the felicity of his reign.

So far are they from wrath and choler, that in the memory of man there hath not been one law-suit commenced amongst them; and, which is more, not one theological disputation,—which usually are attended with so much heat and animosity in these parts of the world. But as for tale-bearers, whisperers, backbiters, and all that melancholy and envious brood, there is not one of them to be found in all the country; every man there loves his neighbour as himself, and is as tender of his interest and reputation as of his own.

And then, for their temper and carriage towards

strangers, they are infinitely civil and obliging. They deride not other men's habit, or mien, or language, or customs, or complexion; but contrariwise, whensoever any such come amongst them, they welcome them heartily, treat them with all instances of hospitality, and by all possible obligations and endearments invite them to become one people with themselves.

BIOPH. This is a very strange relation as ever I heard in my life; but, in plain English, it is too good to be true. All this can amount to no more than to some Utopia, or new Atlantis. Pardon my freedom, good SEBASTIAN: I acknowledge you a wise and a learned gentleman, but in this particular story, somebody hath abused your good nature; for it can be no better than a fiction.

SEBAST. You do not ordinarily think a man bound to warrant the news he tells you, but you used to be contented to take it as he hath it; and I am sure you will not allow me to prescribe to you what you shall believe. However, I assure you, upon the word of a gentleman and a Christian, I have not devised it of my own head, but am as well satisfied of the truth of the relation I have made to you, as it is possible for me to be of any thing which I have not seen with my eyes; and I am very confident I have as good grounds for my persuasion, as it is fit for a discreet man to require in such a case.

BIOPH. I wish you could satisfy me as well. I pray therefore let us know what probabilities you go upon in this matter.

SEBAST. I had this strange relation (as you esteem it) from one that came from the place, and was an eye-witness of what he reported, and therefore could not be deceived himself in what he related. And then, his quality was such, as that he could have no interest to impose upon me therein; for he was no less a man than the only son of the great Monarch of the country; and he came as ambassador extraordinary from the King, his father, on purpose to invite and incline our people to participate of that happy region, and of all the admirable advantages aforesaid; and

assured us, that all which came should be free denizens of Urania.

BIOPH. Aye, good SEBASTIAN, he told you so; but how are you sure he was not an impostor, and designed to put tricks upon you and our good-natured countrymen?

SEBAST. As for that, his very person and mien spake for him; both which were so august and grand, as that no mean man could bear out the port he used. Besides this, he came not in a clancular way, but made his public entry; and his train and equipage were grave and majestic, like himself, far beyond the empty pomp and pageantry of a counterfeit. His commission and letters credential also were publicly seen, read, and allowed; and they were sealed with such a seal, as no wit of man could imitate or counterfeit.

And unto all this, I have seen the map or chart of the country, I have perused the digest of the laws of the kingdom, these eyes have read the records of their history, and with this mouth, I have tasted the delicious fruits of the land. What would you have more to justify the matter of fact?

BIOPH. What would I have more? Why, I think you venture too great a stock in one bottom. I would not trust to any one man, whatsoever he were, in a relation of this nature; I should require to see and speak with many about it, before I would believe it.

SEBAST. You say well. But can you think it reasonable to require that so great a Prince should send many ambassadors on such an errand, when he aims not at his own greatness, or the accommodating of his own affairs, nor hath any heed of our alliance or assistance, but merely designs our benefit? Or can you expect that he should send every day fresh envoys: and that not only to whole countries, but to every individual person too? No, BIOPHILUS, it was an instance of wonderful goodness that such a Prince should send one ambassador on such an errand; and admirable charity and self denial in him that undertook and performed it.

**BIOPH.** You speak reason, I must acknowledge, in that particular; but yet I can never believe, that if there were any such country as your intelligence amounts to, it should lie undiscovered until now. What! **DRAKE, CAVENDISH, COLUMBUS, DAVIS,**—none of them, in all their travels, take notice of such a place; nor give the least intimation of it until now?

**SEBAST.** That is no such strange thing as you make it, if you call to mind how long a time it was before the world would believe there were Antipodes; and yet it is plain, that so long one full half of the world was unknown to the other. Or, if you remember that time was, (and that not an ignorant one neither,) when the Roman empire was thought to embrace the whole earth, which, as now we are certain, took not in one fifth, perhaps not one tenth of it. Do not you know that Hercules's Pillars were accounted the boundaries of human travels, and that, for a great many ages, both the torrid and the frigid zones (as they are called) were esteemed uninhabitable? Besides, you know it is not very long since those vast tracts of land, the West Indies, were first discovered. And, to say no more, I pray how many ages passed over the heads of mankind before this our native country of Britain, as considerable as it is, came into any knowledge or consideration with the rest of the world? Think it not strange, therefore, if Urania was so late discovered.

**BIOPH.** But that which I principally intend to say was this: You afford me matter of great wonder, that you should be so much concerned for a place very newly discovered; (if it be discovered;) but especially, that you should believe so many strange things of it, before any one person hath gone from hence, and returned hither again, to confirm those reports of it.

**SEBAST.** I know no way to make a man believe, that hath no mind to it; yet I will give you all the satisfaction I am able. You must know, therefore, that this country hath not been wholly undiscovered until now; for I myself have seen a book of great authority and antiquity,



which, though somewhat obscurely and figuratively written, yet pointed at such a place, and in some measure described it too, to him that attentively read and considered it. And besides, there are credible relations concerning certain persons that have made very fortunate voyages thither.

But as to that you object, that no man hath gone from hence thither, and returned again to us, to bring us the tidings,—you will easily satisfy yourself therein, if you consider what I intimated before, *viz.*, That those who once get thither, can have no inclination to make a change so much to their disadvantage, as it must needs be for them to return hither again. Besides, though they say the passage is not long thither, yet it is no common road; and therefore very few will (at least unnecessarily) undertake it.

PHIL. But if it be an untraced path, how shall a man find the way thither, if he have a mind to go?

SEBAST. O PHILANDER! there is no great difficulty in that, if a man be well resolved on the business; for besides a chart, and very punctual instructions which the ambassador left behind him for that purpose, when he was amongst us, there are skilful and faithful guides and pilots, who freely offer their service, and will not fail, with God's blessing, to land us safe there.

PHIL. I cannot tell what BIOPHILUS thinks of this business; but for my part, SEBASTIAN, I am so ravished with your relation, that if there be such a place in the world, I will find it out, by God's help. I thank God I am no malcontent, either with my native country, or my private fortunes; yet I see no reason we should, like mushrooms, live and die upon the same spot; especially if we may thus much mend ourselves by the change. I am a citizen of the world, and that shall be my country where I can fare best.

But will you go with me, SEBASTIAN? Then I shall not be only out of all doubt of the truth of your narrative, but I shall with much more cheerfulness change my

country, when I do not change my friend, nor forego your company.

SEBAST. By GOD's grace I will go with you ; and to assure you of my intentions, I will now acquaint you that I have been this good while setting things in order, and making preparations for the voyage.

PHIL. But how shall we dispose of our estates here ? And what commodities had we best to furnish ourselves with, to carry over with us ?

SEBAST. As for the disposal of our present fortunes, there are very sure returns betwixt this country and that ; for the Prince himself will be your security, if you put your effects into such hands as he hath appointed. But as for merchandise to carry with us, there will be no need of that ; for the country which we have in our eye is so gloriously rich and plentiful, the Prince is so noble and benign, and all the inhabitants so kind and charitable, that we shall be sure, as soon as ever we come there, to be furnished, *gratis*, with all that our hearts can wish ; and, moreover, if we should put ourselves to the trouble of transporting our baggage with us, it would not only incumber us in our journey, but would also be such mere trash and lumber when you come there, that we should be ashamed of it, and ourselves too, for setting such a value upon it.

But there is another thing, and much more material, which I must needs tell you of, in order to our more favourable reception when we come there ; and that is, we must beforehand quite alter our habit and garb, and not so much as smell of the earth we came from. Amongst other things we must disuse ourselves from onions and garlic, and from flesh too, that we may the easier accord with the diet of the country ; and we must refine our spirits, that we may be fit to breathe in that pure air ; and having so done, there needs no more but to carry with us great minds and large souls, to qualify us, both for the society and enjoyments there.

PHIL. Thank you, dear fellow-traveller, (for so I will henceforth style you,) for these instructions: I will use the best of my endeavours to be fitted accordingly. But is there any thing else that I need to be advised in?

SEBAST. O yes; there is one thing more which I doubt you do not think of; and I am somewhat afraid lest the mention of it should discourage you; but it must be, and there is no avoiding it.

PHIL. By all means let me know what it is, Sir. Mistrust not my courage or constancy: I will stick at nothing that crosses my way to Urania.

SEBAST. You remember I have intimated to you already, that when we come at the country we design, we shall be immortal, we can never die afterwards; but we must die beforehand, or we shall never come thither. This is the pinch of the business: What think you of it now, PHILANDER?

PHIL. Never the worse for that, fellow-traveller. But what a dream have I been in all this while? I thought verily you had spoken historical truth of some rare earthly country: but now my eyes are open, and I perceive you mean heaven: that is the Urania you have all this while amused us with. Now I can unriddle the whole business: I have now a clew to guide me through the maze of your discourse, and can decipher all the figures you have used. I am sure it is heaven only can answer the character you have given: that is the place where there is no pain, sickness, nor death; there is no night nor darkness, but a perpetual day; there is to be found the true balsam that cures all the distempers and wounds, both of body and mind; there are to be had all the other rarities which you have mentioned; JESUS CHRIST is the ambassador from ALMIGHTY GOD, that invites us thither. All is plain and easy now. How dull was I, that I could not understand you sooner!

BIOPH. And have you drolled with us all this while, SEBASTIAN? Have you wheedled me back again into the-

subject I declined? Is your famous Urania in another world? I thought your news was impossible to be true, and now you as good as confess it.

SEBAST. By your pardon, BIOPHILUS, have I done you any wrong? You asked for news, and I have told you good and true news; news of more importance, and more comfortable, than any the coffee-house affords: a great truth of "a kingdom that cannot be shaken;" a kingdom wherein there is righteousness and justice, unity and joy, love and good will, everlasting peace, and everlasting life; a state of that felicity, that it is able to make us weary of this world, and to render the time of our life tedious to us, till we come to the enjoyment of it; in a word, that is sufficient to make all the ways of virtue seem easy and delectable, and even death itself desirable in the way thither.

What think you of it, PHILANDER, now you understand what country it is I persuaded you to? Doth your mind hold for the voyage? Will you go on with your preparations for it, as we were discoursing before? Will you venture to shoot the gulf, that you may arrive at it?

PHIL. Yes, fellow-traveller, I hold my resolution. For though I find I was mistaken in the particular, yet not in the general; it was an earthly paradise that I had in my thoughts, and I had no other apprehensions of your design; and therein BIOPHILUS was more in the right than I, who was confident there could be no such country in this world as you described. But I heartily thank you for the deception; you have cheated us into our own advantage. And now that I understand you, I do not change my course, though I change my port: I hope I shall not be so absurd as to be more in earnest for an earthly country than for a heavenly.

Who would not gladly be at everlasting rest, and in an unchangeable condition? We are but pilgrims and strangers in this world; but there we shall be at home, and in our Father's house. Here we are continually tossed with winds and seas, tormented betwixt hopes and fears;

there we come into harbour, and shall be safe as upon a rock; stable and settled as the mountains.

Who can choose but wish to live for ever, and would not be contented to die once, that he might be out of the reach of chance or danger for ever after? Everlasting life! what an ocean of joy and felicity is contained in it! Surely he doth not love himself, or doth not understand himself, who would not gladly leave an uncertain, troublesome, quarrelsome, foolish, disputing, suspicious, envious world, upon far easier terms than the attainment of it. But to live with the ever blessed JESUS, to spend eternity in the society of good and wise, kind and peaceable men, to enter into everlasting friendships, inviolable peace, unchangeable felicity; I am transported with the thoughts of it!

When once I had the happiness to take notice of a poor man, blind from his mother's womb, who never had seen the sun, nor could have any notion of beauty or colours, nor any of that variety of delightful objects which the eye and light entertain us with; when afterwards, I say, by a strange cure, this poor man had his eyes opened, and found a crowd of new delights press in upon him, he thought himself surrounded with miracles, and was almost distracted with wonder. And certainly no less, but a great deal more will our surprise be, when we come to heaven; where, probably, we shall have new powers opened, which shall discover such glories to us as we were not capable of perceiving before, if they had been presented to us: but most certainly we shall have then new objects of delight to entertain those powers we have, and those transcendent to all we ever had experience of before.

When we shall come to heaven, our spiritual Canaan, to the enjoyment of a happiness of God's preparing, who hath all the ingredients of felicity in his power, and infinite wisdom to contrive and compound them, and unspeakable goodness to bestow them; and who, as the Scripture expresses it, hath, from the beginning of the world been designing and preparing such a system of joy and felicity,

as may at once both most delight his creatures, and display all his attributes: When, I say, we shall observe the strange change between a narrow, stingy, necessitous, unquiet, sickly, peevish, and contentious world, which we have left behind us, and the settlement and peace, plenty and glory, of that we enter upon; it will not be easy for us (without larger minds than we have now) to know how to behave ourselves; we shall be apt to be oppressed with wonder, and, if it were possible, to die with excess of joy.

SEBAST. You speak sensibly, dear PHILANDER. You seem to have gone up to mount Nebo, and to have fed your eyes with the prospect of the Holy Land: But have you considered the difficulties of the way, as well as the happiness of the journey's end? Will you not repent, and bethink of turning back when you encounter difficulty or danger? Will not death affright you when it appears in all its dismal pomp? Will you not shrink when you shall come to be stripped naked of all your worldly habiliments? Will you not have a lingering after your old accommodations, your fine house, rich furniture, pleasant garden, sprightly wines, or any other pleasures and entertainments of the body?

PHIL. No, no, SEBASTIAN; I will go to heaven, whatever come of it. What can discourage a man when heaven is at stake? If the journey put me to a little trouble, there is rest at the end of it. What is it to exercise a little patience, when a man shall be crowned at last? Who would not run, strive, do, or suffer any thing, and venture all upon such a wager?

Shall I be solicitous for my estate and worldly accommodations, when I know, whether I go to heaven or no, I must shortly leave them all behind me? And surely if they cannot save me from death, they ought not to hinder me of eternal life.

Or, shall I hanker after onions and garlic, and the flesh-pots of Egypt, as you called the pleasures of the body, which will certainly forsake me, if I do not forsake

them first? No; I have counted the cost; there is nothing shall discourage me, by the grace of God; I will go to heaven. But, I pray, let us not part company; let us go to heaven together.

SEBAST. With all my heart, dear friend; for though I doubt we must not expect much company with us, yet perfect solitude is somewhat uncomfortable; and there are great advantages of society: for, if any body should be so absurd as to laugh at us on our journey, we can the better despise them. If either of us should happen to be heavy and weary in our way, we may animate and quicken one another; if any difficulty befall, that may be too hard for one of us, by our united strength we may be able to encounter and remove it; if either of us should swerve a little out of the narrow way, towards the right hand, or towards the left, the other may recall and rectify him. Besides, the great additional comfort it will be when we come to our journey's end, not only that we see one another happy, and enjoy one another's society; but especially when we reflect upon the good service we have done one another, in bringing each other thither; we shall have our joys redoubled by the reflection, and feel not only our own shares, but that also of each other.

PHIL. Happily thought of, fellow traveller; but will not BIOPHILUS go with us too? What say you, Sir?

BIOPH. You are honest gentlemen, and my good friends: But, what romances do you make! what castles do you build in the air! and what shadows do you feed yourselves withal! You talk of heaven as confidently as if you had travelled a hundred times through all the regions of it; or rather, indeed, as if you had visited the world in the moon. But when all is done, did ever you, or any body else, see such a place as heaven? Leave these enthusiastical whimsies, and talk like men: speak of something that is certain and visible, and do not forego substance for shadows, certainties for uncertainties.

PHIL. Good neighbour, in requital of the caution you give us, assure yourself we have the same senses that

you have, and only wish you had the same faith that we have. We are not willing to part with certainties for uncertainties; for if heaven be not certain, nothing else is. And as for the things of this world, they are so far from it, that nothing is more certain than that we must part with them shortly whether we will or no. But as for the other world, we know whom we have believed.

BIOPH. I tell you all is but dream and fancy; there is no proof in the world for it. All you have to say is, that men must believe: as if you should say, shut your eyes and see; you persuade a man to find the way to heaven blindfold. No; give me good proof, or I will not stir a foot: with me, seeing is believing.

PHIL. Remember yourself, good neighbour: Are not you a Christian? Do you not believe that JESUS CHRIST came from heaven on purpose to show us the way thither? And did not he confirm his report by undeniable miracles? Besides, do you not see all wise men provide for another world; and that generally good men, when they come to die, are ravished with joy in contemplation of it, as if they really saw heaven open to receive them?

BIOPH. Whether or no I believe as much as you do, yet I believe this one thing instead of all the rest, that we are born to be cheated: for, what with the illusions of our own melancholy fancies, what by the prejudices of our education, what by the authority of unaccountable tradition, and what by the designs of politicians, it is a hard matter to know what else to believe.

PHIL. Indeed, BIOPHILUS, I am both sorry and ashamed to hear you talk at this rate. And I do not wonder now, that you were so desirous to decline this sort of discourse when we fell upon it. You seem not only to reject Christianity, but all religion in general; and upon those terms you will be as little fit for this world, as for that which is to come.

For, what a sad creature is a man of no religion at all? What state or civil government will be able to endure him, whom no oaths can fasten upon? How can there be any



civil society with him, that can neither trust, nor be trusted? What security can such a man give, that he shall not disturb the state, violate the person of his Prince, falsify his trust, betray his friend, cut his neighbour's throat, if he be under the awe of no God, the expectation of no rewards nor punishments in another world? What security can there be, I say, in dealing with such a man? what sincerity in his friendship, what safety in his neighbourhood? For all these depend upon the reverence of religion; which he that is wholly destitute of, must needs be a wolf's head; the pest and vermin of human society.

Do not, therefore, dear **BIOPHILUS**, at once both stifle your own conscience, and affront the common sense and reason of mankind. Do not, under the pretence of being more witty than other men, reason yourself into brutality; and whilst you grow overwise in your own eyes, be the most fatally mistaken, and lost for ever.

Let not the opinion you have, that other men are under prejudices, prejudice you against arguments for believing. Come, deal ingenuously, and open your breast: propound the grounds of your suspicions, the objections you have against religion; and though I cannot promise you that I will answer them all to your satisfaction, yet I doubt not but there is one that will.

**BIOPH.** Look you, Gentlemen, you put me into a great strait; for if I do not disclose my mind to you, I shall seem disingenuous; and, on the other side, if I do discover my sentiments, it is probable that my creed will fall so many articles short of yours, that we shall break into some heats, and endanger the continuance of our neighbourly conversation. However, since it seems to be your desire, I will be plain with you.

Now, in the first place, that you may not think me a perfect sceptic, I declare to you that I acknowledge the Being of a God; and that not only because the generality of mankind, and even **EPICURUS** himself, owned so much, but because it is not conceivable how the world should be without one; for no wit or reason of man can evince to me,

how any thing should begin to be, without some necessary and eternal existent to begin the motion, and to bring it into being ; or, which is the same thing in effect, there can be no second cause if there be no First.

But then, beyond this you must pardon me ; for, to deal sincerely with you, I do not think that this **God** minds or troubles himself about the world after he had made it : much less do I see any sufficient ground for that which **Philander** hath been talking so warmly about ; namely, a world to come. And for eternal life, (which men speak such great things of,) I profess I look upon it as a flat impossibility ; forasmuch as I see men die, but see no foundation for a belief, that there is any life or existence out of a body.

There are some other points, that I withhold my assent from ; but because you have challenged me to a rational debate, therefore, to put the business between us to an issue, I will insist but upon one point, and that shall be the same which we fell into by chance at our first coming together ; namely, Whether there be such a thing as a general judgment, where men's actions shall be reviewed and censured after this life. Prove me but this one point sufficiently, and I will grant you all the rest.

**SEBAST.** What proof do you require of this ? Why should not the testimony of the Holy Scriptures satisfy you.

**BIOPH.** Excuse me there, **SEBASTIAN** ; I am not to be borne down by authority, but convinced by reason. If you will do any good upon me, you must deal with me as a Philosopher, not a bigoted person.

**SEBAST.** By your favour, it is not to impose upon you, to give you divine authority for proof. I hope **God** may be believed upon his own word ; especially in a business of this nature, which depends so much upon the determination of his will : for who can tell **God's** mind better than himself ? “ Who knows the mind of man, but the Spirit of a man which is in him ? ” And who can pretend to declare what **God** will do, unless he be pleased

to reveal his intentions? But if he declare he will judge the world, we may be sure it shall be done.

BIOPH. Aye, but that is the question. How shall I be assured that God hath any such intentions, or hath made any such declaration?

SEBAST. That which we call by the name of Holy Scripture, is nothing else but a collection of such declarations of the mind of the Divine Majesty, as he hath thought fit, from time to time, to make to the sons of men. And those books, which are so called, have been revered by wise men in all ages upon that account, as such: All imaginable care hath been taken to preserve them from corruption or depravation; and several of the best of men have exposed their lives, rather than consent to the destruction of them. Now, why should you call in question the authority of these books, which you cannot do without impeaching the wisdom of the most able, and the sincerity of the most honest, of men; and upon the same terms you derogate from the faith of all mankind, and must (if you will be impartial) abrogate the credit of all the old records in the world. Forasmuch as (besides all other considerations) these sacred records, I mean the books of the Old and New Testament, bear an irrefragable testimony to each other; and, as a pair of indentures, justify one another. Which you will easily be convinced of, if you consider, that these two volumes were written in several very remote ages, and, consequently, by persons that could hold no correspondence one with another; and were in the custody of those that were of such contrary interests and opinions, that it was impossible they either would or could conspire together to put a cheat upon the world in them. Now if, notwithstanding, these two books (in the circumstances aforesaid) shall verify one another, so as that whatsoever the Old Testament promises, the New Testament performs; what the one foretold, the other represents the accomplishment of; what ground is there, or can there be, to suspect the truth of them? For if several witnesses, and those of several countries, and of contrary interests, such as never saw the

faces of one another before, and therefore neither would nor could combine together and contrive their story, and especially being examined apart too, shall, notwithstanding, jump in the same matter of fact, and circumstances also, there is no man so abounding in his own sense, but will allow their evidence to be good and substantial; then much more is there very good ground to believe those books which have all these advantages, and several other which I will insist upon.

BIOPH. These are pretty things which you say; but this is not that kind of proof I expected from you. If this be all the satisfaction you can give me, I am where I was.

SEBAST. No, BIOPHILUS, this is not all I have to say; but I thought fit to remonstrate to you the sufficiency of this kind of proof in itself, which men of your way are apt to make so slight of; and thence to convince you, that those men that take up with this alone, are not so soft and credulous people as you are wont to represent them.

But what if I had no other proof but this, I do not find that you are able to reply any thing to it. Besides, if this way of probation were far less considerable than it is, yet you know any evidence will serve against none; and the meanest arguments will carry a cause, when there is nothing to be said on the other side. If you could but pretend to prove, on your part, that there were no such thing as a judgment to come, you had then some reason to be strict in your demands of proof from me, of what I assert: But in a true balance, the least grain will cast the scale when there is nothing against it.

Now, besides the unequal balance of nothing against something, be it never so small, do but consider what strange imprudence it is to adventure so great a stake, as all your interest in another world amounts to, upon a mere *Non putaram*. For, what if such a thing should happen to prove true at last, what will become of you then?

Wise men are wont to value, not only certainties, but also probabilities, and even contingencies also. Now,

seeing it is not impossible but such a thing may be, and it is of infinite consequence if it should be, there is all the wisdom in the world to be provided for it. You will say, it may not be: But that is all that infidelity itself can enable you to say: and then sure it is far safer to suppose that it may be, for no hurt can come of that; but the danger is unspeakable on the other side, if it should prove to be true. In a word, in such a case as this is, it is a wise man's part rather to believe upon slight evidence, than to disbelieve upon great presumptions.

BIOPH. I am beholden to you for the friendly caution you give me: But it is your reasons I expect at this time, and not your advice.

SEBAST. Those you shall have presently; and do not think I decline the proof I promised, because I proceed thus gradually with you: the true reason whereof is, because I would rather your own prudence should incline you to believe, than that my arguments should press you to it; and I much more desire that you should be safe, than that I should have the glory of a victory. It is only your concern that we go upon; have therefore a little patience, that we may rightly understand one another; and since you have refused Scripture proof, give me leave to ask you particularly, what kind of proof you expect of this matter under our consideration.

In the first place, I hope you do not require sensible evidence of a day of judgment. You were saying even now, that no man had seen heaven, and therefore you did not believe it. Possibly, those words slipped from you unadvisedly. However, it is (you know) a thing future which we are now debating about; and sensible proof cannot be required of that, without flat contradiction. It is as if a man should desire to see that which confessedly is not to be seen; and that a thing should be that is not; or be, and not be, at the same time. You know you cannot have sensible evidence to day, that the sun will rise tomorrow: In short, neither of any thing past, nor future; but only of that which is present.

BIOPH. Well, we are agreed for that. I did, I confess, speak of seeing heaven, but there was no contradiction in that ; because if there be any such place, it is supposed to be constantly existent, and therefore may be visible : yet I do not expect to see the judgment until the time comes ; because futures are not to be seen, but foreseen. Go on therefore, and give me rational evidence, and it shall suffice.

SEBAST. But there is another thing I desire to be resolved of, namely, What measure or degree of rational evidence you will be satisfied with ? The reason of my inquiry is this : Some men there are, who pretend to a readiness to believe upon just grounds ; but when it comes to trial, they are humoursome and captious ; they will require such evidence as the nature of the thing cannot admit of ; (even supposing it to be true ; ) they expect such proof as shall leave no room for cavil and exception, such as a man can find no evasion from. Now I must tell you, this is very hard and unreasonable in any case whatsoever ; forasmuch as the wit of man is fitter to pull down, than to build up ; and it is the easiest thing in the world to find shifts and cavils, insomuch that he must believe very little indeed, that will admit of nothing which some slight objection or other may be made against.

Therefore, all that you can justly expect in the present case, is, that there be sufficient ground given you for a discreet choice ; and overweight enough in one scale to incline the judgment of a prudent man so far, that he shall see it more reasonable that he believe, than that he do not. This is the just standard of prudence, and this is the principle that wise men govern themselves by in weighty affairs. And, indeed, if no man should determine himself to the pursuit of a business, until there were no objection, no excuse, colour, or pretence, to the contrary ; all the noblest projections, and most necessary undertakings of mankind, would be nipped and blasted in the bud.

BIOPH. In truth, I do not see but that your demand is reasonable; and I must yield to you in this particular also.

SEBAST. Then I ask no more.

PHIL. Yes, SEBASTIAN, let me put you in mind of one thing more; which is, that BIOPHILUS will promise you to hold the scales even; otherwise, an overweight in either of them will not be discernible. My meaning is, that he agree to be sincerely indifferent, and willing to believe on the one side, as well as the other: for I have found by my own experience, that whilst a man retains a partial fondness for an opinion, it is not all the arguments in the world that can beat him out of it; he will see all that which makes for him as through a magnifying glass; and all that which is against him, seems little and despicable. But when a man comes to this pass, that he is content one side should be true as well as the other, then (and not till then) the best reason will carry it. Therefore, unless you premise this, you will strive against the stream, and dispute in vain.

SEBAST. Thank you heartily for that, PHILANDER. It is very true, BIOPHILUS, that if you oppose prejudice against the discourse I am to make to you, that will be armour of proof against all the arguments that can be brought; and then we had as good stay here, as go farther and lose our labour.

But why should you not lean as far towards the doctrine which I am asserting, as towards the contrary? Nay, why should you not look upon it as greatly your interest, that there should be another world, and a Judgment at the end of this? It is certain, you and all of us must die; there is no peradventure in that; and it were a most dismal thing to think of it, if death put an utter end to a man, so that all his comforts and all his hopes expire with him. And I wonder, in my heart, how any man can think of death with any patience upon those terms; and that it doth not make him sullen and melancholy all the days of his life. You will say, he must yield to necessity: but that is a

a man looked no farther than his fodder, had no sense of any thing but eating and drinking, and had a soul in him, that served only for salt to keep the body from putrefaction, so that he never looked about him, made no improvement of himself, and had no designs in his head, it were less matter if he returned to the earth, which (like a mole) he did nothing but root in and turn over, whilst he was upon it. But for a man of an active soul, of improved parts, of reason, and wisdom, and usefulness, to be smothered in the grave; so that all his notions and discoveries, all his arts and sciences, nay, all his virtues, all his hopes and designs shall be abruptly broken off, and buried in oblivion; this is so sad a thing, that it is able to discourage all study and industry, all care and culture of a man's life: for why should I strive to live like a man, if I must die like a beast? Why should I take pains to know, when, 'by increasing knowledge, I should but increase my sorrow?' forasmuch as the more I know, the more I shall feel myself miserable; and, indeed, become guilty of my own torment. So that if there were no hopes after this present life, it would be a more advisable course for a man to abandon himself to the most dark and squalid barbarism, than to wear out himself in the quest of knowledge; and better never to apply himself to any study, or to bestow any pains or cost upon himself; nay, indeed, if it were possible, it were desirable never to know any thing, or to think at all. For why should a man put a cheat upon himself? Why should he take, not only unprofitable, but vexatious pains? In a word, why should he not so live, as he must die? To all which, add, that if there were indeed no other world, and if there be any man that can find in his heart to be fond of living upon these terms, he must of necessity be a pitiable slave whilst he continues here: the perpetual fears of death cramping him, and keeping him in continual bondage, that he shall not have the spirit or courage to dare to do any brave action; but, contrariwise, he will be unavoidably tempted



to be a wretched coward, and base fellow ; and become a sordid parasite, to flatter and humour every body, merely upon the account of self-preservation.

Why therefore should any man be fond of such an uncomfortable, nay, such a sottish and debasing opinion ? Why should not a man rather hope well of himself, by cherishing an expectation that he may survive his body, and live eternally ?

BIOPH. There is no question, SEBASTIAN, but that living for ever is very desirable, if a man could hope for such a thing absolutely, and not clogged with conditions. As for death itself, that would have no great matter of formidableness in it, if it be (as I suppose it) a perfect intercision of all sense ; much less, if it were (as the men of your persuasion use to speak) only a dark passage to another life. But the mischief is, that upon your hypothesis, a judgment must pass upon a man first, before he can arrive at that other life. Now that is the terrible thing : if I were rid of the danger of that, it would (as you say well) be my interest to believe all the rest, in spite of all objections to the contrary.

SEBAST. I do not design to impose upon you ; for it is very true, there is no passage into the other world, without undergoing a test or trial, whether we be fit for eternal life or no. And it is most certain also, that if a man die an impious, a base and wicked person, it were better for him that either he had not been born, or else that the grave might cover him to all eternity. But what need this fright any man whilst he is alive, and may provide himself accordingly ? Especially since the grace of God puts it in our power to be so qualified, that we may be out of all danger of miscarrying in the judgment.

For, BIOPHILUS, can it be thought that ALMIGHTY God should seek the ruin of his creatures ? Or that he can have any design upon them, to make them eternally miserable ? If he had, there would not be the solemnities of a day of judgment ; for he need not to ensnare us in the

remedy worse than the disease, (if it be possible,) to seek a cure for death in desperation. To tell me there is a necessity of dying, is only to tell me there is no help in the case; which is the very thing I complain of.

And this consideration is so much the more sharp and cutting, by how much the more man's life hath been pleasant and comfortable. As for a man that hath all his lifetime been oppressed with calamities, pinched with poverty, covered with obloquy, or afflicted with pain, it may seem easy to him to die, that so he might have that rest in the grave, which he could not have above ground. But for him that hath good treatment in the world, pleasant accommodation, tempting fortunes and enjoyments; for such a man to think of death, which will spoil him of all his ornaments, and level him with the dust; that will interrupt all his delights, put an end to all his designs, and draw a dark veil over all his glories: I say, if such a man hath nothing to comfort him against death, if there be no life after this, but a man must for ever forsake, and be forsaken of all his felicities, I cannot see how he can possibly avoid an unspeakable abhorrence of it. Nay, that is not all; for, methinks it should render all his present enjoyments, not only insipid and loathsome, but even a torment to him.

Now, why should any man resist the only remedy in this case, against the sum of all calamities; which is, the hopes of another life? Why should he be willing to die as the beast dies, and to abandon himself to the grave, to rottenness, and oblivion? It were certainly better never to have been born, than both to live in perpetual fear of dying, and being dead, to be as if a man had never lived: better never to have tasted the sweets of life, than to be only tantalized; and by the time he begins to live, to begin to die; and then be eternally deprived of what he just had a sight of.

Nay, farther yet; if a man had lived only like a beast, it had been no great matter to die like a beast: if, I say,

forms of law, but might, without more ado, have destroyed us when he pleased ; and who could resist him, or dispute the case with him? Undoubtedly, he is too great a Majesty to have any little ends to serve, and therefore we can suspect no hurt from him ; and there could be nothing but the overflowings of his own goodness, that provoked him to make us at the first ; and therefore there can be nothing of envy, malignity, or cruelty, in any of his counsels and designs about us.

And that all these are not mere conjectures of mine, but real truth, (besides all other ways of probation,) you may be assured by this consideration : That in all God's demands from us, as the terms and conditions of our happiness ; or (which is all one) in all the duties he requires at our hands, and in all the obligations of religion, there is nothing severe and discouraging, much less impossible. Such is his wisdom and benignity, that he can impose nothing as a severe task-master, purely to abridge our liberty, or to break our spirits ; but only to raise and improve us, according to our utmost capacities, and as necessary methods to train us up for eternal life.

Why then should a man think so ill of God, as to be afraid or unwilling to fall into his hands? You cannot forebode any evil from him, if you are satisfied that he is perfect and happy, full and glorious, just and good ; and therefore you must condemn yourself of prodigious folly in not complying with reasonable and equitable laws, and of being wilfully accessory to your own calamity, if you dare not undergo his judgment. So that upon the whole matter there can be no reason why you should be unwilling to believe there is such a thing : And that is all I desire of you at present, and I heartily conjure you to be true to yourself herein.

**BIOPH.** Well, I am resolved to be as indifferent as it is possible to be : Now therefore prove it.

**SEBAST.** That I will do with all possible plainness and sincerity ; namely, I will make good that there is sufficient

reason to incline a prudent man to believe, that after this life, GOD will call men to account, and judge them according to their former actions.

Now you know it is the nature of moral arguments, not to depend upon one single evidence, but to consist of the united force of several considerations. Accordingly, my present proof of a judgment to come, must comprise these three particulars.

*First*, I will show, that the nature and condition of mankind are such, as to render him fit and capable to come to an account, and to undergo such a judgment as we speak of.

*Secondly*, That it is very agreeable to the nature and attributes of GOD, that he should call mankind to such an account.

*Thirdly*, That GOD actually exercises such a Providence in this present world, as gives earnest beforehand, that he really intends to judge it hereafter.

These three things make way for each other, and all together amount to a full proof of the point in hand. Wherefore, when I have opened them severally, in the order I have lain them down, I will leave it to you to collect the result of them.

*First*, I say, the nature and condition of mankind are such, as renders him capable of undergoing a judgment in another world; and therefore it is reasonable that he expect it accordingly. This will appear by the instances following:—

In the first place, it is notorious, that man is endued with a large and comprehensive mind, which is not confined to the mere object of his senses, and things present before him; but hath a vast scope and prospect, by means of which, he surveys the universe, embraces the whole world, and takes within his verge, as well things past and things to come, as those that are present; which no other creature is capable of but himself. The beast hath no kind of notice of, or concern for, what was in former time; no solicitude about what may come after; but only applies

itself to the present exigencies or conveniences of the body. But man is very curious, and inquisitive into history, and how things passed of old long before he was born ; and is also very thoughtful and anxious what may befall hereafter, when he shall be dead and gone. Now, this one consideration alone makes him look as if he were a being that were concerned in the whole frame of nature, and in all the revolutions of Providence, and, at least, of more consequence than to be a mere pageant for the short time of this life ; or, as a mushroom to shoot out of the earth, and return to it again, and so be as if it had never been.

Besides, we may observe, that the mind of man doth not only consider the absolute nature of things, as they lie singly and severally before it ; but compares them together, and estimates their relative natures, the mutual respects that they have to each other, and the various influences they have upon each other, and so comparing things together, raises observations, makes inferences, deduces conclusions, frames general maxims ; thereby brings things into order and method, and raises arts and sciences. All, or any, of which things, no creature below himself makes any pretence to, or gives any tokens of. From whence we may conclude, not only the pre-eminence of nature, but that he is ordained to higher purposes.

Moreover, mankind is endowed with liberty of choice, by virtue of which, he doth not only move himself by his own internal principles, and vital energy ; but also can determine himself to this object, or that ; and either resume or desist the prosecution at his own pleasure. Inso-much that he is neither carried by the swing of any superior causes, nor fatally allured by the powerful charms of any objects from without ; no, nor by the efficacy of any arguments arising therefrom ; nor any impression whatsoever (saving that of God) can overbear or supersede his own resolution, but that he can act or desist, suspend prosecution, or pursue his own choice ; and apply himself to this object, or that ; and follow this argument and motive or the other. He hath such a helm within himself, that he can

sail against wind and tide; he can move himself in a calm, and stay himself in a storm; in a word, he can move which way, when, and how far he will. The truth of this we find by daily experience, and we commonly please ourselves too much in this prerogative of our natures. We see that which is better, and follow that which we know to be worse; we hear arguments, and reject them, because we will do so; we are persuaded to the contrary, and yet go on; and when and whatsoever we act, we find at the same time we could have done quite contrary if we had pleased. Other creatures either act merely as they are acted by superior causes, or fatally inclined by the objects and motives before them; but we are put into the hand of our own counsels, as to our inward resolutions and determinations. Now this, as it is a mighty discrimination of our natures from theirs, so it hath this peculiar effect, that it renders a man's actions properly his own, and consequently fits him to undergo a judgment for them.

But farther yet: To make man more capable of a judgment, he hath a directive rule, or law within him, whereby to govern himself; he acts not only freely in respect of any cause without himself, but hath a light within, to guide those free powers of his, by the means of which he is enabled both to make choice of his designs, and to select fit methods of accomplishing them. For, as he is not staked down to some one particular business, (as generally other creatures are,) but hath great scope to expatiate in, and variety to please himself withal; so he hath a card and compass given him to sail by in that vast ocean which lies before him. He hath a faculty of discerning the difference of things, and consequently can judge what is worthy to be pursued, and also to measure and adjust the means thereunto; which renders him more fit to give an account.

Nay, farther yet, man, by the advantage of this light within him, hath not only a capacity of apprehending and judging of natural good and evil, or such things as are pleasant and profitable, or the contrary; but

hath also notions of higher good and evil, which we commonly call moral : that is, he finds himself obliged to have regard to something besides, and better than his body ; namely, either to the Deity, or to the community of mankind ; or, at least, to his own better part, his soul ; none of which are at all considered by any creatures below man. And there is hardly any part of mankind, (at least that deserve to be so esteemed,) which doth not think itself concerned in all these ; for we see, whosoever hath any thing of a man in him, doth think some actions to become, or not become him, merely as he is a man, which would admit of no difference, but be all alike in a beast : whereupon it is, that a man cannot dispense with himself in the doing of several things which are in his power to do ; no, not in the dark, and the greatest privacy ; because every man that in any measure understands himself, hath a reverence of himself, and the effect of this betrays itself in that quick sense which mankind hath peculiarly of shame and honour ; which argues him to be accountable to something higher than his senses.

Above all this, it is considerable that man has not only a speculative apprehension of moral good and evil, but a practical and very quick sense of it, which we call conscience ; by which he not only remembers and calls to mind whatsoever hath passed him, but reflecting also upon the ends and circumstances of his own actions, and comparing what he hath done, both for matter and manner, either with the rule of reason within him, or some other law, he judges himself accordingly. If he hath done well, he then applauds and comforts himself, and feels satisfaction in his own mind. As for example : If a man hath behaved himself gallantly towards his Prince and country,—if he hath carried himself gratefully towards his friends, his patrons, or benefactors,—if he hath been beneficent to any part of mankind,—if he hath demonstrated love to God, or goodness, and good men,—if he has restrained his own rage and passions,—if he has rescued the innocent from the hand of the oppressor, or done any

thing of like nature,—the heart of every man, in such a case, feels such an inward delight as sweetens his spirits, and cheers his very countenance. On the contrary, if he has been false, treacherous, and ungrateful,—if he has been cruel and oppressive, or has said or done any base thing, he is presently upbraided, accused, condemned, and tormented by himself. Now, what is all this but a kind of anticipation of the judgment to come.

To all which add, in the last place, that the mind of man seems plainly to be above the body, and independent of it; forasmuch as we see, that not only our reason and the powers of our souls are so far from decaying with the body, that contrariwise, they grow more strong and vigorous by those very causes which impair the body; I mean, by age, exercise, and experience. Besides, it is easily observable, that our souls, as often as they please, act quite contrary to the inclinations of our bodies, and frequently control the passions thereof, as well as overrule the verdict of our senses; therefore, it is not at all probable that they should perish with our bodies, but survive to some farther purposes; especially if we take in what I intimated before, namely,—the consideration of the shortness of life; which is so inconsiderable for so excellent a being as the soul to display itself in, that it seems unworthy of all the aforesaid perfections, and more unworthy of the contrivance of that Wisdom which made us, to order it so, unless it be that man is placed here in a state of probation, and is to be tried hereafter, in order to a more lasting duration: which, in consideration of all the premises, he cannot but be thought capable of, at least if there be a Judge as fit to judge him, as he is fit to undergo a judgment. Which brings me to my second branch.

**BIOPH.** Hold a little, I pray, good **SEBASTIAN**. You have spoken many things well of the pre-eminence of human nature, and some of them such as are not only sufficient to erect a man's spirits, and to provoke him to



hope well of himself, but also to render it in some sort probable that we are designed for some higher uses than we commonly apply ourselves to; nevertheless, you have not reached your point, nor will all you have said attain the end you propounded, unless you go farther, and prove the soul of man to be a spirit, or immaterial substance, (as the men of your *way* are wont to speak,) that so there may be a plain foundation for its existence out of the body. Without which, let it be as excellent a being as it can, and adorned with as many other perfections as you can imagine, it cannot be capable of standing at a tribunal, and undergoing such a judgment as we are speaking of.

SEBAST. I could have wished you would have given me leave to lay all the parts of my argument together before you, that so you might have taken a view of it entire, and all at once; and then you might have objected as you should have seen cause. But, however, I will comply with your method; and as to that which you have thought fit now to interpose, I answer these two things:—

*First*, I say, it is not necessary to the business in hand, that the soul be proved to be strictly immaterial, and capable of existing and acting out of the body; forasmuch as at the day of judgment I suppose the body shall be raised again: and then, if it should be so, that all the powers of the soul were laid asleep by death until that time, yet, upon a reunion with their proper organs, they would revive again. So that I did not, in my proof, fall short of the mark I aimed at; but you outshoot the point in your demand: for, whether the soul be a spiritual substance or no, so long as those perfections which we have enumerated belong to it, there is nothing wanting to make it capable of undergoing a judgment. But,

*Secondly*, To speak my own mind plainly, and to come home to your satisfaction, I must tell you, that as for my part, I do not doubt but that the soul of man is, properly and strictly, a spiritual nature; so I am confident that those things which we have ascribed to it sufficiently

prove it to be so; seeing it is impossible to solve those phenomena, or to give any tolerable account of those great accomplishments and performances of the soul, before specified, from mere matter, let it be modified how it can.

Simple perception of objects is the lowest of human perfections; and, indeed, is not proper to human nature, but common to brutes; yet this seems impossible to be performed by mere matter; for the eye, though it be a very admirable organ, can by no means be said to perceive the objects of sight, but only to transmit or present them to some perceptive power. It doth, I say, only as a glass, represent the image of the thing; which even a dead eye, or a hole, will in some measure perform; but it makes no judgment of the object at all, as appears by this,—that all objects are transmitted, reversed, or with the heels upward, through the eye, and so left, until some higher powers set them right, and judge of their distance, and other circumstances.

Now, if it be so, that matter thus advantageously disposed, as in the admirable structure of the eye, cannot perform that one act of simple perception, what shall become of all those nobler actions of the soul; and into what shall they be resolved? Such as self-motion, the strange celerity of thought, memory of that which is past, prudence and forecast for that which is to come, and a thousand other strange operations. Is it imaginable that mere matter should understand, argue, dispute, and consider the relation of one thing to another, and thence infer consequences, and make conclusions? Is it likely that mere body and quantity should be sensible of shame and honour; nay, be conscientious too, and accuse, condemn, and torture itself; or, which is most wonderful of all, check, control, deny, limit, and mortify itself? He that will undertake to show how these things may be performed by atoms and motion only, is a subtle mechanist indeed; and I do not doubt but, at the same rate, such a man may be able to make a new world when he pleases, with the same atoms or materials; for it is evident there is more

intricacy in this little world of man, than in the whole fabric of heaven and earth besides.

Wherefore, if matter or body cannot perform the aforesaid operations, then the soul of man must be a spiritual substance.

BIOPH. I cannot understand what you mean by this thing which you call spirit; and therefore I reject the notion as gibberish and nonsense.

SEBAST. Softly, BIOPHILUS. What reason is there for that hasty conclusion? Must we deny every such thing to be, as is hard to understand? Must we, like dull boys, tear out the lesson that is difficult to learn? But besides, let me tell you, there is not more difficulty in understanding the nature of spirits, than there is in conceiving how all the aforesaid operations should be performed without them; no, nor half so much neither; so that nothing is got by the objection; for it is a vain thing to object difficulty, when at the same time you are forced to acknowledge the thing to be necessary. But why, I pray you, is not spiritual substance as intelligible as corporeal?

BIOPH. O Sir, there is a vast difference in the case. I can see and feel the latter, but I cannot the former.

SEBAST. Nay, believe me, there you are out. You see and feel only the accidents of a bodily substance, but not the substance itself, no more than you see or feel a spirit.

BIOPH. Pardon me; at least I see and feel the bodily substance by the accidents; that is, I am assured of its presence and existence, and I can affirm such things of it upon that testimony of senses.

SEBAST. And you may affirm as much of a soul, if you please, though you can neither see nor feel it; forasmuch as you plainly perceive the properties and operations of it.

BIOPH. That is close, and to the purpose, I confess; but still I cannot tell what to make of this thing called spirit; for I can frame no image of it in my imagination, as I can do of other things.

SEBAST. Why, there it is now! I perceive you have a desire to see with your mouth, and hear with your eyes;

for, as reasonably every jot may you expect to do either of those, as to frame a sensible imagination of a spirit. That which we call imagination, you know, is nothing else but the impress of the colour, bigness, or some other accidents of a thing that hath been represented to our senses, retained in our fancy. But now, if a spirit have no colour nor bulk, nor such other accidents to be represented to our fancy, through our outward senses, how is it possible you should have any image of it there? Spiritual beings are only capable of affording us an intellectual idea; namely, our higher faculty of reason, from observation of their effects and operations, concludes their essence, and takes an estimate of their nature: and, indeed, it is a contradiction to require any other evidence of that kind of beings.

BIOPH. This kind of discourse is very subtle, and I cannot tell what to object farther to it. Go on, therefore, to your second branch; perhaps there I may better cope with you.

SEBAST. The second step which I take towards the proof of the judgment to come, is, that as on the one side, mankind appear to be fit and capable of being judged hereafter; so on the other hand, it is agreeable to the nature and attributes of *God*, and to those notions we have of a Deity, that he should call the world to such an account. And this appears briefly thus:—

The most common and most natural notion which men have of the Divine Majesty is, that he is a Being absolutely perfect; that is, amongst other accomplishments, that he is a most powerful, wise, just, and good Being. There is hardly any body that thinks of a *God*, but considers him under these perfections: and he that divests him of any of these perfections, renders him neither an object of fear, nor of love, and consequently not a *God*.

Now, if these things be included in the very notion of *God*, they not only capacitate him to judge the world, if he pleases, but give great assurance that he will do it. For, if he be a wise Being, he cannot but see how things go, and particularly how his creatures carry themselves

here below. If he be powerful, he hath it in his hand to rectify those disorders he observes amongst them; and both to punish the evil, and to reward the good. And if he be good and just, it cannot but be expected from him that he will set things to rights one time or other, when his wisdom shall think fit. But it is evident, this is not done in this world; therefore there is no reason to doubt but he will assuredly do it in another world: and therefore the Scripture tells us, "he hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness."

BIOPH. Not too fast, good SEBASTIAN. I know not certainly what apprehensions other men may have; but for my part, though I do acknowledge a God, yet I must profess to you, I do not think the natural notion of God includes those attributes you speak of. Why may not God be a necessary agent? And then there is no danger of an after-reckoning with him.

SEBAST. I am sorry to find so unworthy a notion of God still to have any room in your thoughts. It is certain, indeed, that if he be only a necessary agent, then all fear of a judgment is discharged; and as certain, that all religion can be nothing else but a groundless superstition: for then God must needs be a very tame Deity, which men may play with and abuse at pleasure; as the frogs did by their wooden king in the fable.

But then, what need is there of any God at all, if a necessary agent will serve the turn! Why can we not as well suppose the world to be eternal, as make such a contemptible being, as a necessary agent is, to be eternal, only to give beginning to the world?

Or rather, if we attribute one perfection, *i. e.*, eternity, to him, why not all the rest, which appear to be inseparable from it? forasmuch as it is not imaginable how the First Cause should be the meanest of all; and he that gave those other perfections to other things, should be destitute of them himself.

Or, how can we believe that such a fettered, impotent, unthinking, and unwise being, should make a world in

such beauty and perfection? Or, at least, how is it possible that a necessary agent, which is like a galley-slave chained down to his bench, and confined to his task and subject, should make a world with such curiosity and diversity of things, yet with that exquisite order and harmony which we observe in nature?

Do you think that the frame of things could not possibly have been any otherwise than they are? Can you fancy that nothing could have been better nor worse than it is now? If you see any footsteps of wisdom or choice, any possibility that any thing should have been otherwise than it is, you forego your necessary agent.

Do not you see great and manifest instances of design and contrivance in the order of things, *viz.*, one thing fitted to another, and one subordinate to another, and all together conspiring to some public end and use? Now, sure a necessary agent could not guide things so, because it hath no ends or designs.

Again, if God be a necessary agent, I would fain be resolved how it came to pass that we are not so too? I think you granted me, even now, that we choose our own way, propound ends to ourselves, and voluntarily pursue them, when we could, if we pleased, as freely choose and act contrary. Now, how to conceive that I should be a free agent, and that He who made me so should be a necessary one,—that is, that the effect should be more excellent than the cause,—neither I, nor (as I suspect) any body else can understand.

But I need not, in this place, industriously set myself to confute this odd conceit of God's being only a necessary agent, because in my third branch I shall fundamentally undermine it; and therefore, with your leave, I now hasten to that.

BIOPH. Go on then, by all means.

SEBAST. My third and last proof for a judgment to come, is this:—God doth actually exercise such a providence in and over the world for the present, as gives great assurance that he will judge it hereafter; for these are, as

it were, the two several ends of the same chain; a Providence here, and a Judgment hereafter. They naturally and mutually draw on each other. If there be a judgment to come, there must be a provident eye over the world for the present, in order to it; that is, GOD must so mind the world, that he perfectly understands how things go, how men carry themselves, what there is amiss amongst them, what requires punishment, and what deserves a reward; otherwise he cannot be said to judge; forasmuch as, without this, it might rather be said, there is a day of execution coming, than a day of judgment. And, on the other side, if there be a providence in this world, and it be true that GOD observes how men carry themselves towards him, it must speak his intention to reward and punish hereafter, in proportion to such observation; for otherwise that providence would be fruitless, and to no purpose: it would be a mere matter of vain curiosity, and a needless trouble to the Divine Majesty; as the Epicureans objected. But now, that GOD doth exercise such a providence in this world, from whence we may reasonably presage a judgment to come, I think will abundantly appear by these three things:—

1. There hath been such a thing as we call Prophecy, or prediction of things before they come to pass: which cannot be without a providence.

2. There have been Miracles: which could not be without the Divine interposition.

3. There are frequent instances, in all ages, of a divine presence in, and influence upon, the affairs of the world.

1. *First*, I ground the assertion of a Providence upon the Prophecies and Predictions of things beforehand, which have been verified by real effects in their respective times and seasons. It is evident, that whosoever is able certainly to foretell things before they are, must see through all the series of causes which produce such events; especially if he define the precise time, and all other circumstances of the accomplishment; but above all, whosoever shall declare beforehand, not only what shall come to pass, according to

the course of natural and necessary causes, but also such things as are casual and contingent, or subject to the choice and indifferency of free and voluntary agents, must have a curious and accurate inspection into the conjunctions and conspiracy of all things, as well as into their particular natures and inclinations. For as every effect must have its causes before it can be, so the prediction of such effect must depend upon a certain knowledge of those respective causes which are pregnant of it. Therefore, if there ever hath been such a thing as prophecy, there is a providence.

Now for the matter of fact: That there have been certain and punctual predictions of things long before they came to pass, is the constant belief of all nations; and he that denies it, must give the lie to the greatest and best part of mankind. You may remember that TULLY pursues this argument in his books *de Divinatione*; and he there gives too many and too remarkable instances of it to be denied or eluded. But I shall choose to set before you only two passages out of the Holy Scripture; for though I perceive you have not such a reverence for those books as they deserve, yet such palpable matters of fact as I shall instance in, and which were of so public a concern, and general notice, as whereupon the revolution of whole nations depended, can afford no ground for calling in question the truth of them. And let me tell you, I make choice of these instances out of those writings, for no other cause but for the notoriety of the fact, and the easiness of confutation, if it had been otherwise.

The former of the two passages is the prediction of the slavery of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt, and their miraculous deliverance thence, above four hundred years before it came to pass; and the accomplishment (when the time came) answering the prediction precisely to a day, so as to be observed by the whole body of the people, and the remembrance of it perpetuated by an anniversary solemnity ever after; as you may see, *Exod.* xii. 41.



The other instance is, the Babylonish captivity, which was foretold above seventy years before it came to pass; and that, in a time of the greatest unlikelihood that any such calamity should befall: namely, it was prophesied of when the Jews were in the greatest peace and prosperity. And then for the term of this captivity, that was foretold to last seventy years; neither more nor less. And both these periods, as well as other circumstances, were exactly hit in the event of things.

Now in both these instances, the things were prophesied of so long beforehand, there were so many obstacles in the way of their accomplishment, and so much of the will of man also interested in both the cases; and yet, notwithstanding such punctual exactness is to be seen in the event, that it is plainly impossible that human wit should so much as guess probably at them; therefore the predictions must be grounded upon divine intimation; and then God is so far from being a necessary agent, that it is apparent he minds the world, and looks narrowly into all the parts of it, from one end to another, and governs and manages inferior causes.

2. My second proof of an actual Providence is, from Miracles. By a miracle I mean any thing coming to pass, which is, either for the matter or manner of it, above the power of natural causes; or at least, contrary to their established course and order; whether it be effected by heightening them above their ordinary pitch, or accelerating their motion, or by suddenly bringing those causes together, which lay at a distance; or whether it be by depressing, suspending, or superseding any of them.

And I reason thus:—If any thing have ever been brought to pass above the capacity, or out of the method of natural and common causes, then there is an active Deity which exerts his power in that case. Or if ever the course of nature hath been interrupted, it must be by the interposition of the Supreme Cause. For it is neither intelligible that nature should go out of course of itself; nor possible, that being once so out of course, it should

ever be able to recover its former order, without the help of Omnipotency. Therefore, if ever there have been a miracle in the world, there is proof of a Providence.

Now that such extraordinary things have happened, cannot be doubted without great ignorance, or denied without impudence. I know there is a sort of witty men (in their way) who endeavour to put a slight upon miracles, and therefore are very captious and critical in such cases as this; but if they can elude some occurrences that have been believed miraculous, yet they will never be able to evade them all. And if there have been but one acknowledged miracle in all the time of this world, it will be sufficient to prove a Providence. They will, perhaps, impute some cures that have been said to be done by miracle, to the efficacy of some medicine; although they can neither tell us what that remedy was, nor much less, how the symptoms should so suddenly cease upon the use of it.

Or if they could speak tolerable sense in some of those particulars, yet, what natural account can be given of the raising of the dead; or, of unlearned men speaking all kind of languages in an instant? What natural cause will they assign for the sun's standing still in JOSHUA'S time? Or of that preternatural eclipse at our SAVIOUR'S passion? What could intercept the sun's light, when the two luminaries were in opposition; or what restored it to its motion again, when it was interrupted, as in the former instance? Or to its light again, when it intermitted, as in the latter instance? To endeavour to give natural accounts of these things, will prove as absurd and ridiculous, as to deny the matter of fact.

But if any of these instances will not pass with such men, because they were over long before our time, or because the truth of them depends upon the authority of Scripture, there are other innumerable passages in all ages, not liable to that exception, that cannot be resolved into any cause less than a supreme and Omnipotent.

Amongst which, what will they say to this, which

happens almost every year ; namely, that after a long wet season, it shall suddenly clear up and be fair weather again ; and, contrariwise, after a long dry season, it shall unexpectedly be wet and rainy ? Whereas, if they look only to natural causes, the quite contrary must happen : Forasmuch as the more rain hath been at any time, the more may be still, because there are the more vapours from whence clouds are raised : and the longer a dry season hath lasted, there is every day the less reason to expect rain ; because there want vapours out of which it should be raised. Now to impute the change only to the winds, is to beg the question ; for it is well enough known that the winds depend upon vapour, as well as rain ; and to ascribe it to the stars, is to confess, that, right or wrong, we will shut GOD out of the world. But this leads me to my

3. Third proof of a present Providence, *viz.*, The more frequent and ordinary instances of a Divine influence upon the affairs of the world. The effects of which, though they are not accounted miraculous, because they are common, yet they give sufficient indication of Divine administration. And of this kind, there are so many which offer themselves to an observant mind, that to seek flaws, and go about to make specious objections against some few of them, will be rather an argument of resolved unwillingness to believe, than of any just grounds of infidelity.

Now under this head I reckon, in the first place, as very observable, that there is scarcely any great thing ever brought about in the world, which GOD may not be seen to have a hand in : and that may be collected generally from the inadequateness of the visible means ; as when great preparations are defeated and laid aside, and mean and inconsiderable ones do the business. This is that which SOLOMON observed long ago, “ That the battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift, nor bread to men of understanding : ” And we cannot want an example for it nearer hand, when we remember the Restoration of King CHARLES II. ; for it pleased GOD to deal in that

particular, as he did by GIDEON'S army, when he dismissed the greatest part of the forces, and did his business with a few, and those very unlikely for such an achievement.

But more admirable than this is the preservation of the Holy Scriptures in all ages; both from total abolition by the flames of persecution, and from corruption by the capricious fancies of such men as would neither sincerely believe it, nor absolutely reject it. Such also is the preservation of the Christian religion, when all the wit, and all the power of the world, combined together against it: and such was the success of the Apostles in propagating that religion, and planting the Christian Church; when a few fishermen leavened the world with a doctrine quite against the grain of it, and naked truth prevailed against authority, art, and interest, in conjunction.

Hitherto also I reduce the maintenance of magistracy and civil government; and I look upon it as a standing evidence of a Providence, that the strong bands of wicked and refractory men should stand in awe of a single man, like themselves, only because he is invested with authority. This, if it be duly considered, is very strange, and can be resolved into nothing but a Providence. Nor is it less strange, that, considering the great numbers of evil men, their secrecy and closeness, their cunning and falsehood, their envy and necessity, their activity and selfishness, they should be able to do no more hurt in the world than they do. Why do they not swear men out of their lives and fortunes, and act whatsoever their revenge, or covetousness, or lust, shall prompt them to? No account can be given of this, but the powerful restraint of Providence.

Moreover, there are remarkable examples in all ages, of evil men, dogged by their own guilt, and tortured by their own consciences, when nobody else either accused or hurt them: and on the other side, as frequent instances of virtuous men, who have been very comfortable under great difficulties, and whose spirits have been borne up with an admirable bravery under such pressures as would crush

and sink other men ; and this, although the persons thus carrying themselves, were otherwise of no remarkable strength or courage. Neither of which passages can be resolved into any other causes than the mighty influence of a Providence.

Nay, further : It is very observable how strangely sometimes secret sins are brought to light, especially such as murder and treachery, and where all arts and advantages were made use of for concealment ; such persons becoming their own accusers, when nobody else could do it for them ; and not unusually their own executioners too.

Above all these, there are some instances of vengeance befalling very flagitious men, so signally, and with such pat and significant circumstances, that (without any uncharitableness) we may be led by the suffering to the sin ; as in the case of ADONIBEZEK, (*Judg.* i. 7,) whose barbarous usage of threescore and ten Kings, cutting off their thumbs and great toes, and making them, like dogs, gather their meat under his table, was repaid upon himself, in the same severity. Of kin to which are those panic fears and shiverings, that oftentimes attend blood-guilty men, as long as they live ; and though they may have escaped revenge from the hand of men, yet this, as a CAIN'S mark set upon them by the hand of GOD, indelibly sticks by them, and follows them to their graves.

It is needless to say any thing more upon this subject ; forasmuch as every man that doth not wilfully shut his eyes, may collect instances to this purpose, both from the government of the world in general, and from his own fortunes in particular. For besides the quiet serenity, (in token of the Divine favour,) which usually attends a virtuous course of life ; and the anxiety, and uneasiness, which as frequently (in testimony of the Divine dislike) attend a wicked one ; it is not a very unusual, nor (to be sure) an unpleasant sight, to behold the former crowned with signal success, and the latter punished with shame and beggary. And this sometimes shall happen in such circumstances, when there is nothing to which this different

success can be imputed, but Providence ; forasmuch as the latter shall otherwise be more cunning for the world, and every whit as industrious and frugal as the former : but the one is under the blessing of heaven, and the other is apparently blasted and cursed.

And now what think you, **BIOPHILUS**, upon the whole matter ? Have I not acquitted myself in all the three things I propounded ? And laying all these things together, is not here sufficient evidence to determine a prudent man in the case, and so satisfy him that there is a Providence in this world ; and consequently, that there will be a judgment hereafter ?

**BIOPH.** I cannot tell, **SEBASTIAN**. I confess you have said many very considerable things ; and some of them beyond what I could have expected in the case. But I have one main objection, which especially touches the last branch of your argument ; and which, if it stick by you, all you have said will signify nothing ; but if you come clearly off from it, I shall not know what to think of the business. It is this, in short : I do not see any such settled method in the management of the affairs of this world, as must necessarily argue a Providence. For, in particular, notwithstanding all you have said, it cannot be denied, that very often the best of men are oppressed, and borne down by ill fortune ; and contrariwise, evil men are very happy and prosperous. Therefore, it may seem that those instances which you collect in favour of your opinion, may happen by chance, rather than by Providence : and if there be no Providence in this world, by your own argument there can be no judgment hereafter.

**SEBAST.** If that be all, or the main of what you have to object, I am in hope to see some good issue of this conference : For, in the first place, you know, that which is impeached by this objection, is but one single instance out of many which I have brought for the assertion of a Providence ; and consequently, if this should fail, yet, so long as the others are unshaken by it, that great doctrine

may stand firm notwithstanding it. However, I will briefly say these three things in the case; *viz.*,

*First*, That some measure of intricacy or obscurity in the dispensation of Divine Providence, is no argument against it, but for it.

*Secondly*, That there are very great reasons assignable, why it may please the Divine Majesty to proceed sometimes indiscriminately, and keep no constant visible method in the distributions of good and evil in this life.

*Thirdly*, Yet, however this be sometimes obscure, there are at other times sufficient and legible instances of a distinguishing Providence.

*First*, Some measure of intricacy in the dispensations of Divine Providence, is so far from being an argument against it, that it is a great argument for it. For if we do not make God a mere necessary agent, (which I hope I have satisfied you in,) we must allow something to his prerogative and sovereignty; and, consequently, grant, that he may do some things whereof he doth not make us acquainted, with the reasons: and we may very well allow to his wisdom, to have a reach beyond us, and to have other measures to govern the world by, than we could have made for him. What! shall we call God to account for his management? Shall he not govern the world at all unless he order it just as we would have him? This is apparently so far from being reasonable, that it would be much more so to conclude on the contrary; namely, that if there were no depths in the Divine counsel which we could not fathom, no meanders in the way of Providence which we could not trace, it would be very suspicious whether there were any thing of Divinity in the whole business; for if things were constantly managed one way, without any variation, we should be apt to think all was under the rigid laws of a fatal necessity. If, on the other side, there were no rule to be observed, no footsteps of any method, then we should be tempted to think chance ruled the world. But when we observe an intermixture of these

two, *viz.*, that there is a rule, though there be some exceptions from it, then we have reason to conclude, that all is under a powerful and a free Agent, who, if he be also infinitely wise, cannot but see reason for several things, which we cannot apprehend.

*Secondly*, There are very great and weighty reasons assignable, why, in this particular instance of Providence, (namely, in the distribution of good and evil in this world,) the Divine Majesty should not gratify our curiosity with a plain account of his proceedings, but make some exceptions to his general rule: amongst which these following are considerable:—

*First*, Because such a constant and visible exercise of distributive justice, as your objection seems to require, would be such an irrefragable and palpable evidence of a Providence, as would leave no room for the discovery of ingenuity, or a virtuous disposition: for, it would be no argument of love to God, or goodness, that a man took care to serve God, if he constantly stood over us in a visible and undeniable Providence; so that every offender were taken in every fact, and presently led to execution; and, on the other side, every virtuous action were forthwith rewarded and crowned. In short, it is not agreeable to the mind of God, to overrun the freedom of our choice, since he hath endowed us with it. Should he do so, he would act contrary to himself, and to his own glory, as well as to the nature and condition of mankind.

Again, *secondly*, a checkered and diversified method of Divine Providence, wherein there is an intertexture of prosperity and adversity in the fortunes of virtuous men, tends more to their improvement, than a more regular and constant Providence would do. For, as a continued course of prosperity is too apt to tempt men to be wanton and careless; so a perpetual series of adversity would be apt to sink and depress their spirits: but a middle way of interchange in their condition, balances them on both sides, and maintains them in a more even temper and conversation. And for this reason it pleases the Divine



wisdom to make such false steps, as you are apt to imagine them to be.

To which add, in the third place, that herein lies the very secret of Divine wisdom; and by this very way he doth most effectually assure us of the point in question, (namely a judgment to come,) in that there is such apparent necessity of it. For if the Divine Majesty should let the present world run at random, and interpose himself in no case to check the hurry, and punish the disorder, there would seem no reason to expect justice from him hereafter, whò gave no token of it all this while: and, on the other side, if he interposed so frequently and constantly, as to leave no irregularity unpunished, nor any brave action unrewarded, there would be no business left, nor need of a day of judgment. Whereas by affording us some plain instances of his discrimination in this world, we are satisfied that he minds how things go, and is able to judge; and yet by permitting several other things to run riot, and seemingly to be unanadverted upon, he hath, as it were, cut out work for a day of judgment.

*Thirdly*, Notwithstanding all this, as I said before, there are some sufficient and undeniable instances of a distinguishing Providence. I have granted to you, that sometimes the ways of GOD are intricate and involved; and I have offered at some reasons of it, to which many others might have been added; and, amongst the rest, that by this means we might be kept humble and modest, and taught to admire and reverence GOD, rather than to judge or pronounce of him. For these, I say, and other reasons best known to infinite wisdom, he thinks fit sometimes to lose us in the meander of his ways: yet, I say, they are not always thus obscure; but sometimes he treads such plain and direct paths, that we may easily follow him. And of this I have set before you several examples already, and whosoever will diligently attend to it, may easily collect more: But I will not omit to put you in mind of one great standing one, and (as far as is possible) beyond all exception; and that was in the history of the Jewish

nation, who were infallibly sure to be happy and prosperous, so long as they stuck to the true GOD, and the laws he had given them by MOSES ; and as sure to be signally miserable and calamitous, whensoever they apostatized from their GOD, or debauched their religion. So that that people were placed as a light upon a mountain, and were an illustrious instance to all the world, of that great truth we are now discoursing of ; and if there were no more instances of this kind, that alone would be sufficient for the purpose.

BIOPH. I must confess, if the story be true, there was a very strange fate attended that people.

SEBAST. Fate, do you call it ? What colour or pretence in the world is there for imputing those admirable revolutions to fate ? Could blind fate make distinction of persons and actions, and apply itself in the distribution of good or evil, in proportion to men's deserts or miscarriages ? Do not disparage your own discretion so much, as to use the word fate in such a case : No ; assure yourself, that was a signal display of Divine Providence, and such a one as you cannot expect or demand a greater.

BIOPH. But if it were the effect of Providence, I wonder how it comes to pass that there is no such thing now ; or why all the rest of mankind was neglected by Divine Providence, and only that people, and in that age and corner of the world, so carefully managed by it.

SEBAST. O BIOPHILUS ; ask not GOD an account of his prerogative, much less prescribe to him how he should govern the world. What if he, pitying the dark state of the world then, did something extraordinary to relieve and enlighten it ? And what if, having once given such abundant proof of himself, he shall think that sufficient to all after-ages ? Who shall expostulate the matter with him, especially since he hath not left us destitute of sufficient grounds to determine a prudent man in the case ! Which is all I have pretended to assert all this while, and I think I have made it good at last, though with some tediousness of discourse.

**BIOPH.** I cannot tell what to say more for the present, but I will consider farther of it at leisure.

**PHIL.** Aye, but do it quickly, good **BIOPHILUS**. You sceptical gentlemen are apt to take too long time to consider of these matters. You know, die we must, and that shortly too; so that we have not any long time to consider in. What surprise would it be, if, whilst we stand doubting and disputing, we should hear the sound of the last trump, and be summoned to that great tribunal? When death once arrests us, there is no bail will be taken; we must come to a strict account, and await an irreversible doom. So that there is no dallying in this matter.

When **NOAH**, for no less than one hundred and twenty years together, preached repentance, and foretold a flood coming to drown all the world, no question but the generality of men laughed at him, as a timorous, hypochondriacal person: they could object how unusual a thing it was to be talked of; a thing that no man had seen, or had ever happened to the world before: they could discourse philosophically in the case too, and represent it as a very absurd thing to imagine; that the water should rise above the earth, and overflow the tops of their stately houses; for (might they say) where shall there be water enough to do it? From whence should it come? Or how should this fellow have notice of it, before all other men? And perhaps they would conclude, that, at worst, they should have time to shift for themselves, and escape as well as others. Hereupon, they ate, and drank, and feasted, and made merry; and laughed at that precise coxcomb, with his new machine of an ark: but “so (saith our **SAVIOUR**) shall the coming of the Son of Man be.”

Alas, **BIOPHILUS**! whilst we dream, the judgment slumbers not; whilst we doubt and dispute, **GOD** is in earnest; and the time draws on apace, when “**CHRIST JESUS**, the Judge of the world, shall come in the glory of his Father, and of all the holy angels. The heavens shall then melt away, and the earth be on fire,” from one end of it to another: “The dead shall rise out of their graves,”

and make a huge assembly: "The books" of all men's actions "shall be opened," and the Devil, together with every man's own conscience, shall be the accusers. Then shall all those that have lived virtuously and holily, look up with joy and comfort, to see their SAVIOUR become their Judge; to find a vindication from all those unjust censures that have passed upon them here below; to come to an end of their labours, a reward of their services, the accomplishment of their faith and hope. What joy will be in their countenances! What glory upon their heads! How the angels smile upon them, and welcome them to their journey's end, and heaven opens in an admirable scene of light and glory to receive them.

But, on the other side, all that have lived wickedly and unprofitably, shall look pale, and tremble, and "call upon the rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of the Lamb that sits upon the throne;" for they shall see all black and dismal about them; no tears will move pity, no rhetoric will persuade, no excuses will be admitted, no appeal allowed, no refuge to be found, nor reprieve to be hoped for; but they shall hear that dreadful sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels;" and shall see hell open her mouth to receive them into unquenchable flames.

BIOPH. I protest you speak with such feeling, PHILANDER, that your discourse hath more power upon me, than all the arguments that ever I heard in my life: and I know not what is the matter, but my heart trembles; therefore let me once more entreat you to adjourn the remainder of this discourse until another time.

PHIL. Ah, dear neighbour! do not prove like unhappy FELIX: do not go about to elude what you cannot evade. No; put not off this business a moment longer. Now that it seems GOD hath touched your heart, quench not his HOLY SPIRIT; it may be, you will never be in such a temper again, if you lose this opportunity.

BIOPH. I assure you, I like this temper (as you call it) so ill, that I do not desire to feel more of it: but if you

are resolved to go on to torment me, I pray do me the favour, first to answer me this question : If these things be so as you represent them, how comes it to pass, that men unconcerned about religion, die as comfortably as any others ? The reason of my question is this, because you will pretend that whilst men are well in health, and swimming with the tide of prosperity, they may either put off the thoughts of these things, though they be true ; or the noise of business, and the caresses of their sense, may obscure all apprehension of another world. But sure, when men find themselves dying, it should be too late for them to flatter themselves, or to admit the flatteries of others ; then surely prejudices cease, and men are at leisure to think. What then, I say, can be the reason, if these things be true, that there is not as remarkable a difference in men's tempers when they come to die, as there seems to be in their conversation whilst they are alive ?

SEBAST. I apprehend your question very well, and the reasons of your asking it. And for answer to it, I pray tell, what is the reason that men who love their health and their estates both very well, will nevertheless be drunkards, and whoremasters, and gamesters ; though they see by daily experience, that these are sure methods to deprive them of both ? You will tell me, I suppose, that they feed themselves with absurd and unreasonable hopes, which fool their discretion ; or that they are bewitched and besotted with those kinds of pleasures, and so consider nothing at all. Why, just so it is here : the things we speak of are undoubtedly true, and the miscarriage in them is fatal ; but men are careless and incogitant, and slip into the pit of destruction before they are aware : they live merrily, because they never think of any thing ; and they die as sottishly as they lived.

Again, there is another sort of men, that are captious and conceited, who will chop logic, as we say, with **GOD ALMIGHTY** ; they will have not only their reason satisfied, but their curiosity also, or they will not believe ; they must see a spirit, and heaven, and hell, or one must come

from the dead, or they will not be contented. Now God will not indulge this humour of theirs, and they are resolved to venture him; that is, they will be damned rather than forego it.

Besides, there are others who take a great deal of pains to disbelieve: they will use all the arts of sophistry, all the tricks and evasions of wit, intrench and fortify themselves in their atheistical conceits: in a word, they will cheat their own reason, out-face their conscience, and bring upon themselves a stupid insensibility of all that is good and virtuous; and so in conclusion they die quietly, and go silently into the bottomless pit.

Add to this, that it is very probable many of these men may be very far from dying cheerfully, though we are not able to observe their agonies and torments; for it may very well be, that when once they begin to consider what a desperate condition they are in, the very thoughts of that, together with their bodily disease, overwhelm their spirits, and make their passage out of the world more compendious, but never the more comfortable.

After all, you shall find some of the aforesaid persons, when they come to die, sadly bewail their folly and carelessness: but wherever did you hear of a holy and virtuous man, that repented of his choice or pains in religion, or care of his soul, and solicitude in preparation for this occasion? It is possible, indeed, such a man may express no transports, because his body is like other men's, and the strength of his disease may enfeeble his spirits, and cloud his reason, and so interrupt the exercise of his faith. And, on the other side, the irreligious man, though perhaps (as you suppose) he cannot, or will not dissemble at the approach of death, yet he may be sottish and insensible; and then, whatsoever difference of state they are entering upon, there may be no discernible difference in their departure hence. And so, you see, your question will not serve to the purpose you propounded it for.

PHIL. Come, BIOPHILUS, leave these sceptical artifices; these captious questions; do not seek out ways to muzzle

your own conscience, or impose upon your reason: a judgment there will be, and it is all the wisdom in the world to be prepared for it. It is in our power, by the grace of GOD, to order matters so, that we shall rather hope and wish for it, than fear it: and what vast odds is there between them two? You are sensible that it is only a judgment following death, that makes death terrible. Indeed it is possible our bodies may be disturbed at the assaults of it: but mere death can never shake our minds, or discompose one thought, if we are satisfied that all will be well after it. And what a happy and desirable condition were it, to be out of the reach of that king of terrors, to see light through that dark vault of the grave, to outlive all a man's fears, and to live to his hopes! What a strange alteration will that one thing make in a man's projections and designs, in his countenance, and in his spirit, and in the whole management of himself! For who can be afraid of any other accident, that hath no cause to fear death? Who would be much discomposed, whether his temporal affairs succeed well or ill, that is provided for eternity? Who will stoop so low, as to lay any stress upon fame, that hath approved himself to GOD and his own conscience, and can stand the shock of the great trial at the day of judgment? He that is in a condition not to fear death, will have no reason to fear men, or devils; but may be as bold as a lion: he will crouch to nobody, flatter and humour nobody; for nobody can hurt him: and so his life is easy as well as comfortable, forasmuch as he has no one to please but GOD and his own conscience.

But, as I was saying, this is to be prepared for. Salvation is not a matter of course, nor the judgment a mere piece of state and formality, but infinitely sacred and solemn. The Judge is wise, and holy, and just; the trial strict and severe, the doom irreversible, the misery intolerable, if a man miscarry; as well as the felicity unspeakable, if he stand right at that tribunal: and to all this, the time draws on apace; we feel our-

selves daily dying, therefore it concerns us to do what is to be done out of hand.

**BIOPH.** I am convinced that it is the wisest course to provide for it, if it could be done without too much trouble.

**PHIL.** Ah, **BIOPHILUS!** can any care be too great in such a concern? Can any thing seem troublesome, that may at once secure us from all other troubles? But the trouble is not great neither; it is but being heartily religious, and all is done.

**BIOPH.** That is soon said, I confess; but not so soon done. Besides, I am never the wiser for such a general advice: for there are so many religions in the world, that it is hard to know which to trust to. Some sublime religion to such a height of spirituality, (as they call it,) that a man cannot tell what to make of it: and again, some make no more of it, than honest morality. Some dress it up so fine, with so many trappings and ornaments, that it is hard to find what the naked truth of the thing is: and others render it so plain and coarse, that a man is tempted to despise it. In a word, it seems to me to be what the painter pleases, forasmuch as I see some describe it out of the pleasantness of their own sanguine fancy, and others out of the black humour of their hypochondriac passions; so that, upon the whole matter, I think I had as good maintain my own character, and withhold my assent until men are better agreed upon the point.

**SEBAST.** God forbid, **BIOPHILUS!** for that you cannot do, unless you will adventure to be damned; as certainly you must, if you be found to be of no religion.

**BIOPH.** Why have you less charity for men of my temper, than for all the world besides?

**SEBAST.** Far be it from me to be uncharitable towards any men. But I must tell you, I have less hope for that man that hath no faith at all, than for him that hath a bad one: and it must be a very bad religion indeed, that is no better than none. For though by reason of the variety of persuasions, a man may be so misled as to perish in a



blind devotion; yet certainly he that is of no religion at all, cannot be saved. But what need is there for either of these? There are a great many false religions, it is acknowledged; but there is a true one too, and that not so hard to discern as you represent it.

Come, I will tell you a religion that all the world shall agree in; and my soul for yours, you shall be safe if you comply with it. Do not stare; it is no more but this: "Live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Or, if you will have it in other words: Resolve with yourself not to do that thing, whatever come of it, that you cannot answer to GOD, and your own conscience; and do every thing within your power, that may approve and recommend you to both; and thenceforward fear not a day of judgment.

BIOPH. Now you speak to the purpose, indeed; that, I must needs say, is good counsel, and such as, I think, all the world is agreed in.

I thank you both, for your good company, and your charitable offices towards my satisfaction; and I do already assure you of this fruit of it,—That by your conversation I have learned, that all religion is not acting a part, and playing the hypocrite, which I was apt to suspect heretofore; for I see you both are so hearty in it, and yet men of greater sagacity than myself, that I tell you truly, I begin to think it becomes me seriously to consider it. Good night to you, good SEBASTIAN.

## PART III.

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### THE ARGUMENT OF THE THIRD CONFERENCE.

SEBASTIAN and PHILANDER, meeting together at the house of BIOPHILUS, in pursuance of a former resolution taken between them, represent to him the whole scheme of religion, and now render it as rational in itself, as before they had showed it to be prudent and important. Then they entertain one another with pious and useful discourses, partly of the necessity of constancy in religion, and the considerations that will maintain it; partly of the means of obtaining and preserving an even temper of spiritual comfort through the whole course of a Christian Life.

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SEBASTIAN. Well met, again, gentlemen: I hope we we shall one day meet in heaven.

PHILANDER. GOD grant it, good SEBASTIAN; and truly for my part, I am persuaded we shall the sooner get there, the more we have of your company and conversation in the mean time.

SEBAST. No compliments, PHILANDER. I am glad to observe you so cheerful. Come, gentlemen, what think you of our journey? I hope by this time BIOPHILUS is resolved. You promised, Sir, to consider of it.

BIOPHILUS. I have considered a little; but in truth, I think winter no good time for travelling, especially for the undertaking of so long a journey.

SEBAST. Be not discouraged, Sir; the journey is not so long as you may fancy, and the way is very good.

You will think it strange, perhaps, but it is very true, that no time is so good as winter for this expedition; the short days, dark and cold nights, the very dirt and wet, and all the seeming disadvantages of the season, (which probably may run in your head, BIOPHILUS,) all make for our purpose. The severities of the weather, which

constrain us to lay aside other business, give us the more leisure to attend to this ; the short days are followed with long evenings, which afford us opportunity to set things in order, to discourse together, and to instruct and animate one another in our intended enterprise ; and in the dark solitary nights, our minds being then free from the distraction of variety of objects, our thoughts will run this way with wonderful speed, if we do but direct them aright. So that, in truth, we may make real progress towards our designed port, even as we sit here.

BIOPH. But, in earnest, I am somewhat too old and crazy to undertake the journey.

SEBAST. Nay, believe me, the older the better. An old man, if he set to it in earnest, will outstrip all others in this voyage ; such men will lose no time in trifles : experience hath taught them caution, and made them very wary of all diversions and impediments. In short, such men are so sensible of the inconveniences of this our present country, that it is great odds, but they will put on so vigorously as to get to their journey's end before the youngest of us all.

Though I should have been right glad to have found you better resolved, and hoped that this present Conference should rather have been directed to the encouraging one another in our course, than spent in disputing our port ; yet, in hopes that at length you will become a votary for the holy land, I will present to you two things :—

*First*, The influence of religion on civil society. Of this you will easily be sensible, if you consider how inconceivable it is, that mere external force, or fear of human punishment, should be sufficient to keep the world in order, when (as it often happens) flagitious men find themselves either secured from that danger by the secrecy of their plots, or protected by their strength and multitude. And then you must acknowledge, that to the ends aforesaid there is a necessity that some superior Power not only protect governors from violence, but also strike the minds of men with an awful apprehension of them as his

favourites and vicegerents ; but this cannot be done but upon such principles of religion as we now speak of ; therefore he that infringes that, weakens both law and government, and is an enemy to civil society.

Again, there can be no obligation of oaths, and consequently no security of faith and trust between man and man, but upon supposition of a God that takes notice of what men do, and who will call them to an account in another world ; so that the man who is destitute of these persuasions, can neither give security of loyalty to his Prince, nor of fidelity to his friend or neighbour, or any man he deals with.

BIOPH. Why, I pray you, SEBASTIAN, may not men trust one another upon the security of honour, good-nature, or gratitude, or some such obligation, without those fetters of conscience which you speak of ?

SEBAST. Alas, BIOPHILUS, all those bonds which you mention are too weak to restrain the licentious humour of men ; they may put some little bias upon men's spirits, but they cannot bridle their passions, curb their desire of revenge, nor prevail with them to deny their extravagant inclinations, when they shall have an opportunity to gratify them, as we find by daily experience ; for in all the obligations below religion and conscience, a man is supposed to be accountable only to himself, and therefore may dispense with himself, and acquit himself upon what terms he pleases ; and therefore wise men, and especially wise Princes, use not to trust to any of those securities, but only to that of religion.

BIOPH. Well, but have not pretenders to religion played fast and loose with laws and government, as well as other men ? Nay, generally you shall observe, that a bigoted sort of men are the principal actors in most of the tumults and disorders in the world.

SEBAST. If I should object to you the daily and horrible violations of faith amongst the pretenders to honour, ingenuity, and gratitude, I know you would answer me, that those persons were not really men of honour. but

only pretenders : and so you may answer yourself in this case, that they are but pretenders to the real principles of religion, that falsify their faith, and disturb government.

Besides, if I should grant you that the very bonds of religion are not able always to restrain the rage and folly of some exorbitant persons, yet certainly it is the most powerful means to that end, and incomparably beyond all those you have named ; and therefore you may remember, when upon occasion PTOLEMY, King of Egypt, sent one THEODORUS, in the quality of his ambassador to LYSIMACHUS, this latter refused to treat with him, or admit him under that character, because he was a reputed Atheist ; and being such, he looked upon him as a person with whom there could be no security of civil intercourse.

BIOPH. I remember the story ; but I pray you, if LYSIMACHUS'S objection against THEODORUS was sufficient, how came PTOLEMY, notwithstanding, to trust him with the management of his affairs ?

SEBAST. Truly, I can give you no other answer, but that he had not so much prudence as his neighbour. But let that pass, if you please ; and give me leave in the next place to represent to you every man's personal concern in the truth of religion, which is such, that no man can either live or die comfortably without it.

BIOPH. With all my heart. Let Princes alone to manage their own matters. Show me but that one point, and it shall suffice.

SEBAST. For that, BIOPHILUS, you will easily apprehend that no man can die cheerfully without the supports of religion, (I mean, if he die sensibly,) because the very best of such a man's expectations can be but this, That he shall die like the beast, and that vital principle in him, which we call the soul, shall be absolutely extinguished ; so that he shall thenceforth as perfectly cease to be what he was, as if he had never been. Now this, I suppose you will readily grant me, must needs be not only a very uncomfortable prospect, but such a condition as a man

cannot think of without just abhorrence, nor be reconciled to, without as great a contradiction, as it were for him to be supposed to hate his own being.

Yet this is the very best of the irreligious man's case, and that of which he can never be secure, will be the worst that shall befall him; for if it shall prove that there is another world, (and at least it may do so for aught he knows,) then his case is so much worse, that now, by death, he must enter upon an estate for ever, which he hath had no foresight of, nor made any preparations for. He encounters a God, whom he hath taken no care to propitiate towards himself in all the course of his life, and what a dismal plunge must the approaches of death (together with such a surprisal) of necessity put such a man into!

BIOPH. As for death, I shall easily grant all you say, for that is no very comfortable thing at the best; the only refuge I know is, to make a virtue of necessity, and seeing die we must, to take it patiently. But for that reason I am resolved to live as long as I can, and as cheerfully too; and why may not this be done without the business of religion?

SEBAST. In truth, BIOPHILUS, the impossibility of living comfortably, without the helps of religion, is every whit as evident as that of doing so, and for the very same reason; forasmuch as whatsoever renders death terrible, must needs make life uneasy too. For since death is acknowledged to be unavoidable, it cannot choose but run in such a man's head,—Shortly I must die, and either everlastingly cease to be, or (which is far worse) begin to be eternally miserable; the least of which two things (without the miserable refuge of a perpetual debauch to keep such a man from thinking) must be of force enough to make his heart ache, and to spoil all the pleasures of the present life. Especially considering withal the uncertainty of the tenure, and the innumerable accidents of human life, which last circumstance makes it to become just matter of fear at all times, that by some or other of those

accidents of mortality, his frail thread may abruptly be broken; and consequently, who knows but tomorrow, not only all his projects and contrivances, but all his delights and entertainments, will suffer a total interruption?

But then, if there be a God and another world, (which he can never be sure that there is not,) he can expect nothing less than very suddenly to fall under the vengeance of that Great Majesty whom he hath always provoked, and never appeased.

Besides all this, as we commonly observe that atheistical persons are of all men the most timorous; so there is great reason for it, if we consider what a dark and melancholy thing it must needs be, for so impotent a creature as man is, to live in a world without a God, and without the security of providence; for there are a thousand things confessedly too strong for us, and which are able to crush and destroy us every moment; and in this case, where a man hath no help in himself, if he have no guardian about him neither,—if, I say, he cannot look up to some higher Being as his patron and protector, it were mere madness to be valiant; for all the grounds of courage fail him, and therefore no wonder if his spirits be broken and baffled by the danger of his case, and the lonesomeness of his condition.

Upon which account, a great wit of this present age acknowledged, “That although he, for his part, had no feeling of the comforts of religion, yet he accounted those to be happy men that had it.” For indeed, life is not life without those supports which that, and that only, affords us. But when a man hath, by the benefit of that holy prudence, put all his interest into God’s custody, and secured himself of another world, then he begins to live indeed; then he may laugh at the present world, despise temporal life, and defy death; forasmuch as thenceforth he is out of the reach of chance, fate, or fortune.

PHIL. It is true, BIOPHILUS; it is true, as SEBASTIAN saith, the world to come is the only reality, and religion the only comfort. O happy we that know there is a

GOD in the world, under whose providence we live! And blessed be that divine goodness, which hath provided another world to receive us, and there promised us eternal life!

O heaven, thou end of cares and fears, and beginning of joy without end! Thou rest of souls, and only satisfaction of great and wise minds! I am ravished with the thoughts of thee! I am so transported with hopes of thee, that I am become all life and spirit. Methinks I begin to have wings, and could fly to heaven!

BIOPH. You discourse ingeniously, SEBASTIAN; but I pray let me see if you can excuse this transport of PHILANDER from fanaticism.

SEBAST. Why, BIOPHILUS, do you think a man cannot be cheerful, unless he be either mad or drunk?

BIOPH. It seems, then, in your opinion, fanaticism is madness.

SEBAST. Truly, Sir, I take it to be little better; especially, if it be in any high degree. For what, I pray you, is it to be mad, but for a man's fancy or passions so to get head of him, that he is hurried on, wildly and extravagantly, by such an unaccountable impetus, that his reason is not able to govern him? And on the other side, what is it for man to fear without danger, and to hope without ground; to believe without reason, and to think, or speak, or do such things, whereof he can give no account which is intelligible by the rest of mankind? This I take to be fanaticism; and this is plain madness.

BIOPH. I am very glad to hear these things from you, SEBASTIAN; and that you have so slight an opinion of that sort of men, who make such a figure, or rather such a dust in the world.

SEBAST. So far then we are agreed; but all this which I have said will make nothing towards the proof of your charge against PHILANDER; for though I impute unreasonable and extravagant raptures to fancy rather than faith, and account them rather a distemper of the body, than the devotion of the mind; yet I must tell you after



all, that true and manly religion is no cold and comfortless thing ; it is not a lukewarm notion, not a formal round of duties ; but is lively, vigorous, and sparkling, and hath its joys and ravishments too, only they are more sedate and governable, as well as more rational and accountable, than those we spake of before ; and so, I suppose, you will find it to be with PHILANDER. He hath expressed some heat, but not without light ; and is both able to govern his expressions, and to give a sober reason for them.

PHIL. Hearty thanks, dear SEBASTIAN, for vindicating me from the misapprehensions my innocent joy had exposed me to ; and herein you have not only done me a kindness, but obliged all good men, and done a right to true piety itself, which is apt to be put out of countenance with the imputation of fanaticism : and so far it suffers thereby, that a great many well-disposed, but bashful and timorous men, are tempted to a strange kind of hypocrisy, and to pretend themselves worse than they are, for fear of incurring the censure of being zealots.

But now I shall adventure to let my light shine out abroad, as well as burn within my breast. And I cannot forbear upon this occasion to return my most humble thanks to GOD, who hath given me cause to hope in his goodness, and the cordial of that hope hath antidoted me against the troubles of this present world ; for I profess to you, there is so much of care and fear, of labour and pain here below, what by disappointments, what by the malice of evil men, or by the follies, peevishness, and jealousies of weak men, that were it not for the prospect of a better state of things above, I should be very far from being fond of this life. But when I consider that at the worst I am under a Providence, so that nothing befalls by chance, or by the mere will of man, but by divine appointment and ordination, and consequently there is nothing but what he both can and will make to work for good in the conclusion ; and when withal, I find myself resolved to submit to his wise purposes, by which means it is in my power to be wiser and better by all occurrences, and in so

doing have my hopes improved into an assurance, that I shall in due time be translated into those happy regions above: this comforts my heart under all the present inconveniences, and not only supports my spirits, but cheers them, and refreshes my very countenance; and sometimes, the more the vexations of the world had depressed me, the higher do these contemplations raise me; so that I break out into such a holy triumph as that which you, **BIOPHILUS**, took notice of.

**SEBAST.** **BIOPHILUS**, what is there to amaze you in this matter? Consider with yourself, how can it be otherwise, but that he who is thoroughly satisfied that it is neither blind chance, nor surly fate, nor some ill-natured and unlucky being; but contrariwise, a great, and wise, and good **GOD**, that governs the world; how can it be, I say, but that such a man must needs be very comfortable under such a protection?

Or how can it come to pass that a man, who approves himself to his own reason and conscience, and, as near as he can, to the mind of that great **GOD** who made and governs the world, should be tormented with panic fears of he knows not what; since, whether he looks upward or downward, into himself or abroad, there is nothing that can hurt him, nothing but what must needs cheer him with a hopeful expectation of a good issue in the upshot of things; especially if he have a firm belief of eternal life in another world, and of unspeakable joy and felicity there, and certainly to be enjoyed by him that pursues it by a course of virtue and piety? How can you imagine that such a man should be able to smother such hopes, and conceal such joys? No; they are too great to be kept secret in his bosom; they will break out now and then in triumphant expressions.

Eternity, **BIOPHILUS**, (eternal life, I mean,) is so great, so glorious, so admirable a happiness, that I can never be persuaded that man really believes it, and hath good hope that he shall attain it, who can be so reserved and stoical as to keep his countenance whenever he thinks of it.

Do but judge with yourself, if you could have ground to believe you should never forego this present life, but for ever enjoy your house, your wife and children, nor ever be parted from those friends you have made choice of; that no accident, no disease, nor malice of men, or evil spirits, could reach you; but you might pursue your designs, and meet with nothing to interrupt the train of your thoughts and projections; in this case you may easily imagine how much at ease a man's thoughts would be, how secure his mind, how bold his spirit, and how cheerful his countenance. But now to live for ever in the glories of the kingdom of heaven; to be not only secure from all pain or care, fear or danger, but to be in possession of perfect bliss; to enjoy the favour of God, the presence of the ever-blessed JESUS, and the perpetual society of all good men, made perfect and free from their ignorances, errors, passions, and infirmities; this is a state of life that I cannot think of without astonishment, nor speak of without passion, nor hope for without rapture.

BIOPH. I should easily consent to you in all this, SEBASTIAN, if I thought it was real; but in truth, I suspect all these things you talk of, to be but pleasant dreams, and high rants of fancy.

SEBAST. But why should you think so, BIOPHILUS, seeing it is very plain, that the soberest and best men are of this persuasion; and for the most part, the better the men are, the more lively is their sense of these things. Can you imagine that either ALMIGHTY GOD should put a cheat upon the best of mankind, and upon them especially? Or can you think, that the best of men should be the greatest liars, and pretend to that of which they had no real grounds? I pray, therefore, be free with me, and tell me the causes of your mistrust in this case.

BIOPH. I think I have reason to doubt these high pretences to the wonderful comforts of religion; in the first place, because I observe the state of mankind to be generally very uneasy, and the world to be full of nothing more than melancholy and complaint; which sure could

not be, if there were such effectual remedies ready at hand, and such a heart's-ease in religion.

SEBAST. I will answer that presently ; but I pray first tell me (by the way) what do you think is the reason there are so many sickly people in the world ?

BIOPH. Truly, I think we may resolve the greatest part of those tedious distempers, under which so many people languish into surfeits and other instances of their own riot and luxury.

SEBAST. Very well : But do you not think there are a great many amongst those that pine away under these lingering distempers, who might possibly receive help and ease, if they took due care of themselves ?

BIOPH. Yes, doubtless, for in those chronical diseases there is time for advice and application, and fit intermissions for medicines to take place in ; but the mischief is, some men are humorsome and obstinate, and will take no advice, whatever comes of it : others deliver themselves up to empirics and unskilful persons, who often make the disease worse than it was ; and there are some so soft and delicate, that although they have good advice given them, will not follow the rules that are prescribed to them.

SEBAST. Very good : Now you have answered your own objections against the comfortableness of religion : for there are the same three accounts to be assigned of the uncomfortableness of men's spirits, which you have given of the sickly state of their bodies, *viz.*,

In the first place, there are some men who fancy themselves either too wise to be advised, or think the case of human nature too desperate to be cured ; and therefore grow morose and sceptical, and will rather cloak themselves up in a melancholy reserve for the present, and run the venture of all for the future, than give themselves the trouble of any serious thoughts of religion. Now you cannot expect these men should find the comfort of religion, who are so far from making experiment of it, that they are afraid of it, like those wise men that, for fear they

should one time or other be poisoned, will never eat any meat.

**BIOPH.** If you would pardon my interrupting you, I could tell you for all this, that there are some men in the world (though not many I confess) who enjoy themselves very well, and yet never were in debt to religion for it.

**SEBAST.** Very likely, **BIOPHILUS** ; for so (as I remember) King **JOHN** killed a fat stag that had never heard mass in its life ; and so you shall see an ox in the stall, let him but have meat and drink, and ease enough, he never repines at the approach of the day of slaughter. In like manner there are a sort of dull unthinking men, that pass away their time in a pleasant dream of sensuality, and never feel any want of the consolations of religion ; but it is not because there is no need of them, but because such persons do not feel the need, nor indeed are sensible of any thing else that is manly and generous.

If I should tell you it was dangerous being upon such a precipice, I suppose you would not think it a confutation of my caution to tell me, that, notwithstanding, a certain blind man slept and snored upon it : for real danger is danger, whether men be apprehensive of it or no.

**BIOPH.** Your pardon again : It is not only true that some stupid persons are at ease without religion, but you shall observe some of a better mould, polite and ingenious men, live very pleasantly, and yet are not beholden to religion for it.

**SEBAST.** It may be so ; but then I doubt they must be beholden to the bottle for it, which they must ply continually too, to keep them from thinking ; for I have showed you already, that it is as impossible for a thinking man (out of a debauch, and who cannot but be sensible that he must die) to be comfortable without the aids of some religion or other, as it is for you or me to caper and frolic upon the brink of a precipice. In short, such men as have eyes in their heads, have no other refuge but to wink hard, that they may not be sensible of their danger.

And so much for that ! Now if you please I will proceed. In the second place there is (as you well observed) another sort of men, who though they are not so refractory and contumacious as to defy the whole art of physic, (as a perfect cheat,) yet will apply themselves only to quacks and mountebanks ; who, instead of curing the present infirmities, by unskilful management, render them more dangerous and intolerable. So it is in religion, there are those who do not abandon themselves to desperate Atheism, nor cast off all care of religion, but find they cannot be at ease without some provision for another world ; yet (not falling into the hands of those that were able to principle them right) they entertain such imperfect and inconsistent notions of religion, as can afford them no solid consolation. And this is a second cause why the world is so uncomfortable, notwithstanding all the relief that religion may give.

As for example : Suppose a man believes there is a **God**, yet if he look upon him under the notion of a cruel and unrelenting tyrant, governed by mere will, and who aims at nothing but the securing and greatening his own power, and consequently is so far unconcerned for any of his creatures, that it is all one to him whether they be saved or damned eternally ; you will easily grant, that the belief of such a **God** cannot be very comfortable, since a man cannot think of him, nor much less exercise any act of devotion towards him without horror and affrightment.

Or, again, suppose a man should entertain a more kindly notion of **God**, but yet find himself perfectly at a loss how to please the **Divine Majesty**, in regard he knows of no declaration of his will that he hath made, (because he either never heard of, or doth not believe, the **Holy Scriptures**,) it is impossible but a devout mind in this case must be very much perplexed and uneasy ; and the more devout the man is, the more will his perplexity be, in regard that when he hath done all he can to please **God**, he cannot rest satisfied, whether he hath served or disserved

him all the while ; which in a great measure was the condition of the gentile world, for lack of Divine Revelation ; and therefore they were necessitated in their devotions to make use of abundance of various rites in hopes that if one sort of them missed, the other might hit to be acceptable to the Deity ; and when all was done, they were not sure that either, or any of them, was agreeable to his mind : therefore their devotion must needs be attended with panic fears and uncomfortable apprehensions.

Farther, let us suppose a man had some intimations of the divine will, as to matter of fact, but yet was under a dispensation which (at least in the letter of it) consisted mainly of nice and curious observances ; such as the abstaining from such or such meats ; the performing such or such rites and ceremonies ; (which was the case of the superstitious Jews, as it is also of a sort of degenerate Christians ;) now it is plain that this state of religion must needs be very uncomfortable also ; because a man must of necessity drag on heavily where his reason doth not go before him, and his judgment is not convinced of the goodness and excellency of those observances, as well as the necessity of them.

Such principles of religion as any of the aforementioned, must needs be very uncomfortable ; but all these, **ΒΙΟΦΙΛΟΣ**, are as manifestly false, as they are sadly melancholy, and therefore it is not any defect in religion that the spirits of men are uncomfortable, but the fault of those bad notions they have taken up, instead of the true principles of religion. And so much for that second sort of men.

**ΒΙΟΦΗ.** I am wonderfully pleased with this last discourse of yours, in which you have not more demonstrated the uncomfortableness, than exposed the absurdity of a great number of religionists. I must tell you, it makes as much against yourself as any of them, so far as concerns the point in hand. For after all it is undeniable, that some men, of very different persuasions, are as cheerful in their several ways one as the other : Now, forasmuch as

these cannot all be true, in regard they contradict each other, doth it not follow, that the comfortableness of men's spirits doth not depend merely upon religion, but upon something else?

SEBAST. In truth you follow me very close; yet I have two or three things to say, which, I do not doubt, will acquit me in what I have said, and hope may satisfy you. First, it is to be considered, that a man may be sound in his principles of religion, and right for the main, who yet may differ from other men, and perhaps from the truth too, so much as to make him be reputed of a different religion; yet, notwithstanding those great principles which he is sound in, and that honest zeal he shows in the prosecution of them, will enable him to live very comfortably; for fervent devotion will cover a multitude of errors as well as charity doth "a multitude of sins." And this, it is to be hoped, is the condition of a great many well-meaning but deluded people.

Again, Secondly, it is observable in this case, that many warm themselves by "sparks of their own kindling," and are heated more by their own motion than by the grounds and causes of it: zeal warms the blood, and whatsoever warms, in some measure, comforts too; insomuch that some men of such opinions, as in the consequences of them tend to hell, are yet raised up to heaven by the power of a heated fancy.

But after all, you must remember, (what I said before,) that truth is truth, and dream is dream. My meaning is, the man of a mighty zeal in his way, may please himself, (whatever his principles be,) but it is only the man of sound principles of religion, that can be truly, and understandingly, and constantly, comfortable.

And now I suppose I may come to the third and last sort of men which disparage religion, (just as an unruly patient discredits his physician,) namely, those who, though they have right notions of religion, yet live carelessly, and are by no means answerable to their principles in the conduct of their lives.



Now it can be no wonder, nor any slander to religion, that such men who live wickedly, should be uncomfortable in their spirits; for we may as well expect to warm ourselves by a glow-worm, or a painted fire, as that any man's heart should be truly cheerful by the advantage of a religion which consists only in notion. Nay, it would be a wonder if such a man should not be often melancholy, as lying under the lashes of his own conscience. And this is so far from reflecting any dishonour upon religion, that it is a mighty vindication of the truth and power of it, when a man's own heart shall revenge upon him his contempt of her dictates and sentiments.

But now, take a man who to right principles joins a holy life, and (as there is all the reason in the world for it, so) it is a thousand to one but he lives comfortably. And thus I think I have fully acquitted myself of your prime objection against the comfortableness of religion.

BIOPH. I confess, SEBASTIAN, you have spoken a great deal of reason, but yet, perhaps you are not so clearly come off as you imagine; for I have still to object, that many men of your principles, and who carry it sometimes with full sail of joy and courage, yet at other times are not able to maintain this tide, but flag, and are as much down as other men; nay, do you not observe that there are men in the world, whose principles I know you will allow, and withal, whose lives you cannot blame, and yet these very men shall be remarkably uncomfortable, and no men fuller of complaints than they. Therefore, it seems religion is neither such a stable principle of comfort, nor such a general remedy of the troubles of life, as is pretended: If you can reconcile this with your former assertions, I shall then be forced to yield you the cause.

SEBAST. It is true, that sometimes those who seem to have all the advantages of religion, are, notwithstanding, uncomfortable under them, and yet this may be no impeachment either of the truth, or of the efficacy of those principles: for this may come to pass upon several other accounts, as, namely:—

In the first place, it may be, that he in whose life we can observe no blemish, may, notwithstanding, be justly charged by his own conscience for several such miscarriages as may well make him uneasy, until he hath made his peace with GOD and himself again. Now you must not impute this to the defect of consolation in religion, but to the man's own defect of piety : for whensoever we see a man troubled for violating the rules of his religion, we have a kind of sensible experiment of the great reality and mighty power of it ; and this may happen, though you see not the causes of it.

Again: It may be, the person who now lives very virtuously, hath formerly been a great sinner : and now, though he hath made his peace with GOD, and so there is nothing justly to interrupt his comfort ; yet, as often as he reflects upon the heinousness of his former miscarriages, no wonder if the briskness of his spirit be abated, if it be but by the consideration of the danger he hath escaped.

Again : It may happen, that he who is not conscious to himself of any guilt which should deject his confidence towards GOD, yet, by the malicious artifice of the great enemy of mankind, may have such frightful fancies raised in his head, as may much discompose him for the present, until by prayer, and the grace of GOD, he overcomes them.

Moreover, sometimes, when all is well within, and a man's own heart doth not accuse him, yet it may happen that outward afflictions may be so sharp, that, for a time, even a good man's spirits may be disordered, until he recollect himself, and Samson-like, shake off those Philistines that are upon him ; I mean, until he rally the forces of his reason, or rather, until by faith he take sanctuary in the impregnable fortress of religion, and there he securely weathers out the storm, and all becomes serene and calm again.

But after all, allowance must still be made for an unhappy temper of body ; for it must be remembered,

that religion is a medicine of the soul, and not for bodily diseases. You know the intimate correspondence between those two inmates, soul and body, which is such, that like HIPPOCRATES'S twins, one of them cannot well enjoy itself, if the other be in disorder. Do but consider how exceeding difficult it is to maintain the rate of a man's common conversation, when the body is but a little sickly and discomposed. And then, how can you imagine but that there will be an unevenness of temper in a melancholy man's deportment, notwithstanding that the comforts of religion should be as solid and stable as I have represented them to be?

BIOPH. But by your leave, Sir, I understood you that there was such a catholic antidote of all sorrow to be found in religion, that your pious man could never have been sad any more; neither outward accidents could discompose him, nor bodily infirmities interrupt his enjoyments.

SEBAST. Sure, BIOPHILUS, you did not think I took every good man to become a god, or the powers of religion to be so omnipotent, as that because they can recreate a man's spirits, they should therefore make him entirely another creature. You might as well imagine I asserted that this spiritual remedy should preserve men from dying, as from being sick or melancholy, when their constitution is prone to it. For although by reason of the near relation between soul and body, it is not to be doubted but the comforts of the mind may, in a good measure, cheer the bodily spirits; yet on the other side, it is to be expected that the body will have its influence reciprocally; and when it is infirm, will depress and clog the mind that it shall be sensible of the burthen, and move the less briskly in its course. In short, the business between the soul and body stands thus: As, on the one hand, the body can affect the mind so far as to retard its motion, and check its flight, but not so as altogether to hinder them; on the other hand, the mind (if that be

comfortable) comforts and refreshes the bodily spirits; but is not able entirely to alter them: for temper will be temper, and melancholy will be melancholy still.

That, therefore, which I assert, and which the common experience of pious men attests, is this, That there are never-failing springs of consolation in religion, provided the issues of them be not obstructed by some or other of the aforesaid occasions.

PHIL. There is one thing runs in my thoughts, concerning which I would gladly ask your opinion.

I have observed several Divines, amongst the causes of perplexity and uncomfortableness of good men, to reckon one, of which you have hitherto taken no notice; namely, the case of desertion, which they define to be “when GOD withdraws himself arbitrarily from such persons for a time, and hides his face from them upon the sole account of his prerogative, or some reason best known to himself, but without the least guilt or provocation on their parts.” Now if this be true, it may then not only happen that the very best, and also the most cheerful men naturally, may be very uncomfortable; but the very state of spiritual comfort will be very uncertain and fluctuating; and, which is worst of all, there will be a disease without a remedy; a case that admits of no consolation. For what can all counsels and discourses, or all the exercises of faith or reason avail against a peremptory act of GOD?

SEBAST. It is very true, PHILANDER, as you observe, there hath been such a notion broached, and the effects and consequences have been bad enough; for besides what you have alleged, under the pretence hereof, some have been so abused as to indulge their own humour, and, as JONAS said, “he did well to be angry;” so they fancy they ought to be melancholy, when GOD (as they imagine) sets himself against them, and they thereby are tempted to think hardly of the Divine Majesty, as if he was a great tyrant, who took pleasure in the complaints of his creatures; and, which is worse than that, (if worse can be,) sometimes evil men get this notion by the end; and then, whensoever

their wicked lives render their consciences uneasy to them, they presently conceit it may be only the withdrawing of the Divine favour from them; and how can they help it, since it is the case of good men to be so dealt with?

But what ground there is for this, I cannot imagine. It is true, we ought not to dispute the Divine Prerogative, or what he may do if he pleases: for we find it dangerous to take upon us to limit the prerogative of earthly princes; and if they may have reasons for such things as we do not understand, much more hath God, whose wisdom is infinite and unsearchable: Therefore, not to define what God may or may not do, it is plain that there is no foundation in Holy Scripture, (which is the declaration of his will,) to think he will take such a course as this; and besides, it seems inconsistent with his sincerity and goodness, and can by no means be reconciled with that settled and immoveable delight, he declares himself to take in good men, that he should play fast and loose with them, or (as some have rudely expressed it) play at bo-peep with his children.

No, PHILANDER, assure yourself, Infinite Goodness will not disguise itself, and put on a frightful vizard merely to scare his weak children; so far from that, contrariwise, so long as men continue constant, loyal, and dutiful towards him, he will be unchangeable in his favour, and constantly shine out upon them in the bright beams of love and kindness: and if it shall happen that the melancholy of men's constitution shall rise up in such black fumes, as not only to cloud their minds, but that (consequently thereof) they may entertain dismal apprehensions of him; yet he is ready to assist and comfort them by his HOLY SPIRIT, if he be devoutly applied to: But to be sure he will never exasperate the condition of a sincerely good man by any unprovoked act of his own. He hath told us, "He will not break a bruised reed, nor quench smoking flax;" (*Matt. xii. 20*;) and that, "if men draw nigh to him, he will draw nigh to them:" (*James iv. 8*;) And he neither needs it, nor is inclined to try experiments upon

poor melancholy men. Let us have a care, therefore, of charging the effects of our own changeable humour (either of body or mind) upon the unchangeable GOD; for so long as we walk by the light of his word, we may live under the light of his countenance, if (at least) our own melancholy interpose not, and eclipse it to us: and we may upon those terms, in a good measure, enjoy heaven upon earth; we may be as bold as lions, as cheerful as angels; in a word, as full of joy as our hearts can hold: for the principles of religion will bear all this out; and GOD will never interrupt the efficacy of them.

PHIL. O blessed, for ever blessed be the Divine goodness! and GOD's blessing on your heart, SEBASTIAN, for the good report and assurance you have given us of it. And now, friends, why should we not be comfortable?

Have we not a GOD, who is a just and a faithful Creator, a wise and benign Being, that is tender of, and exorable towards his creatures; how then can we choose but love him, and delight in him?

Hath not his Divine Majesty made his mind so well known to us, that we cannot be to seek what will please him, but may go on cheerfully in the course of our duty without distrust or scruple? And can we doubt his constancy to himself, and to that declaration he hath made of his will, that we should suspect the end if we use the means; since we may read our own destiny before-hand, and anticipate the sentence of the great day? Are not all his laws so just and rational, that they agree with the very sense of our own mind, so that "his service is perfect freedom?" Forasmuch as, in a proper sense, we are governed by our own laws, those of the Gospel being enacted in our own consciences.

And are we not satisfied that we shall be so far from losing our labour in religion, that we have the fullest assurance, that in reward of faithful serving GOD in this life, we shall after death be raised up again, and live for ever and ever with him in his kingdom of heaven? Surely

all this together is sufficient to make us fervent and hearty in the exercise of religion, and comfortable in our spirits.

SEBAST. I add to what you have said, why should we be afraid to be alone, or in the dark, since we believe GOD is every where, and, in the greatest solitude, will afford us the comfortable effects of his presence and providence? Or why should we be under dreadful apprehensions of the power of evil spirits upon us, seeing we are convinced “that greater is He that is with us, than he that is in the world?”

Why should we be dejected at worldly losses, when we know that “in heaven we have a more enduring substance.”

Why should we be dismayed at the infliction of any pain upon our bodies, either by the hand of GOD in a violent disease, or by the cruelty of men; since GOD hath promised “that no temptation shall overtake us, but what we shall be able to bear.” That is, he both can, and will, either abate the torments, or support us under them.

In a word, what need we be afraid of death itself, since it cannot kill the soul, and is no more, but only a dark passage to a kingdom of light and glory.—

BIOPH. You talk bravely, gentlemen; but I protest I am amazed at you, for to this very day I never looked upon religion as any other than an austere and melancholy course of life, and the most undesirable thing in the whole world.

PHIL. Tell me then, BIOPHILUS, what is comfortable, if religion be melancholy? Is the world so very comfortable, when you know it is full of nothing but care and folly, vexation and disappointment? Is sin so comfortable, which (after the commission of it) perpetually dogs a man with guilt, and ordinarily disorders his fortunes, impairs his health, and crows and debases his spirit? Or is death so comfortable a thing, which represents to a man nothing but a horrible pit of darkness, and the land of oblivion.

What, I say, can be comfortable, if that be not so, which

is the only remedy against all the former? For it is plain that nothing but the hopes of a better world at last, can enable a man to enjoy himself tolerably in this present; and nothing but eternal life is a sufficient antidote against the fears of death: and all these are the effects and benefits of religion. Therefore if this be uncomfortable, man must needs be the most unhappy being in the whole world. For though other creatures are in some sort fellow-sufferers in the common calamity of this world; yet besides that their share is ordinarily not so great as his, it is evident that they fear nothing for the future, but only feel the present evil, and they have no restraint upon them from what they desire, nor any remorse for what they have done; therefore if man have not the glory of his conscience when he doeth well, to set against the checks of it when he doeth amiss; and if he have not hopes to counterbalance his fears, and a reward hereafter for his self-denial at present, his condition is far the worst of any creature in the world. Therefore, as I said, religion is the peculiar concern, and singular advantage, as that which only can repair all his misfortunes.

SEBAST. But I pray, BIOPHILUS, what do you apprehend in religion, that can make it look so melancholy to you? Is it because it sets a GOD before you, than which nothing can be more desirable? "For GOD is love," is "rich in goodness," nay, goodness itself; insomuch, that if it were possible any thing in the universe should be more good than he, that would be GOD. He made man, preserves him, loves him, delights in him, designs him to live eternally with himself. In a word, all imaginable comfort is so wrapped up in this one word, GOD, that I remember a brave Heathen said, "He would not be willing to live a day in the world, if he thought there was not a GOD in it.

It may be, you will say, this GOD is just and holy, and jealous of his honour, and will revenge himself upon stubborn and incorrigible sinners: All this is true, but what



need you be one of those that provoke him? And then, the juster and holier he is, the better and more comfortable it is for you; or if you have offended him heretofore, yet if you repent and turn to him, he is so exorable and pitiful, that no tender parent hath more yearning bowels, or more open arms to receive his prodigal and lost son, returning home to him, than GOD hath towards penitent sinners.

Will you object the self-denials required by religion, as that a man must restrain himself of many things that are pleasant to flesh and blood? It is true there are such things required, but they are not so many as that a man may not live very pleasantly notwithstanding; and if they were more than they are, who would not comply with them to obtain the favour of such a GOD, and to gain eternal life.

I am sure you cannot object against the direct and positive duties of religion, such as prayers and praises to GOD, reading and meditating on his word, or acts of beneficence and charity towards mankind; for there is nothing more pleasant, nothing more delicious than these, if they be rightly understood. So that, in short, it is no better than a mere slander to call religion uncomfortable, and such as could proceed from nothing but the Devil himself; or if from men, it must be such as had never tried it, nor were resolved ever to do so.

BIOPH. You must pardon me, gentlemen; I tell you plainly, I never felt any of these comforts of religion which you speak of.

PHIL. Aye, there is the business: now you have said all. Here lies the bottom of all the scandalous reports of religion, as if it was a sour, melancholy thing. Try it, BIOPHILUS, and you will quickly confute yourself; experience will do it for you. You used to say, seeing is believing; now in GOD'S name make the experiment; "taste and see how good the LORD is:" and let me tell you this, for your encouragement, There were never yet any who effectually made the experiment and were disappointed.

**BIOPH.** But, what do you mean by trying? What would you have me to do? I should be very glad to live comfortably.

**PHIL.** By trying, we mean no more but this: Apply yourself in earnest to the knowledge and practice of religion; the very first step to which is gravity and seriousness of spirit. It was, I remember, the short and weighty counsel of the great **HUGO GROTIUS**, when he lay on his death bed, to some about him, who asked his advice; ‘Be serious,’ said he, ‘and your work is half done.’ Do not please yourself in a trifling pretence to extraordinary sagacity in finding flaws in so weighty a concern as this; but be willing to believe, and then resolve to live up to the convictions of your conscience, and you will find the comfort of so doing.

**SEBAST.** As soon as you set your face towards heaven, you shall find your mind easy, and your spirits cheered with an admirable serenity; and when, in consequence of such beginning, you worship **GOD** devoutly, you will find a comfort in his presence, and a sweet sense of him: then you will feel a power in your mind to resist all kinds of sin, and that will be followed with an unspeakable pleasure in victory over your passions, and corrupt inclinations, and thenceforward you shall be able to look towards the other world with hope and desire; and then, finally, the **HOLY SPIRIT** will come into your soul, and “seal you to the day of redemption,” and give you such a relish of the glories above, that you shall despise the present world, and be able to look through the dark vault of death, and take a view of heaven.

**BIOPH.** But, I pray, what religion must a man be of, that he may make this experiment.

**SEBAST.** Nay, sure enough it must be the old religion, or you will lose your labour. The way to peace of conscience and spiritual joy, is not to be of such an opinion, sect, or party; or to be zealous of such a mode or ceremony; but to have a firm faith in **GOD**, to live a holy and devout life; this is the old religion, truly so

called; for it is as old as the Gospel itself; and consequently, is the tried way to solid consolation. But, I pray, upon this occasion, give me leave to ask you a bold question: What religion are you of at present?

BIOPH. It is a free question, I confess; but (knowing whom I am amongst) I will give you as free an answer. Truly, SEBASTIAN, I am of no religion at all that I know of, unless you make me to be of one.

PHIL. Then I do not wonder you are such a stranger to the comforts of religion; for it seems all was romance to you: but I hope, however, you do not look upon it as a piece of gallantry to be without religion. Take heed of that, for GOD will not be mocked.

BIOPH. You see I do not, PHILANDER; but I know on the other side, you would not have me dissemble and play the hypocrite neither; and therefore I have told you the very truth.

SEBAST. I pray give me leave to inquire how you came to be in this condition? I am confident you have not drowned your religion in drink; (as some have done;) for I take you to be a wiser man, and more careful of your life and health; and I am as confident that you have not carelessly lost it in your travels in foreign countries, as some young gentlemen have done. What then? hath the hypocrisy of some high pretenders made you ashamed of it? Or (which hath been very common in this age) have you run a wild round through all opinions, until at last, being come to the point you set out from, you concluded, according to the proverb, 'As good never a whit as never the better?'

BIOPH. You can never find what was never lost; nor can I have lost what I never had. I tell you again, I neither have, nor ever had any religion that I know of.

PHIL. You might have spared those last words; for I will undertake for you, you have no religion indeed, if you do not know of it. Religion is not like a disease, to be caught before we are aware; nor can it be imposed upon us without our consent and privity. Besides it is so

active a principle, that it will discover itself, and a man may as well carry fire in his bosom and not be burned, as carry religion in his heart, and not be sensible of it.

SEBAST. You increase my wonder : I am at a loss how this could come to pass. Did you grow like a mushroom out of the earth ? Or what was the manner of your education ?

BIOPH. My birth, SEBASTIAN, was, I suppose, like other men's ; but perhaps my breeding might have something peculiar in it ; for, amongst other things that happened to me, it fell out that one of those persons who should especially have taken care of my institution, was of the opinion, that the SPIRIT of GOD (as his phrase was) must immediately and by himself, effect all the good that is in any man ; and therefore he concluded, it would not only be lost labour, but a derogation from the grace of GOD, to make use of any means, or to be much concerned about my education. And then, for the rest of them to whom I was committed in my minority, they were great politicians, and pretended they should consult my interest most, by keeping me disengaged from any party in religion ; that so I might be always at liberty to join myself with that which should prove most to my temporal advantage.

SEBAST. Here was a beginning bad enough, I confess ; but when you grew a man, and became at your own disposal, what kept you unresolved in this great affair ?

BIOPH. My setting out in the world, fell about the late times of public distraction ; and then I observed there were so many religions, that it was not easy to resolve which to choose.

SEBAST. Nay, BIOPHILUS, there you was wanting to yourself, as much as your guardians had been wanting to you before ; for the more disputes concerning religion there are in the world, it is the greater probability that there is at least some general truth amongst them, though many of the particulars must needs be mistaken. Besides, if you had considered that matter diligently, you would have found that few or none of those ~~disputes~~ were about

the fundamentals of religion, but only about certain notions, or modes and forms; and you might have abstracted from them, and been a good Christian nevertheless.

BIOPH. It may be so, and I confess I had sometimes such thoughts; but then, whenever I began to look that way, there were those brisk young men about me, who, observing me to grow a little serious, would preach to me at this rate: What, BIOPHILUS, do you grow weary of your liberty? Do you not know there are bonds in religion as well as in matrimony? Are you not aware how it restrains the pleasures of life, and damps all jollity? If once you let loose that thing called conscience, it will cost you a great deal of art and pains to hamper it again. Do but observe, say they, that whensoever any man comes under the power of religion, it abates his courage, and renders him tame and sheepish, liable to be affronted by every body. In a word, said they, all that they call the fear of God, and concern for another world, is nothing but ignorance, pedantry, or hypocrisy.

PHIL. What pity it is that such men, as you speak of, were not condemned to wear fools' coats; or that they have not some mark set upon them, that men might avoid them as lepers, or men infected with some such loathsome and contagious disease.

SEBAST. BIOPHILUS speaks like a man of sense and ingenuity; and give me leave to say, Sir, I cannot tell whether I ought more to applaud the sagacity of your mind, or to deplore the unhappiness of your education and acquaintance: it is a thousand pities the former should lie under the fatal prejudices of the latter; and I should account nothing to have befallen me in my whole life more desirable, than an opportunity of rescuing such a temper from such a calamity. But, I pray, with the same ingenuity, tell me, have you gone away currently with this unconcernedness for religion? Have you not sometimes had conflicts within yourself?

BIOPH. I confess I have; for sometimes, whereas I

could not but observe this business, religion, to be the great theme of the world ; I mean, to be that which the generality of mankind are solicitous about ; surely, thought I, these men believe themselves, and then, why should I make the adventure alone ? It may become me in prudence to have some concern about it too ; especially when I considered that I must shortly die, and it was impossible for me to be certain what might or might not come afterward, and what strange revolutions might succeed my going off the stage of this world, within the compass of that vast tract of time which I was likely to leave behind me. Hereupon, methought, it became me in discretion to provide for the worst. To all which I must add, that I have at several times had unaccountable misgivings of heart, which not a little startled me for the present ; but then, I endeavoured to check them as the effects of melancholy and mere panic fears ; notwithstanding, in spite of my heart, they would return upon me, and gave me suspicion that they might have some other ground than I was aware of.

SEBAST. Well, and would not these things prevail upon you to a serious consideration of religion ?

BIOPH. No truly, they did not ; for I had other thoughts came into my mind, which seemed to counterbalance the former. I suspected my suspicions, and fell in doubt whether those odd kind of bodings and presages of my own mind, which I told you of, concerning God and a future state, might not proceed from the mere weakness of human nature : or from ignorance, melancholy, or natural superstition, without any just and reasonable foundation. And then, as for those apprehensions of religion, which I observed to be generally in other men, I suspected the arts of politicians, who might have design to cheat others into those persuasions which they had no sense of themselves. Upon such considerations as these, I was inclined, on the other side, not to give myself any trouble about what seemed so dark and uncertain.

SEBAST. I pity you with all my heart, BIOPHILUS ; and

yet my wonder is almost equal to my pity, that a man of your sagacity should be staggered by such groundless fancies; for in the first place, you cannot but have observed, that many of the shrewdest men in the world are as much under an awful sense of religion, as the most easy and injudicious. Nay, ordinarily, the more thoroughly learned and wise any men are, the more hearty they are in this affair. From whence you cannot (without doing violence to your discretion) but conclude, that religion is far from being the mere effect of ignorance and imposture; whatever some shatterbrained and debauched persons would fain persuade themselves and others.

And then, in the second place, when you consider that the most courageous do as well take sanctuary in religion, and embrace it as ardently as the most cowardly; you will have no more reason to impute the rise of piety to pusillanimity, than you had before to charge it upon folly and ignorance, but must be forced to conclude this great business to be more deeply founded, and to depend upon higher causes.

BIOPH. You say well, Sir, and I should be apt to think so too, if I could learn what those higher causes are: and herein I would gladly have your advice, who (as I am persuaded) have too great judgment to be led away with popular errors. Tell me therefore, I beseech you, into what real causes I ought to resolve, either those private impressions of religion I have found in myself, or those more public effects of it, which I have observed in others.

SEBAST. Play the man, BIOPHILUS, and judge with yourself, into what causes should you, or can you, resolve such effects, but those that are as real and substantial as the effects themselves; namely, the plain reasonableness of that thing (called religion) approving itself to the inward sense of your own mind; there is a natural impress of religion, which God hath left upon the consciences of men, which is, as it were, the internal sense of the soul. And then, when the reason reflects also upon this, weigh-

ing and estimating the reasons for it, and the objections against it, together with the importance of the thing, it pronounces it the most necessary concern of mankind.

BIOPH. But if you will make me your disciple, I must entreat you to deal more particularly with me, and to open the foundations of the thing in question. But I pray deal plainly and rationally with me, seeing otherwise, if I should become your convert, you will have but little credit by me, since, in that case, my zeal would be without knowledge. Therefore pray make me to understand, that religion is as reasonable in itself, as you have represented it to be important in its consequences.

SEBAST. I have gone more than half way in that already; for having showed you the consequence of religion to be such, that a man can neither live nor die comfortably without it, there is all the reason in the world for it; for he that proves a thing to be necessary, does more than prove it to be real.

BIOPH. That was a side-blow which I did not expect, I confess.

SEBAST. But it is a home-thrust; for it obliges you, as you are a man, and pretend either to prudence or self-love, to apply yourself seriously to this affair: nay, if there should be wanting such other proofs as you require, still you will acknowledge, that self preservation is the first and surest principle in nature; and sure that is good proof, which proves that man to be worse than a fool who does not follow it.

BIOPH. That is home indeed: but let me tell you, it is one of my greatest prejudices against religion, that the most zealous defenders of it talk of probable arguments, and prudential considerations. Now, for my part, I require direct proofs, and nothing less will satisfy me.

SEBAST. There is one thing I would ask first, that you will be willing to believe religion, if you see reason for it.

BIOPH. That is not an ingenuous demand, SEBASTIAN, if I understand you: for whilst you seem to ask my con-



sent, you plainly beg your cause; whereas you are to prove it with that evidence, which will make me believe it, whether I will or no.

SEBAST. There it is now that makes the necessity of my demand apparent; for it is a mighty mistake, BIOPHILUS, to think that any arguments whatsoever can be sufficient to make a man believe, whether he will or no. It is a question whether ALMIGHTY GOD can make man believe against his will; indeed it seems a contradiction to suppose it. He hath given men freedom of will, and "put them in the hand of their own counsel, bid them choose life or death;" by which means, as wise and good men have the comfort to co-operate towards their own happiness, so perverse and obstinate men have the shame and remorse of being guilty of their own destruction. For when both parties have light to guide them, and motives and arguments to persuade them, the one ingenuously complies, but the other wilfully refuses, and employs the prerogative of his nature both against God and his own soul.

But in a human way it is plainly impossible; for if a man have taken up his post, which he resolves to maintain, it is not in the power of reason to remove him from it. The will is immoveable by any thing but itself, and reason is no equal match for it. Now this is the case of a great part of the adversaries to religion, and this is the main disadvantage of its cause, that such men have no mind it should be true, and then, *non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris*; they will hold the conclusion in spite of the premises. And this is the reason why I require of you to be willing to believe, before I begin my argument; not that I require you should believe without proof, but that you should not oppose prejudice to my argument, but be true to your reason, and to the evidence that shall be given.

BIOPH. If that be all you mean, it is granted also; and now that you have done with your cautions, before you enter upon the business, I must ask one thing of you,

namely, that you will not be too prolix in your arguments.

SEBAST. Indeed, BIOPHILUS, if I had thought of it, I ought to have cautioned against that very thing which you now demand; for this is another capital mistake in those men that are strangers to these matters. They expect to jump into the full understanding of religion presently, whensoever they make it the subject of their discourse; and if it be not decided in one syllogism or two, they immediately begin a triumph. I confess to you, that GOD, out of compassion to mankind, hath discovered a short cut over to the other world; I mean, a very compendious way to a full knowledge of, and satisfaction in, all the mysteries of religion; and that is by the Holy Scripture, which he devised on purpose, because some men's capacities will not reach to a long argument, and the occasions and busy life of others will not give them leisure to attend the laborious process of reason. But as you reject that, and will not permit GOD to judge you, but will be your own judge in the case, therefore you must have patience in this way of probation you put me upon. For if a man will take nothing for current coin, but what he hath wrought out of the ore himself, nor believe any thing to be truth but what he hath drawn out of the depth by his own skill and strength, he must be content to take a great deal of pains, and be at the expense of a great deal of time, before he can arrive at satisfaction: however, I hope you shall have no occasion to accuse me of tediousness in this argument.

BIOPH. You speak reason, I confess; and I yield you this, together with all your other preliminaries. Now therefore to the business.

SEBAST. KNOW then, BIOPHILUS, (without any farther preface,) that all this great fabric of religion stands upon these three pillars, *viz.*

*First,* That there is a GOD, as the object of devotion and religious observance.

*Secondly.* That this GOD exercises a Providence over

his creatures, and mankind especially; and so by observing how they carry themselves towards him, and consequently being able to reward or punish them, lays an obligation upon them to observe and worship him.

*Thirdly*, That man is a subject capable of such an obligation, and of paying such devotion and observance to the Deity.

Mistake me not; I say, upon all these three in conjunction doth the truth and reason of religion depend; but if any one of them were wanting, religion would vanish into a romance, and come to nothing.

For, first, if there was no God, it would not only be certain that there is nothing to whom religion could be due; but it would be as certain that there could be no Providence, nor other consideration, to enforce it; and then let the constitution of mankind be as capable of noble performances as can be imagined, yet there could be no ground nor foundation of religion.

Again, if we should acknowledge the being of a God, and him also fit to be worshipped; yet if there be no Providence, so that this God doth not mind whether men serve or disserve him, and consequently could not reward or punish accordingly; though it might be fancied a decent thing for all creatures to pay some kind of homage to so excellent a Being, yet there can be no danger to them if they do not; so, consequently, no sufficient obligation upon them to perform it.

And lastly, if there be both a God and a Providence acknowledged, and consequently an obligation to religion; yet if man be not a subject capable of it,—that is, if either he hath it not in his power to know God's will, or it is not in his choice to serve or disserve him, the business of religion cannot concern him, nor can it be expected from him.

But if all these three things prove certainly true, then is religion immoveable as the foundations of heaven and earth. For the first proposition describes the object, the third qualifies the subject, and the second lays the obli-

gation of religion, which is all that can be required in the case.

**BIOPH.** The pinch of the business therefore lies in the proof of those three assertions; and if you are able to make out the truth of them severally, I must be a proselyte; there is no help for it. But the first I allow,—that there is a **GOD**. Prove the second if you can.

**SEBAST.** That there is a Providence, I doubt not to convince any considerate man of, these two ways, *viz.*

1. From the causes and reasons of it.
2. From the visible effects of it.

In the first place, there is very great reason to assure one's self that **GOD** exercises a providence over the world, from the consideration of those perfections which appear to be in the Divine Nature, namely, infinite wisdom and power; both which we must necessarily ascribe to him, whom we allow to be the Creator of the world. Now there can be no reason to doubt whether it be in his power to look over and mind all the passages of the world, when we have acknowledged his power to have been sufficient to give beginning to that which was not, and to make a world out of nothing, which is incomparably the more difficult province.

And then, if we are satisfied that such a providence is not impossible, the same wisdom which joined with his power in making the world, will oblige him to exert himself in the management of it when he hath made it. For it is not conceivable that a wise Being should wholly abandon that piece of workmanship, which he hath made the greatest demonstration of art and skill in the contrivance of. Such a supine negligence as this is not easily to be suspected in the meanest of intelligible beings, and therefore there can be no colour of reason that the most perfect of Beings should be thought guilty of it.

This I take to be a sufficient argument of a providence between you and me, now that you acknowledge a **GOD** and Creator of the world; but I will not insist upon it, because I promised to give such evidence of this point,

as should at the same time (and *à majori*, as they say) conclude the former principle also : I mean, that there is a God.

And therefore I shall now come to the second way of probation, *viz.*, from the visible effects of a providence. But, you remember, I have already prevented myself herein, by what passed between us in a former Conference, where I showed, at large, the evident footsteps of providence in his managing or overruling the ordinary course of nature in two remarkable instances, *viz.* : 1. In the prophecies and predictions of things to come, which have been so admirably verified in the event, as must argue an all-seeing eye over all the motions of second causes. And, 2. In the miracles that have been wrought in the several ages of the world, wherein the Divine Majesty hath apparently interposed, and either suspended or overruled, heightened or accelerated, the motion and force of natural causes, and by both together given proof of his being, and of his minding the affairs of the world.

I assure myself I shall not need to repeat that argument at large, but may trust your memory for it ; only if now, upon so long consideration, you have any thing material to object, I am ready to make good what I have asserted.

BIOPH. I must needs say you deal fairly thus far ; and now that I recollect the sum of that discourse of yours, I have, as I think, this very material thing to say against it : namely, that we cannot observe any such interpositions of Divine Providence now, but the world is left wholly to the course of natural causes. If you would have appealed either to miracles or prophecy in the present age, so that a man might have made his own eyes witnesses of matter of fact, then the argument would have been irrefragable ; but forasmuch as we see no such things in the present times, why should we be so credulous as to believe there ever were ?

SEBAST. I am very sensible of the importance of your objection, and of the necessity that a sufficient answer be made to it ; yet I do not in the least doubt but you will

find it in the following particulars, by the time you have laid them together :—

*First*, I suppose you will grant, that there can be no need of, or reason for, God's displaying himself by miracles, or a spirit of prophecy, in the present age, for the assurance of a providence, if we may be sufficiently secured that he hath indubitably given those evidences in former ages; for he that hath once sufficient grounds given him to believe such a point, hath always an obligation upon him to believe it, without repeated proofs. And it is unreasonable to expect that God should be bound to exert his omnipotency, or any way put out of course the order of natural causes, merely for the gratification of men's curiosity or fancy, but only for the satisfaction of their reason in so important a point.

*Secondly*, I will show you, that (bating merely the gratifying of curiosity and fancy) we may have as credible and sufficient assurance of a miracle, or other extraordinary passage of providence, which was done many ages ago, as we could have if such a thing was to be done in the present age. This will, perhaps, seem a little strange to you at first, but your wonder will abate when you consider these two things :—

1. That it cannot be expected God should so far comply with the humour of men as to work miracles every day, and in the sight of every man. Miracles are a kind of parenthesis in the ordinary course of nature; or, as it were, a short digression from the usual method of things. Now, if such digressions should be daily made, it would be, in a manner, a total superseding the ordinary course of nature; and so, instead of serving the particular humour of some men, the whole race of mankind would be deprived of a greater and more remarkable miracle than all the other put together; namely, that of the stable and constant course of nature. And such frequent irregularities as must follow upon that concession, would put a great temptation upon men to suspect that there was no constant law in the creation, but that chance carried all

before it ; which would make an objection indeed against providence. And yet it is certain, that notwithstanding this horrible mischief, so it must be done if every particular man must have his eyes witnesses of miracles before he believes them. For, it is plain, that if GOD should vouchsafe one or more miracles to the present age, it could not be done before every man ; and therefore some of them, if they will believe a providence upon that account, must trust to other men's eyes for the grounds of their belief.

And thus we see it was in those times and places where miracles were most frequent, as in the time of our SAVIOUR ; those mighty works which he wrought whilst he was upon earth, and even his resurrection itself, were not obvious to the eyes of all men, but only to so many as might render them sufficiently credible by their testimony ; and as for the generality, they must content themselves to believe without seeing, (*John xx. 29,*) as he himself told them.

2. If GOD should so far condescend to the incredulity of men, as to permit generally their eyes and senses to be witnesses of such extraordinary passages of providence as we speak of, it would not have such success as you imagine ; for there would not want objections against this also. Some would then suspect their very senses, or say that either their imaginations were deluded, or else all was done by natural causes, though perhaps they did not well understand them, or at least would conclude that which appears to be a miracle was merely an accident, and so there is no account to be sought or given of it. Thus we know the greatest miracles that ever were wrought have been eluded, even in the times wherein they were done, and by those men that saw them. But now, when those things that I make the instances of a providence, (the ancient miracles, I mean,) have undergone the test of time, and been canvassed in several ages, and yet no flaw found in them, in this case we have more full ground for our belief, than if the things had been fresh before our

eyes ; for that same incredulous humour which now objects against the credit of things, because they were done long ago, would find out as good a trick to put upon a present miracle ; such a man would say, (and with more colour of reason,) Though I cannot detect the cheat of this for the present, yet time may discover it ; which cannot be said in the other case.

But lastly, I add, that though it is true, that all ages are not alike illustrated with such prodigious acts of providence as are strictly called miracles ; yet there is no time of the world wherein there are not very plainly the prints of Divinity, and evidences of a providence continually presiding over the world, if a man do not humorsomely despise them, (for want of the pompous circumstances of miracles,) or stupidly overlook them, because of their frequency ; such as (for example) the preserving the several species of things in the world, that amongst that vast multitude of the kinds of birds or insects, and their several enmities to one another, and the many accidents all of them are exposed to, there should, notwithstanding, in so long a tract of time, not be any one kind of them lost or extinguished.

That the Holy Scriptures, and Christian Religion, should be upheld, in spite of the combination of wit and ignorance, power and malice, against them.

That Civil Government should be preserved against all the interests of resolutely wicked men, and against all the brutish violence of the enraged rabble.

Besides the remarkable infatuation of the counsels, discovering the plots, and defeating the designs of crafty and atheistical politicians ; and frequent terrors upon the consciences, and damps upon the spirits of the most desperate and flagitious men, and the assisting, animating, and comforting the hearts of good men in their greatest agonies, and most difficult undertakings. Some of these things I mentioned before, and all of them happen in every age, and are never the less evidences of Providence for being ordinary.



Indeed it may and doth fall out, that now and then things happen quite otherwise, as that conspiracies of wicked men are successful, &c. ; and God seems to order it so on purpose, because he will not be traced in his methods, and because he will leave some trial of men's willingness to believe in him : But the other course is so usual, and things often fall out so patly that way, that it must be extreme humorsomeness to deny a providence in them.

But besides all these, there is one thing more comes to my mind, which is beyond all the fore-mentioned, and seems to be set up on purpose by Divine Providence, as a standing monument of itself to all ages, and that is, the present condition of the Jews.

They were once a great and flourishing kingdom, and fortunate beyond all example ; but from the time they grew incurably wicked and rebellious against the God that had so signally blessed them, and had to all their other impieties crucified the SAVIOUR of the world ; they have, for the space of sixteen or seventeen hundred years, been " like the field which God hath cursed," and been the most prodigious instance of unhappiness that ever was in the world. Forasmuch as though they are still vastly numerous, a cunning and projecting sort of people, yet they are every where scattered through all nations ; but every where under marks of infamy, and no where able to become a people, so as to live under laws and a government of their own : notwithstanding all which, and which is the wonder of all, they keep up their stock and pedigree with exactness, as if God intended (as certainly he did) by all this, to set them forth as a lively instance both of his just Providence, and of the truth of the Spirit of Prophecy in the Holy Scriptures. This, together with the foregoing instances, I think, affords sufficient evidence that God doth not now neglect the world, and leave all to run in the road of natural causes, but even in these latter ages, as well as formerly, gives some signal strokes of an overruling hand. What think you, BIOPHILUS ? If you have any thing farther to say to the contrary, propound it.

**BIOPH.** Truly, I have nothing very material to say farther.

**SEBAST.** Then **GOD** be thanked, we have now gained two feet for religion to stand upon; namely, we have a **GOD** to whom it is due, and we have an obligation from the consideration of his Providence, to make all the world observant of him; at least so far as any part of the creation is capable of such a duty.

**BIOPH.** Very right; but I remember you said, That to lay the foundation of religion effectually, it must appear, that mankind is under a capacity of the aforesaid obligation, and of performing this duty towards the Divine Majesty. Now, as for this, though I foresee no difficulty in the case, yet however, I pray, express yourself a little more fully about it.

**SEBAST.** The bottom of this third point is no more than this: To make man a subject capable of the obligations of religion, these three things are requisite:—

1. That he be able, in some measure, to judge what carriage from himself is fit and decent towards **GOD**.

2. That he be a free agent, and have it in his choice and power, to determine himself towards the performance of what he understands to be fit and decent, or towards the contrary if he will.

3. That he be able to reflect upon what he hath done, so as to accuse and condemn, or to acquit and justify himself accordingly, as his actions and carriage towards the Deity, have been agreeable, or disagreeable, to the judgment aforesaid.

The first of these Powers and Capacities, is commonly called Understanding; the second Will, or Freedom of Choice; and the third is known by the name of Conscience.

Without the first of these, namely, if mankind had not Understanding, to discern the difference of things, and some rule within him whereby to judge of moral good and evil, he would be lawless and brutish, having no other measures to go by than his passions and sense.

Without the second, namely, if he had not Freedom of

Will, to determine himself towards good and evil, he must be under a fatal necessity of doing whatsoever he should happen to do ; and then, there could be no such thing as acceptableness to GOD when he did well, nor blameableness when he did otherwise ; because there could be no such thing as virtue or vice in his case ; and consequently, no more room for either rewards or punishments, than there is in the motion of plants, or stones, or any other the most insensible things.

Without the third and last, *viz.*, If man had not such a faculty in him as we call Conscience, so as to reflect upon his own actions and carriage, by virtue of which he either justifies himself when he hath obeyed the best reason of his mind, or upbraids and scourges himself whenever he hath done otherwise, he would have no regard what use he made of his liberty.

But by all these together, (if they appear to be in human nature,) mankind is fully qualified for the obligations of religion.

Now, looking over the world, as far as we can, we find no creature that we converse with, to be endued with these faculties but ourselves ; and then, looking into ourselves, we find by undeniable experience, that we have every one of the aforesaid capacities : and hence I conclude, that man, and man only, of all creatures, (in the visible world,) is the subject of religion. And this I called the third fundamental principle of religion : not that I take it to be properly and strictly so, but in regard it is manifest, that there can be no sure ground for religion without it.

And thus, I think, I have fully answered your demand, concerning the ground-work of religion, and laid out a foundation both large enough, and strong enough, to bear the whole structure. And now I hope you will see no cause to suspect it to be a mere melancholy fancy, or politic stratagem, the result of education, or effect of weakness and fear ; but the most manly and rational thing that any man can concern himself about.

**BIOPH.** I confess you have done as you say, **SEBASTIAN**; and I thank you heartily for it. You have discovered to me the foundations: tell me what superstructures must be made upon them. In the first place, What do you mean by Religion?

**SEBAST.** By Religion, in general, I understand nothing else but a serious study to know **GOD**, together with a careful endeavour to please him, and procure his favour. This is that which not only the several sects of Christians mean by Religion, but is that which all men of sense, and even the better sort of Pagans themselves, agree in.

**BIOPH.** I pray condescend to explain yourself more particularly; and first give me leave to ask you, what you mean by knowing **GOD**? Do you intend any thing more than the acknowledgment that there is a **GOD**?

**SEBAST.** Yes, **BIOPHILUS**: I here understand a great deal more by the knowing of **GOD**, than I did in all our former discourse. While we were only laying the foundations of religion, there no more was required than to acknowledge his being, and that because (as then I showed you) therein lies the first reason of such a thing as we call religion: for there is nothing to oblige a man to have any regard to himself, nor to make any difference of his actions, until he acknowledge such a being as hath a sovereignty over him, and to whom he is accountable for his carriage. But when that is resolved of, then there arises a twofold occasion of studying farther, to know the **GOD** which he acknowledges to be.

*First*, Because it cannot but appear a point of great decency towards this acknowledged Sovereign of the world, that we employ our minds in the study and contemplation of him; and indeed to do otherwise, is not only unmanly, but an argument of such contempt as is not consistent with the real persuasion of such a Being.

Again, forasmuch as by the bare acknowledgment that there is a **GOD**, we see reason to have a care of our actions with respect to him; so now, when we are come to that, it will farther concern us to have some rule and measure

to govern ourselves by, whereby to make a distinction of good and evil, that we may please him in what we do ; and that is only attainable by serious study of the Divine nature, attributes, and such declarations of his will as he hath made.

For it is not every thing, whatsoever we may fancy, that will please him : for then all religions would be alike true and safe, and none but atheists and hypocrites could miscarry. But it is certain, God hath a mind of his own, and that devotion or observance only pleases him which he appoints ; all other is foolish superstition, and at best but lost labour.

BIOPH. But I hope, after all, you do not intend to represent the Deity as a touchy and humorsome being ; for then religion must needs be the most anxious thing in the world, and far from what you have hitherto made me believe.

SEBAST. God forbid that such a thought of the Divine Majesty should enter into any man's heart. As for God himself, he is certainly nothing else but wise and great goodness ; too great to be fondly taken with little things, and too wise and good to be offended with trifles : and therefore religion cannot consist in niceties and punctilios ; as if it was the servile flattery of a tyrant, and not the ingenuous service of loyal subjects, to a brave and generous Prince. Notwithstanding, as I said before, he hath a mind and will of his own, and expects that should be complied with.

BIOPH. But is it not enough that a man live well and virtuously, and serve God devoutly ? Will not that please him ?

SEBAST. Yes, doubtless, it will ; but still you must have a rule and standard for all that ; otherwise, there will be no real difference of virtue and vice ; no distinction between superstition and devotion.

BIOPH. Now am I in a wilderness, when I thought myself even at Canaan.

SEBAST. Why, what is the matter, BIOPHILUS ? Could

you think that mere good meaning, or any kind of blind devotion, would serve the turn? Or that man might prescribe to his Maker what he should be pleased with?

**BIOPH.** The matter is plainly this, **SEBASTIAN**: I perceive that if a man have a mind to be religious, he will be at a loss which way to take. His own conscience, you say, is not a sufficient guide for him, because that may be mistaken, and therefore he must have a rule: he must, say you, study to know **GOD**'s nature; and that is not enough, but **GOD** hath a mind and will of his own, and that must be known too; and that is not all neither, for he may alter his mind, and then we are at a worse loss than ever: If therefore this be the state of the case, it is no purpose to think or talk further of this business.

**SEBAST.** Come, cheer up, man, there is no danger of all this; this seeming difficulty will presently clear up, by the time I have told you, that **GOD**'s mind and nature are so entirely the same; that whatsoever is agreeable to his nature, cannot be contradicted by any act of his will; and whatsoever is the express of his will, is also the true copy of his nature: (at least in the general :) and therefore, if we perfectly understood the divine nature, there would be no need that he should make any declaration of his will; for then it would be the only instance of religion, to imitate him, which is the truest honour that can be done to him. But now, forasmuch as we neither do nor can perfectly understand his nature, because it is too great and too sublime for us to take a full view of it: therefore it is that we stand in need of the declaration of his will for our guide in his service.

**BIOPH.** If this be so, (as it seems reasonable enough,) then why did you speak of his nature in this case; seeing the business lies in the studying the divine will: at least, if there be any such thing as a declaration of it which may be come at?

**SEBAST.** The reason of my making mention both of the divine nature, and the divine will, will become as evident

to you as any thing we have discoursed of, by the time you have considered these two things:—

*First*, That forasmuch as natural light (which is the common principle of mankind) can make some discovery of the nature of GOD to us, but little or nothing of his will; therefore it is necessary, that such as have not divine revelation, should study the divine nature for their guidance.

Again, *Secondly*, It is very considerable, that even those that live under the advantage of divine revelation, may be imposed upon by counterfeit oracles, if they do not well study the divine nature, by the knowledge of which they may be able to detect such impostures. For if a doctrine be broached in the world, that is contrary to the natural and reasonable notions men have of GOD, although such doctrine pretend never so much to divinity; nay, if it should seem to have the same miraculous attestation to it that the Gospel itself hath; we may and ought to reject it upon this account, that we are sure nothing can come from GOD which contradicts himself; nor can there be any declaration of his will, which is contrary to the known measures of his nature: and therefore, the nature of GOD, as well as the will of GOD, is to be attended to, as our rule in this great affair of religion.

BIOPH. Now I think I understand you thus far; and if I be not mistaken, then I have two great things still to ask your assistance in: 1. That you will help me to understand the divine nature. 2. That you will direct me how I may come to the knowledge of his Will: by which two together, I find I must be enabled both to please him and procure his favour. And first, I pray, explain the nature of GOD to me.

SEBAST. I know you are a wiser man than to expect from me that I should give you a perfect definition of the Divine Majesty; for by what hath been said already, you cannot but be sensible of the vanity and impossibility of such an attempt. But if your desire be, (as I suppose it

is,) that I should represent God to you under such expressions that we may understand one another what we mean when we speak of him, and also may sufficiently distinguish him from all other beings; then I doubt not to give you satisfaction.

BIOPH. I ask you no more but that promise; saving that I expect also that your description of him should not only render him a fit object of religion, but also, in some measure, a rule for it too, according to what you last discoursed.

SEBAST. I understand you: and why may not these few words satisfy you, *viz.*, God is an Infinite and Eternal Spirit.

BIOPH. Ah, SEBASTIAN! The words are few indeed, but they are such as will put you to the expense of a great many more before I shall understand them; every word is a mystery,—Spirit, Eternal, Infinite.

SEBAST. Be of good courage, BIOPHILUS, for though I foretold you we should never be able fully to comprehend the Divine Majesty, yet with a little patience and attention you shall find those phrases very intelligible.

BIOPH. I confess you have not disappointed me hitherto, and therefore I will not despair, nor do I intend any longer to dispute with you, but to learn of you; therefore, I pray in the first place, tell me plainly and intelligibly what a Spirit is, and what you mean when you say, *God is a Spirit?*

SEBAST. When I call God a Spirit, I mean neither more nor less than this, That he is an understanding, free, and powerful substance, which yet is not visible, nor can fall under the notice of our bodily senses.

In the first place, I call a spirit a *substance*, that you may be sure I mean not a phantom, (as your friends use to suspect,) but something which is as real as matter itself.

And yet, in the second place, to distinguish it from matter, I say it is not visible, nor can fall under the notice of our bodily senses, as that other kind of substance doth.



And then, in the last place, to show you that this is no contradiction, and to deliver you from the prejudice of sense, I represent to you the effects and operations of a spirit, which are such as must needs argue it to be a substance, and an excellent one too ; namely, that it hath power to move the matter, wherein it resides, and also hath understanding and choice, which matter is incapable of.

So that what a soul is in ourselves, that doth this notion of Spirit imply GOD to be to the whole world ; as by that we move our bodies, and can give check to our own motion, so doth GOD preside over the world.

BIOPH. I acknowledge you have delivered a consistent notion of such a thing as a spirit, and I see no impossibility that there should be such a thing. But how doth it appear that there is really such a thing as a spirit ; or that if there be a GOD, he must needs be a Spirit ?

SEBAST. The reason is very plain : For something must be eternal, or nothing could have been at all ; and matter could not be that eternal Being ; therefore it must be Spirit, or nothing, that gave beginning to things ; and consequently this thing, Spirit, is not only a consistent notion, but a necessary reality, and GOD is that Spirit.

Besides, to convince you of this more effectually, let me remind you of what I have heretofore observed,—That we find in ourselves something which not only moves and acts our bodies, but also sometimes bears hard against them, crosses and controls them in their interests and inclinations. Now surely that which doeth so, must needs be something of a higher and different nature from them, and is no other than that kind of spiritual being which we call a soul ; and so you have another and more obvious evidence of the actual existence of a spiritual substance.

BIOPH. I apprehend you ; but, I pray, what influence will the acknowledgment of GOD to be a Spirit, have upon the directing a man in his devotion towards him ?

SEBAST. The belief that GOD is a Spirit, is of very great consequence to religion upon several accounts.

Partly as it obliges us to be sincere, hearty, and inward, in all our devotions to him; and not think to put him off with outsides and compliments: For seeing "he is a Spirit, he will be worshipped in spirit and truth." (*John* iv. 24.)

Partly, also, as it renders it evident to us, that neither the sound of words, nor any peculiar posture, ceremony, or other such like childish trifles, can of themselves be acceptable to Him, who is a great and wise Spirit; no, nor yet the fat of beasts, nor the odours of sweet incense, nor gold, nor silver, nor any of those things that are admired among men; but least of all such sensual and lascivious rites as were in use among the Pagans: for as none of the former can be suitable oblations to such a pure Being; so it is certain, those last named can only befit an impure spirit, such a one as the Devil is.

But principally, as it convinces us of the vanity and impiety of making images of God, or of thinking to do honour to him by the use of them in his worship, since he, being a spiritual substance, can by no means be represented by them, but must needs be debased and rendered much meaner to our thoughts by such representations. And therefore we find, that not only the Holy Scripture utterly condemns such usages as idolatrous and abominable to him; but that amongst the Pagans themselves, all those who arrived at this notion, that God was a Spirit, rejected image-worship, and thought that of the mind and spirit to be only acceptable to him.

To all which add, that the belief of the spiritual nature of God enables us more easily to conceive the greatness of his power, and that it is easy to him to mind and govern the world without trouble or weariness to himself, and with the greater advantage to us. For it is not imaginable that a perfectly immaterial substance should be sensible of any lassitude or decay; and thus the belief of God's being a Spirit, confirms our trust in his divine providence, which is the prime spring of devotion.

**BIOPH.** I am abundantly satisfied that God is a Spirit,

and that he ought to be so acknowledged. Now proceed, in the next place, to tell me what you mean when you say he is eternal.

SEBAST. By GOD's being an Eternal Spirit, I mean, that as he had no beginning, so he can have no end of his being, and that because he is necessarily, or could not but be; such an excellency of being must be allowed to something or other, or else nothing could have been at all; and it cannot be attributed to the world, or any part of it, and therefore must be due to GOD.

BIOPH. Of what moment is it to religion, whether GOD be acknowledged to be eternal or not?

SEBAST. O of very great moment: For, in the first place, this being acknowledged, we are thereby assured that all the gods of the Gentiles, or whatsoever were either supposed to have a beginning, or to die, or decline in power and divinity, could not be gods, but the idols of foolish and deluded men; and at the same time we are as certain, that the true GOD can neither do, nor be capable of, any hurt, no, nor of any change, but ever remains immutably the same: for whatsoever is liable to change, may also cease to be.

Again, upon the consideration of GOD's eternity, depends a great obligation to religion; forasmuch as by this means he hath it always in his power to reward or punish men according to their demerit; wherein consists a great secret of his providence, namely, the reason of his patience and long-suffering, that he doth not presently execute vengeance upon wicked men; nor, on the other side, immediately deliver good men out of trouble, because he hath it always in his power to do it; and if he do it not in this world, will be sure to do it in the next.

To both which may be added, That although the notion of eternity to come be a great deep, into which we cannot look without giddiness and disturbance, yet we may be certain there is such a thing, because we are sure that GOD cannot cease to be, no more than he began to be; and therefore the solicitude which is in men about

what is to come after their death, is not the effect of weakness, but a rational and well-grounded prudence.

**BIOPH.** But yet there is one difficult thing remains, namely, what do you mean when you say, **GOD** is an infinite Spirit ?

**SEBAST.** By that, I mean, that whereas all other beings, (as well spiritual as material,) which are not necessarily, or which might not have been, must consequently, whensoever they come into being, depend upon him, who hath being in himself, and so be limited and circumscribed by him ; that as they can have but such a portion of power, life, and understanding, as he hath allotted them. On the contrary, He that was before all things, and the cause of all things, and who could not but be, must needs be unlimited in all kinds of perfections ; forasmuch as there was nothing before him to limit him, nothing equal to him to rival him, nothing after him to intrench upon him, and consequently, all conceivable perfection must be essentially in him ; that is, he must be most powerful, most wise, most just, and most good.

**BIOPH.** I think I need not ask you, of what importance this last point is, for I am aware that this attribute renders him the object of our admiration, fear, trust, and all other instances of devotion.

**SEBAST.** It is very true, **BIOPHILUS** ; and, besides, by virtue of this infinity, he can be present to all places, to take notice of all passages ; he can easily accomplish whatsoever he promises or threatens, he can be straitened in nothing, nor need any thing, having all things in himself, and consequently, it is impossible to conceive of him as a stingy, narrow-hearted being that can envy or malign his creatures, but contrariwise he must be unspeakably good, and take delight in nothing more than in communicating of his own fulness to them.

But that which I would especially remark, is this,—That a Being, infinite in goodness and wisdom, can never be the author of absurd, or harsh, and impossible laws ; for any

such would be a contradiction to the aforementioned perfections of his nature : and therefore, as we have upon this account great obligations to serve him cheerfully, so we may assure ourselves that whatsoever pretends to be a divine law, and can be made appear to be inhumanly rigorous, or intolerably difficult to be observed, is either no law of his, or, at least, is not rightly interpreted.

And thus, I hope, I have in some measure explained to you the nature of **GOD**, and also led you to observe the main strokes of piety or the laws of natural religion towards him, deducible from those principles : and you yourself, by attentive consideration, may be able to deduce many other of like nature. What other service do you now command me?

**BIOPH.** I would in the next place request of you, that you will discourse to me of the **Divine Will**, as you have done of his **Nature**.

**SEBAST.** If we should go no farther, and that I had nothing to say concerning **Divine Revelation**, yet you see we have enough already to render religion not only worthy of a prudent man's care, but the most reasonable and necessary thing in the whole world : so that atheism, with all its boasts of wit and extraordinary sagacity, and scepticism too, with all its caution and reservedness, are quite beaten out of the field.

**BIOPH.** I remember you said, that human reason was too short to be a standard for **GOD**, and that if it was possible for us perfectly to understand the divine nature, (which we cannot,) yet, since he is a free agent, and hath a mind of his own, and will not be prescribed to by us, it is necessary, in order to the pleasing him, that we should be more particularly instructed concerning his will and pleasure : Now therefore my desire is, (if it be possible,) to be ascertained of the divine will, that I may know how to carry myself agreeably thereunto.

**SEBAST.** First let me ask you, what ways are there

imaginable that might give you or any other man satisfaction in this case ; and what are those you could think fit for God to make use of to this purpose ?

BIOPH. I could think of several ways whereby God might, if he please, make known his mind to men ; namely, I doubt not but he can, if he will, speak from heaven in an audible voice, so that we shall hear him as we hear one another ; or if he thought good to condescend so far, he could personally appear in the world, and instruct men in what he requires of them ; again, he could singly apply himself to particular persons, and by some secret operations of his, instil his mind into their hearts ; or, to name no more, he could guide the thoughts and hands of some certain men whilst they committed his will to writing, which should be a record and digest of the divine laws to all ages of the world.

SEBAST. Very good. Then I hope it will abundantly satisfy you, if I show you that God hath not only made use of some one or other of these ways, but hath by every one of them notified his pleasure, at some time or other, to the sons of men.

For instance, in the first ages of the world, before there were any divine laws settled for the conduct of men's lives, it was not unusual with the Divine Majesty to give particular intimations of his mind, especially in such cases as the use of natural reason could not extend to ; and those that were extraordinary good men, had very frequent experience of this in those ancient times ; and even the better sort of heathens were not destitute of such special discoveries of God's will, to supply the defects of human reason in divine things ; and there is nothing more known and acknowledged amongst them than this.

And it is also certain, that though God, as a Spirit, hath properly no voice of his own, yet he hath several times framed a voice, and caused it to be heard from heaven : the famous instance whereof was at the giving of laws to the Jewish nation from Mount Sinai. Nor have later times (no, not amongst the Pagans themselves) been

altogether left without such prodigious discoveries of the divine will, unless we call in question the credit of all their writings.

But for GOD's condescending to come himself into the world, and to instruct men in such things as are agreeable to his will, this was most gloriously verified in the conversation of our Saviour, CHRIST JESUS, in human nature upon earth, who had all the attestations to his Divinity that could be desired, both in the wonders of his birth, the miracles of his life, and the glories of his resurrection; but especially in the frequent and humble ministry of angels to him as occasion served. And he familiarly and fully interpreted the mind of GOD to men; and the more to awaken the attention of mankind to him, a voice from heaven also attended his entrance on this office.

And then, in the last place, for GOD's declaring his mind to us by the ministry of men, this he hath abundantly done in the books of the Holy Scripture, which, as they were dictated by himself to those holy men that composed them, so they have been carefully preserved by his special providence from the changes and corruptions that all human things are liable to, that so they might convey his pleasure to all persons, climates, and ages of the world.

BIOPH. But do you mean that a man may consult which of these oracles, and when he pleases, for a resolution in any matter of difficulty that occurs in the business of religion?

SEBAST. No indeed, BIOPHILUS; that you must not expect; but must content yourself only with the last of the four, namely, the Holy Scripture: that is the standing and "lively oracle of GOD."

BIOPH. But may I not ask, Why might not some of those other declarations of the divine mind have been continued as well as that of the Scripture; especially a voice from heaven; if it had been but for the attestation to, and fuller confirmation of, the written way of divine revelation?

SEBAST. Nay, BIOPHILUS, we must not ask GOD a

reason of that, but be thankful to him for what he hath afforded us; especially since that is as much as is necessary for our guidance: for those that "hear not **MOSES** and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead," (*Luke* xvi. 31,) much less if they heard a voice from heaven.

Nevertheless I must tell you, I do not think it altogether impossible to give a modest man more particular satisfaction in this case; for there were apparent reasons why **God** should make such prodigious discoveries of himself in former times as he doth not make now; namely, because for a good part of the age of the world there was no written law, and so **God** must apply himself to men in some extraordinary way, or they would have had no instruction in his will at all: and then, after the Law was given by a voice from heaven on Mount Sinai, and written on tables of stone, it was in itself so imperfect a draught of the divine mind, and for the most part so accommodated to the weakness of that people, that it would have been hard to have kept a man of any sagacity in a constant belief of it as coming from **God**, if he had not from time to time made prodigious attestations to it; but now, especially since our **SAVIOUR** came into the world, and we have the books of the New Testament as well as of the Old, there is so full a declaration of the divine mind, and that not in types or figures neither, but in so plain a way, and with so much agreeableness of the things discovered to the reason of mankind, that there is no need of any secondary attestation, nor any thing more than that it appears that those writings were indited by **God**.

Besides, it is to be considered that the way of giving answer by a voice from heaven, unless it had been granted to every man, (and then it must have been done almost every day and hour, and in every part of the world also,) could not have given better satisfaction to the generality of men, (I mean, to such as were not ear-witnesses of such a voice,) than this way of Scripture doth; for without



infinite and continual miracles, it must have been their lot and duty to believe without hearing such a voice.

BIOPH. What do you mean by this way of delivering the will of GOD, by the writings of the Holy Scripture?

SEBAST. The way is this: Divine Wisdom, resolving to give a standing law to mankind, in the first place, inspired certain holy men, that is, made clear impressions of his own sentiments upon their minds; and then also guided and governed them in writing and publishing the aforesaid impressions for the use of others.

That it is easy for ALMIGHTY GOD to imprint his own sense upon the minds of such men as he shall choose for that purpose, you cannot doubt, when you consider that power of his which he displayed in the creation; and that therefore the minds of men must needs be "in his hands as clay in the hands of the potter," so that he can mould and figure them as he pleases.

And he can give assurance to the minds of such men, that it is He himself that makes those impressions upon them. For certainly GOD hath ways enough to distinguish himself and his motions from illusions.

That also he should be able to guide and govern those holy penmen in the writing of what he himself had put into their minds, and in delivering his sense so fully and clearly as to answer his end, and become a sufficient rule for men to govern themselves by, must be granted, or you make him more impotent than a man.

*Lastly,* That he could by his providence preserve the books so written from being embezzled or corrupted, that so they may answer the ends aforesaid, cannot be denied without denying his providence.

So that, in sum, this way of the Holy Scripture must needs be a very sufficient way of divine legislation, and an abundant supply of the defects of natural reason in divine things.

BIOPH. I grant all you have hitherto said, which amounts to no more but this,—That it is not impossible for

GOD to do so; but now the question is, how shall it appear that he hath done so? Or (which amounts to the same thing) how do you prove that those books, commonly called the Bible, are indeed what they pretend to be?

SEBAST. In order to your full satisfaction in that point, let me desire you to lay together the four following particulars:—

*First,* It cannot be denied but that the books of Holy Scripture are, at least generally speaking, the most ancient monuments in the whole world. Wherefore, besides the veneration which we commonly allow to antiquity, it is apparent that they have endured the test of all times past, and that all the wit of men hath not hitherto been able to find any considerable flaw in them, and consequently their authority and credibility is so much greater than any other books, by how much the time is longer since they were written and published; for there have not been wanting those that have endeavoured to expose them, and if they had been able to have done it, doubtless, long ere this time, these books had lost all their veneration; but since they still retain their esteem, (notwithstanding all efforts of their enemies to the contrary,) there is ground enough to believe they never shall be able to do it, and consequently that there can be no reasonable suspicion of the truth of them.

To which may be added, that since Divine Providence hath so long preserved and watched over these writings, it is natural to collect, that they are such as he peculiarly owns and recommends to us.

*Secondly,* It is to be considered that the doctrine of these books is perfectly agreeable to the natural notions we have of GOD; and therefore, being fit for him to be the author of, they must consequently be fit for us to entertain, as coming from him, at least upon reasonable evidence of fact that they did so.

If, indeed, any man could justly charge these writings as containing any thing absurd or impossible, or make appear that they countenanced such things as are disagree-

able to what we naturally know of GOD, or can discern to be in him by the best improvement of our understanding, then we could not be bound to believe them, although they should be supposed to have all the confirmation imaginable; for no man can believe what he will, nor be obliged to act contrary to the natural sense of his mind, upon any authority whatsoever.

But whensoever a doctrine is propounded that is reasonable in itself, and besides hath reasonable evidence that it came from GOD, then it is highly reasonable that we should receive it as such, notwithstanding some trifling objections which may be to the contrary.

*Thirdly,* It is especially to be minded, that the doctrine of the Holy Scripture hath not wanted such special assurances that it came from GOD, as were fit for him to give, or for men to expect; for all those holy men that delivered any part of it to the world, were abetted by miracles wrought for the confirmation of what they delivered; so that either GOD must be supposed to set the seal of his omnipotency to a falsehood, or else these doctrines are the discoveries of the mind of GOD.

Now, that there was such miraculous proof, we may be assured in the general by this consideration, that it is not imaginable that such doctrine and such books should have obtained that credit in the times when they were set on foot, without such confirmation, especially since the matter of those writings in a great part was so very different from the notions, and practices, and interests of those ages and persons to whom they were published: 'Insomuch, that (as a great man said of old) to suppose the world to be brought to the reception of these doctrines without a miracle, might justly seem the greatest miracle that ever was.'

And in particular, that the books of the Old Testament had such divine attestation, the very books themselves frequently appeal to, or at least give us the history of such things of this kind as could neither be denied by the men of the present age when they were done, nor confuted by

those that came after; besides the famous spirit of prophecy, which displayed itself all along those times.

And for the New Testament, besides all the miracles wrought by our SAVIOUR and his Apostles, that one of his resurrection was a thing both so notorious to be observed, and so easy to have been confuted if it had been false, that there is no colour of reason to doubt of it, and consequently, none to doubt of his doctrine: and in the Apostles' times, that miraculous ability of speaking with all kinds of tongues, which was suddenly bestowed upon the Christians, on the famous day of Pentecost, was a thing equally stupendous in itself, and irrefragable in its evidence of the Christian religion.

Now I have showed you before, that whatsoever point hath been once sufficiently proved, it must be true for ever; and there can be no reason to expect after-miracles for confirmation of it.

*Lastly,* It is observable, that the several parts of Holy Scripture, I mean the books of the Old and New Testament, like a pair of indentures, justify one another, and assure us that there can be no fraud or forgery in either of them.

Besides this, it is in the first place certain, that these several books, or parts of Holy Scripture, were written and published in several ages of the world, which were very remote from each other, and consequently by such men as could possibly hold no correspondence or confederacy with each other.

And secondly, it is as plain that the Old Testament foretells, many ages before, what things should come to pass many ages after; wherefore, if those things came to pass accordingly, there can be no doubt but God inspired those men that prophesied those things: and if the New Testament, on the other side, contain a relation of such events, as fully answer those predictions. then are both of them certainly true.

And now, laying these four things together, and only setting aside the demand of present and daily miracles,

which I have showed to be unreasonable to expect, I pray tell me what farther evidence can any ingenuous man require in such a case as this is ?

BIOPH. To speak the truth from my heart, I cannot tell.

SEBAST. Why then I hope, BIOPHILUS, you think yourself now concerned in those sacred records, and for the time to come will make them a principal part of your study.

BIOPH. I am hitherto an utter stranger to the contents of those books ; I pray, therefore, give me in short the sum of them.

SEBAST. As far as I can comprehend so great and weighty a subject, and so full a writing in my mind, the Scripture principally consists of these three things :—

*First*, An exact and excellent rule of holy living ; by conforming ourselves to which, we shall most certainly please GOD.

*Secondly*, The most powerful and effectual motives to provoke us to an uniform and thorough compliance with the aforesaid rule.

*Thirdly*, The most proper means and assistances to that end, that so we may not only be encouraged to undertake, but enabled to accomplish, that holy course which is prescribed.

This, I take it, is a summary of the whole Bible ; at least the principal contents of it.

BIOPH. Pray explain these things more fully to me : and first, I desire to know more particularly, what the peculiar laws and rules of this institution are.

SEBAST. The last and ultimate revelation of the Divine Will, in the New Testament, must consequently be more perfect than any other ; yet notwithstanding it is not destructive, but only perfective of those that went before it : and therefore, as it contradicts no former prophecy, or revelation of GOD's will, so it repeals no law of nature or reason, derogates from no rule of piety, gratitude, civility, or humanity, but only adds to them and improves them.

So that indeed the Christian institution is a pandect or digest of all that is grave, decent, prudent, virtuous, or praiseworthy : (*Phil.* iv. 8 ;) all which things it not only reinforces by more powerful arguments, but requires every one of them in greater perfection. But now the supplement or addition it makes to all those is that which is to be called the peculiar character of this religion ; and that, I think, may be reduced to these three heads.

*First,* It enjoins a more excellent and spiritual worship of God.

*Secondly,* A more refined purity of heart and life.

*Thirdly,* A more noble, generous, and diffusive charity.

1. The Gospel prescribes a more spiritual worship than was in use in the world before ; for our SAVIOUR expressly affirms, “ The time now comes when the true worshippers shall worship the FATHER in spirit and truth ; ” and gives the reason, “ because GOD is a Spirit.” (*John* iv. 23, 24.) It is true, GOD ever was a Spirit ; and it is impossible he should ever have been otherwise ; but his spiritual nature was not so well understood heretofore, whilst he was wont to represent himself by fire, or in human shape, amongst men : and whilst he required to have a temple built for his residence, as if he required an external state of grandeur or bodily accommodation ; and lastly, whilst he required sacrifices and oblations to be made to him, of such things as are of value among men. But now, since he hath given proof of his mighty majesty, without those visible appearances, and the sons of men are better instructed that he is a pure Spirit, without all mixture of matter, and infinitely full, perfect, and happy in himself, without any accession of other things to him ; henceforth he will not be worshipped with the steams of blood and fat, nor pleased with clouds of incense, but with hearty adorations, with raised affections, with the contemplation of pure minds, with inward reverence and admiration of him, with devout prayers and praises offered to him, with love, with trust and confidence in him, and endeavours of conforming ourselves to him. This is the

worship that is suitable to a good, and happy, and a spiritual Being; yet not excluding bodily expressions of reverence neither, but principally requiring the former, and making this latter only the effect of that.

2. The Gospel requires a more refined temper of heart and life, than was usually practised or easy to be arrived at before; it prescribes to our inward man as well as our outward actions, and that our hearts be pure, as well as our bodily members; that our reason have the mastery of our lusts and passions, so that we neither indulge our sensuality in the intemperate use of pleasure, nor live as if we were born to eat and drink, but be above the relish of bodily entertainments; that we subdue our passions, and soar above the tempest of this world, so as to despise the usual cares, and fears, and solitudes of the present life, and enjoy ourselves in a kind of divine tranquillity and security.

The generality of mankind, both Jews and Pagans, thought it a mighty felicity to hoard up riches, to grasp civil power; a ravishing thing to swim in sensual pleasures; and nothing was counted either more sweet or more brave, than to revenge a man's self when he thought he was affronted: but as the glory of all these things is faded by the light of the Gospel, so the desires of them are to be mortified by the laws of Christianity; the mind is to be freed from these sordid entertainments, and to be taken up with more pure and spiritual delights, with intellectual pleasures, with the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, with the glory of conquest (not over other men, but) over ourselves, with the joys of God's favour, and the peace of our own conscience.

3. And lastly, this religion requires a larger spirit, and a more noble and diffusive charity, than was prescribed by any other religion. The charity of a Pagan commonly extended no farther than his family and friends, or at most to his own city and country; and that of the Jews to their own nation and religion only: but to love their  
 ies, was by both of them looked upon as so far from

necessary, that it was thought impossible: whereas this institution requires us to love our very enemies, and those that mortally hate us; to render good for evil; to embrace all the world in our affections; to look upon all mankind as our brethren, the children of one common parent; that there are no men so silly or peevish, so mean and contemptible, or so remote from us in blood, country, manners, or opinion, but we are to be ready to do all good offices towards them; to oblige them by kindness, and to conquer and overpower them by real instances of good-will and endearing carriage. This is the sum of the Christian law, and the peculiar character of that religion, at least, so far as concerns the rule of living.

The second thing remarkable in the Gospel is, the powerful motives it makes use of to provoke men to a uniform compliance with its laws; and they are especially these three.

*First*, It charms men by a lively draught of the Divine goodness.

*Secondly*, It provokes them by the example of our SAVIOUR.

*Thirdly*, It inflames them by the promise of eternal life.

1. The Gospel makes so lively a representation of the Divine goodness and clemency, especially in the free pardon, and total abolition of all sin past, that it powerfully works upon men's ingenuity, and melts them into a compliance with the most difficult terms that such goodness can be capable of propounding. Do but think with yourself, if you had so far offended your Prince, and violated the laws of your country; that Majesty was exasperated, and justice armed with severity against you, so that you was under a terrible sentence, and expected a speedy execution; now if, notwithstanding, your Prince should condescend to make you an offer of pardon and full restitution to your former capacity upon certain terms, would you not be willing to enter upon a very difficult service, and undertake the most hazardous enterprise? Would



you be nice and captious, or stand carping and capitulating? Nay, would you not be inflamed with resolution, spirited by gratitude, and find yourself to become more than yourself, in such an undertaking?

Now this is the case, **BIOPHILUS**: We have infinitely offended **ALMIGHTY GOD** in the whole course of our lives, and so are justly fallen under his displeasure, insomuch, that a sentence of eternal death is passed against us. Notwithstanding, in the Gospel an overture of reconciliation is made, and upon the terms of true faith he offers to receive us into favour, that all our sins, how many and great soever, shall be blotted out, and never come in remembrance again; the sentence shall be revoked; we shall never be upbraided with our follies; no cloud shall hang over us; no ill character be upon us; but our consciences shall be quiet, and **GOD** will everlastingly shine upon us. Now can any man, in this case, expostulate the terms with **GOD**? Can he find in his heart to complain of the trouble of his service, the difficulty of self-denial, or think it hard to be obliged to forgive other men upon condition of **GOD**'s forgiving him? No, surely; he will heartily embrace the propositions, will love and thank **GOD** with all his soul, and rejoice in difficulty itself, that he may give proof of his gratitude, and be only sorry that he can give no better evidence of it. In a word, he will be inflamed in his resolutions, and winged in his endeavours of serving and pleasing such a **GOD**: "A **GOD** of mercy, rich in mercy and goodness, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin;" forgiving old, and great, and the most disingenuous sinners.

2. The second motive of the Gospel is, the example of our **SAVIOUR**: This it sets before us, and by this it provokes us to a compliance with his laws. That he was the very **SON** of **GOD**, "the brightness of his glory, and the express character of his majesty," (*Heb. i. 2.*) I have intimated before; and all the miraculous glories of his birth, life, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, have abundantly demonstrated it. Now that he should come down from

heaven to earth, and there frame himself to an exact conformity to the aforesaid laws of the Gospel, is not a greater instance of his admirable self-humiliation, than of the incomparable excellency, wisdom, and goodness of those laws, in that they are such as GOD himself thought fit to be subject to, as well as to recommend to us.

For certainly no man can be so absurd, as to account it a mean drudgery to be conversant in that way of worshipping GOD, which the Gospel teaches; seeing CHRIST JESUS himself made it not only his business, but his delight.

No man can be so fond as to admire riches and honours, and the preferments of this world, which our SAVIOUR could have had in the greatest measure that is imaginable, if he had not despised them; no man can be so madly passionate, as to think that to revenge himself is a point of glory, when he observes the SON of GOD, who could have done it effectually, instead thereof, only praying for his enemies; nor can any man be so mean-spirited, as either to be vainly puffed up with prosperity, or sink under adversity, reproach, or the deepest contempt imaginable, that sees the SON of GOD to be the poorest, meanest, and most ignominiously treated of all men.

All this considered, cannot but have the force of a mighty motive, and prevail upon all ingenuous persons "to cast away every weight, and the sin that besets them, and to run with patience [and courage] the race that is set before them." (*Heb. xii. 1.*)

3. The third motive of the Gospel is, the promise of eternal life to all those that frame themselves by these rules. Whereas the best that other men can hope for is, to rot in their graves, and everlastingly to be forgotten; (but that will not serve their turn, for they shall certainly suffer the vengeance of eternal fire;) those that live by the laws of the Gospel shall be raised again out of the dust, and outlive the very heavens in unspeakable felicity.

Now, BIOPHILUS, this is such a thing, this living for ever, is such a motive, that it is able to make a man to defy

all difficulty, so far as even to be inflamed the more by the apprehension of it.

And this being plainly propounded in the Gospel, as the great wager to him that runs that race, and withal being impossible to be obtained upon any other terms, must needs make "the yoke of CHRIST easy, and his burthen light." (*Matt. xi. 30.*) And so much for the second principal point of Christianity.

BIOPH. NOW, SEBASTIAN, you have increased my wonder more than ever; though, I must confess, you have translated it to another subject: whereas I suspected before the possibility of complying with those strict laws of the Gospel, now I am as much amazed that any body should complain of difficulty in them, those things considered, which you have last represented.

SEBAST. GOD be thanked for that change, BIOPHILUS; but your wonder will be heightened, when you consider also the assistance that the Gospel affords us, towards the performance of what it requires; which is the third and last of those things whereby I designed to represent the sum of it to you: and (to be short) that consists principally in these two things:—

1. The inward assistance and co-operation of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT.

2. The outward advantages of the society of his Church.

1. He that by his SON hath required such things of us, namely, spiritual worship, purity of heart, and universal charity, hath also promised, by his Divine Power, to cooperate with us in the discharge of them; and then there can be no such thing as impossibility: for what is impossible to Almighty Power? or what burthen can there be to complain of, when we have such a helper?

The meaning is not, that GOD will do all for us without us, so that we shall be only passive, as some have fancied; for then, all the acts of piety would be GOD'S acts, not ours, and could be capable of no praise or reward: and besides, this could not be called divine assistance, but his creation rather; since in such an exertion of

his own Omnipotency, he did wholly overbear or supersede our endeavours.

But the meaning is, that whensoever any man (in contemplation of the motives and encouragements aforesaid) sets himself in earnest to comply with that which God hath made his duty, he shall not only have the benefit of a common Providence, in upholding and strengthening the powers of his mind, nor only find the effects of a more especial Providence in removing obstacles, and making his way easy to him ; but by the vital power and efficacy of the Divine SPIRIT, his mind shall be more enlightened to see the excellency of the thing he goes about ; his will shall be confirmed and strengthened in its choice and resolution ; his affections quickened in the pursuit and execution of that choice ; and, above all, his heart shall be cheered in the whole enterprise with unspeakable joy, and many times with an admirable and ravishing prospect of the glory that shall attend and crown his performance.

This our SAVIOUR promised to the Christian Church before he left the world, *viz.*, That he would this way be “present with them to the end of the world.” (*Matt.* xxviii. 20.) And hereof he gave a great earnest, when on the famous day of Pentecost, (*Acts* ii. 1,) the HOLY SPIRIT came in a very prodigious manner upon all the Apostles and Christians that were assembled together as the representative and seminary of his future Church ; and it was done (amongst other reasons) to give assurance that he was mindful of his promise, and that all ages after might justly expect the presence of his SPIRIT with them ; (though not so visible as in that extraordinary instance ;) which accordingly good men, at all times, find true by comfortable experience.

BIOPH. This which you now tell me is the strangest thing that ever I heard of in my life. If this be true, it will be ridiculous to object difficulty against the Christian institution ; for upon this supposition it is plain there can be nothing but sottishness of obstinacy, cowardice and credulity, to hinder a man from observing the laws of it.

But I pray, however, proceed in your method, and show me also, in the next place, what are those external helps which you intimated?

SEBAST. The external advantage of this religion is the institution of a Christian Church; that is, the SON of GOD, the Author of this religion, ordered that all those who embrace it, should not content themselves to live singly and separately, as if they were unconcerned one in another; but unite themselves into a body of spiritual polity; and that, although they were to be respectively subject to the civil Governments under which they lived, (at least so far as the laws of men intrenched not upon those of his religion,) yet they were to be under a stricter tie of unity among themselves, and to become a distinct corporation under peculiar officers, as well as for peculiar ends and purposes. Nor was this a mere arbitrary or positive law of his, and to be observed only because he has commanded it; but as it was enjoined with admirable wisdom on his part, so it was of singular advantage to all his disciples, in innumerable respects; some of which I am engaged to represent to you.

And *first*, the constitution of this society of a Church was an excellent expedient for the preserving the doctrine of Christianity in the world, and for the prevention both of corruption and errors in the laws, and of mistakes in the great motives and encouragements of this religion. Hence the Church is called by the Apostle ST. PAUL, "The pillar and ground of truth." (1 *Tim.* iii. 15.) Not that the Church properly gives authority to the doctrine of our religion; for that it hath immediately from our SAVIOUR himself, and from the miracles wrought by GOD to attest it; but because the Church was the conservatory of the books wherein the doctrine was written, and a witness of the proofs made of the divinity of it, and competent to secure us from imposture, and to preserve those sacred books that contained it, as the sum of our religion. Accordingly, it is observable, that in the rage of Pagan persecution, when the enemies of this religion grew to that height

of pride and confidence, as to promise to themselves to root out all memory and remains of Christianity, the care and zeal of this society preserved this sacred *depositum* of Holy Scripture entire to after-ages, when, otherwise, private persons would or might, out of fear and weakness, have delivered them up to be destroyed.

Again, *secondly*, This way of incorporating Christians in a society, was a more easy and ready way for the instruction of the several persons of which that society consisted; and necessary for the publishing, explaining, and inculcating the doctrine and laws of their religion to them. For if our SAVIOUR had appointed pastors and not a flock, (unless he had made the former as numerous almost as the latter,) it had been impossible that they should have instructed all his disciples: but now, he having appointed them to join together in a body, the same pastor and the same labour that instruct one, may instruct many. Now this is a great advantage to all the disciples of this religion, that those that cannot read and study, nor are capable of feeding themselves, GOD hath provided a way for their constant easier instruction, by the public ministry of the Gospel.

Moreover, *thirdly*, By means of such a society, and officers appointed over it, there is provision made for the resolution of all doubts, and for the ease and satisfaction of perplexed consciences. It is not to be supposed, but that there are a great number of well-meaning men, who may either want ability to judge of several things that may concern them, or may want leisure to consider so maturely as a difficulty may require, or may not be impartial enough in their own case, to guide their own consciences; now for the relief of such as these, it is of great use to be in the society where GOD hath appointed such to be officers in it, as "have the SPIRIT of the LORD upon them, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, and to comfort those that mourn." (*Isa.* lxi. 1, 2.) Such as have made it their business to study the more difficult points of religion, that they may be able

“to speak a word in season to him that fainteth;” (*Isa.* 1. 4;) and whose duty and province it is, not so much to make public harangues to the flock, as by particular application to remove scruples, to solve difficulties, and provide for emergencies: and all this they may well be supposed to be able to do with great sincerity and impartiality, as also with great authority, being hereunto appointed by GOD himself, and assisted herein by the HOLY SPIRIT.

*Fourthly*, There is this farther advantage of a Church, That the members of this society are not only more likely to animate and inflame one another in the ways of piety by mutual example; but also being concerned in one another, as of the same body, and for the honour of their common faith and religion, are authorized to watch over one another; to correct the erroneous, to admonish the careless, to reprove the vicious, to strengthen the weak, to encourage the good; and, in a word, are obliged, in an extraordinary manner, to all offices of charity towards one another.

All which together, must needs be a mighty means of securing both the doctrine and practice of religion.

*Fifthly* and *lastly*, The establishment of the society of a Church, and thereby a public worship, is an expedient of unspeakable comfort and encouragement to all humble and modest persons, and especially to such as are truly contrite and broken-hearted, in the addressing their prayers to ALMIGHTY GOD; animating them against their sense of the guilt of their sins, the unworthiness of their persons, the imperfection of their prayers; and affording them many arguments of hope for success beyond what they could expect from their private devotions.

Whilst they consider, 1. That they are now in GOD’S house, or Court of Requests, where he uses to give audience to poor suppliants.

2. That their desires are put up by the hands of GOD’S own Minister, whom he hath appointed to present petitions to himself.

3. That their prayers are not offered up singly, but in

conjunction with the devotions of so many other more holy persons; so that they may hope to speed the better for such company, and especially by the united efficacy of so many ardent affections.

And, *lastly*, The faith and hope of such men is wonderfully strengthened by the contemplation of the great Propitiation for sin, made by our SAVIOUR, and represented to their eyes on the LORD'S table. All these things were mightily esteemed by the Christians of old, and certainly are great advantages.

And thus I have now laid before you the peculiar laws of the Gospel, and showed you also the admirable encouragements, and the singular helps and assistances GOD hath afforded us, towards the observance of those laws, and the prosecution of that religion. Is there any thing more I can serve you in?

BIOPH. Yes, I plainly see there is a great deal more I may learn of you: But, GOD be thanked, and I heartily thank you, for what I have learned hitherto.

SEBAST. Well, good night to you both, gentlemen; I doubt it grows late.

PHIL. I hope, good SEBASTIAN, you are not weary of well-doing; I was unwilling to interrupt you in your discourse hitherto, both because it exceedingly confirmed me in what (I thank GOD) I did believe already, and especially because I did not doubt of a good issue of it upon my neighbour; but I have all this while waited for an opportunity to ask your advice in a case or two of very great concernment. There are these two things I would crave your direction in.

*First*, By what means a man may maintain his ground, and keep stable and steadfast in religion in distracted times?

And, *Secondly*, What course he should take to maintain an even temper, and constant cheerfulness of spirit, under all the accidents of life?

SEBAST. Those two inquiries are both so necessary at



all times, and so peculiarly seasonable at this time, that I should neglect myself as well as you, if I should not be willing to consider them with you. But I pray, in the first place, let me know what you mean by stability in religion ?

PHIL. I do not call perseverance in an error, stability, but stubbornness and obstinacy. The meaning of my first question therefore is, only how a man shall be enabled to stand firm and right to the truth of religion, and whereof he hath had good proof and experience ; so that he shall neither be always trying and seeking, and disputing and doubting on the one hand ; nor, on the other, in danger to be hectored out of his conscience, nor wheedled and complimented out of it ; that no example of great men, or of the multitude, may bias him, nor sophistry of cunning men cheat him of his religion ; no atheistical person droll or rally him out of it, nor scurrility make him ashamed of it.

SEBAST. I recommend you to these three or four things.

1. In the first place, you know that your religion, I mean that which you have been trained up in, the Church of England, and which you have always professed, is a Scriptural religion, *i. e.*, such a one as hath not merely prescribed for itself by custom, (though it be certainly elder than those that do so,) nor derived itself from that headless monster, unaccountable tradition ; no, nor yet from the subtilty of human philosophy, though it have more reason to plead for itself than any other ; but hath taken its rise from Divine Revelation, and consequently, as it is to be proved, so it is to be disproved thence, or nothing can be said to the purpose against it.

Therefore, my first advice is, that you study the Holy Scriptures diligently, and stick close to that : that, as ST. PAUL hath assured us, “ is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of GOD may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for all good works ; ” (2 *Tim.* iii. 16 ;)

and from thence a man “ may be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him, (1 *Pet.* iii. 15,) *i. e.*, make a sufficient apology for and defence of his religion. .

2. But if it shall happen that either any thing in the Scripture should seem so obscure, or that the sophistry of cunning men should cast such a mist before us that we are not able to determine ourselves what to do ; then, in the second place, we are to resort to our spiritual guides, which God hath set over us, who have trained us up in our religion, to help us out.

This is also a means of stability of God’s own appointing ; for the Apostle hath told us, that God hath erected those orders of men in his Church, that we should “ not be as children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by the cunning craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive.” (*Ephes.* iv. 14.) “

3. He that would be stable in his religion, must learn to condemn the present world, without which both the former advices will be utterly insignificant. If a man have the world in admiration, it will dazzle his eyes, blind his judgment, bribe his affections, and debauch his conscience ; for it cannot be but religion, and the things of another world, must be cheap with him that overvalues the present.

Therefore, PHILANDER, if you and I would stick fast to our principles, we must sit loose to the world ; we must entertain no great opinion concerning wealth and honour, but be content with little things for the present, and comfort ourselves with the expectation of great ones in another world. We must consider with ourselves how vain and empty those things are, even in this life, and whilst they are enjoyed, and especially how they vanish, and are of no avail at all at the day of judgment. “ We must look at the things which are not seen, and are eternal ;” then shall we be stable as the centre of the earth, unchangeable as the heavens, brave and courageous, so as to scorn allurements, contemn danger, and be true

to our real interest, our conscience, our God, and our religion.

4. To these, in the last place, we must join fervent and constant prayer; for we are not to trust ourselves, but commend to God the fixing our minds, and establishing our hearts. He made and knows them, and he only can confirm and strengthen them against all temptations of the Devil: he can provide that we shall not be led into temptation: or, however, "that no temptation shall overtake us but what we shall be able to bear;" he can deliver us from all the snares that shall be laid for us, and help us to elude all sophistry; and, in a word, can, upon emergency, and in time, bestow upon us "such a spirit and wisdom as none of our adversaries shall be able to withstand. (*Luke xxi. 15.*)

These, PHILANDER, are the most effectual things I can think of for the present, in answer to your first question.

PHIL. I thank you heartily, SEBASTIAN, for the great satisfaction you have given me; and I shall make it both my own care and the matter of my prayer to God, that neither the levity of my own mind, nor the importunity of others, shall tempt me from the good old way.

And now be pleased, as briefly as the case will bear, to resolve me also in my second inquiry; namely, by what means I may maintain a constant cheerfulness of spirit in the course of Christianity. You made it evident at the beginning of this present Conference, that there is such a thing attainable, and you will not wonder that I am inquisitive after so inestimable a good.

SEBAST. This second inquiry of yours, PHILANDER, is no less useful than the former; for not only the happiness of a man's own life depends upon it, but the reputation of religion itself is very much concerned in the temper of spirit which he expresses under it.

Now in order to the determining the means of settled peace, and an even temper of spiritual comfort, it is necessary that we discover the several causes of the interruption

thereof; and when we have found them, if we can apply proper remedies to each, then we shall do your business.

As for the former, *viz.*, the causes of the unevenness of a Christian's spirit, or the interruptions of his spiritual comfort, they are easily found out; and I do not doubt but they may be reckoned to be these four following:—

- Namely, either, 1. Unevenness or irregularity of life: or,  
 2. Undue apprehensions of God: or,  
 3. Sad accidents externally: or,  
 4. Melancholy of body.

1. In the first place, I account the irregularity of men's lives to be the most ordinary cause of the unevenness of their comfort.

All virtuous actions have peace and tranquillity belonging to them; on the contrary, all vicious actions are naturally uncomfortable; for besides the infamy that attends them, they have guilt inseparably adhering to them, and God's displeasure entailed upon them: for as he can never either hate virtue or love vice without a flat contradiction to his own nature, so neither can he or will he frown upon the one, or shine upon the other.

Now, therefore, if a man be habitually vicious, he must needs be habitually sad and miserable. And if a man be habitually holy, and maintains a constant course of piety and virtuous actions, he will be habitually comfortable, and under a constant ray of light and glory. But if a man be up and down in his life, sometimes good and sometimes bad, he cannot expect that his comforts should be more constant than he himself is.

In this case, therefore, the disease leads to the remedy: he that would maintain an even peace in his conscience, must be sure to maintain an even course of virtue and piety in his life. For it is not only impossible to secure the former without the latter, but it is ridiculous to pretend to it; nay, farther, if it should happen that any man found his heart cheerful upon other terms, he would have just cause to suspect a delusion of the Devil.

God is constantly of the same mind. religion is constant

and settled; therefore there can be no way to constant comfort in the one, or hopes in the other, but by being constant to our duty; nor can there be any cause of uncertainty but the unsettledness of our own hearts. Let the man, therefore, that aims at a settled peace, be sure to be constant in his duty, that it become not only a bias upon him, but the very method and habit of his life; and let foolish people, if they will, call this a road of religion; if it be a road, it is certainly the narrow one that leads to life. For never is religion as it should be, until it becomes thus natural and habitual; and he that takes this course, shall effectually secure himself against the first cause of uncomfortableness.

2. The second cause of spiritual dejection I reckoned to be, undue apprehensions of God; and this generally goes a great way in the disquiets of well-meaning, but weak people. For whereas, if things be rightly considered, the very first notion of a God is an everlasting spring of hope, and the right understanding of his goodness is the great sweetener of a man's spirits, and that which principally disposes him to cheerfulness; it is common with weak people either to receive such impressions from others, or ignorantly to frame such an image of God in their own minds as they must eternally hate, but cannot possibly love. And if the thoughts of God be unpleasant to them, it must needs follow, that all the duties of religion must go on heavily; and when they have done, their hopes must be flat, and all about them looks melancholy.

The principal thing I aim at in this place is, when men have such a notion of God as renders his actions as necessary as his nature, and because he was from eternity, and could not but be, therefore they conceit he cannot but do whatsoever is done as necessarily as he exists; and so unawares they set a surly and rigid fate over themselves, instead of a wise and good God. For in pursuance of this notion, they conclude he must be just to extremity; and that he is bound to vindicate himself rigorously, so

that he cannot abate or remit of his own right, but must exact the utmost farthing.

And though there be a Mediator and a Satisfaction spoken of in the Gospel, yet the apprehension of such a Supreme Being is able to render even that remedy suspicious; or however, to make a man's heart ache and tremble all the days of his life; but to be sure he can take no delight in God, whatever hopes he may have in a SAVIOUR.

Again, there is a third very common occasion of uncomfortableness; namely, external accidents and calamities, which frequently befall the best men, and which, either by their sharpness discompose a Christian, or by the multitude and severity of them, may tempt him to question how he stands in the favour of God, who permits such things to befall him; or at least, by their often and yet uncertain returns, may make the pulse of his heart beat very uncertain.

Against this, there is no more proper remedy than to rouse up ourselves, and act a generous faith in God.

Considering, in the first place, that this is his usual method with those he loves best, and that affliction is so far from being a token of his hatred, that, on the contrary, there is no more dangerous sign of God's having quite abandoned a man, than for him to use no chastisement toward him. "If ye receive not chastisement," saith the Apostle, "ye are bastards, and not sons." And therefore we see the eternal SON of God, when he came upon earth, and was in our nature, was the most remarkable instance of a "Man of Sorrows" that ever was in the world; inasmuch that it is not easy to imagine what calamity can befall any man, which is not to be paralleled, if not exceeded, in the sufferings of our SAVIOUR: as if God had ordered it so on purpose to this end, that no man might complain of his share, or especially think himself forsaken of God because of his adversities.

In the second place, let us assure ourselves, that as all

afflictions come from GOD, so they shall “certainly be made to work for good to all those that love him. (*Rom. viii. 28.*) For unless we humour ourselves, we may discover that there is hardly any affliction befalls us, but what we may be bettered by, even for the present; but there can be no doubt that GOD both can and will turn it to our advantage in the upshot of things; and therefore we have no reason to be dejected upon such an occasion.

3. The third cause is Melancholy. It is more than half way of the cure, to understand the disease, and yet that is no more than to be aware that melancholy is both the cause and the effect, and that that alone is able to act all this tragedy, without any other cause of sadness. And that betrays itself notoriously in this,—That such a man can assign no reason of his trouble, but only he is troubled, and he is again troubled that he is so. Now if a man could give any such account of his uncomfortable fears as were sufficient to satisfy any man besides himself, then it would be reasonable not to charge them upon melancholy, but upon those just causes; but if no such causes be assignable, then it is manifestly temper that is in fault, without guilt or danger; and this one thing considered is able to relieve a man out of his perplexity, and his mind may arrive at some tolerable measure of cheerfulness, even in the midst of his bodily infirmity.

But if the understanding of such a man be too weak, or the disease of melancholy be too strong upon him to be cured this way, then the next thing to be done, after the use of physic for the body, is, to resort to some able and experienced physician of souls, and sincerely to lay open the state of his conscience to him; and having so done, to rest upon the judgment of that other person; seeing he is not able to judge for himself, or not willing to rely upon his own judgment.

After all, I would earnestly advise such a man not to smother his thoughts in his own bosom, but by all means to let his heart take air: for there is hardly any serious

person so weak and injudicious, that a melancholy man had not better consult with than himself; nay, many times the putting a question to a post or pillar, will help him to an answer better than revolving of it altogether in his own breast; but especially it is to be recommended to him, that he give not himself up to solitude and retirement, which thickens the blood, and feeds the disease, but that he frequent the company and conversation of good men.

And thus, I think, PHILANDER, I have satisfied your second inquiry, and have done it more largely than I intended, or than you expected. And now, once again, good night.

PHIL. Good night heartily, SEBASTIAN.





EXTRACTS FROM THE

WORKS

OF

DR. ROBERT LEIGHTON,

*SOME TIME ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW :*

CONTAINING

I. AN EXPOSITION OF THE CREED.

II. SERMONS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS.



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AN EXPOSITION

OF

THE CREED.

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## TO THE READER.

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THE discourses here published are but a small taste of a great many more that were written by the same most Reverend Author. He never appeared in print upon any occasion in his whole life : and though few men have been more solidly learned, in the whole compass of learning, than he was : to which he added a perfect command of the purity of the Latin Tongue, and a more than ordinary knowledge of the Greek, Hebrew, and other Oriental Languages ; yet he never once broke through that profound humility, which made him judge himself neither fit to write, nor speak, though he did both to a great perfection.

The Author was so averse to all controversies, that he thought the best way to refine some low notions, was to graft great and high thoughts on them ; and therefore instead of attacking them, or disputing about them, he studied to improve them to some pious reflection. If the meanness of style which then prevailed, threw him into a little more negligence than agrees with that chasteness of style which now takes place, it is what all men, who have raised the strain of their language, have fallen into at first : But I will not pretend to excuse that, which, I confess, I admire, and by which I myself have been so sensibly improved.

The Author was the delight and wonder of all that knew him ; his thoughts were noble, and his expressions beautiful ; his gesture and pronunciation, (peculiar to himself,) had a gravity, a majesty, and yet a sweetness

## PREFACE.

in them, that many severe judges have often said, were beyond all that they had ever seen at home or abroad.

That which gave the greatest authority to all he said, was, that his life was such a continued course of the sublimest virtue, and the most elevated piety, that have appeared in this age. Those who have known him the most, and the longest, have often said, that in a course of many years' acquaintance, they scarcely ever saw him once out of that deeply serious state in which they themselves wished to be found in their last minutes.

∨ This may look somewhat high to those who knew him not: But those who did know him and are yet alive, will, I am confident, justify the truth of this short character.

To conclude: I, who reckon, that the knowledge I had of him for some years, the few Sermons I heard him preach, and the many of his composing which I have read, will be no small article of the account I must render at the last and dreadful day, have thought it one part of my duty, to be instrumental to communicate these to others, who, I hope, will profit more by them, than I myself have been able yet to do. And in this hope and assurance I recommend those discourses and the readers of them, to the blessing and grace of **ALMIGHTY GOD,** through his **SON JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.**

# AN EXPOSITION

OF

## THE BELIEF.

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1 TIM. iii. 9.

*Holding the Mystery of Faith in a pure Conscience.*

THAT which was the Apostle's practice, as he expresses it, (1 Cor. ix. 22,) is the standing duty of all the Ministers of the same Gospel: "To the weak to become as weak, to gain the weak; and all things to all men, that by any means they may save some." And one main part of the observance of that rule is, descending to the instruction of the most ignorant in the principles of the Christian Religion. That which I aim at, at this time, is, a very brief and plain Exposition of the Articles of our Faith, as we have them in that summary confession. Not staying you at all on the antiquity and authority of it, both which are confessed; whether it was penned by the Apostles, or by others in their time, or soon after it, it doth very clearly and briefly contain the main of their divine doctrine.

But though it be altogether consonant with the Scriptures, yet not being a part of the canon of them, I choose these words as pertinent to our intended explication of it: they are indeed here, as they stand in the context, a rule for Deacons; but without question, taken in general, they express the great duty of all that are Christians.

You see clearly in them, a rich jewel, and a precious cabinet fit for it: The Mystery of Faith laid up, and kept in a pure conscience. And these two are not only suitable but inseparable, as we see in the first Chapter of this Epistle, verse 10; they are preserved and lost together;



they suffer the same shipwreck ; the casting away of the one, is the shipwreck of the other : if the one perish, the other cannot escape. Every believer is the temple of God, and as the tables of the law were kept in the ark, this pure conscience is the ark that holds the mystery of faith. You think you are believers ; you do not question that, and would take it ill that others should ; it is very hard to convince men of unbelief directly : but if you believe this truth, that the only receptacle of saving faith is a purified conscience, then I beseech you, question yourselves concerning that ; being truly answered in it, it will resolve you touching your faith, which you are so loath to question. Are your consciences pure ? Have you a living hatred and antipathy against all impurity ? Then sure faith is there ; for it is the peculiar virtue of faith, “ to purify the heart ; ” (*Acts xv.* ; ) and the heart so purified, is the proper residence of faith, where it dwells and rests as in its natural place. But have you consciences that can lodge pride, or lust, or malice, or covetousness, and such like pollutions ? Then be no more so impudent as to say, you believe, nor deceive yourselves so far as to think you do. The blood of CHRIST never speaks to any conscience, but the same “ that it purifies from dead works, to serve the living God.” As that blood is a sacrifice to appease God’s wrath, so it is a laver to wash our souls, and to serve both ends ; it is, as was the blood of legal sacrifices, both offered up to God, and sprinkled upon us, as both are expressed in the Apostle’s words there. We do not think that God will throw this jewel of faith into a sty or kennel, a conscience full of defilement and uncleanness. Therefore, if you have any mind to the comforts and peace that faith brings with it, be careful to lodge it where it delights to dwell,—in a pure conscience. Notwithstanding the unbelieving world mocks the name of purity ; yet, study you, above all, the purity and holiness which may make your souls a fit abode for faith, and that peace which it worketh, and that HOLY SPIRIT that works both in you.

Faith is either the Doctrine which we believe, or that

Grace by which we believe that doctrine. Here, I conceive, it is both met and united in the soul; as they say of the understanding, in the schools: Faith apprehending its proper object. Faith is kept in a pure conscience; that is, both that pure doctrine of the Gospel which faith receives, and that faith which receives it, are together fitly placed and preserved, when they are laid up in a pure conscience. The doctrine of faith cannot be received into, nor laid up in the soul, but by that faith that believes it; and that faith hath no being, without believing that doctrine, and both are fitly called “the mystery of faith:” the doctrine is mysterious; and it is a mysterious work to beget faith in the heart to receive it: for the things we must believe are very high and heavenly, and our hearts are earthly and base till the Spirit renew them. In our Confession of Faith, we have both expressed. The first word is a profession of faith, which receives the doctrine as true,—*I believe*; and the Articles themselves contain the sum of the doctrine believed; and if we that profess this faith, have within us pure consciences, wherein the mystery of faith, the doctrine of faith believed, and the grace of faith believing it, both together may be preserved; then is the text completely answered in the present subject.

Remember then, since we profess this faith, which is the proper seat of faith. Not our books, or our tongues only, or memories, or judgment; but our conscience: and not our natural conscience defiled and stuffed with sin, but renewed and sanctified by grace: “Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.”

*I believe in GOD the FATHER.*

FAITH, taking it as comprehensively as we can, is no other but a supernatural belief of GOD, and confidence in him. Whether we call GOD, or the Word of GOD, the object of Faith, there is no material difference; for it is GOD in the Word, as revealed by the Word, that is that object. It is all one, whether we say it is CHRIST or the

promises, for it is **CHRIST** revealed and held forth in the promises, that faith lays hold on: "In him are all the promises of **GOD**, yea, and in him, Amen." So that it is one act of faith that lays hold on **CHRIST**, and on the promises; for they are all one: He is in them, and therefore faith rests on them, because they include **CHRIST**, who is our rest and our peace; as a man at once receives a ring, and the precious stone that is set in it.

That confidence which this expression bears, believing in **GOD**, supposes certainly, (as all agree,) a right belief concerning **GOD**; both that he is, and what he is, according as the word reveals him; especially what he is relating to us: These three we have together;—"He that cometh to **GOD**, must believe that **GOD** is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him." (*Heb. xi. 6.*) 1. That he is. 2. To trust his word, believing that he is true to his promises; "a rewarder of them that seek him." 3. Upon these follows, coming to him, which is that reliance and resting of the soul upon him, which results from that right belief concerning him, and trusting the testimony of his word, as it reveals him.

We have discoursed of the Attributes of **GOD** elsewhere, as also of the Trinity, which is expressed in these words: "I believe in **GOD** the **FATHER**, the **SON**, and the **HOLY GHOST**." That sublime mystery is to be cautiously treated of, and rather humbly to be admired, than curiously dived into. The day will come, (truly a day, for here we are beset with the nightly shades of ignorance,) wherein "we shall see him as he is." In the mean time let us devoutly worship him, as he has revealed himself to us; for this is the true way to that heavenly country, "where we shall see him face to face." And it is our interest here to believe the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, and to trust in them as such; for this is the spring of all our hope, that the middle of the three became our Mediator, and the **HOLY SPIRIT** our Guide and Teacher, and "the **FATHER** reconciles us to himself by the **SON**, and renews us by the **SPIRIT**."

*FATHER.*

First, the **FATHER** of his only begotten **SON**, **CHRIST**; and through him our **FATHER**, by the grace of adoption. And so **CHRIST** does clearly insinuate: "I ascend to my **FATHER**, and your **FATHER**, my **GOD** and your **GOD**. He says, not to our **FATHER**, but to my **FATHER**, and your **FATHER**; first mine, and then yours through me.

*ALMIGHTY.*

Able in himself to do all things, and the source of all power in others; all the power in the creature being derived from him; so that it cannot altogether equal his, nor resist him, no, nor at all be without him. Whosoever they be that boast most in their own strength in any kind, and highest in conceit of it, are yet but as brittle glass in the hand of **GOD**; he can not only break it to pieces by the strength of his hand, but if he do but withdraw his hand from supporting it, it will fall and break of itself.

*Maker of Heaven and Earth.*

The **SON** and the **SPIRIT** were, with the **FATHER**, Authors of the Creation; but it is ascribed to the **FATHER** particularly, in regard to the order and manner of their working. Whether natural reason may evince the creation of the world, we will not dispute; yet there is enough in reason to answer all the cavils of profane men, and to justify the truth of this we believe. However, we must endeavour to believe it by divine faith, according to that of the Apostle: "By faith we believe that the worlds were framed by the **Word of GOD**. And this is the first article we meet with in the Scriptures: and our faith is put to it in a very high point in the very entrance.

"In the beginning **GOD** made the heaven and the earth," speaking like himself: it is not proved by demonstrations,

nor any kind of arguments, but asserted by the authority of **GOD** : and with that which begins the Books of the Law, **JOHN** begins his Gospel ; that upon His word, who by his Word made the world, we may believe that he did so.

This is fitly added to the title of **ALMIGHTY**, as a work of almighty power, and therefore a clear testimony of it, and both together will suit with our profession of believing in him ; for this is a main support of our faith, to be persuaded of His power on whom we trust. “ Our **GOD** is able to deliver us,” said they : and **ABRAHAM**, the Apostle says, “ offered up his Son, accounting (or reasoning with himself, or laying his reckoning) that **GOD** was able to raise him from the dead.”

We make more bold to speak out our own questioning the love of **GOD**, because we think we have some reason in that from our own unworthiness ; but if we would sound our own hearts, we should find in our distrusts some secret doubtings of **GOD**'s power : “ Can **GOD** prepare a table in the wilderness ?” said they ; though accustomed to miracles, yet still unbelieving. We think we are strongly enough persuaded of this ; but our hearts deceive us. It is not for nothing that **GOD**, by his Prophets, so often inculcates this doctrine of his power, and this great instance of it, the creation, when he promises great deliverances to his Church, and the destruction of their enemies. (*Isa.* xlv. 12, and li. 12.) What can be too hard for Him, that found it not too hard to make a world of nothing ? If you look on the public, the enemies of the Church are strong ; if on thyself, thou hast indeed strong corruptions within, and strong temptations without ; yet none of these are almighty, as thy **GOD** is. What is it thou wouldest have done, that he cannot do, if he think fit ? And if he think it not fit, if thou art one of his children thou wilt think with him ; thou wilt reverence his wisdom, and rest satisfied with his will. This is believing indeed ; the rolling all our desires and burdens upon an **ALMIGHTY GOD** ; and where this is, it cannot

choose but establish the heart in the midst of troubles, and give it a calm within in the midst of the greatest storms.

And try what other confidences you will, they shall prove vain and lying in the day of trouble. He that thinks to quiet his mind, and find rest, by worldly comfort, is, as SOLOMON compares his drunkard, as “one that lies down in the midst of the sea,” that sleepeth on the top of a mast; he can have but unsettled repose that lies there; “but he that trusteth in the LORD, is as Mount Sion, that cannot be removed.” When we lean on other props besides GOD, they prove broken reeds, that not only fail, but pierce the hand that leans on them.

There is yet another thing in this article, that serves farther to uphold our faith, that of necessity he that made the world by his power, doth likewise rule it by his providence. It is so great a fabric, as cannot be upheld and governed by any less power than that which made it. He did not frame this world, as the carpenter his ship, to put it into other hands, and look no more after it; but as he made it, he is the continual pilot of it; sits still at the helm and guides it; yea, he commands the winds and seas, and they obey him.

*And in JESUS CHRIST.*

The two great works of GOD, by which he is known to us, are, Creation and Redemption, which is a new or second creation. The SON of GOD, as GOD, was with the FATHER, as the worker of the former; but as GOD-MAN, he is the author of the latter. ST. JOHN begins his Gospel with the first, and from that passes on to the second. “In the beginning was the Word: (Verse 1:) By him were all things made.” But (verse 14) the other is expressed, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;” had a tent like ours, and made of the same materials. He adds, “He was full of grace and truth;” and for that end, as there follows: “That we might all

receive of his fulness, grace for grace." And this is that great work of new creation: therefore the Prophet ISAIAH, foretelling this great work from the LORD's own mouth, speaks of it in these terms: "That I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Sion, Thou art my people." That making of a new people to himself in CHRIST, is as the framing of heaven and earth. Now this restorement by JESUS CHRIST, supposes the ruin and misery of man by his fall; that sin and death under which he is born. This we all seem to acknowledge; and well we may, for we daily feel the woeful fruits of that bitter root; but the truth is, the greatest part of us are not fully convinced of this gulf of wretchedness into which we are fallen: if we were, there would be more cries amongst us for help to be drawn out, and delivered from it; this great Deliverer, this Saviour, would be of more use, and of more esteem with us.

The disunion and distance that sin hath made betwixt GOD and man, cannot be made up but by a Mediator; one to come betwixt; so that there is now no believing in GOD the FATHER, but by believing in JESUS his SON; no appearing without horror, yea, without perdition, before so just a Judge, highly offended, but by the intervention of so powerful a Reconciler, able to satisfy and appease him; and he tells us plainly, that we mistake not our way: "No man comes unto the FATHER but by me."

Few are our thoughts concerning GOD, and returning to him; but if we have any, this is our unhappiness, that naturally we are subject to leave out CHRIST in them.

We think there is something to be done; we talk of repentances, and prayers, and amendments, though we have not these neither; but if we had these, there is yet one thing necessary above all these, that we forget: There is absolute need of a Mediator, to make our peace, and reduce us into favour with GOD; one that must for that end do and suffer for us, what we can neither do nor suffer: though we could shed rivers of tears, they cannot

wash out the stain of any one sin ; yea, there is pollution in our very tears ; so that they themselves have need to be washed in the blood of JESUS CHRIST.

JESUS CHRIST : Our anointed SAVIOUR ; anointed to be our King, our great High Priest, and our Prophet, and in all these our SAVIOUR : Our Prophet, to teach us the way of salvation ; our Priest, to purchase it for us ; and our King, to lead and protect us in the way, and to bring us safe to the end of it. Thus is his name full of sweetness and comfort. It is a rich ointment ; and, in the preaching of the Gospel, an ointment poured forth, diffusing its fragrant smell, for which the virgins, the chaste purified souls of believers, love him ; such as have their senses exercised, as the Apostle speaks ; their spiritual smelling not obstructed with the pollutions of the world, but quick and open to receive and be refreshed with the smell of this precious name of JESUS CHRIST.

#### *His only SON.*

Other sons he hath, angels and men, by creation and adoption ; but this his only-begotten SON, as GOD, by eternal generation ; and as man, peculiarly the SON of GOD, both in regard of his singular unexampled conception by the HOLY GHOST, and by that personal union with the Deity, which accompanied that conception, and by that fulness of all grace which flowed from that union. The unfolding of these would require a long time, and after all, more would remain unsaid, and unconceived by us ; “ for his generation who can declare ? ”

Let us remember this, that our Sonship is the product of his : “ He is the only-begotten SON of GOD ; ” (*John* i. 14 ; ) and yet, (ver. 12,) “ To as many as received him he gave this privilege, to be the sons of GOD.”

#### *Our LORD.*

Both by our loyal subjection to him, and our peculiar interest in him, these go together ; willing subjection and



obedience to his laws, are an inseparable companion, and therefore a certain evidence, of our interest in his grace.

*Conceived by the HOLY GHOST.*

This is that great mystery of godliness, “**GOD** manifested in the flesh;” the **KING** of Glory after a manner divesting himself of his royal robes, and truly putting on the form of a servant; the **HOLY GHOST** framing him a body in the **Virgin’s** womb, that by that miraculous and peculiar manner of birth, he might be declared more than man, as being a way more congruous both to the greatness of his person, and the purity of his human nature.

*Born of the Virgin Mary.*

He was not only of the same nature with man, which he might have been by new created humanity, but of the same stock, and so a fit Saviour, a near kinsman, (as the word, that in Hebrew is a Redeemer doth signify,) “**Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.**” We see then the person of our Mediator very fit for that his office, having both the natures of the parties at variance which he was to reconcile. And this happy meeting of **GOD** and **Man**, in the person of **CHRIST**, to look no further, was a very great step to the agreement, and a strong pledge of its accomplishment; to see the nature of man that was an enemy, received into so close embraces with the **Deity**, within the compass of one person, promised a reconcilment of the persons of men unto **GOD**; there the treaty of peace began, and was exceedingly promoted by that very beginning, so that in it there was a sure presage of the success. Had **GOD** and man treated any where but in the person of **CHRIST**, a peace had never been concluded; yea, it had broken up at first; but being in him, it could not fail, for in him they were already one, one person; so there they could not

but agree: "GOD was in CHRIST reconciling the world to himself."

2. Considering the work to be done in this agreement, as well as the persons to be agreed, it was altogether needful that the undertaker should be GOD and man. The meditation was not a bare matter of word, but there was such a wrong done as required a satisfaction should be made; (we speak not what GOD might absolutely have done, but what was to be done suitable to GOD's end, that was for the joint glory of justice and mercy, "that mercy and truth might meet, and righteousness and peace kiss each other;") and because the party offending was not able for it, he that would effectually make suit for him, must likewise satisfy for him. And this JESUS CHRIST did. Now that he might do this, it was necessary that he should be GOD able to save, and man fit to save man; man that he might suffer, and GOD that his suffering might be satisfying; man that he might die, and GOD that his death might have value to purchase life to us.

The SON was fit to be incarnate for his work; the middle person in the Godhead to be man's Mediator with GOD. That we had lost was the dignity of the sons of GOD; and therefore his only SON was only fit to restore us to it: the beauty defaced in us was the image of GOD; therefore the repairing and reimpacting it was a fit work for his most pure and perfect image, his SON, the character of his person.

Now this incarnation of the Word, the SON of GOD, is the foundation of all our hopes; it is the sense of that great promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head;" and many others of the same substance in the Prophets. It is the great salvation so often foretold, and so long expected by the Jews. When this was fulfilled, that a virgin did conceive by the HOLY GHOST, "then did the heavens drop down righteousness from above, and the earth bring forth salvation."

*Suffered under PONTIUS PILATE.*

Though all his life was one continual act of suffering, from his lying in the manger to his hanging on the cross; yet because of the briefness of this confession, as likewise because this act was the greatest and most remarkable of his sufferings, and the Scripture itself doth (as such) mention it most frequently, therefore it is here immediately subjoined to the article of his birth.

It is not for nothing that we have the name of the Roman Judge here expressed, under whom he suffered; though it is nothing to his credit, yet it is to the credit of Divine Wisdom; even this, considering the nature and end of CHRIST's death, being to satisfy a pronounced sentence of justice, though for others, it was a very agreeable circumstance that he should not be suddenly, or tumultuously murdered, but be judicially, though unjustly, condemned.

*Crucified.*

Besides it made his suffering more public and solemn; and the Divine Providence ordered this, that he should suffer under a Roman Judge, and so fall under this Roman kind of punishment, being in itself a very shameful and painful kind of death, and by the sentence of the law accursed, that we might have the more evidence of our deliverance from that shame, and pain, and curse that was due to us: "The chastisement of our peace was upon him," says the Prophet, "and by his stripes are we healed."

*Suffered.*

That he died, and what kind of death you see is expressed; but as many particular sufferings of his body are not here mentioned, so none of those of his soul, but all comprehended in this general word, "he suffered." Those were too great to be duly expressed in so short a form;

and therefore are better expressed by supposing them, and including them only in this, "He suffered." As he that drew the father, among others, beholding the sacrifice of his own daughter, signified the grief of the rest in their gestures, and visages, and tears, but drew the father veiled; so here the crucifying and death of our SAVIOUR are expressed, but the unspeakable conflicts of his soul are veiled under the general term of suffering. But sure that invisible cup that came from his FATHER'S hand, was far more bitter than the gall and vinegar from the hand of his enemies; the piercing of his soul far sharper than the nails and thorns. He could answer these sweetly with, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" but these other pangs drew from him another kind of word: "My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me?"

### *Died.*

No less would serve, and therefore he was "obedient even unto the death;" as the sentence against us did bear, and the sacrifices of the law did prefigure. When the sacrifices drew back, and went unwillingly to the place, the heathens accounted it an ill presage. Never was sacrifice more willing than CHRIST: "I lay down my life for my sheep," says he, "and no man taketh it from me." "As a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." "He gave his back to the smiters." (*Isa. l.*) "For this hour came I into the world," says he.

And this his death is our life, though by it we are not freed from temporal death; yet, which is infinitely more, we are delivered from eternal death, and which is yet more, entitled to eternal life; and therefore do no more suffer temporal death as a curse, but enjoy it as a blessing, and may look upon it now (such as are in CHRIST) not only as a day of deliverance, but of coronation; the exchange of our present rags for white robes, and a crown that fadeth not away.

*Buried.*

For the further assurance of his death, and the glory of his resurrection, as likewise to commend the grave to us, as now a very sweet resting place; he hath warmed the cold bed of the grave to a Christian, that he need not fear to lie down in it, nor doubt that he shall rise again, as we know that he did.

*Descended into Hell.*

The conceit of the descent of CHRIST'S soul into the place of the damned, to say no more nor harder of it, can never be made the necessary sense of these words; nor is there any ground in Scripture, or any due end of such a descent, either agreed on, or at all allegeable to persuade the choosing it as the best sense of them. Not to contest other interpretations, I conceive, with submission, that it means his burial; or rather, that when his body was laid in the grave, his soul went into paradise.

These are great things that are spoken concerning JESUS CHRIST, his birth and sufferings; but the greater our unhappiness if we have no portion in them: to hear of them only, and to enjoy nothing of them, is most miserable, and thus it is through our unbelief. Were it as common to believe in him as to repeat these words, or to come to church and hear this, then would you all make a pretty good plea; but believe it, it is another kind of thing to believe than all that, or than any thing that the most of us yet know. "My brethren, do not deceive yourselves;" that common highway-faith will not serve. You are, for all that, still unbelievers in CHRIST'S account; and if so, for all the riches of comfort that are in him, you can receive none from him. It is a sad word that he says, "Because ye believe not in me, ye shall die in your sins." Though I died for sins not mine own, yet you remaining in ungodliness and unbelief, that shall do you no good;

ye shall die in your sins. It is such a faith as endears **CHRIST** to the soul ; unites it to him ; makes **CHRIST** and it one ; that makes all that is his to become ours : then we shall conclude aright, **CHRIST** hath suffered, therefore I shall not. As he said to them that came to take him,—“Is it I you seek ? Then let these go free.” So to the law and justice of **GOD** : Seeing you have sought and laid hold on me, and made me suffer, let these go free that lay hold on me by faith : if you have any thing to say to them, I am to answer for them ; yea, I have done it already.

2. You that believe and live by this death, be often reviewing it, and meditating on it, that your souls may be ravished with the admiration of such love, and warmed with love to him. Other wonders, as you say, last for a while ; but this is a lasting wonder, not to the ignorant, (the cause of wonder at other things is ignorance indeed,) but this is an everlasting wonder to those that know it best, *viz.*, to the very angels. Let that loved **JESUS** be fixed in your hearts, who for you was nailed to the cross. **ST. BERNARD** wonders that men should think on any thing else. Sure it is great folly to think and esteem much of any thing here, after his appearing : the sun arising drowns all the stars. And withal, be daily crucifying sin in yourselves, be avenged on it for his sake, and kill it because it killed him.

3. Will you think any thing hard to do or suffer for him that undertook and performed so much for you ? Know, that if you are not **CHRIST**'s, but your own, you must look for as little of him to be yours ; if ye be your own, you must bear all your own sins, and all the wrath that is due to them ; but if you like not that, and resolve to be no more your own, but **CHRIST**'s, then what have you to do but cheerfully to embrace, yea, earnestly to seek, all opportunities to do him service ?

4. These are the steps of **CHRIST**'s humiliation ; look on them so as to study to be like him, particularly in that : surely the soul that hath most of **CHRIST**, hath most humility. It is the lesson he peculiarly recommends to

us from his own example, which is the shortest and most effectual way of teaching. "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." One says well, 'Let man be ashamed to be any longer proud, for whom GOD himself humbled so low.' He became humble to expiate our pride; and yet we will not banish that pride that undid us, and follow that way of salvation which is humility. JESUS CHRIST is indeed the lily of the valleys: he grows nowhere but in the humble heart.

### *Rose again the Third Day.*

When humbled to the lowest, then nearest his exaltation, as JOSEPH in the prison. He could die, for he was a man; and a man for that purpose, that he might die; but he could not be overcome by death, for he was GOD; yea, by dying he overcame death, and so showed himself truly the Lord of Life. He strangled that lion in his own den. The whale swallowed JONAH, but it could not digest him; it was forced to cast him up again at the appointed time; the same with the time here specified, wherein the Prophet was a figure of this great Prophet, JESUS CHRIST. The grave hath a terrible appetite; devours all, and still cries, 'Give, give,' and never hath enough, as AGUR says; yet, for all its appetite, CHRIST was too great a morsel for it to digest; too strong a prisoner for all its bars and iron gates to keep him in.

He hath made a breach through death, opened a passage on the other side of it into life, though otherwise indeed *Vestigia nulla retrorsum*. They that believe, that lay hold on him by faith, they come through with him, follow him out at the same breach, pass through death into heaven; but the rest find not the passage out, (it is as the Red Sea, passable only to the Israelites,) therefore they must of necessity sink through the grave into hell, through the first death into the second; and that is the most terrible of all. That death is indeed what one called the other, The most terrible of all terribles; the king of terrors.

Now the only assurance of that happy second resurrection to the life of glory hereafter, is the first resurrection here to the life of grace: "Blessed are they that are partakers of the first resurrection, for on such the second death hath no power;" for the resurrection of **JESUS CHRIST** is to the believer the evidence of his redemption completed, that all was paid by **CHRIST** as our surety, and so he set at liberty; which the Apostle teaches us when he says, "He arose for our righteousness."

Nor is it only the pattern and pledge of a believer's resurrection, but it is the efficient both of that last resurrection of his body to glory, and of the first, of his soul to grace.

The life of a believer flows from **CHRIST** as his Head, and is mystically one life with his; and therefore so, as himself expresseth it, "because I live, ye shall live also." Therefore is he called the "first begotten from the dead, and the beginning," *Ἐν πᾶσιν πρωτεύων*. He is first in all, and from him spring all these streams that "make glad the city of **GOD**;" therefore the Apostle, in his thanksgiving for our new life and lively hopes, leaves not out that, "Blessed be **GOD**, the **FATHER** of our **LORD JESUS CHRIST**;" that is, the conduit of all. And he expresses it in the same place, that "we are begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of **JESUS** from the dead." But, alas! we rob ourselves of all that rich comfort that is wrapped up in this, by living to ourselves and to the world, not having our consciences purified from dead works. How few of us are there that set that ambition of **PAUL** before us, "desiring above all things to know him, and the power of his resurrection." To be made conformable; that is, the knowledge, as he there expresses it, a lively, experienced knowledge of that power.

2. This, rightly considered, will answer all our doubts and fears in the hardest times of the Church; when in its deliverance there appears nothing but impossibilities; so low, that its enemies conclude it shall never rise again, and its friends are oppressed with fearing so much; yet he



that brought up his own Son **JESUS** from the dead, can and will restore his Church, for which he gave that his only begotten **SON** to the death. "Son of man," says he, "can these dry bones live?" Thus often looks the Church's deliverance; (which is there the proper sense;) the Prophet answered most wisely, "**LORD**, thou knowest:" it is a work only for thee to know and to do: and by his **SPIRIT** they were revived. And as here it looked hopeless, so the disciples thought they were giving it over, and blaming almost their former credulity: "We thought this should have been he that should have delivered Israel; and besides all this, to day is the third day. True, the third day was come, but it was not ended; yea, he rose in the beginning of it, though they yet knew it not, nor him present to whom they spake; but toward the end of it, they likewise knew that he was risen, when he was pleased to discover himself to them. Thus, though the enemies of the Church prevail so far against it that it seems buried, and a stone laid to the grave's mouth, yet it shall rise again, and at the very fittest, the appointed time, as **CHRIST** the third day. Thus the Church expresses her confidence: "In the third day he will raise us up." (*Hos.* vi. 1, 2.) Whatsoever it suffers it shall gain by it, and be more beautiful and glorious in its restorment.

*He ascended into Heaven.*

He rose again, not to remain on earth as before, but to return to his throne of Majesty, from whence his love drew him, according to his prayer, (*John* xvii.,) which was a certain prediction of it. He had now accomplished the great work he came for, and was therefore to be exalted to his former glory; the same person that before, but with the surcrease of another nature, which he had not before, and of a new relative dignity, being to sit as King of his Church, which he had purchased with his blood.

And to express this it is added, that he sits at the right hand of **GOD**. By which is expressed, not only his

matchless glory, but his dominion and rule as Prince of Peace, the alone King of his Church, her supreme Law-giver and mighty Protector, and Conqueror of all his enemies, ruling his holy hill of Zion with the golden sceptre of his word, and breaking his enemies, the strongest of them, in pieces, with the iron rod of his justice. They attempt in vain to unsettle his throne; it is very far out of their reach, as high as the right hand of God. "For ever, O God, thy throne is established in heaven." What way is there for the worms of this earth to do any thing against it?

As in these is the glory of CHRIST, so they contain much comfort of a Christian. In that very elevation of our nature to such dignity, is indeed, as the ancients speak, wonderful condescension; that our flesh is exalted above all the glorious spirits, the angels; and they adore the nature of man, in the person of man's glorified SAVIOUR, the SON of GOD. This exaltation of JESUS CHRIST doth reflect a dignity on the nature of mankind; but the right and possession of it is not universal, but is contracted and appropriate to them that believe on him. "He took not on him the nature of angels," says the Apostle; but the nature of "the seed of ABRAHAM." He says not the nature of man, though it is so, but of the seed of ABRAHAM; not so much because of his descent from that particular stock after the flesh, as in the spiritual sense of ABRAHAM's seed. The rest of mankind forfeit all that dignity and benefit that arises to their nature in CHRIST, by their distance and disunion from him through unbelief. But the believer hath not only naturally one kind of being with the humanity of CHRIST, but is mystically one with the person of CHRIST, with whole CHRIST, GOD-MAN; and by virtue of that mysterious union, they that partake of it, partake of the present happiness and glory of CHRIST; they have a real interest in whatsoever he is and hath, in all his dignities and power, and in that sense they that are justified are glorified.

In sum, believers have in this ascending and enthroning

of CHRIST, unspeakable comfort through their interest in CHRIST, both in consideration of his present affection to them, and his effectual intercession for them, and in the assured hope this gives them of their own after-happiness and glory with him.

1. In all his glory he forgets them not. He puts not off his bowels with his low condition here, but hath carried it along to his throne; his majesty and love suit very well, and both in their highest degree. As all the waters of his sufferings did not quench his love, nor left he it behind him buried in the grave, but it arose with him, being stronger than death; so he let it not fall to the earth when he ascended on high, but it ascended with him, and he still retains it in his glory. And that our flesh which he took on earth, he took up into heaven, as a token of indissoluble love betwixt him and those whom he redeemed, and sends down from thence, as the rich token of his love, his SPIRIT into their hearts; so that these are mutual remembrances. Can he forget his own on earth, having their flesh so closely united to him? You see he does not; he feels what they suffer: "SAUL, SAUL, why persecutest thou me?" And can they forget him whose SPIRIT dwells in them, and records lively to their hearts the passages of his love, and brings all those things to their remembrance, as himself tells us that SPIRIT would do; and so indeed proves the Comforter, by representing unto us that his love, the spring of our comforts? And when we send up our requests, we know of a Friend before us there; a most true and a most faithful Friend, that fails not to speak for us what we say, and much more: "He liveth," says the Apostle, "to make intercession for us." This is the ground of a Christian's boldness at the throne of grace; yea therefore is the FATHER'S throne the throne of grace to us, because the throne of our Mediator, JESUS CHRIST, is beside it: he sits at his right hand, otherwise it could be nothing to us but a throne of justice; and so, in regard of our guiltiness, a throne of terror and affrightment, which we would rather fly from, than draw near unto.

*Lastly*, as we have the comfort of such a Friend, to prepare access to our prayers there, that are the messengers of our souls; so our souls themselves, when they remove from these houses of clay, shall find admission there through Him. And this He tells his disciples again and again, and in them all his own, in his ascending to his glory: "I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also."

It will not be hard to persuade them that believe these things, and are portioners in them, to set their hearts on them, and for that end to take them off from all other things as unworthy of them; yea, it will be impossible for them to live without the frequent and sweet thoughts of that place where their LORD JESUS is. Yet it is often needful to remember them, that this cannot be enough done, and by representing these things to them, to draw them more upwards; and it is best done in the Apostle's words, "If ye be risen with CHRIST, mind those things that are above." If ye be risen with him, follow him on; let your hearts be where he is; they that are one with him, the blessed seed of the woman, find the unity drawing them heavenwards: But, alas! the most of us are more like the accursed seed of the serpent, basely groveling on this earth, and licking the dust: the conversation of the believer is in heaven, where he hath a SAVIOUR, and from whence he looks for him. Truly there is little of a true Christian here; (and that argues that there is little of the truth of Christianity among us, who are altogether here;) his Head in heaven, and his heart there, and these are the two principles of life. Let us then suit the Apostle's advice, and so enjoy the comfort he subjoins, that by our affections above, we may know, "That our life is hid with CHRIST in GOD, and therefore, that when He who is our life shall appear, we likewise shall appear with him in glory."

*From thence He shall come to judge the Quick and the Dead.*

We have in this to consider: 1. That there is an universal judgment. 2. That CHRIST is the Judge. 3. The quality of the judgment.

1. That there is a Judgment to come, is the frequent doctrine of the Scriptures, and hath been ever the belief of the godly from the beginning; as we may perceive by that ancient Prophecy of ENOCH, recorded by ST. JUDE. And there is so much just reason for it, that natural men, by the few sparkles of light in their consciences, have had some dark notions of it, as is evident in PLATO and the Platonics; and not only the Philosophers but the Poets: it may be too, that they have been helped by some scattered glimmerings of light concerning this, borrowed from the Jews, and traditionally passed from hand to hand among the Heathen, and therefore disguised and altered after their fashion.

If we be persuaded that there is a Supreme Ruler of the world, who is most wise, and just, and good, this will persuade us not only that there is some other state than that we see here appointed for man, the most excellent part of this visible world; but that there shall be a solemn judicial proceeding, in entering him in that after being. The many miseries of this present life, and that the best of men are usually deepest sharers in them, though it hath a little staggered not only wise heathens, but sometimes some of the prime saints of GOD; yet it hath never prevailed with any, but brutal and debauched spirits, to conclude against Divine Providence; but rather to resolve upon this, that of necessity there must be another kind of issue, reducing all the present confusions into order. It is true, that sometimes here the LORD'S right hand finds out his enemies, and is known by the judgment which he executes on them; and on the other side, gives some instances of his gracious providence to his Church, and to

particular good men, even before the sons of men : but these are but some few preludes and pledges of that great judgment. Some he gives, that we forget not his justice and goodness ; but much is reserved, that we expect not all, nor the most, here, but hereafter : and it is certainly most congruous that this be done, not only in each particular apart, but most conspicuously in all together, that the justice and mercy of **God**, may not only be accomplished, but acknowledged and magnified, and that not only severally, in the several persons of men and angels, but universally, jointly, and manifestly, in the view of all, as upon one theatre ; angels and men being at once, some of them the objects of that justice, others, of mercy ; but all of them spectators of both. Each ungodly man shall not only read, whether he will or no, the justice of **God** in his own condemnation ; but they shall then see the same justice in all the rest of the condemned world, and the rest in them ; and to the great increase of their anguish, they shall see likewise the glory of that mercy, that shall then shine so bright in all the elect of **God**, from which they themselves are justly shut out, and delivered up to eternal misery.

And on the other side, the good shall, with unspeakable joy, behold, not only a part as before, but the whole sphere both of the justice and mercy of their **God**, and shall with one voice admire and applaud him in both. Besides, the process of many men's actions cannot be full at the end of their life, as it shall be at that day ; many have very large after-reckonings to come upon them, for those sins of others to which they are accessory, though committed after their death ; as the sins of ill-educated children to be laid to the charge of their parents,—the sins of such as any have corrupted, either by their counsels, or opinions, or evil examples.

2. He, the **LORD JESUS**, shall be Judge in that great day ; the **FATHER**, and **SPIRIT**, and his authority, are all one ; for they are all one **God** and one Judge ; but it shall be particularly exercised and pronounced by our **SAVIOUR**,

**GOD-MAN, JESUS CHRIST**; that “Eternal Word, by whom all things were made, by Him shall all be judged;” and so He shall be the Word in that last act of time, as in the first: He shall judicially pronounce that great and final sentence, that shall stand unalterable in eternity: and not only as the eternal **SON** of **GOD**, but withal the **Son of Man**; and so sit as **King**, and invested with all power in heaven and earth. “By that Man whom he hath appointed to judge the quick and the dead.” (*Acts xvii. 31.*) The powers of the world and of hell are combined against his throne; therefore they shall be His footstool, sitting on that throne; and the crown which he hath purchased for believers, he shall set on their heads with his own hand. This shall be exceeding joy and comfort to all that have believed on him, that their **REDEEMER** shall be their **Judge**. He that was judged for them, shall judge them, and pass sentence according to that covenant of grace, pronouncing them free from the wrath which he himself endured for them, and heirs of that life that he bought with his dearest blood.

And that gives no less accession to the misery of the wicked, that that same **JESUS** whom they opposed and despised, so many of them as heard any thing of him, shall sit upon their final judgment, and pronounce sentence against them; not partially avenging his own quarrel on them, but justly returning them the reward of their ungodliness and unbelief; that great Shepherd shall thus make that great separation of his sheep from the goats.

3. Of the manner we have thus much here,—That he shall come from heaven, as the Scriptures teach us; he shall visibly appear in the air, he shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, attended with innumerable companies of glorious angels, that shall serve him, both in congregating his elect, and segregating them from the reprobate; but himself in the brightness of his own majesty, infinitely surpassing them all. His first coming was mean and obscure, suiting his errand; for then he came to be judged; but that last coming shall be glorious; for

he comes to judge, and his judgment shall be in righteousness. There shall be no mis-alleging, or mis-proving, or mis-jūdging there; all the judgments of men, whether private or judicial, shall be re-judged there according to truth, by a Judge before whom all things are naked; and not only shall he know and judge all aright, but all they that are judged shall themselves be convinced that it is so: then all will see that none are condemned but most deservedly; and that the LORD's justice is pure and spotless in them that perish; as his grace, without prejudice to his justice; it being satisfied in CHRIST for them that are saved. The books shall be opened; those that men so willingly, the most of them, keep shut and clasped up, and are so unwilling to look into; their own accusing consciences: The LORD will proceed formally against the wicked, according to the books; no wrong shall be done them; they shall have fair justice; and they shall see what they would not look upon before; when, by seeing, that might have been blotted out, and a free acquittance written in its stead.

We are gaping still after new notions; but a few things wisely and practically known, drawn down from the head to the heart, are better than all that variety of knowing, that men are so taken up with: *Paucis literis opus est ad mentem bonam.* This, and such like common truths, we think we both know and believe well enough; but truly, if this great point, touching the great and last judgment, were indeed known and believed by us, it would draw our minds to more frequent and more deep thoughts of it; and were we often and serious in those thoughts, they would have such influence into all other thoughts, and the whole course of our lives, as would much alter the frame of them from what they are.

Did we think of this Gospel which we preach and hear, that we must then be judged by it, we should be now more ruled by it; but the truth is, we are willingly forgetful of these things; they are melancholy, pensive thoughts, and we are content that the noise of affairs, or any vanities, fill



the ear of our minds, that we hear them not. If we be forced at some times to hear of this last judgment, it possibly casts our conscience into some little trembling fit for the time, as it did **FELIX**; but he was not, nor are we so happy, as to be shaken out of the custom and love of sin by it: we promise it fair, as he did, some other time; but if that time never come, this day will come, and they that shun to hear or think of it, shall then see it, and the sight of it will be as terrible and amazing, as the timely thoughts of it would have been profitable. It is, no doubt, an unpleasing subject to all earthly minds; but sure it were our wisdom to be of that mind now, that then we shall be forced to be of: we shall then read, by the light of that fire that shall burn the world, the vanity of all those things whereon we now doat so foolishly. Let us therefore be persuaded to think so now, and disengage our hearts, and fix them on him who shall then judge us. They are only happy that trust in him; that which is the affrightment of others is their great joy and desire; they love and long for that day, both for their **SAVIOUR**'s glory in it, and their own full happiness; and their love to his appearing, is a certain pledge of the crown they are to receive at his appearing. "In that day," (*2 Tim.* iv. 8,) says the Apostle; this day he esteems more than all his days; therefore he names it no otherwise than "that day:" How may we know what day it was he meant? His coronation day. But of all men, sure the hypocrite likes least the remembrance of that day: there is no room for disguises there, all masks must off, and all things appear just as they are, and that is the worst news to him that can be.

*I believe in the HOLY GHOST.*

This name, personally taken, is peculiarly that of the third person, proceeding from the **FATHER** and the **SON**, by a way that can neither be expressed nor conceived; holy in himself, and the author and cause of all holiness in us.

It is neither useful nor safe for us to entangle our thoughts in disputes concerning this mystery; but it is necessary that we know, and acknowledge, and believe in this **HOLY SPIRIT**: it is **He** in whom and by whom we believe. We cannot know **GOD**, nor the things of **GOD**, but by the **SPIRIT** of **GOD**; nor say that **JESUS** is **GOD**, but by the same **SPIRIT**. We know that this Holy Trinity co-operates in the work of our salvation; the **FATHER** hath given us his **SON**, and the **SON** hath sent us his **SPIRIT**, and the **SPIRIT** gives us faith, which unites us to the **SON**, and through him to the **FATHER**: the **FATHER** ordained our redemption, the **SON** wrought it, the **HOLY SPIRIT** reveals and applies it.

The remaining articles have the fruit of that great work, the sending of the **SON** of **GOD** in the flesh. What it is, and to whom it belongs; the result of **CHRIST**'s incarnation and death. Yea, the great design of **GOD** in the other great work, that of the first creation, was this second: He made the world, that out of it he might make his Church. The **HOLY SPIRIT**, moving upon the souls of men in their conversion, aims at this same end, the gathering and completing of his Church: He is the breath of life, that breathed on these new creatures that make up this society. So then, this is as much as to say, I verily believe that **GOD** had such a purpose in making the world, and in sending his **SON** into it, and they both in sending the **SPIRIT**, and the **SPIRIT** in his working to make a holy Church, a number that should serve **GOD** here, and enjoy him in eternity; and I believe that **GOD** cannot fall short of his end: I believe, therefore, there is such a company; there is a holy universal Church (universal) diffused through the several ages, and places, and nations of the world; (holy) washed in the blood of **CHRIST**, and sanctified by his **SPIRIT**; that is, that it hath, in all ages, continued from the beginning, and shall continue to the end of the world, increasing still and growing to its appointed perfection, amidst all the enmities and oppositions that it encounters. "I send you forth," says **CHRIST**,

“as sheep among wolves.” The preservation of the Church is a continuing miracle: it resembles DANIEL’S safety among the hungry lions, but prolonged from one age to another. The ship wherein CHRIST is may be weather-beaten, but it shall not perish. So then you see, that this confession is no other but your acknowledgment of GOD in himself; “Three in One, and One in Three;” and his works of the creation of the world, and redemption of man by his SON, made man for that purpose, and appropriate to them for whom it was designed, by his HOLY SPIRIT; and, with this acknowledgment, our reliance on this GOD as the Author of our being and well-being.

### *The Communion of Saints.*

This springs immediately from the former: if they make one Church, then they have a very near communion together; they are one body united to that glorious Head that is above; they have all one spiritual life flowing from him: and this communion holds not only on earth and in heaven apart, but even betwixt heaven and earth; the saints on earth make up the same body with those already in glory; they are born to the same inheritance by new birth, though the others are in possession before them. This their common title to spiritual blessings, and eternal blessedness, prejudices none of them; their inheritance is such, as is not lessened by the multitude of heirs; it is entire to each one; and that grace and salvation that flow from CHRIST, the SUN of Righteousness, is as the light of the sun where it shines; none hath the less because of others partaking of it. The happiness of the saints is called, “an inheritance in light,” which all may enjoy without abatement to any. They have each their crown; they need not, they do not envy one another, nor, Ottoman-like, one brother kill another to reign alone: yea, they rejoice in the happiness and salvation of one another; they are glad at the graces that GOD bestows on their brethren, for they know that they all belong to the same

first owner, and return to his glory; and that whatsoever diversity is in them, they all agree and centre in that service and good of the Church; and so, what each one hath of gifts and graces, belongs to all by virtue of this communion. Thus ought each of them to think, and every one of them humbly and charitably to use, what he hath himself, and to rejoice in that which others have.

*I believe a Holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints.*

We may see the worth and the necessity of holiness, how much it is regarded in the whole work; “for this very thing did CHRIST give himself for his Church, that he might sanctify it.” See the end of our redemption. If we look as far forward as salvation,—heaven; nothing unclean shall enter that holy city. And look again as far back as our election; and these that are not partakers of this, do but delude themselves in dreaming of interest in the rest; no washing in the blood of CHRIST to remission, but withal by the SPIRIT of Sanctification; no comfort to the unholy in their resurrection, because no hope of eternal life: no, without shall be dogs. In the base and foolish opinion of the world, holiness is a reproach, or at the best but a poor commendation; and men are more pleased with any other title; they had a great deal rather be called learned, or wise, or stout, or comely, than holy; but GOD esteems otherwise of it, whose esteem is the true rule of worth: That forecited place, a glorious Church; how? Holy and without blemish; that is indeed the true beauty of the soul; it makes it like GOD; and that is its comeliness. We see the LORD himself delights to be known much by this style, and glorified by it, “Holy, holy, holy:” so *Exod. xv.*; “Glorious in holiness;” and the SPIRIT of GOD is still called the HOLY SPIRIT. How much then are they mistaken concerning heaven, that think to find the way to it out of the path of holiness, which is indeed the only way that leads unto it. And yet, if we

reprove you of unholiness, you say you are not saints. No? so much the worse; for they that mean to share in eternal life, must be such; if you be content still not to be saints, go on; but know, that they that are not saints in grace here, shall never be saints in glory hereafter.

### *Forgiveness of Sins.*

Notwithstanding forgiveness of sins, there is a necessity of holiness, though not as meriting it, as leading unto happiness. But on the other side, notwithstanding the highest point of holiness we can attain, there is a necessity of this forgiveness of sins. Though believers make up a holy Church and company of saints, yet there is a debt upon them that their holiness pays not; yea, they are so far from having a superplus for a standing treasure after all paid, that all the holiness of the saints together will not pay the least farthing of that debt they owe. "As for me I will walk in mine integrity," says DAVID. (*Psalm xxvi. 11.*) How then, adds he, this should justify me sufficiently; no, "but redeem thou me, and be merciful to me;" and so throughout the Scriptures. All the integrity of the godly under the Law, did not exempt them from offering sacrifice which was the expiation of sin in the figure, looking forward to that great and spotless sacrifice, that was to be slain for the sins of the world; and those that believe the Gospel, the application of that justifying blood, that streams forth in the doctrine of the Gospel, is not only needful to wash in for their cleansing in their first conversion, but to be reapplied to the soul, for taking off the daily contracted guiltiness of new sins. It is a fountain opened and standing open for sin and for uncleanness, as the sea of brass before the sanctuary.

The consideration of that precious blood shed for our sins, is the strongest persuasive to holiness, and to the avoiding and hating of sin; so far is the doctrine of justification (right understood) from animating men to sin. But there is a continual necessity of new recourse to this great expiation.

You think it an easy matter, and a thing that for your own ease you willingly believe, the forgiveness of sins; it is easy indeed after our fashion, easy to imagine that we believe such a thing when we hear it, because we let it pass, and question it not; we think it may be true, and think no farther on it, while we neither know truly what sin is, nor feel the weight of our own sins; but where a soul is convinced of the nature of sin, and its own guiltiness, there to believe forgiveness is not so easy a task.

In believing forgiveness of sins, and so the other privileges that attend it, there are these three things gradually leading one to the other. 1. To believe that there is such a thing, and that it is purchased by the death of CHRIST, and so attainable by coming unto him for it. 2. By this, the soul, finding itself ready to sink under the burden of its own sins, is persuaded to go to him, and lay that load on him, and itself withal resolves to rest on him for this forgiveness; to believe in him who is the LORD our Righteousness. 3. Upon this believing on him for forgiveness, follows a reflex believing of that forgiveness; an express testimony of GOD'S OWN SPIRIT. To believe and to grow stronger in believing, and to aspire to the full assurance of faith, is our constant duty: and the keeping our consciences pure, as much as may be, doth not only keep the comfortable evidence of pardon clearest and least interrupted within us, but is the likeliest to receive those pure joys that flow immediately into the soul from the SPIRIT of GOD. The testimony of our conscience is (if we damp it not ourselves) our continual feast; but that testimony of the SPIRIT is a superadded taste of higher comfort out of GOD'S own hand, as it were a piece of heaven in the soul, which he cheers it withal.

### *The Resurrection of the Body.*

The comfort of these privileges is opposed to those grand evils that we feel or fear: sanctification, to the power of sin: justification, or forgiveness, to the guilt of

sin; the resurrection, to temporal death; and life eternal, to the second or eternal death.

This is the raising of the self same body that is laid in the dust; otherwise, the giving a body to the soul again, must have some other name, for resurrection it cannot be called.

That **GOD** can do this, notwithstanding all imaginable difficulties in it, have we not proof enough in what he hath done? Sure that which he did in the beginning of time, the framing the whole world of nothing, is more than a sufficient pledge of this that is to be done in the end of time.

That he will do it, we have his own word for it, and the pledge of it in raising his **SON JESUS**; therefore called "The first begotten from the dead;" as relating to believers who are one with him. The resurrection of the dead in general is an act of power; but to the godly an act of grace; to the wicked, of justice: both shall rise by the power of **CHRIST**; but to the one as a Judge, and a Judge that shall condemn them; to the other as their Head, and their Saviour. **JOSEPH**'s two fellow-prisoners were both taken out of the prison, and at the same time; but the one to the court, the other to the gallows; so in the resurrection.

The confession of faith being of such things as belong to believers, and are their happiness, therefore their resurrection is particularly here intended, as we see eternal life is subjoined to it.

Our bodies are raised, that were companions and partakers of our good and evil in our abode upon earth, that they may in eternity be companions and partakers of our reward: those of the ungodly, to suit their condemned souls, shall be filled with shame, and vileness, and misery; and those that were in their lowest estate here, temples of the **HOLY GHOST**, shall be filled with that fulness of joy, that shall run over from the soul unto them: they shall be conformed to the happy and glorious souls to which they shall be united, yea, to the glorious body of our **LORD**

**JESUS CHRIST.** There shall then be nothing but beauty, and glory, and immortality, in them that are now frail and mortal, and being dead do putrefy and turn to dust. "He shall change our vile bodies, and make them like unto his glorious body." But as **ST. BERNARD** says well, "If we would be sure of this, that our bodies shall be conformed to his, in the glory to come, see our souls be here conformed to his, in that humility which he so much manifested whilst he dwelt among men." If we would that then "our vile body be made like his glorious body," let our proud heart now be made like his humble heart.

### *Life Eternal.*

Our confession of faith ends in that which is the end of our faith; our everlasting salvation, or, eternal life; of which, all that we can say is but stammering, and all our knowledge of it but ignorance, in regard of what it is: yet so much we know, or may know of it, as, if we knew aright, would certainly draw us more into the desires and pursuit of it. The very name of life is sweet, but then especially, as it is here meant, in the purest and sweetest sense, for a truly happy life. For a life full of misery is scarce worth the name of life; and the longer it were, the worse; therefore, the miserable estate of damned souls, though immortal, is called death. So, then, by this life, true and full blessedness being meant, and then that added, that it is eternal, what can be imagined more to make it desirable?

So happy, that there shall not be the smallest drop of any evil and bitterness in it; pure unmixed bliss; nothing present in it that is displeasing, nothing wanting that is delightful; and everlasting, that when millions of years (if there were any such reckoning there) are rolled about, it shall be as far from ending as at the first.

A very little knowledge of this blessed life would make us clean out of love with the life that now we make such account of. What can it be that ties us here? The



known shortness of this life, were it more happy than it is to any, might make it of less esteem with us; but then withal, being so full of miseries and sins, so stuffed with sorrows round about us, and within ourselves; that if the longest of it can be called long, it is only the multitude of miseries in it, can challenge that name for it. Such a world of bodily diseases: Here is one's head paining him, another his stomach; some complaining of this part, some of that; and the same party sometimes of one malady, sometimes of another. What disappointments and disgraces, and cross encounters of affairs; what personal and what public calamities; and then sin, the worst of all; and yet all cannot wean us. We cannot endure to hear or think of removing; and the true reason is, unbelief of this eternal life, and the neglect of those ways that lead to it. Be persuaded at length to call in your heart from the foolish chase of vanity, and consider this glorious life that is set before you. Do you think the provision you make for this wretched life worth so many hours' daily pains, and give eternal life scarce half a thought in many hours; possibly not a fixed serious thought in many days? Sure if you believe there is such a thing, you cannot but be convinced, that it is a most preposterous course you take, in the expense of your time and pains upon any thing else than on life eternal. Think what a sad thing it will be, when your soul must remove out of that little cottage wherein it now dwells, not to be bettered by the removal, but thrust out into utter darkness; whereas, if ye would give up sin, and embrace **JESUS CHRIST** as your joy and your life; in him you would be put into a sure right to this eternal life: it is a pure life, and purity of life here, that is the only way to it. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see **GOD**."

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**SERMONS**

ON

**SEVERAL OCCASIONS.**

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# SERMON I.

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JAMES iii. 17.

*The wisdom that is from above, is pure.*

“GOD doth know that in the day that ye shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,” was the first hissing of that old serpent, by which he poisoned mankind in the root. Man, not contented with the impression of GOD’s image in which he was created, lost it by catching at a shadow; climbing higher than his station, he fell far below it; seeking to be more than man, to become as GOD, he made himself less than man; he lodged not a night in honour, but became as the beasts that perish. Ever since, nature’s best wisdom is full of impurity, turbulence, and distemper: nor can any thing rectify it, but a wisdom from above, that both cleanseth and composeth the soul: “It is first pure, and then peaceable.”

This Epistle, as some that follow, is called, General; both by reason of the dispersion of the parties to whom it is addressed, and the universality of the subject of which it treats: containing a great number (if not all) of the necessary directions and comforts of a Christian’s life, both from the active and passive part of it. It is evident that the Apostle’s main design is, to arm the dispersed Jews against all kinds of temptations, both those of affliction, (in the first chapter, at the second Verse,) and sinful temptations. (ver. 13.) And having discoursed of two special means of strengthening them against both, speaking to GOD in prayer, and hearing GOD speak in his word; in the two last verses of that chapter, he recom-

mends, as chief duties of religion, and sure evidences of integrity in religion, first, meekness and moderation, chiefly in their speeches; and then charity, and purity in their actions; insisting largely upon the latter in the second chapter, and upon the former, the ruling of the tongue, in this third chapter; and here, towards the end of it, he shows the true spring of miscarriage in speech and action, and of right ordering and regulating of both; evil conversation, strifes, and envyings, are the fruits of a base wisdom, that is “earthly, sensual, and devilish: (verse 15 :) But purity, meekness, and mercy, are the proper effects, and certain signs, of heavenly wisdom.

“The wisdom that is from above is first pure:” Its gentleness can agree with any thing except impurity; then it is “peaceable;” it offends nobody, except purity offend them: It is not raging and boisterous. It is not only pure, “being void of that mire and dirt, which the wicked are said to cast out like the sea;” (*Isa. lvii. 20;*) but peaceable likewise; not swelling and restless, like the sea, as is there said of the wicked. Nor is it only peaceable negatively, not offending; but, as the word bears, *εἰρηνικὴ*, pacific; disposed to make and seek peace. And as it readily offends none, so it is not easily offended; it is gentle and moderate, *ἐπιεικὴς*; and, if offended, *ὑπειθεὴς*, easily entreated to forgive. And as it easily passeth by men’s offences, so it doth not pass by, but looks on their distresses and wants; as full of compassion, as it is free from unruly and distempered passions. Nor rests it in an affecting sympathy, its mercy is helpful, “full of mercy and good fruits.” It both forgives and pities, and gives without partiality, and without hypocrisy: [*ἀδιάκριτος καὶ ἀνυπόκριτος*.] The word may as well bear another sense, no less suiting both with this wisdom, and these its other qualities: That is, not taking upon it a censorious discerning and judging of others: they that have most of this wisdom, are least rigid to those that have less of it. I know no better evidence of strength in grace, than to bear much with those that are weak in it. And lastly, as it spares the infirmities of others, so it makes not

false and vain shows of its own excellencies. It is without hypocrisy. This denies two things, both dissimulation and ostentation: the art of dissembling is no part of this wisdom; and for the other, ostentation, surely the air of applause is too light a purchase for solid wisdom. The works of this wisdom may be seen, yea, they should be seen, and may possibly be now and then commended; but they should not be done for that low end, either to be seen or to be commended; surely no. The wisdom being of so noble extraction, having descended from heaven, will be little careful for the estimation of those that are of the earth, and are but too often of the earth, earthly.

The subject, "Wisdom from above," requires our first consideration; next, the excellent quality that is attributed to it.

"Wisdom from above." There are two things in that: There is the general term of wisdom, common to diverse sorts of wisdom, though most eminently and truly belonging to this. Then there is the original of this wisdom; serving, as its difference, to distinguish it from all the rest: "wisdom from above." Wisdom, in the general, is a very plausible word among men. Who is there that would not willingly pass for wise? Yea, often those that are least of all such, are most desirous to be accounted such; and where this fails them, they usually make up that want in their own conceit, and strong opinion. Nor do men only thus love the reputation of wisdom, but they naturally desire to be wise, as they do to be happy; yet, through corrupt nature's blindness, they naturally mistake and fall short both of the one and the other. And being once wrong, the more progress they make, they are further out of the way: and pretending to wisdom in a false way, they still befool themselves, as the Apostle speaks, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (*Rom. i. 22.*)

Our Apostle, (ver. 15,) speaking of that wicked wisdom, that is fruitful of wrongs, strifes, and debates, and that is only abusively to be called wisdom, shows what kind of wisdom it is, by three notable characters,—earthly, natural,

and devilish ; which, though they be here jointly attributed to one and the same subject, yet we may make use of them to signify some differences of false wisdom. There is an infernal or devilish wisdom, proper for contriving cruelties, and oppressions, or subtle shifts, and deceits, that make Atheism a main basis and pillar of state policy: Such are those that “devise mischief upon their beds.” (*Micah* ii.) This is serpentine wisdom, not joined with, but most opposite to, the dove-like simplicity. There is an earthly wisdom that draws not so deep an impiety as that other, yet is sufficient to keep a man out of all acquaintance with God; drawing his eye perpetually downwards, employing him in the pursuit of such things as cannot fill the soul, except it be with anguish and vexation. That dexterity of gathering riches, where it is not attended with the Christian art of right using them, abases men’s souls, and indisposes them wholly for this “wisdom that is from above.” There is a natural wisdom far more plausible than the other two, more harmless than that hellish wisdom, and more refined than that earthly wisdom, yet, no more able to make man holy and happy than they: *Natural*, it is the word the Apostle ST. PAUL useth, (*1 Cor.* ii.) ἀντὶ ψυχικος, naming the natural man, by his better part, his soul; intimating that the soul, even in the highest faculty of it, the understanding, and that in the highest pitch of excellency to which nature can raise it, is blind in spiritual objects; things that are above it, cannot be known but by a “wisdom from above.” Nature neither affords this wisdom, nor can of itself acquire it. This is to advertise us, that we mistake not morality and common knowledge, even of divine things, for “the wisdom that is from above.” This may raise a man high above the vulgar, as the tops of the highest mountains leave the valleys below them; yet is it still as far short of true supernatural wisdom, as the highest earth is of the highest sphere. There is one main point of the method of this wisdom, that is of most hard digestion to a natural man, and the more naturally wise he be, the worse

he likes it : “ If any man would be wise, let him become a fool that he may become wise.” (1 *Cor.* iii. 18.) There is nothing gives nature a greater prejudice against religion, than this initial point of self-denial : when men of eminent learning, or the strong politicians, hear, ‘ that if they will come to CHRIST, they must renounce their own wisdom to be fit for his,’ many of them go away as sorrowful as the young man, when he heard of selling all his goods and giving them to the poor.

JESUS CHRIST is that eternal and substantial wisdom that came from above, to deliver men from perishing in their affected folly. ST. PAUL calls him, “ the Wisdom of GOD.” That shows his excellency in himself; and he tells us, that “ He is made of GOD our wisdom.” That shows his usefulness to us. And by him alone is this infused “ wisdom from above ” conveyed to us : “ In him are hid the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ; ” “ and from his fulness,” if at all, “ we all receive grace for grace ; ” (*Col.* ii. 3;) and of all graces, first some measures of this wisdom, without which no man can know himself, much less can he know GOD. Now this supernatural wisdom hath in it both speculation and prudence. It is contemplative and practical. These two must not be separated : “ I, wisdom, dwell with prudence.” (*Prov.* viii. 12.) This wisdom, in its contemplative part, reads CHRIST much, and discovers in him a new world of hidden excellencies unknown to this old world. But they are hid, and no eye sees them, but that which is enlightened with this wisdom : But when the renewed understanding of a Christian is once initiated into this study, it both grows daily more and more apprehensive, and CHRIST becomes more communicative of himself, and makes the soul acquainted with the amiable countenance of his Father in him reconciled. “ No man hath seen GOD at any time ; the only-begotten SON, which is in the bosom of the FATHER, he hath declared him. (*John* i. 18.) What wonder if the unlettered and despised Christian know more of the mysteries of heaven than the naturalist, though both



wise and learned? CHRIST admits the believer into his bosom, and he is in the bosom of the FATHER. But withal know, that all this knowledge, though speculatively high, yet descends to practice; as it learns what GOD is, so it thence teacheth man what he should be. This wisdom flows from heaven, and a heavenly conversation flows from it, as we find it here characterized by these practical graces of purity, peace, meekness.

This wisdom represents to us the purity of GOD's nature. It gives the soul an eye to see the comeliness and beauty of purity; as the philosopher said of virtue, to the end it might be loved, he would wish no more but that it could be seen. And as it thus morally persuades, so, by an insensible virtue, it assimilates the soul to CHRIST. It also produces all the motives to holiness and obedience; it begets these precious qualities in the soul. It giveth a Christian a view of the matchless virtues that are in CHRIST, and stirs him up to a diligent, though imperfect, imitation of them. It sets before us CHRIST's spotless purity, "in whose mouth there was no guile," and so invites us to purity; it represents the perpetual calmness of his spirit, that no tempest could reach to disturb it; in his mouth there was no contentious noise, his voice was not heard in the streets; and this recommends peaceableness and gentleness, and so in the rest here mentioned.

Hence I conceive it is evident, that gross ignorance cannot consist with the truth of religion, much less can it be a help and advantage to it. I shall never deny that a false superstitious religion stands in need of it: 'Not too much Scripture wisdom for the people:' the pomp of that vain religion, like court-masks, shows best by candle-light; fond nature likes it well; the day of spiritual wisdom would discover its imposture too clearly. But to let their foul devotion pass, (for such it must needs be, that is born of so black a mother as ignorance,) let this wisdom at least be justified of these that pretend to be her children. It is lamentable, that amongst us, where knowledge is not

withheld, men should, through sloth, and love of darkness, deprive themselves of it. What abundance of almost brutish ignorance is amongst the people! And thence uncleanness, and all manner of wickedness; a darkness that both hides and increaseth impurity. What is the reason of so much impiety and iniquity in all places; but the want of the knowledge of GOD? And not knowing JESUS CHRIST, and not obeying his Gospel, are joined together. (*2 Thess. i. 8.*) It will be found true, that where there is no obedience, there is no right knowledge of CHRIST. But out of all question, where there is not a competency of knowledge, there can be no obedience; and as these two lodge together, so observe what attends them both. “He shall come in flaming fire to render vengeance on them that know not GOD, and that obey not the Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And if there be any that think to shroud unpunished among the thickets of ignorance, even amidst the means of knowledge, take notice of this, though it may hide the deformity of sin from your own sight for a time, it cannot palliate it from the piercing eye, nor cover it from the revenging hand, of Divine Justice. As you would escape, then, that wrath to come, come to wisdom’s school; and how simple soever ye be as to this world, if ye would not perish with the world, learn to be wise unto salvation.

And truly it is mainly important for this effect, that the Ministers of the Gospel be active and dexterous in imparting this wisdom to their people. If they would have their conversation to be holy, and peaceable, and fruitful, the most expedient way is, once to principle them well in the fundamentals of religion; for therein is their great defect. How can they walk evenly and regularly so long as they are in the dark. One main thing is to be often pointing out the way to CHRIST, the fountain of this wisdom; else you bid them be clothed, and clothe them not.

How needful then is it that Pastors themselves be seers indeed, as the Prophets were called of old, not only faithful,

but wise dispensers, as our SAVIOUR speaks; (*Luke* xii. 42;) “that they be, διδασκατικοί, able and apt to teach.” (1 *Tim.* iii. 2.) Laudable is the prudence that tries much the Church’s storehouses, the seminaries of learning. But withal, it is not to be forgotten, that as a due furniture of learning is very requisite for this employment, so it is not sufficient. When one is duly enriched that way, there is yet one thing wanting, that grows not in schools: except this infused wisdom from above season and sanctify all other endowments, they remain common and unholy, and therefore unfit for the sanctuary. Among other weak pretences to CHRIST’S favour in the last day, this is one,—“We have preached in thy name;” yet says CHRIST, “I never knew you;” surely then they knew not him; and yet they preached him. Cold and lifeless (though never so fine and well contrived) must those discourses be, that are of an unknown CHRIST. Pastors are called angels; and therefore, though they use the secondary helps of knowledge, they are mainly to bring their message from above, from the fountain, the head of this pure wisdom.

“Pure:” If it come from above, it must needs be pure, being the portrait of GOD’S renewed image in the soul. By this wisdom, the understanding is both refined and strengthened to entertain right conceptions of GOD, in his nature and works. And this is primarily necessary, that the mind be not infected with false opinions in religion; if the spring-head be polluted, the streams cannot be pure; it is more important than men usually think, for a good life. But that which I suppose is here chiefly intended is, that it is effectively and practically pure; “It purifies the heart,” (*Acts* xv. 9,) this is said of faith, which in some sense and acceptation differs not much from this wisdom,) and consequently the words and actions that flow from the heart.

This Purity some render, Chastity. “The wisdom from above is chaste, ἀγνή. The word is indeed often so taken, and includes that here; but it is too narrow a sense. It is here a universal detestation of all impurity, both of

flesh and spirit. Pride, self-love, profaneness of spirit, and irreligion, though they do not so properly pollute the body as carnal uncleanness; yet they do no less defile the soul, and make it abominable in the sight of God. Those apostate angels, called unclean spirits, are incapable of bodily defilement; though they tempt man to it, their own inherent pollutions must need be spiritual, for they are spirits. Idolatry, in Scripture, goes often under the name of fornication, and adultery; and indeed these sins may mutually borrow and lend their names, the one to the other; idolatry may well be called spiritual unchastity; and unchaste love, carnal idolatry. Earthly-mindedness, likewise, is an impurity of the soul: in the Apostle's phrase, covetousness is idolatry, and so a spiritual pollution; yea, it may well share with idolatry in its borrowed name, and be called adultery too, for it misbestows the soul's prime affection upon the creature; which, by right, is God's peculiar.

This purity, that true wisdom works, is contrary to all pollution. We know then, in some measure, *what* it is. It rests to inquire *where* it is; and there is the difficulty: it is far easier to design in itself, than to find it among men: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean?" (*Prov.* xx. 9.) Look upon the greatest part of mankind, and you may know at first sight, that purity is not to be looked for among them; they suffer it not to come near them, much less to dwell with them and within them; they hate the very semblance of it in others, and themselves delight in intemperance and all manner of licentiousness, like foolish children striving who shall go furthest into the mire; these cannot say they have made clean their hearts, for all their words and actions will belie them. If you come to the mere moralist, 'the world's honest man,' and ask him, it may be he will tell you he hath cleansed his heart; but believe him not. It will appear he is not cleansed, because he says he has done it himself, for (you know) there must be some other besides man at this work. Again, he rising no higher than nature, hath none of this

heavenly wisdom in him, and therefore is without this purity too. But if you chance to take notice of some well-skilled hypocrite, every thing you meet with makes you almost confident, that there is purity; yet if he be strictly put to it, he may make some good account of the pains he hath taken to refine his tongue and his public actions, but he dare not say he hath made clean his heart; it troubles his peace to be asked the question. He never intended to banish sin, but to retire it to the innermost and best room, that so it might dwell unseen with him; and where then should it lodge, but in his heart? Yet possibly because what is outward is so fair, and man cannot look deeper to contradict him, he may embolden himself, to say he is inwardly suitable to his appearance. But there is a day at hand that shall, to his endless shame, at once discover both his secret impurity and his impudence in denying it.

After these, there follow a few despised and melancholy persons, (at least as to outward appearance,) who are complaining of abundant sinfulness. And sure, purity cannot be expected in these who are so far from it, by their own confession: Yet the truth is, that such purity, as is here below, will either be found to lodge among these, or no where. Be not deceived; think not that they who loathe, and (as they can) fly from the unholiness of the world, are therefore taken with the conceit of their own holiness. But as their perfect purity of justification is by CHRIST'S imputed righteousness, so likewise they know, and acknowledge, that their inherent holiness is from above too, from the same fountain, JESUS CHRIST.

The purified Christians are they that are most sensible of their impurity. Therefore I called not this a universal freedom from pollution, but a universal detestation of it. They that are thus pure, cannot be in love with any sin at all; nor do they willingly dispense with the smallest sins, which a natural man either sees not to be sin; (though his dim moonlight discovers grosser evils;) or if he do see them, yet he judges it too much niceness to choose a great

inconvenience rather than a little sin. Again, they differ in another particular: A natural man may be so far in love with virtue, after his manner, as to dislike his own faults, and resolve to amend them; but yet he would think it a great weakness to sit down and mourn for sin, and “to afflict his soul,” as the Scripture speaks. The Christian’s repentance goes not so lightly; there is a great deal more work in it. (2 Cor. vii. 11.) There is not only indignation against impurity, but it proceeds to revenge. The saints we read of in Scripture were ashamed of their impurity, but never of their tears for it. Let the world enjoy their own thoughts and account it folly, yet sure the Christian, that delights in purity, if he cannot yet be free from sin, when he retires himself at night, is then best contented when his eyes serve him most plentifully to weep out the stains of the by-past day; yet he knows withal, that it is only his Redeemer’s blood that takes away the guilt of them. This is the condition of those that are truly, though not yet fully, cleansed from the pollutions of the world by the Spirit of wisdom and purity. What mean they, then, that would argue themselves out of this number, because they find yet much dross left, and that they are not so refined as they would wish to be? On the contrary, this hatred of pollution testifies strongly, that the contrary of it (purity) is there; and though its beginnings be small, doubt not it shall, in the end, be victorious; the smoking of this flax shows, indeed, that there is gross matter there, but it witnesseth, likewise, that there is fire in it too. You find not, indeed, absolute holiness in your persons, nor in your best performances; yet if you breathe and follow after it, if the pulse of the heart beats thus, if the main current of your affection be towards purity, if sin be in you as your disease and greatest grief, and not as your delight, then take courage, you are in the way. And notwithstanding that impure spirit, SATAN, and the impurity of your own spirits, vex you daily, yet, in despite of them all, you shall arrive safe at the harbour where you would be.

“Wisdom from above is pure:” Be ashamed then of

your extreme folly, you that take pleasure in any kind of uncleanness, especially seeing **God** hath reformed and purged his house amongst us. You that are, or should be, his living temples, remain not unreformed: if you do, church-reformation will be so far from profiting you, that, as a clearer light, it will but serve to make your impurity both more visible and more inexcusable. If you mean that the **HOLY GHOST** should dwell with you, entertain him, avoiding both spiritual and fleshly pollutions. The word here used doth more particularly signify chastity; and certainly wherever this "wisdom from above" is, this comely grace is one of her attendants. Whatever any have been in times past, let all be persuaded henceforth to mortify all lustful and carnal affections. Know that there is more true and lasting pleasure in the contempt of unlawful pleasures, than in the enjoyment of them. Grieve not, then, the good **SPIRIT** of **God**, with actions, or speeches, yea, or with thoughts, that are impure. The unholy soul, like the mystical **Babylon**, (*Rev. xviii.*) makes itself "a cage of unclean birds, and a habitation of filthy spirits;" and if it continues to be such, it must, when it dislodges, take up its habitation with cursed spirits for ever, in utter darkness. But as for those that are sincerely and affectionately pure, that is, "pure in heart," our **SAVIOUR** hath pronounced their happiness begun; "blessed are they that are pure in heart;" (and assured them of full happiness;) "for they shall see **God**." This wisdom is sent from heaven on purpose to guide the elect thither by the way of purity. And mark how well their reward is suited to their labour: their frequent contemplating and beholding of **God's** purity as they could, while they were on their journey, and their labouring to be like him, shall bring them to sit down in glory, and to be for ever the pure beholders of that purest object; "they shall see **God**." What this is we cannot tell you, nor can you conceive it. But walk heavenwards in purity, and long to be there, where you shall know what it means; "for you shall see him as he is." Now to that blessed **Trinity**, be praise for ever!

## SERMON II.

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PSALM lxxvi. 10.

*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee : the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

“WHAT man is this,” said the passengers in the ship, “that even the winds and the sea obey him?” CHRIST suddenly turns a great tempest into a greater calm. Surely those are no ordinary words of command, that swelling waves and boisterous winds, in the midst of their rage, are forced to hear, and taught to understand and obey them. Therefore, the holding the seas in the hollow of his hand, the bridling the wind, and riding upon the wings of it, we find peculiarly attributed to the Almighty. But no less, if not more wonderful, is another of his prerogatives; to wit, his sovereignty over all mankind, the divers and strange motions of the heart of man: admirable is it to govern those, both in respect of their multitude and irregularity. Consider we what millions of men dwell at once upon the face of earth; and again, what troops of imaginations pass through the fancy of any one man, within the compass of one day! It is much to keep an eye upon them, and to behold them all once; but far more to command and control them all. Yet if they were all loyal and willingly obedient, tractable and easily curbed, it were more easy for us to conceive how they might be governed; but to bound and overrule the unruly hearts of men, the most of them continually either plotting or acting rebellion against their LORD, to make them all concur at last in one end, cannot be done but by a power and a wisdom that are infinite. GOD alone is the absolute monarch of men’s



hearts, and the ruler of all their motions; he works his own glory out of their attempts, while they strive most to dishonour him. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

The Psalm is made up of these two different sorts of thoughts; the one arising out of particular experience, and the other out of a general doctrine. These drawn from experience are set down in the verses preceding our text; and in it, with those that follow, is the doctrine, with a duty annexed to it, which two are faith's main supporters. Past particulars verify the doctrine, and the generality of the doctrine serves to explain the particular experiences to all wise observers. There is not a treasure of the merits of saints in the Church, (as some dream,) but there is a treasure of the precious experiences of the saints, which every believer hath right to make use of; and these we should be versed in, that we may have them at hand in time of need, and know how to use them, both to draw comfort from them to ourselves, and arguments to use with God.

The words contain clearly two propositions, both of them concerning the wrath of man. The former hath the event of it: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." The latter, the limitation of it: "The remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain."

That the virtues and graces of men praise the LORD, all men easily understand; for they flow from him, his image and superscription is upon them, and therefore no wonder if he has from them a tribute of glory. Who knows not that faith praises him? "ABRAHAM believed, and gave glory to GOD." Good works, the fruits of faith, praise him too: "Herein is your heavenly FATHER glorified, (says our SAVIOUR,) that you bring forth much fruit." But that the inordinate wrath of man should praise him, may seem somewhat strange. Were it GOD's own wrath, (as wrath is attributed to him in Scripture,) that might praise him, for it is always most just; but that wicked and disordered wrath, (which is undoubtedly here meant,) that

the wrath of men, that is both uncomely and dishonourable for themselves, (though they think otherwise,) that even such a wrath should honour God, and praise him, argues well that he hath good right to praises, when every thing, even things that seem contrary to his nature, as well as his law, pay them to him; and that he hath great power and wisdom, who obtains what is due to him, even from those persons and things who are most unfit to pay it. This is the excellent skill of his wisdom, to draw that which shall go into the making up of the precious composition of his praise out of this poison; for so the word here used for wrathful heat doth sometimes signify; and this wrath often proves so, a deadly poison both to those it is incensed against, and to the very breast wherein it is kindled.

But for the clearer understanding of this, it will be requisite to consider more distinctly,—1. What this wrath of man is. 2. How it can praise God. And lastly, The infallibility of this event: “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.”

In the 148th Psalm, where DAVID summons the creatures to meet in that song of praise, to keep that full concert, he calls not only the heavens, and the inhabitants of it, angels and lights; but these of the lower world to bear their part in it: and not only men, beasts, cattle, creeping things, and the flying of fowl, but the creatures that do most resemble this wrath,—fire, stormy tempests, and dragons. The tenor of the Psalm doth show, that by “the wrath of man,” is to be understood the undue rage of evil and ungodly men against those whom God owns for his people. The word here used signifies a hot or inflaming wrath; and indeed such is the feverish distempered anger of the Church’s enemies. And as too much heat is an enemy to solid reason, this hot wrath of theirs makes them incapable of wise deliberation in themselves, and inflexible to the good advice of others. It is true, “they take counsel how to execute their wrath,” as we shall hear anon; but they take no counsel that may cool it. Anger is called

by some, a boiling of blood about the heart; but this ariseth from the apprehension of something offensive, kindling a desire of revenge. Now it is a wonder what the powers of the world find in CHRIST, and his harmless flock, that can incense them. ST. JAMES says of the tongue, "that it is set on fire of hell." The same is the original of this wrath. "Why doth the heathen rage?" saith the Psalmist; that is, only, to what purpose? Intimating that it is a fruitless rage, and void of success, in regard of GOD'S power. But why? That is, upon what occasion; considering CHRIST and his Church's innocency? The cause is only within themselves; to wit, that unhappy antipathy of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman. Thus this wrath of man is the causeless malicious enmity of the wicked against the Church of GOD; and under the name of this passion, I take to be here comprised likewise all the attendants of it, all their crafty compliments and devices for the acting their wrath. As there is mention of the nations' rage against CHRIST, in the second Psalm, so likewise of the consultations of those that are of quality fit for it: "The rulers take counsel together." Further, this wrath is not barely their inward fire, but it flames into cruel and outrageous practices, including likewise all the instruments they make use of. And of all these it is true, that GOD shall gain glory by them. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee."

"But the wrath of man," says the Apostle, "worketh not the righteousness of GOD;" how then can it accomplish his praises? And this is the second thing propounded.

"Are grapes gathered of thorns, or figs of thistles?" Surely no. Therefore I called this praise not the fruit or proper effect of man's wrath, but the event or consequent of it, by the efficacy of Divine Providence. "The wrath of man shall praise thee."

The use which thou wilt make of it shall tend to thy praise. Thou wilt produce such effects from it, both in the Church and upon thine enemies, when thou sufferest

thy wrath to break forth, as shall furnish more matter of thy praises than if thou hadst altogether restrained it. To instance this in some few particulars :—

It is the fury of the Church's enemies that has made known to the world the invincible courage and patience of the saints. Those ages that have been most monstrous in persecution, have most of all graced Christianity. Had there been no persecuting Emperors, who should have heard of those primitive martyrs, that triumphed over the cruelty of their torments? Were there no persecution, nor peril, nor sword against believers, we should not have heard the Apostle say immediately after the mention of those, "In all these we are more than conquerors;" they could not have been so much as conquerors had there been no conflict.

Again, as the wrath of man praises God in the invincible patience of the saints, so likewise in the unmoveable stability of the Church. Is it not wonderful how so small and weak a company as the Church hath often been reduced to, yea, hath always been, in respect of the world, could escape the mouths of so many lions, so many enraged enemies, that were ready to devour it? And that we may see that this tends solely to the praise of her great Protector, look at the Church's song, penned by the Royal Prophet: "If the LORD had not been on our side when wicked men rose up against us, they had swallowed us up quick." (*Psalm cxxiv.*) The great monarchies and kingdoms of the world, that have risen with so much splendour, have had their periods, and been buried in the dust. That golden-headed and silver-bodied image degenerated into worse metal as it went lower, and the brittle feet were the cause of the fall and breaking of all the rest; but the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST, though despicable in the eyes of the world, and exposed to the wrath of the world in all ages, stands firm, and cannot be removed. There is a common emblem of the winds blowing from all quarters; and upon the globe of the earth, being in the middle of them, is written, *Immobilis*, Unmoveable. This fitly resembles the Church.

Why? It seems to be the sport of all the winds, but is indeed so established, that all of them, yea, "the very gates of hell, cannot prevail against it." Now the more the Church's enemies labour to undo her, the more doth their weakness, and the power of her LORD appear; so that thus "the wrath of man doth praise him."

When was the Church free from the world's wrath? (To say nothing of the Church of the Jews.) Did not those wicked Emperors of Rome think to have made the Christian Church short-lived; to have drowned her, newly born, in floods of her own blood? And in latter ages, who knows not the cruelties that have been practised by the Turk in the East, and the proud Prelate of Rome in the West? by which she hath sometimes been brought to so low a point, that if you can follow her in history, it is by the track of her blood; and if you would see her, it is by the light of those fires in which her martyrs have been burned. Yet hath she still come through, and survived all that wrath, and still shall, until she be made perfectly triumphant.

Farther: Man's wrath tends to GOD's praise in this, that GOD, giving way to it, does so manage it by his sublime Providence, that it often directly crosses their own ends, and conduces manifestly to his. PHARAOH thought his dealing more cruelly with the Jews was wisdom: "Let us work wisely," says he. But whereas their ordinary servility was become familiar to them, that same accession of new tyranny disposed the Israelites for a desire of departure, and their departure made way for PHARAOH's destruction. Surely, then, the wrath of man commends the wisdom of GOD, when he made him, by that, contrive and afford the means of his own downfall. "The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down," says BILDAD. (*Job* xviii. 7.) And that is a sad fall; as that eagle that was shot with an arrow trimmed with her own feathers.

But to close this point. It is out of all question, that

the deserved punishment of man's unjust wrath doth always glorify the justice of God ; and the more he gives way to their wrath, the more notable shall be both their punishment and the justice of it. And though God seems neglective of his people and of his praise, while man's wrath prevails, yet the truth is, he never comes too late to vindicate his care of both ; and when he defers longest, the enemy pays dear interest for the time of forbearance. He permits the course of man's wrath for his own glory ; and when the period which he hath fixed is come, he stops man's wrath, and gives course to the justice of his own. Nor is there any possibility of escaping ; he will right himself, and be known by executing judgment. " Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." And that is the third thing propounded : the infallibility of the event.

The Author of nature governs all his creatures, each in a suitable way to the nature he hath given them. He maintains in some things a natural necessity of working ; contingency in others ; and in others, liberty. But all of them are subject to this necessity of effecting his purposes ; and this necessity is no way repugnant to the due liberty of man's will. Some maintain the truth, some plot, others act against it, some please themselves in a wise neutrality, and will appear so indifferent, that it would seem they might be accepted of all sides for judges of controversies ; and all these find no less liberty to wind and turn themselves whither they please, than if there were no higher hand. Shall not only the zeal of the godly, but even the wrath of the enemy, and the cold discretion of the neutral, all tend to His praise whose supreme will hath a secret, but a sure sway in all their actions ? Whilst some passengers sit, some walk one way, some another ; some have their faces towards their journey's end, some their backs turned upon it ; this wise Pilot does most skilfully guide the ship, to arrive with them all at his own glory. Happy they that propound and intend his glory, as he himself does ; for in them " shall the riches of his mercy be glorified." They that oppose him lose this happiness, but he

is sure not to lose his glory for all that; to wit, the glory of his justice. His right hand shall find out all his enemies. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee."

The consideration of this truth, thus in some measure unfolded, may serve to justify the truly wise dispensation of GOD against our imaginary wisdom. Were the matter referred to our modelling, we would assign the Church constant peace and prosperity for her portion, and not consent that the least air of trouble should come near her. We would have no enemies to molest her nor stir against her, or if they did stir, we would have them presently repressed; and these, in our judgment, would be the fairest and most glorious tokens of his love and power, whose spouse she is. But this carnal wisdom is enmity against GOD, and against the glory of GOD, which rises so often out of the wrath of his enemies. Had GOD caused PHARAOH to yield at the very first to the release of his people, where had been the fame of those miraculous judgments on Egypt, and mercies on the Israelites, the one illustrating the other? Where had been that name and honour that GOD says he would gain to himself; and that he did gain out of PHARAOH's final destruction, making that stony-hearted King and his troops "sink like a stone in the waters," as MOSES sings? Observe his proud boastings immediately foregoing his ruin: "I will pursue," says he, "I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied on them; I will draw my sword, and my hand shall destroy them." Soon after, the sea quenches all this heat. Commonly big threatenings are unhappy presages of ill success. GOD, as he abhors these boastings, so he delights in abasing the lofty heart whence they flow; and it is his prerogative to gain praise to himself out of their wrath. "Hast thou an arm like GOD?" says the LORD to JOB; "Then look upon the proud, and bring them low." (*Job* xl. 9, 11.) When SENNACHERIB came up against Jerusalem, his blasphemies and boastings were no less vast and monstrous than the number of his men and chariots. Good HEZEKIAH turned over the matter

to GOD, spreading the letter of blasphemies before him : GOD undertook the war, and assured HEZEKIAH, that the Assyrian should not so much as shoot an arrow against the city, “but return the same way he came.” (2 *Kings* xix. 33.) And the deliverance there promised and effected, is conceived to have been the occasion of penning this very Psalm. Surely when an angel did in one night slay 185,000 in their camp, that wrath, and those threats, tended exceedingly to the praise of the GOD of Israel. The hook that he put in SENNACHERIB’S nostrils, (as the history speaks,) to pull him back again, was more remarkable than the fetters would have been if he had tied him at home, or hindered his march with his army.

Who is he, then, that will be impatient because of GOD’S patience ; and judge him slack in judgment, while the rage of the wicked prevails ? Know, that he is more careful of his own glory than we can be ; and the greater height man’S wrath arises to, the more honour shall arise to him out of it. Did not his omnipotency shine brighter in the flames of that furnace into which the children were cast, than if the King’S wrath had been at first cooled ? Certainly, the more both it and the furnace had their heat augmented, the more was GOD glorified. “Who is that GOD,” said he, blasphemously and proudly, “that can deliver you out of my hands ?” A question highly dishonouring the ALMIGHTY. But stay until the real answer come, and not only shall that wrath praise him, but that very same tongue, though inured to blasphemy, shall be taught to bear a main part in these praises. Let that apostate Emperor, JULIAN, go taunting the head, and tormenting the members of that mystical body ; his closing with, ‘Thou hast overcome, O Galilean,’ (meaning CHRIST,) shall help to verify, that whether its course be longer or shorter, man’S wrath ends always in GOD’S praise. In like manner, the closing of the lions’ mouths spake louder to His praise that stopped them, than if he had stopped DANIEL’S enemies in the beginning of their wicked design. So hot was their rage, that the King’S



favourable inclination to DANIEL, (of which, in other cases, courtiers use to be so devout observers,) yea, his contesting and pleading for him, did profit him nothing; but they hurried their King to the execution of their unjust malice, though themselves were convinced that nothing could be found against him, but only concerning the law of his GOD. “The King set his heart upon him to deliver him, and laboured to do it until the going down of the sun;” and then those counsellors and counsels of darkness overcame him. But upon this black night of their prevailing wrath, followed immediately a bright morning of praises to DANIEL’S GOD, when the lions, that were so quiet company all night to DANIEL, made so quick a breakfast of those accursed courtiers that had accused him.

The other proposition concerns the limiting of this wrath: “The remainder of wrath thou wilt restrain.”

To take no notice, for the present, of divers other readings of these words, the sense of them, as they are here very well rendered, may be briefly this: That whereas the wrath of man, to which GOD gives way, shall praise him, the rest shall be curbed and bound up, as the word is; no more of it shall break forth than shall contribute to his glory. Here might be considered divers ways which GOD useth to stop the heady course of man’s wrath, and hinder its proceeding any further. But only

Let us take out of it this lesson, That the most compendious way to be safe from the violence of men, is to be in friendship with GOD. Is it not an incomparable privilege to be in the favour, and under the protection of one, whose power is so transcendant, that no enemy can so much as stir without his leave? Be persuaded then, Christians, in these dangers that are so near us, every one to draw near to him; remove what may provoke him; let no reigning sin be found either in your cities or in your villages, for he is a holy GOD. Is it a time to multiply provocations now, or is not rather high time to be humbled for the former? What shameless impiety is it to be

now licentious or intemperate; to be proud, to oppress, or extort; to profane God's day, and blaspheme his name! All these sins, and many others, abound amongst us, and that avowedly. Without abundant repentance for these we shall smart, and the wrath of our enemies, though unjust in them, shall praise God in our just punishment, though, doubtless, he will own his Church, and be praised in the final punishment of their wrath that rise against it.

There is a remarkable expression in the 99th Psalm, of God's dealing with his people: "He was favourable to them, though he took vengeance on their inventions." A good cause will not shelter an impenitent people from sharper correction. It is a sad word God speaks by his Prophet to his own people,—“I myself will fight against you.” A dreadful enemy! and none indeed truly dreadful but he. O prevent his anger, and you are safe. If perverse sinners will not hear, yet let those that are indeed Christians mourn in secret, not only for their own sins, but for the sins of others. Labour to appease the wrath of God, and he will either appease man's wrath, or turn it jointly to our benefit and his own glory. Let the fear of the Most High God, who hath no less power over the strongest of his enemies, than over the meanest of his servants; let this fear (I say) possess all our hearts, and it will certainly expel that base fear of the wrath of man. See how the Prophet opposes them in the eighth chapter of Isaiah: "Fear not their fear," says he, "nor be afraid; but sanctify the Lord, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." This holy fear begets the best courage: the breast that is most filled with it, abounds most in true magnanimity.

Fear thus, that you may be confident, not in yourselves, though your policy and strength were great; "cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm;" But confident in that God, who is too wise to be surprised, too mighty to be foiled, and too rich to be out-spent in provision; who can suffer his enemy to come to the highest

point of apparent advantage without any inconvenience, yea, with more renown in his conquest. And so a Christian, who is made once sure of this, (as easily he may,) is little careful about the rest: his love to God prevailing over all his affections, makes him very indifferent what becomes of himself or his dearest friends, so God may be glorified. What though many fall in the quarrel, yet it is sufficient that truth in the end shall be victorious. Have not the saints in all ages been content to convey pure religion to posterity, in streams of their own blood, not of others? Well, hold fast by this conclusion, that God can limit and bind up the most violent wrath of man, that though it swell it will not break forth. The stiffest heart, as the current of the most impetuous rivers, is in his hand, to appoint its channels, and turn it as he pleaseth: Yea, it is he that hath shut up the very sea with bars and doors, and said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther;" "here shall thy proud waves be stayed." To see the surges of a rough sea come in towards the shore, a man would think they were hastening to swallow up the land: but they know their limits, and are beaten back into foam. Though the waves thereof toss themselves, as angry at their restraint, yet the small sand is a check to the great sea; "yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it."

The sum is this: What God permits his Church's enemies to do, is for his own further glory; and, reserving this, there is not any wrath of man so great, but he will either sweetly calm it, or strongly restrain it.

## SERMON III.

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PSALM cxix. 136.

*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.*

LOVE is the leading passion of the soul: all the rest follow the measure and motion of it, as the lower heavens are said to be wheeled about with the first.

We have a clear instance of it in the Psalmist, testifying his love to GOD, by his esteem and love of the law or word of GOD. What is each of the verses of this Psalm but a breathing and vent of this love, either in itself, or in the causes, or in the effects of it? Where he sets forth the excellencies of GOD's law, there you have the causes of his love; his observing and studying it, his desire to know it more, and observe it better; these are the effects of his affection to it. The love itself he often expresseth: "Thy word is pure, therefore thy servant loveth it:" "I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." But as scarce accounting that love which can be uttered how much it is, he expresseth it most, by intimating that he cannot express it: "O how I love thy law!" Hence are his desires (which are love in pursuit) so earnest after it. Amongst many, that is pathetic, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." (*Ver. 20.*) Hence, likewise, his joy and delight: (which are love in possession:) "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as in all riches;" (*ver. 14;*) and "I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word." (*Ver. 16.*) We have his hatred of things opposite, which

is love's antipathy: "I hate vain thoughts; but thy law do I love: I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love." (*Ver.* 113.) And in *ver.* 139 you shall find his zeal: (which is no other but the fire of love blown into a flame :) "My zeal hath consumed me; because mine enemies have forgotten thy words." And to omit the rest, in *ver.* 158, his love to the law shows its sympathy in sorrow for the violation of the law: "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word." And here you find this grief swelling to such a height, that it runs over into abundant tears: "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

The words have briefly, These rivers in their channel and course, "They run down mine eyes;" in their spring and cause, to wit, his sympathy with God's law, broken by men: "Because they keep not thy law." But both together clearly teach us, that good men are affected with deep sorrow for the sins of the ungodly.

More particularly consider, 1. The object of this affection. 2. The nature of it. 3. The degree or measure of it. 4. Its subject. •

1. The object is, the transgression of the law; or, to take it, as in the text, men that are transgressors of the law. "They keep not thy law." It is true, the whole creation groaneth under the burden of sin, in the effects of it; but sin itself is man's enemy, he being that reasonable creature to whom the law was given. Now in the general, it is matter of grief to a good mind, to consider the universal depravedness of man's nature. That he is a transgressor from the womb; that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to his law," neither while it remains such, can it be. And this grief will go the deeper, by remembering from whence he is fallen. When he was newly come forth out of the hands of his Maker, that image of God that he stamped upon him shined bright in his soul; the whole frame of it was regular and comely, the inferior faculties obeying the higher, and all of them subject to God. But how soon was he seduced, and then what a

the visible Church, though indeed they be in it but as spots and blemishes, as the Apostle speaks; or, whether it be the apostasy, or the gross fall of true converts. All these are the great grief of the godly. The relations of men, either natural or civil, will add something too; this sorrow will be greater than ordinary in a Christian; he will melt in a particular tenderness for the sins of his kindred, parents or children, husband or wife; and most of all, Ministers for their people. How pathetically does this appear in ST. PAUL: (*2 Cor. xii. 21* :) “And lest when I come again, my GOD will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness which they have committed.” A man cannot but be more particularly touched with the sins of that nation, and of that city, and congregation, and family, whereof he is a member: as LOT dwelling among them of Sodom, in seeing and hearing, “vexed his righteous soul from day to day, with their unlawful deeds.” The sins of more eminent persons, either in church or commonwealth, will most affect a prudent Christian, because their inclinations and actions import the public much: therefore the Apostle, when he had exhorted to supplications and prayers for all men, particularly mentions “Kings, and such as are in authority.” And truly, when they are abused by mis-advice and corrupt counsel, some of these tears were very well spent, if poured forth before GOD in their behalf; for in his hand (as that wise King confesseth) are their hearts, even as rivers of waters: let their motion be never so impetuous, yet he turns them whither he pleaseth. And who knows but these rivers of waters, these tears, may prevail with the LORD, to reduce the violent current of that river (a King’s heart) from the wrong channel?

2. But to proceed: The second thing to be considered in this affection, is, the Nature of it: (1.) It is not a stoical apathy, an affected carelessness, much less a delightful partaking with sinful practices. (2.) Not a proud setting off their own goodness, with marking the sin of others, as

the Pharisee did in the Gospel. (3.) Not the derision and mocking of the folly of men, with that laughing Philosopher; it comes nearer to the temper of the other that wept always for it. It is not a bitter anger, breaking forth into railings and reproaches, nor an upbraiding insultation; nor is it a vindictive desire of punishment, venting itself in curses and imprecations, which is the rash temper of many. The Disciples' motion to CHRIST was far different from that way; and yet he says to them, "You know not of what spirit ye are." We find not here a desire of fire to come down from heaven upon the breakers of the law, but such a grief as would rather bring water to quench it, if it were falling on them.

3. The degree of this sorrow is vehement, not a light, transient dislike, but a deep resentment; such as causeth not some few sighs, or some drops of tears, but rivers.

It is true, the measure and degree of sorrow for sin, whether their own or others, is different in divers persons, that are yet true mourners. And they are also different in the same person, at divers times, not only upon the difference of the cause, but even where the cause is equal; upon the different influence and working of the Spirit of GOD. Sometimes it pleaseth him to melt the heart more abundantly, and so he raises these rivers in the eyes to a higher tide than ordinary. Sometimes they remove again, but yet this godly sorrow is always serious and sincere; and that is the other quality here remarkable in it. It is not a feigned weeping only in public; for the speech is here directed to GOD, as a more frequent witness of these tears than any other, who is always the witness of the sincerity of them, even when they cannot be hid from the eyes of men: for I deny not but they may and should have vent in public, especially at such times as are set apart for solemn mourning and humiliation; yet even then, usually, these streams run deepest, where they are stillest and most quietly conveyed. But howsoever, sure they would not be fewer and less frequent alone than in company. "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I

might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." (*Jer.* ix. 1.) And, "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock is carried away captive." (*Jer.* xiii. 17.)

4. The Subject of this affection is, not the ungodly themselves, that are professed transgressors of this law; they rather make "a sport of sin," they play and make themselves merry with it, as the Philistines did with SAMSON, until it bring the house down about their ears: but the godly are they that are affected with this sorrow; such as are careful observers of the law themselves, and mourn first for their own breaches; for these are the only fit mourners for the transgression of others.

Now to inquire a little into the cause of this; Why the breaking of GOD's law should cause such sorrow in the godly, as here breaketh forth into abundance of tears, we shall find it very reasonable if we consider, 1. The Nature of Sin, which is the transgression or breach of the law, as the Apostle defines it. 2. The Nature of this Sorrow, and these Tears. 3. The Nature of the Godly.

1. Sin is the greatest evil in the world; yea, (in comparison,) it alone is worth the name of evil, and therefore may justly challenge sorrow, and the greatest sorrow. The greatest of evils it is, both formally, in that it alone is the defilement and deformity of the soul, and causally, being the root from whence all other evils spring, the fruitful womb that conceives and brings forth all those miseries that either man feels or hath cause to fear. Whence are all those personal evils incident to men in their estates, or in their bodies, or minds, outward turmoils and diseases, and inward discontents, and death itself, in all the kinds of it? Are they not all the fruits of that bitter root? Whence arise these public miseries of nations and kingdoms, but from the national sins of the people, as the deserving and procuring cause at GOD's hand? And withal, often from the ambitious and wicked practices of some particular men,



as the working and effecting causes, so that every way, if we follow these evils home to their original, we shall find it to be sin, or the breaking of GOD's law.

Ungodly men, though they meddle not with public affairs at all; yea, though they be faithful and honest in meddling with them, yet by reason of their impious lives, are traitors to their nation; they are truly the incendiaries of states and kingdoms. And these mourners, though they can do no more, are the most loyal and serviceable subjects, bringing tears to quench the fire of wrath. And therefore sorrow and tears are not only most due to sin, as the greatest of evils, but they are best bestowed upon it, if they can do any thing to its redress; because that is both the surest and most compendious way to remedy all the rest; sin being the source and spring of them all.

This is the reason why JEREMIAH, (ix. 1,) "when he would weep for the slain of his people," is straightway led from that, to bewail the sin of his people. (*Ver. 2, 3, &c.*) And in his book of tears and lamentations, he often reduces all these sad evils to sin, as causing them: "The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us that we have sinned." He turns the complaint more to the sin than to the affliction.

2. Consider the nature of these tears: Tears spent for worldly crosses are all lost. They run all to waste; they are *lachrymæ inanes*, empty fruitless things: but tears shed for the breach of GOD's law are the means to quench GOD's wrath. The prayers and tears of some few may avert the punishment of many, yea, of a whole land; and if not so, yet are they not lost. The mourners themselves have always benefit by them, as you have it in that known place, *Ezek. ix.* They that mourned for the common abominations were marked, and the common desolation took not hold on them. This mourning for other men's wickedness, both testifies and preserves the good man's innocence; I say, it preserves it, as well as testifies it; it keeps them from the contagion of that bad

change ensued? There is ever since such a tumult and confusion in the soul, that it cannot hear the voice of **GOD'S** law, much less obey and keep it. Hence is that complaint of the Psalmist oftener than once, "They are all gone out of the way, and become abominable; there is none that doeth good, no not one." The world (*ἐν ἀδικία κείται*) lies buried in it, as the word is used in the inscription of tombs. Look abroad in the world, and what shall ye see but a sea of wickedness over the face of the whole, which draws from a discerning eye that beholds it these rivers of tears? The greatest part not knowing the true **GOD**, nor the true religion, and the true way of his worship; and for those that do, yet how unlike are they to it in their lives! The reformed Churches, this way, how unreformed still!

But more particularly, to branch this out a little in several sorts of men: this godly grief has a very large sphere; it will extend to remote people, remote every way, not only in place, but in manners and religion, even to heathens and gross idolaters; yea, the very sins of enemies, and of such as are professed enemies to **GOD**, yet move the tender-hearted Christian to sorrow and compassion. "Of whom I now tell you weeping, that they are the enemies to the cross of **CHRIST**." (*Phil. iii. 18.*) Enemies, and yet he speaks of them *weeping*: what he writes concerning them he would have written in tears, if that had been legible. Thus you see the extent of this grief. But yet, out of all question, it will be more intense in particulars of nearer concernment; it is the burden of the pious man's heart, that His law, who made the world, and gives being to all things, should be so little regarded, and so much broken through all the world, but yet more especially that in his own Church, among his own people, transgression should abound. Sins within the Church are most properly scandals: **GOD** manifests himself (so to speak) most sensible of those, and therefore the godly man is so too; whether they be the continual enormities of profane persons, who are by external profession in the face of

air they live in; for without this, sin would soon grow familiar. It is good for men to keep up, and maintain in their souls, a dislike of sin; for when once it ceaseth to be displeasing to a man, it will ere long begin to be pleasing to him.

3. If we consider the nature of the godly, we shall see this mourning suit with it exceedingly, both in regard of his relation to **GOD**, and to man; **GOD** is his Father, and therefore it cannot but grieve him much to see him offended and dishonoured. Love to **GOD**, and consequently to his law, and love to men, and desire of their good, is the spring of these rivers. A godly man is tender of **GOD**'s glory, and of his law; every stroke that it receives, strikes his heart; and he hath bowels of compassion towards men, and would be glad if they were converted and saved.

He considers every man as his brother, and therefore is sorrowful to see him run the hazard of perishing in sin. The former sympathy, whereby the godly man tenders the glory of **GOD**, is from his piety; this latter, whereby he pities the misery of man, is from his charity; and from these flow the "rivers, that run down his eyes."

To be too sensible of worldly crosses, and prodigal of tears upon such slight occasions, is little better than childish and womanish; but the tears that flow from love to **GOD**, and grief for sin, have neither uncomeliness nor excess in them; abundance of them will beseem any man that is a Christian. Let profane men judge it a weakness to weep for sin, yet we see **DAVID** do it. Men of arms and valour need not fear disparagement by weeping thus: It is the truest magnanimity to be sensible of the point of **GOD**'s honour, which is injured by sin.

Again, the consideration of truth, will discover the world guilty of very much ingratitude to godly men; it hath always been the custom of profane persons, to seek to brand religion with disloyalty and turbulency, and to make it pass for an enemy to the peace and prosperity of

states and kingdoms. But here you see clearly with what affection religion furnishes men towards the public, causing them to mourn for common sins, and so to prevent (as far as in them lies) common calamities. And this is of no little consequence; for truly it is not foreign power, so much as sin at home, that ruins kingdoms: all the winds that blow without the earth, be they never so violent, stir it not, only that which is within its own bowels makes an earthquake. It was a grave answer of EPAMINONDAS, being asked what he was doing, solitary and pensive, in the time of solemn mirth and feasting: "While my countrymen (says he) are so peaceably feasting, I am thinking on the best means to preserve that peace to them, that it may continue;" which, a little altered, is applicable to the godly. They are often mourning for the sins, and praying for the peace of the places where they live, when, in the mean time, the greatest part are multiplying sin, and so forfeiting their peace.

"Rivers of waters:" This is a melancholy life, says the worldling; yes, truly, if there were no more in it than what he can perceive. But besides the full joy laid up for them that weep, and the beginnings of it here, there is even in this mourning an unknown sweetness and delight. The philosopher says, even of common tears, that there are some things which please the taste by their very tartness. But of these tears, they that know them, know it to be eminently true, that they are pleasant. But be this exercise as sad as the profane call it, yet why observe they not, that they themselves are the cause of it; as they may read here, "Because they keep not God's law."

To pass by divers inferences that the words afford, let us take notice of the duty here practised, and how much we are all obliged to the present practice of it. Who will deny that we have too much matter and occasions of it? Besides, the sorrow of Sion, and the distress of our brethren, what corner of the land, what rank or condition of people is there, that abounds not in gross and heinous

violation of God's law? "They keep not thy law." Magistrates and Judges turning judgment into gall and wormwood; Ministers remiss in that great care, the care of souls; people wallowing in ungodliness; the greater oppressing the less, and the less defrauding and wronging the greater. What vile uncleanness and wantonness! What shameful drunkenness and excess! And some, so far from mourning for other's guiltiness of this sin, that they glory in making others guilty of it, and account it a pastime to make others drunk; and this is a far greater sin than drunkenness itself; for these men, while they make beasts of their companions, make devils of themselves.

Again, how is the land filled with oaths and cursings? How are our streets, and almost all companies, defiled, partly with tearing the precious name of God; partly with calling on the Devil. There would be no end of reckoning up all particulars; sabbath-breaking, fraud and covetousness, pride and malice, and envyings one of another; but the sum is this, An universal want of the fear of God and his law.

And the cause of this is, in a great part, ignorance of God, and of his law: and truly it is wonderful under so much light to find so much darkness, not only in the skirts and remote places, but even in the prime parts of this land. Multitudes that are strangers to the very principles and fundamentals of that religion which they profess; and they that have knowledge abusing it, and sinning against it, continuing in profaneness; and without this true religion it is as impossible to have renewed hearts and lives, as to have a house without a foundation. This Atheism and ignorance amongst people are in a great part to be imputed to the corruption and sloth of Ministers. And would to God there were not many congregations, not indeed altogether destitute, but such as are freezing under a cold and lifeless ministry.

You see, then, we want not causes of mourning and

humiliation, on all hands. But our want is inward; of that due disposition for it, softness of heart, and that love to God, which should melt and mollify the heart. Let us then stir up ourselves, and one another, to this godly sorrow for the sins of the land: there is need of rivers of tears for these heaps of sin, as they tell of his letting in a river to that monstrous stable of Augeas, that could not otherwise have been cleansed in the time allotted him.

And truly, as the duty lies upon all the faithful, the Ministers of the word ought to be most eminent in it, the chief mourners. And all that wish the good of the Church and Kingdom, ought to bear a part with them, according to their measure. Have we not much need to entreat reconciliation with God, that he prove not our enemy? Yes, surely; and were we reconciled with him, we would have little need to fear the power of man.

Now they that would be profitable mourners for other's sins, by all means must have these two conditions I mentioned; to be careful observers of the law themselves, and to mourn for their own breaking of it. Now to the observing of the law, it is absolutely needful to know and understand it, and that not only in the letter, but according to the spiritual sense and meaning of it; for without this knowledge, a man may light upon some duty by guess, as it were in the dark, but observe the law he cannot. (2.) As a man must know this law, so he must be inwardly convinced and persuaded of the divinity of it, that it is God's law. (3.) He must have a deep apprehension of the majesty and authority of the Lawgiver, to work reverence, and of his goodness to beget love; and the due mixture of these two, will both strongly command, and sweeten obedience to his commandments. And this obedience, though it be not an absolute fulfilling of the commandments, yet it is a respect to them all, as this Psalm hath it. And from this respect to the law will flow that other condition, of grieving when we break it.

And besides all other things that should make a Christian's own sin grievous to him, there is one thing cannot but move him much,—The consideration of the sorrow and sufferings of CHRIST. To view the bleedings of the LORD JESUS cannot choose but pierce a believing soul, and make it say, Did my REDEEMER shed his blood for my sins, and shall not I myself shed tears for them? I know the natural constitution of some denies them tears; but if it do so to any, make up that, then, with inward grief, and it is well enough; the eye of GOD can discern that as well as the other: But truly, where men have tears for lighter causes, (for all other causes are lighter,) and none for this, they feel not yet the weight of sin; except that want be through the deepness of sorrow, which sometimes will stop the current of tears, though it used to run at other times: but this is a rare and happy impediment.

This grief then must begin at home. But it must not rest there; and truly, where it comes in that order, it may be some way a stronger evidence of sincerity to mourn for others' sins than for our own; for there seems to be more of GOD in it, because there is less in it of ourselves, and our own particular interest.

Now you will possibly think it but an unpleasant duty, that you have heard urged all this while; but look forward, and consider the issue of it. That which CHRIST speaks in particular to his disciples, is generally true in all Christians: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned" or made "into joy." (*John* xvi. 20.) The water of those tears shall be turned into wine of consolation. The traffic of these rivers is gainful; they export grief, and import joy. When these tears are called seed, the harvest is called joy. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." They are here called rivers, and they are answered with a river; (*Psal.* xxxvi. 8;) for which they shall, in the end, be perfectly exchanged: "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." And "The Lamb shall feed

them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters.” (*Rev.* vii. 17.) Here they run down the eyes, and water the cheeks; and there you read, that **GOD** shall wipe them away from their eyes. Who would not be content to weep, to have **GOD** wipe away their tears with his own hand? Be ambitious, then, to be found amongst the mourners in Sion, and when you remove from this valley of tears, **GOD** shall at once fully wipe all the stain of sin from your souls, and all tears of it from your eyes. And as he shall wipe away the tears with one hand, he will set the crown upon your heads with the other.



## SERMON IV.

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ISAIAH lx. 1.

*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.*

ADMIRABLE is the worth and depth of Divine Providence. This either we know not, or at least seldom remember: while we forget the wonders of providence, we direct our thoughts to baser objects, and think not on it; and while we forget the depth of providence, (if at any time we look toward it,) we judge rashly and think amiss of it. If this be true of that general providence whereby GOD rules the world, it is more true of his special providence towards his Church. This is both the most excellent piece of it, and therefore best worth the reading; and also the hardest piece, and therefore it requires sobriety in judging. Above all other things he that suddenly judges in this, makes haste to err. To have a right view of it, it must be taken altogether, and not by parcels: pieces of rarest artifice, while they are a making, seem little worth, especially to an unskilful eye, which, being completed, command admiration. There is a time when the daughters of Sion embrace the dunghill, and “sit desolate in the streets.” And at the same time the voice of Babylon is, “I shall sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow.” All this is out of order here. But if we stay a while, we shall see Sion and Babylon appointed to change seats, by the great Master of the world: “Come down,” says he, “daughter of Babylon, and sit in the dust:” (*Isa. xlvii. 1:*) And here to Sion, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.” It is an entire

catastrophe, both parties find a notable alteration together. That same hand that exalts the one, ruins the other. When the sun rises upon the Church, her antipodes must needs be covered with darkness : as we find in the next verse to the text : “ Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people ; but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.”

The Prophet, elevated by the SPIRIT of GOD to a view of after ages, as clear as if present, seems here to find his people sitting under the dark mantle of a sad and tedious night ; and having long expected the sun’s return in vain, before its time, they give over expectation when it is near them. Now the Prophet, as it were, standing awake on some mountain, perceives the day approaching, and the golden chariots of the morning of deliverance hastening forward, and seems to come speedily with this glad news to a captive people, and sounds this trumpet in their ears : “ Arise, shine ; for thy light is come.” The very manner of expression is sudden and rousing, without a copulative ; not, arise and shine ; but, “ arise, shine.”

The words have in them, a clear relation to a low posture, and obscure condition. They suppose a people lying, or sitting, without light. Deep distress is that dark foil that best sets off the lustre of marvellous deliverances ; and among many other reasons of the Church’s vicissitudes, why may not this be one ? The LORD is more illustrious in the world, by that deep wisdom and great power that shine when he rises, and restore her from desperate afflictions, than if he had still preserved her in constant ease. He seems sometimes careless of her condition, and regardless of her groans ; but even then is he waiting the most fit time to be gracious, as our Prophet speaks : and when it is time, out of the basest estate he brings her forth more fresh, strong, and beautiful than before. “ Though you have lain among the pots, ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” (*Psalm lxxviii.* 13.) Do with the Church what you will, she shall come through, and that with advantage.

*Mergas profundo pulchrior exilit*, as one says of Rome. Keep the Church seventy years captive; yet, after that, she shall arise and shine more glorious than ever.

But surely the strain of this evangelic prophecy rises higher than any temporal deliverance. Therefore we must rise to some more spiritual sense of it, not excluding the former. And that which some call divers senses of the same scripture is, indeed, but divers parts of one full sense. This prophecy is, out of question, a most rich description of the kingdom of CHRIST, under the Gospel: and in this sense, this invitation to arise and shine is mainly addressed to mystical Jerusalem, yet not without some privilege to literal Jerusalem beyond other people. They are first invited to arise and shine, because this Sun arose first in their horizon. CHRIST came of the Jews, and came first to them. "The REDEEMER shall come to Sion," says our Prophet in the former chapter; but miserable "Jerusalem knew not the day of her visitation, nor the things that concerned her peace; and therefore they are now hid from her eyes." She delighted to deceive herself with fancies of (I know not what) imaginary grandeur and outward glory, to which the promised MESSIAH should exalt her; and did, in that kind particularly, abuse this very prophecy; so, doting upon a sense grossly literal, she forfeited the enjoyment of those spiritual blessings that are here described. But undoubtedly the Jews shall once more be commanded to arise and shine; and their return shall be the riches of the Gentiles; and that shall be a more glorious time than ever the Church of God did yet behold. Nor is there any inconvenience, if we think the high expressions of this prophecy have some spiritual reference to that time, since the great Doctor of the Gentiles applies some words of the former chapter to that purpose. (*Rom. xi. 29.*) They forget a main point of the Church's glory, that pray not daily for the Jews' conversion.

But to pass that, and to insist on the spiritual sense of these words, as directed to the whole Church of CHRIST.

They contain a powerful incitement to a twofold act, enforced (as I conceive) by one reason, under a twofold expression; neither of them superfluous, but each giving light to the other, and suiting very aptly with the two words of command: "Arise, for the glory of the LORD is risen; shine, for thy light is come."

I will not now subdivide these parts again, but rather unite them into this one proposition: The coming and presence of CHRIST, engage all to whom he comes to "arise and shine." In this proposition may be considered, The Nature of the Duties, the Universality of the Subject, and the Force of the Reason.

First, the Nature of the Duties; what it is to arise and shine. Arising hath either reference to a fall, or to some contrary posture of sitting or lying; or to one of these two conditions that are so like one another, sleep or death: and to all these, spiritually understood, may it here be referred. This is the voice of the Gospel to the sons of ADAM, "Arise," for in him they all fell. The first sin of that first man, was the great fall of mankind: it could not but undo us, it was from so high a station. Our daily sins are our daily falls, and they are the fruits of that great one. "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity," says the LORD to his people." (*Hosea* xiv. 1.) For these postures of sitting and lying, the Scripture makes use of them both to signify the state of sin. Says not ST. JOHN, "The whole world lieth in wickedness." (*1 John* v. 19.) Are not the people said "to sit in darkness?" (*Matt.* iv. 16.) Which is directly opposite to "arise and shine." In the darkness of Egypt it is said, the people sat still; none arose from their places. In the gross mist of corrupt nature, man cannot bestir himself to any spiritual action; but when light is come, then he may and should arise.

Now for sleep and death. Sin is most frequently represented in Holy Writ, under their black vizors. To forbear places where they are severally so used, we shall find them jointly in one. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise

from the dead ; ” (*Eph.* v. 14 ; ) which place seems to have special allusion to this very text.

The impenitent sinner is as one buried in sleep ; his soul is in darkness, fit for sleep, and loves to be so. That he may sleep the sounder, he shuts all the passages of light, as enemies to his rest ; and so, by close windows and curtains, makes an artificial night to himself within ; not a beam appears there, though without, the clear day of the Gospel shines round about him. The senses of his soul, as we call them, are all bound up, and are not exercised to discern good and evil : and his leading faculty, his understanding, is surcharged with sleepy vapours, that arise incessantly from his perverse affections ; nor hath his mind any other exercise, in this sleepy condition, but the vain business of dreaming : his most refined and wisest thoughts are but mere extravagancies from man’s due end, and his greatest concernments nothing but golden dreams : yet he is serious in them ; and no wonder, for who can discern the folly of his own dream until he is awake ? “ He that dreams he eateth, when he awakes finds his soul empty,” and not until then. (*Isai.* xxix. 8.) Now while he thus sleeps, his great business lies by ; yet spends he his hand-breadth of time as fast, while he is fast asleep, as if he were in continual employment : judge then, if it be not needful to bid this man “ arise.”

*Lastly,* This voice may import, that man is spiritually dead. God is the life of the soul, as it is of the body ; while he dwells there it is both comely and active, but once destitute of his presence becomes a carcase, where, besides privation of life and motion, there is a positive filthiness, a putrefaction in the soul, unspeakably worse than that of dead bodies : and as dead bodies are removed from the sight of men, dead souls are cast out from the favourable presence of God, until CHRIST’s saying “ arise,” revive them. The Scripture is undeniably clear in this, that man is naturally dead in sin. The Gospel bids him arise ; and it is CHRIST that is his life, and that raises

him. Thus we see, in some measure, what it is for men to arise.

Now being risen they must shine, and that two ways; jointly and publicly, as they make up visible churches; and likewise personally, in their particular conversation. First then, What is the shining of the true Church? Doth not a Church then shine when church-service is raised with pompous ceremonies, rich furniture, and gaudy vestments? Is not the Church then beautiful? Yes, indeed; but all the question is, whether this be the proper genuine beauty or no; whether this be not strange fire. Methinks it cannot be better decided, than by referring to **ST. JOHN**, in his book of the Revelation. We find there the description of two several women, the one riding in state, arrayed in purple, decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearl. (*Rev. xvii. 4.*) The other in rich attire too, but of another kind, clothed with the sun, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. (*Chap. xii.*) The ornament of one was all earthly; this woman's is all celestial. What need she borrow light and beauty from precious stones, that is clothed with the sun, and crowned with stars: she wears no sublunary ornaments; but, which is more noble, she treads upon them: the moon is under her feet. Now if you know (as you do all without doubt) which of these two is the spouse of **CHRIST**, you can easily resolve the question. The truth is, those things seem to deck religion, but they undo it. Observe where they are most used, and we shall find little or no substance of devotion under them, as we see in that corrupt Church of Rome. This painting is dishonourable for **CHRIST**'s spouse; and besides, it spoils her natural complexion. The superstitious use of torches and lights in the Church by day, is a kind of shining, but surely not commanded here. No, it is an affront done both to the sun in heaven, and to the Sun of Righteousness in the Church.

What is meant, then, when the Church is commanded to shine, or be enlightened? These two readings give the entire sense of the word: having no light of herself, she

must receive light, and then show it ; be enlightened, and then shine. She is enlightened by CHRIST, the Sun of Righteousness, shining in the sphere of the Gospel. This is that light that comes to her, and the glory of the LORD that arises upon her. Hence she receives her laws and form of government, and her shining is the pure exercise of those, and conformity to them.

And the personal shining of the several members of a Church is a comely congruity with pure worship and discipline, and it is that which now is most needful to be urged. Every Christian soul is personally engaged, first to be enlightened, and then to shine ; and we must draw our light for ourselves from the same source that furnishes the Church with her public light. There is a word in the civil law, *Uxor fulget radiis mariti*,—The wife shines by the rays of her husband's light. Now every faithful soul is espoused to CHRIST, and therefore may well shine, seeing the Sun himself is their husband. He adorns them with a double beauty of justification and sanctification : by that they shine more especially to GOD ; by this to men. The light of sanctification must begin in the understanding, and from thence be transfused to the affections, and from thence break forth and shine into action. This is then the nature of the duties, "Arise and shine."

We are, secondly, to observe the Universality of the Subject. Every man that knows CHRIST is here engaged to shine too ; neither grandeur exempts from the duty of shining, nor meanness excludes from the privilege of shining. Men of low condition need not despair of it, for it is a spiritual act ; great men need not despise it, for it is a noble act to shine by CHRIST's light. In the third verse of this chapter it is said to the Church, "Kings shall come to the brightness of thy rising." To what end, but to partake of her light, and shine with her ? And indeed the regal attire of CHRIST's righteousness, and the white robes of holiness, will exceedingly well become Kings and Princes. "Give the King thy judgments, O LORD ; and thy righteousness to the King's son."

The third and last thing propounded was, the force of the reason that CHRIST's presence engages to "arise and shine;" wherein it is supposed that CHRIST, declared in the Gospel, is the light which is said here to come, and the glory of the LORD which is said to be risen; so that now it should be more amply cleared, how CHRIST is light and the glory of the LORD, and what his coming and rising is; but of these afterwards. I shall close now with a word of exhortation.

"Arise" then, "for the glory of the LORD is risen." The day of the Gospel is too precious that any of it should be spent in sleep, or idleness, or worthless business; worthless business detains many of us. Arise, immortal souls, from moiling in the dust, and working in the clay, like Egyptian captives. Address yourselves to more noble work; there is a Redeemer come that will pay your ransom, and rescue you from such vile service, for more excellent employment. It is strange how the souls of Christians can so much forget their first original from heaven, and their new hopes of returning thither, and the rich price of their redemption, and dwell so low, and dote so much upon trifles. How is it that they hear not their Well-beloved's voice, crying, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away?" Though the eyes of believers are so enlightened, yet their spirits are often seized with a kind of drowsiness, and sometimes even then when they should be of most activity. The time of CHRIST's check to his three disciples made it very sharp, though the words are mild: "What! could you not watch with me one hour?" Shake off, believing souls, that heavy humour. Arise, and satiate the eye of faith with the contemplation of CHRIST's beauty, and follow after him until you attain the place of full enjoyment. And you others, that never yet saw him, arise, and admire his matchless excellency. The things you esteem great, are but so through ignorance of his greatness; his brightness, if you saw it, would obscure to you the greatest splendour of the world, as all those stars that go never down upon us, yet are swallowed up in the surpassing light of the sun when it arises. "Stand up



from the dead, and he shall give you light." "Arise, and work while it is day, for the night shall come wherein none can work," says our SAVIOUR himself. Happy are they that arise early in the morning of their youth, for the day of life is very short, and the art of Christianity long and difficult. Is it not a grievous thing, that men never consider why they came into the world, until they are upon the point of going out again? Nor think how to live, until they be summoned to die? But most of all unhappy he that never wakes out of that pleasing dream of false happiness, until he fall into eternal misery. Arise then betimes, and prevent this sad awakening.

And being risen, put on your beautiful garments. Draw towards you, with the hand of faith, the rich mantle of CHRIST'S righteousness. "It is time to awake," says the Apostle; (*Rom. xiii. 11*;) and presently after, "Put ye on the LORD JESUS CHRIST." And it is a wonder how a sinner can rest while he is out of this garment; for there is no other in heaven nor earth can make him shine to GOD, and so shelter him from the stroke of justice. Put him on then, and so shine; being thus clothed, thou shalt shine in justification, and likewise in sanctity. What a privilege is it to be like GOD! A sanctified conscience, what can be said against it?

And first, have an enlightened understanding; for that is the proper seat of light. That ignorant zeal that Rome commends, exposes religion to scorn and contempt. Heat without light, is the character of the fire of hell. I know all are not tied to a like degree of knowledge; but certainly all are obliged to have a competency, and diligence for increase. Aspire, then, to be intelligent Christians, and to know well what you believe. "Let your minds be filled with knowledge," as the Apostle speaks; but let it not stop there: it must have influence into the will. True light conveys heat. All the knowledge that the natural man hath of CHRIST, not warming his affections to CHRIST, is but *ignis fatuus*,—a vain light: it shall never lead him to happiness. Saving light produces love, and by that acts: "Faith works by love," says the Apostle. That

breaks forth in the life, and shines in godliness, righteousness, and sobriety. Shine, then, in all these; first in piety towards God, for this is the reflection of these rays of light back toward their source; and this will command the other two. No man that shines in godliness will wallow in injustice and intemperance; guile and wrong cannot endure the light. They that are unjust cannot shine; and let them never offer to shine among Christians, that are not sober, but stained with riot and uncleanness. These foul enormities lay waste the conscience, and put out the light. How can that pure SPIRIT, that chose the likeness of a chaste dove, dwell and give light in that soul that is a nest of impure filthy lusts? No; there can be no fellowship betwixt this celestial light, whereby we should shine, and those infernal works of darkness.

Let profane men hold it wit to scoff at purity; but you that move heavenward in good earnest, and mean to shine in glory, shine here in holiness: "for without holiness no man shall see God." And do it with these qualifications:—

1. Constantly, in every estate: let not this divine light go out, either by day, in prosperity; or by night, in adversity. Do not shine clear in every other place, and be dark in your chamber. They that do thus, have their reward. That is a sad word, if rightly understood: "Beware of hypocrisy."

Again, shine progressively, gaining still more and more victory over darkness, until you attain unmixed and perfect light. "The way of the just," says SOLOMON, "is like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (*Prov. iv. 18.*)

*Lastly,* Shine humbly to His glory whose light you borrow; not to show forth your own excellencies, but His "who hath called you from darkness into his marvellous light." (*1 Pet. ii. 9.*) If we be the children of light, our brightness must praise the Father of Lights. "Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works," (not yourselves, if you can be hid; as the sun affords its light, and will scarce suffer us to look upon

itself,) “may glorify” not you, but “your heavenly Father.”

To conclude: The pure light of the Church is revived, “and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you,” and “upon this glory there shall be a defence.” If God be your glory in the midst of you, he will be likewise a wall of fire round about you. All the danger is, if we fall short in the duty of shining. As you desire, then, that this glory should abide and dwell amongst you, let all estates of men provoke one another to shine bright in holiness. You who either by birth or office are in eminent station, know that you were set there to be eminent and exemplary in shining, as stars of more notable magnitude. You who are Ministers of this light, know that “you are the light of the world,” and “if the very light become darkness, how great will that darkness be?” You that are of a lower order, know that you must shine too; for it is a common duty. There is a certain company of small stars in the firmament, which, though they cannot be each one severally seen, yet, being many, their united light makes a conspicuous brightness in the heaven, which is called the Milky Way; so, though the shining of every private Christian is not so much severally remarkable, yet the concourse and meeting of their light together will make a bright path of holiness in the Church.

Now to the end we may each one shine in our measure, we must learn to turn ourselves often towards Him from whom our light is derived: conversing with him will make us more and more like him. There is an unknown virtue for this purpose in secret prayer and meditation; were we more in the mount with God, our faces would shine more with men. Let us then rescue from the world all the time we can, to resort frequently thither, until the soul, which is now often pulled down again by the flesh, shall let that mantle fall, and come down no more; but shine there without spot, and be for ever satisfied with her Maker's image.

## SERMON V.

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ISAIAH lx. 1.

*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.*

TRULY, “light is sweet, and it is a pleasing thing to behold the sun,” says the Preacher. (*Eccles. xi. 7.*) But the interchange of night with day adds to its beauty, and the longest night makes day the welcomest; as that people well know, whose situation in the world gives them a five or six months’ night all of one piece. It is reported of some of them, that when they conceive their night draws towards an end, they put on their richest apparel, and climb up to the highest mountains, with emulation who shall first discover the returning light; which, so soon as it appears, they salute with acclamations of joy, and welcome it with solemn feasting, and all other testimonies of exceeding gladness. But such is the lethargy of sinful man, that he stirs not to meet his spiritual light; and, which is worse, when it comes upon him, it finds him in love with darkness: instead of his shouts of joy for this light, many a cry must be sounded in his ears to awaken him, and it is well too, if at length he hear and obey this voice, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come.” It is clear that the words contain a command, and the reason of it: The command to a twofold act,—The reason under two expressions. Good reason the Church should arise, when the LORD’s glory is risen upon her; and it is very congruous she should be enlightened and shine when her light is come. Of those two acts or duties somewhat was formerly spoken, and the

reason likewise was made use of so far, as relative to those duties, and tending to their enforcement. It will be now expedient to consider simply in themselves these latter words: "Thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee."

So far as this prophecy hath respect to the reduction of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, that temporal deliverance was their light; and that divine power, by which it was effected, was this "glory of the LORD." And indeed, both these expressions are frequently used in such a sense in Holy Writ; but this literal sense is but a step to elevate the Prophet to a sight of CHRIST's spiritual kingdom, which is usual with him, as our SAVIOUR himself testifies of another of his prophecies: "These things said ESAIAS, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." (*John xii. 41.*)

In these words there are three things concerning CHRIST represented to the Church's view. First, his beauty and excellency, in that he is called "light," and "the glory of the LORD." Secondly, The Church's propriety and interest in him: "Thy light," and "risen upon thee;" which hath an emphasis, as the very next verse doth clearly manifest; as he is originally "the glory of the LORD," and the light of the LORD, so he is communicatively the Church's light and her glory too, as it is expressed in the nineteenth verse of this same chapter: "Thy God, thy glory." Thus hath she both his worth, and her own right in him to consider. Thirdly, his presence, or her actual possession: "He is come, and is risen;" and in these, the Church and each faithful soul may find a double spring of affection; the one of love, the other of joy. The transcendant beauty of CHRIST makes him the choice object of love, and her property in him, or title to him, together with possession, is the proper cause of solid joy.

First, then, this excellency is expressed by these two characters, "light," and "the glory of the LORD." Concerning which, it will be fit both to demonstrate that they

are the proper titles of **CHRIST**, and also to show what they signify.

Indeed the Apostle, in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, (chap. iii.,) insists much in extolling both the light and the glory of the Gospel. And in the fourth verse of the next chapter, speaks of the light of the glorious Gospel; but he immediately intimates whence it hath this light and glory: "The glorious Gospel of **CHRIST**," says he, "who is the image of **GOD**." So that it is unnecessary to inquire whether the **MESSIAH**, or the word that reveals him, be rather here couched under these terms of "light," and "the glory of the **LORD**." These two agree so well together, and these words agree so well to them both, that it were an injury to attempt to sever them. All the difference will be this: **CHRIST** is that incomplex and substantial light; the Gospel that complex light, wherein he appears. But (not to be guilty of dark terms, especially in a discourse of light) I take it in this resemblance: **CHRIST** is the sun, and the Gospel his proper sphere, or heaven, wherein he gives light to his Church. He is primarily the glory of the **LORD**; and the Gospel, by participation, because it declares him: so that much of that which shall be spoken here of **CHRIST**, will be secondarily to be understood of the Gospel.

That **CHRIST** is light, the Scripture speaks abundantly; his own voice concerning himself, (notwithstanding the cavil of the Pharisees,) is above all exception, for he is Truth itself. "I am the light of the world," saith he; "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." (*John* viii. 12.) The **FATHER** that sent him gives him the same title: "I will give thee for a light of the Gentiles." (*Isaiah* xlii. 6.) And not to multiply citations of the Prophets and Evangelists, who with one consent all magnify this light, take the true testimony of a false Prophet; (and indeed, the favourable witness of any adversary is strongest;) it is that of **BALAM**, who saw that **CHRIST** was light, though, because he saw him afar off, (as he says himself,) and had not his eye fortified like the true Pro-

phets, he discerned him but as a star. "There shall come a star out of Jacob." (*Num.* xxiv. 17.) But what need we go so far to be certified what this light and glory of the LORD is, seeing the very next verse to the text assures us of it? "Upon thee shall the LORD arise." And in the nineteenth verse, "The LORD shall be thy everlasting light, and thy GOD thy glory."

By this time I hope it is clear, that the eternal SON of GOD, co-essential with his FATHER, was he that gave accomplishment to this prophecy, by appearing to the world wrapped up in the darkness of human nature. He is that "day-spring from on high that hath visited us," as old ZACHARIAS speaks. (*Luke* i. 78.)

Among all created excellencies, none can be borrowed more fitly representing CHRIST than that of light. And is it not CHRIST that decks his Church with supernatural beauty? But the manifold agreement of light with CHRIST doth require more particular consideration.

Light is the first object of sight: And JESUS CHRIST, whom the Apostle styles, "GOD over all, blessed for ever," is the prime object of the understanding. What is then become of that divine sparkle, that understanding soul, that the Father of Spirits breathed into these bodies, that all our thoughts creep here below, and leave their noblest object unconsidered? Which of us may not complain, (though few of us do,) that our souls have either no wings to elevate them to the contemplation of him from whom they issued; or, if they make offers at it, our affections, engaged to the world, make us, like a bird tied by the foot, fall presently down again? It is high time to leave hunting shadows, and to turn our internal eye to the beholding of this uncreated light.

In this elementary world, light being the first visible, all things are seen by it, and it by itself. Thus is CHRIST among spiritual things, in the elect world of his Church: "All things are made manifest by the light," says the Apostle, (*Eph.* v. 13,) speaking of CHRIST, as the following verse doth evidently testify. It is in his word that

he shines, and makes it a directing and convincing light, to discover all things that concern his Church and himself, to be known by its own brightness. How impertinent, then, is that question so much tossed by the Romish Church? ‘How know you the Scriptures,’ say they, ‘to be the word of God, without the testimony of the Church?’ I would ask one of them again, How they can know that it is day-light, except some light a candle to let them see it? They are little versed in Holy Scripture, that know not that it is frequently called light; and they are senseless that know not that light is seen and known by itself. “If our Gospel be hid,” says the Apostle, “it is hid to them that perish; the god of this world having blinded their minds against the light of the glorious Gospel.” No wonder if such stand in need of a testimony. A blind man knows not that it is light at noon-day, but by report. But to those that have eyes, light is seen by itself.

Again, it makes all other things that are in the world to become actually visible; as they speak. So by this substantial Word, JESUS CHRIST, all things in religion are tried and discovered. Doctrines and worship must be tried by this light; and what will not endure this trial, must not be endured in the house of God. “To the law, and to the testimony,” says the Prophet; “if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (*Isa. viii. 20.*) The rays of CHRIST’S light are displayed through both his testaments, and in them we see him.

But O, how sublime is the knowledge of Him! None are ignorant that there is light; yet what light is, few know; the best wits are troubled to define it: so all that bear the name of Christians, acknowledge that CHRIST is; but to know what he is, is of marvellous difficulty. In a speculative way, unsoundable is the depth of his nature and properties; “and his generation who can declare?” I define not whether his eternal generation, or his incarnation in time. These are mysteries that shall hold the very



angels busy in admiration for ever. And for experimental knowledge by faith, how small is the number of those that are truly acquainted with it ?

Again, light fitly resembles CHRIST in purity. It visits many impure places, and lights upon the basest parts of the earth, and yet remains pure and undefiled : CHRIST sees and takes notice of all the enormities and sinful pollutions in the world ; as DAVID says of the sun, “there is nothing hid from his beams ;” (*Psal.* xix. ;) yea, many of those foul evils he cures, and purgeth away these pollutions, and yet is never stained by them in the least degree. He is a Physician not capable of infection, and therefore, while he dwelt among men, he shunned not publicans and sinners, but sought them rather ; for with such was his business and employment. Indeed, for a frail man to be too bold in frequenting profane and obstinate persons, though with intention to reclaim them, is not always so safe. They may pull him in that would help them forth, and pollute him that would cleanse them. But our SAVIOUR, the light of the world, runs no such hazard ; he is stronger than the perversest sinner, yea, than the Prince of Darkness himself, over whom his banners are always victorious, and purer than to be in danger of pollution. His precious blood is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness ; sinners are purified by it, and it is not defiled by them ; thousands have washed in it, yet it shall abide, and always shall be most perfectly pure. And such a High Priest was needful for us, ἀμίαντος, undefiled : and though conversant with sinners, to communicate to them his goodness ; yet “separate from sinners,” in immunity from their evil.

To this agrees well that title the Prophet MALACHI gives him, when he calls him the “Sun of Righteousness :” full of purity and righteousness, as the sun is of light : all luminous, without spot, subject to no eclipse in himself, his light being his own : though our sins interposed may hide Him sometimes from us, as those real eclipses in the sun are rather ours ; for we are deprived of light, but not

the sun. CHRIST is many ways most fitly called the sun ; for since all created light falls infinitely short of his worth, the prince and chief of them, the sun, cannot but suit best, so far as may be to set forth his excellency.

The light of the sun is neither parted nor diminished by being imparted to many people and nations that behold it at one time ; nor is the righteousness of this “Sun of Righteousness” either lessened to himself, or to believers, by many partaking of it at once : it is wholly conferred upon each of them, and remains whole in himself. Hence it is, that not only CHRIST invites so liberally sinners to come to him, but even justified persons would so gladly draw all others to lay hold on this righteousness of their Redeemer, knowing well, that if all the world were enriched by it, they themselves would be no whit the poorer.

Again, the sun hath a vivifying power, not only of plants and vegetables, but, if Philosophers be right, it hath a special influence in the generation of man. But this is both more certainly and more eminently true of this Sun we speak of in man’s regeneration ; that he is the proper and principal efficient of it. The Evangelist calls him at once, “The light and the life of men.” (*John i. 4.*) To say nothing of him as a treasure, he is the source of our spiritual life and motion.

When the sun takes its course towards us in the season of the year, it drives away the sharp frosts, and the heavy fogs of winter ; it clears the heavens, decks the earth with a variety of plants and flowers, and awakes the birds to the pleasant strains of their natural music. When CHRIST, after a kind of winter, returns to visit a declining Church, admirable is the change that he produces ; all begins to flourish by his sweet influence ; his house, his worship, his people, are all clothed with a new beauty, but it is spiritual, and therefore none but spiritual eyes can discern it. When he will thus return, all the power and policy of man can no more hinder him, than it could stay the course of the sun in its circle. In like manner,

a soul, that can do nothing but languish and droop, while CHRIST withdraws himself, what inexpressible vigour and alacrity finds it at his returning? Then those graces, that seemed to have been lost, bud forth anew, with a pleasant colour and fragrant smell. It is the light of his countenance that banisheth their false fears, that strengthens their faith, and cures their spiritual infirmities. This Sun is indeed the sovereign Physician: "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings." (*Mal.* iv. 2.)

Finally, all darkness flees away before him: it was his arising in the world, that made the day break and the shadows flee away. The types and shadows of the law were then abolished. It was his light that dispelled the mists of ignorance and idolatry; and he alone delivers the soul from the night of sin and misery. All the stars, and the moon with them, cannot make it day in the world; this is the sun's peculiar. Nor can nature's highest light, the most refined science and morality, make it day in the soul; for this is CHRIST's.

The common light of reason and conscience every man that comes into the world hath from him as his Creator; but the special light of faith they alone that are born again have from him as their Saviour. Gross is the darkness of every natural mind until CHRIST enlighten it. It can neither discern, nor receive the things of God. "Ye were darkness, (says the Apostle,) but now are you light in the LORD." It is nothing else but a mass of darkness, and the companion of darkness is confusion: as it was in the mass of the world before light was created. And what is there under heaven more confused than a carnal mind? The affections quite out of order, and though all evil, yet fighting one with another, and continually hurrying the judgment whither they please. Now to dissipate this darkness, and remedy this confusion, CHRIST shines externally in his word: but too much daily experience testifies, that this is not sufficient.

Therefore, to those whom he makes children of the light, to meet with this outward light of his word, he gives another internal, by the Spirit. The sun can make dark things clear, but it cannot make a blind man see them. But herein is the excellency of this sun, that he illuminates not only the object, but the faculty; doth not only reveal the mysteries of his kingdom, but opens blind eyes to behold them; and the first lineament of the renewed image of **GOD** in man, is that light in the understanding, removing not only that simple ignorance of divine things, but these misconceits likewise, and false principles, and that wicked pertinacity, whereof man's mind is naturally full. He that at first commanded light to shine out of darkness, infuseth saving knowledge and light into the dark soul of man, and this light kindles love. It hath a powerful influence, begetting heat in the affections. And this divine light conducts the soul that hath received it, until it be received to the land of light and perfect happiness. Thus in our Redeemer is "the fountain of life," as the Psalmist speaks; "and in his light do we see light." (*Psal.* xxxvi. 9.)

He is likewise here styled, "The Glory of the **LORD**." The ark of **GOD** was called the glory: It enjoyed that name as a type of **CHRIST**, in whom that which the ark contained was fulfilled. The tabernacle is called "the dwelling of **GOD**'s glory." Typifying him in the tabernacle, in whose human nature that glory dwells far more excellently: ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, "He dwelt in a tabernacle among us, and we saw his glory; as the glory of the only-begotten **SON** of **GOD**, full of grace and truth." (*John* i. 14.) The Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls him, "the brightness of his **FATHER**'s glory, and the character of his person." And under these expressions lies that remarkable mystery of the **SON**'s eternal relation to the **FATHER**, which is rather humbly to be adored than boldly to be explained. It is true, he is called, "the wisdom of the **FATHER**;" but this wisdom is too wonderful for us: he is called "the **Word**;" but what this

word means, I think we shall not well know, until we see him face to face, and contemplate him in the light of glory. Meanwhile we may see him to be "the glory of the LORD," in a sufficient measure to guide us on to that clear vision reserved above for us. "We saw his glory," says that sublime Evangelist. But how could this excellent glory be seen by sinful men, and not astonish and strike dead the beholders? "He was made flesh and dwelt among us," says he, "and we saw his glory." That majesty that we could never have looked upon, he veiled with human flesh, that we might not die, yea live, by seeing him. There he stood behind the wall, and showed himself through the trellis: "In him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead;" (*Col. ii. 9;*) but it was *bodily*. For who could have endured the splendour of the Godhead's fulness, if that cloud of his body had not been drawn betwixt? And through it did shine that grace and truth, that wisdom and power, in the work of our Redemption, whereby he was clearly manifested to be "the Glory of the LORD."

Surely we need not now ask the Church, or a believing soul, what is her Beloved more than another? Or, if we do, well may she answer, "He is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely;" for he is the light of the world, and the glory of the LORD. Let not the numerous titles of earthly potentates be once admitted into comparison with these. If we believe DAVID, the stateliest things and persons in the world, being balanced with vanity itself, are found lighter than it. And shall we offer to weigh them with CHRIST? If we knew him rightly, we would not sell the least glance or beam of this light of his countenance for the highest favour of mortal men, though it were constant and unchangeable; which it is not. It is ignorance of CHRIST that maintains the credit of those vanities we admire: the Christian that is truly acquainted with him, enamoured with the brightness of his beauty, can generously trample upon the smilings of the world with one foot, and her frownings with the

other : if he be rich, or honourable, or both, yet he glories not in that ; but CHRIST, who is the glory of the LORD, is even his chief glory. And the light of CHRIST obscures that worldly splendour in his estimation ; and as the enjoyment of CHRIST overtops all his other joys, so it overcomes his griefs ; as that great light drowns the light of prosperity, so it shines bright in the darkness of affliction ; no dungeon so close that can keep out the rays of CHRIST'S love from his beloved prisoners. The world can no more take away this light, than it can give it : and as this light is a comfort, so it is likewise a defence, that suffers no more of distress to come near the godly than is profitable for them : Therefore we find very frequently in Scripture, where this light and glory are mentioned, protection and safety jointly spoken of.

“ The LORD is my light, and my salvation ; whom shall I fear ? ” says DAVID. (*Psal.* xxvii. 1.) “ The LORD is a sun and a shield too.” (*Psal.* lxxxiv. 11.) And truly I think him shot-proof, that hath the sun for his buckler. And for glory ; “ Upon all the glory shall be a defence,” says our Prophet in his fourth chapter, fifth verse. And the Prophet, where he calls the LORD, “ the Church's glory in the midst of her,” he calls him likewise, “ a wall of fire round about her.” (*Zech.* ii. 5.) The only way then to be safe is, to keep this light and this glory entire. To part with any part of this glory is to make a breach in that wall of fire ; and if that be a means of safety let all men judge : No, keep it whole, and then they must come through the fire that will assault you.

Nor is this light only defensive of the Church that embraceth it, but likewise destructive of all adverse powers. See a clear testimony of this : “ And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame : [speaking there of the Assyrians :] and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day ; and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field : and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth.” (*Isai.* x. 17, 18.)

Let, then, the Church of **God** entirely observe this light and glory of the **Lord**, and she shall undoubtedly be preserved by it. But to close in a word, first to those that know this light, and then to those that are yet strangers to it.

You who know **Christ**, glory in him perpetually: well may he be your glory, when he is the glory of the **Lord**. There are some that pretend love to **Christ**, and yet a taunting word of some profane miscreant will almost make them ashamed of him. How would they die for **Christ**, that are so tender as not to endure a scoff for him? Where is that Spirit of **Moses**, that accounted the very reproach of **Christ** greater riches than the treasures of Egypt? O learn to glory in **Christ**! think highly of him, and speak so too. Methinks it is the discourse in the world that becomes Christians best, to be speaking one to another honourably of **Jesus Christ**: and of all men, the Preachers of his Gospel should be most frequent in this subject. This should be their great theme, to extol and commend the **Lord Jesus**, that they may inflame many hearts with his love; and best can they do this, who are most strongly taken with this love themselves: such will most gladly abase themselves, that **Christ** may be magnified: and whatsoever be their excellencies, they still account **Christ** their glory; and they are richly repaid, for he accounts them his glory. This would seem a strange word, if it were not the Apostle's: "They are the messengers of the Churches, and the glory of **Christ**." (2 *Cor.* viii. 23.) Delight who will, either in sloth and ignorance, on the one hand, or in vain speculations and frothy wit, on the other; surely those Preachers shall only be approved in the great day, who have constantly endeavoured, in their measure, to speak the best they could for their Master's advantage: and happy are those Christians, of what estate soever, that in all estates make **Christ** their glory, and in all actions have their eye fixed upon his glory, who is their light and the glory of the **Lord**.

Now to those that are strangers to him; (would to **God**

none that are to be spoken to were such;) to them I say, notice would be given both of the excellency and necessity of CHRIST. Though it were possible to grope the way to happiness in the dark, yet none will deny that to be conducted thither by a constant light is both more safe and more delightful; but were there any possibility to attain that end without this light, the neglect of it were not altogether so strange. The wonder of all is this,—That CHRIST alone being both that life, and the way to it, and the truth or life that guides in that way, yet Christians, so called, should esteem and look after him as little, as if he were wholly needless. What meanest thou, O besotted sinner! Is it so light a thing to die in thy sins, and eternally for them, that thou wilt not so much as open and admit the light of salvation? What wilt thou pretend in that terrible day? Though all other kind of people should offer some excuse, thou who hast heard the Gospel shalt be speechless: for not only the rigour of justice shall condemn thee, but mercy itself shall plead against thee, for thou hast despised it. That light did come and was not embraced, shall be thy main condemnation. How many thousands that make no doubt of heaven, yet shall then fall short of it? It is not a superficial profession that will then pass current. It is not some sighs and groans from an unsanctified heart, which either come from custom or some present touch of the word; nor yet is it some sudden rising of inward affection towards CHRIST upon the report of his worth, that shall then serve the turn. The intellectual knowledge of CHRIST, the distinct understanding, yea, the orthodox preaching of his Gospel, the maintaining of his public cause, and suffering for it, shall not then be found sufficient. Only that peculiar apprehension of CHRIST, those constant flames of spiritual love, that even course of holy walking in his light, shall be the characters whereby CHRIST shall own his children, and admit them into the inheritance of perfect light. One of the speakers in the book of JOB, discoursing of the prosperity of the ungodly.



calls it but his candle, and tells how long it can last. "His candle," says he, "shall be put out with him," and that is the longest term of it. If it last his life-time, it shall convey him no further; he goes into eternity in the dark; and therefore, as ST. JOHN says, "he knows not whither he goeth." Is it not a sad thing, when the soul that knows no other but worldly light, must take leave of it, and enter into eternal darkness, there to be incessantly tormented with present anguish, and the frightful expectation of the last judgment, where it must take again that body which was the accomplice of its wickedness, to be partaker of its punishment? where it shall have a double misery, to behold crowns of immortality distributed to the godly, after the short combats of this life, and itself thrust out among the devils? Then shall all men be some way sensible, what is the worth of this now-contemned light, the LORD JESUS CHRIST: the greatest number too late; for they shall be banished from it for ever; but the righteous shall then most perfectly know, and for ever enjoy this light and glory of the LORD: To whom, with the FATHER of Lights, and SPIRIT of Grace, be an eternity of praise and honour.

## SERMON VI.

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CANT. i. 3.

*Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee.*

THE natural workings and desires of things are agreeable to their being. The beasts, according to their sensitive life, seek those things that tend to the preservation of that life, and affect nothing higher than those, and they are satisfied. Man (except such as are in the lowest stage and border upon the beasts) finds nature, even corrupt nature, raising him to higher desires and designs. And yet of the best of them, the Apostle's maxim holds true, "They that are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh." But he subjoins the excellency of some men beyond the best naturalist: "They that are after the spirit, the things of the Spirit." (*Rom. viii. 5.*) They must not be confined to things natural, but are strongly moved towards spiritual blessings, and CHRIST the sum of them. And having once tasted of his sweetness, "of the savour of thy good ointments," they can admit nothing into competition with his love: and this it is that lies under these words.

Numbers have been his guests at this time, and the greatest number think they came to good purpose: but know, that you are so far from partaking of CHRIST in the Sacrament, that you have not so much as smelled his perfumes, if you be not strongly taken with his love. Great are the praises, and many the duties you owe him for so rich favours, and show therefore your good-will, and endeavour some payment. But know, that none of them are

current, except they be stamped with love. If you love not, you do nothing; all your labours and services without it, are as so many ciphers: and with it the meanest of them will find acceptance.

You have briefly, in the words, CHRIST's loveliness, and the Christian's love: the former the cause of the latter; both couched under borrowed terms, according to the whole strain of this allegorical song; to which the true experimental knowledge of this love is the best commentary.

In all love, three things are necessary: 1. Some goodness in the object, either true and real, or apparent and seeming to be so; for the soul, be it never so evil, can affect nothing but what it takes some way to be good. 2. There must be a knowledge of that goodness; for the most excellent things, if altogether unknown, affect not. 3. There must be a suitableness or agreement of that good thing with the nature of those which should affect it; otherwise, how good soever it is, it is not good to them.

Now all these we have clearly in this love. (1.) The goodness, the excellency of CHRIST, expressed by "precious ointments." (2.) The manifestation and making it known, signified by "the pouring forth of his name." (3.) His fitness, and congruity with them, here mentioned under this denomination, "virgins:" such as have the senses of their souls, not stopped with the pollutions of the world; but pure and active, and exercised to discern good and evil: these three requisites, thus met, must needs produce love. "Therefore do the virgins love thee."

"Because of the savour of thy good ointments." How true is the Apostle's word, when he calls CHRIST the believer's "all things." And that radical grace of faith, because it apprehends CHRIST, hath a kind of universality: and it is reasonable too; it alone being to the soul what all the five senses are to the body. It is the eye and the mouth: a wonderful eye; "it sees him that is invisible." (*Heb. xi. 27.*) The mouth; "it tastes that the LORD is

gracious." (1 *Pet.* ii. 3.) Yea, take these both together in one place: "O taste and see that the LORD is good." (*Psal.* xxxiv. 8.) It is the soul's ear, for what else is meant, when it is said, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear:" And was it not that touch which CHRIST took special notice of, and with good reason distinguished from the common touch of the multitude that was crowding about him; that touch alone draws virtue from him: "Somebody hath touched me; for there is virtue gone out of me." And lastly, as it is all those other senses, and CHRIST its object in reference to them all, so here, in its smelling, it finds the savour of his fragrant graces, and by that works love.

What strange odds is there betwixt the opinion of CHRIST's spouse, and the world that knows him not? They wonder what she sees in him desirable: she wonders that they are not all ravished with his excellencies. They prefer the basest vanities in the world before him: she finds the choicest and richest things in the world too mean to resemble the smallest part of his worth. See in this song how busily and skilfully she goes to all the creatures, and crops the rarest pieces in nature and art to set forth her Well-beloved; and seems to find them all too poor for her purpose. One while, she extols him above all things beautiful, and pleasant to the eye; another while, above things delectable to the taste; as in the former verse,—“Thy loves are better than wine;” and here she prefers the perfume of his graces to the most precious ointments.

When a natural eye looks upon the Sacrament of the LORD's Supper, it finds it a bare and mean kind of ceremony. Take heed there be not many that come to it, and partake of it with others, that prize it little; and do indeed find as little in it as they look for. But O! what precious consolation doth a believer meet with at this banquet! How richly is the table furnished to his eye; what plentiful varieties employ his hand and taste! What abundance of rare dainties! Yet there is nothing but one

here : but that one is all things to the believing soul. It finds his love sweeter than the richest wine to the taste, or best odours to the smell ; and that delightful word of his, “ Thy sins are forgiven thee,” is the only music to a distressed conscience.

“ Thy good ointments.” The holy ointment of the sanctuary, under the law, was composed according to God’s own prescription : (*Exod. xxx. 25* :) And they were straitly forbid to imitate it, or make any like it ; to signify the singular holiness, the matchless worth of the anointing oil of gladness, wherewith our High Priest, the LORD JESUS, was anointed above his fellows. And in this he is incomparable, that his ointment he hath not from without. It was his own divine nature that perfumed his manhood with these precious ointments. God, and the SPIRIT of the LORD, is said to have anointed him : “ Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness ; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows : ” (*Psal xlv. 7* :) and, “ The SPIRIT of the LORD, God is upon me, because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.” (*Isai. lxi. 1*.) But know that that SPIRIT, and the FATHER, are one in essence with the eternal SON. In that mystical song much like to this, in the 45th *Psal*m, at the 8th verse, it is said, that his “ garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, as he comes forth of his ivory palaces.” When he came down from above to dwell among men, he appareled himself like them ; he was clothed with human flesh : but yet that vesture was so transcendently enriched with all graces, as with costly perfumes, that men might easily know there was more under them than a mere man ; yea, even in that low estate did such beams of his glory shine through, that those whose eyes were open did clearly behold them, and knew him to be no less than the only-begotten SON of GOD by this, that He was so “ full of grace and truth.” (*John i. 14*.) And these are, in a word, these “ precious ointments,” whose delightful smell is here recommended.

Now to enumerate and describe these graces, what tongue of men, yea, or of angels, were sufficient? What other is the main subject of the whole Scriptures? What mean all the figures and ceremonies of the law; the costly furniture and ornaments of the temple; the rich vestments of the High Priest; that fine linen, that silk and gold, these gems and precious stones? Were any of them, were they all, any other but shadows and dim resemblances of the matchless perfections of JESUS CHRIST? It is strange, that Christians have so low conceits of their high Redeemer! What is the Gospel, but a more clear and plentiful pouring forth of those ointments? What was the great labour and business of the holy Apostles, but the diffusing of CHRIST'S grace through the world? "I determined to know nothing among you, save CHRIST and him crucified," says ST. PAUL to his Corinthians. What was that other Sacrament and this, but coverts under which CHRIST conveys himself and his graces to the believing soul, while the profane and slight-hearted receivers are sent away with empty elements? Thus you see how ample a subject these graces are in the general: and truly, the consideration of any one particular of them, might be the employment of many hours. Would you have the wisdom of CHRIST? look what the Apostle says of it; "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:" (*Col. ii. 3.*) not some drops of wisdom, no, nor streams, but a fountain. A treasure, not one treasure, but treasures; many, yea, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; yet not obvious to every eye, but, as treasures, they are hid. The children of wisdom, which are the world's fools, have some knowledge of this his wisdom, and draw from it for their own use; but to sound the depth of it, who can be able?

No less admirable is his holiness. He is both the immaculate Lamb, and the undefiled Sacrifice. "Such a High Priest became us:" Became us? Yes; "holy, harmless, and undefiled." (*Heb. vii. 26.*) The more we were defiled with sin, the more stood we in need of an undefiled and spotless High Priest: it was as expedient that he

should be unlike us in that, as that he should be like us in all other things. Therefore, as for the legal priesthood there was a holy consecrating oil, this immortal High Priest was anointed with the most entire and complete holiness; and this perfect holiness of his is set forth as myrrh,—the best ointments and spices. Myrrh is of a virtue preservative from corruption. He was not only of excellent smell while he lived among men, but this myrrh did likewise preserve and exempt him from contracting any corruption or pollution by the bad air of sinful company; so that he conversed with sinners that he might convert them, without any danger of infection. And as he was thus extraordinarily anointed with the Spirit of wisdom and holiness, so likewise with the Spirit of meekness, therefore called, “The Lamb of God.” His “voice was not heard in the streets.” And take in that other grace, which he himself mentions, together with his meekness, as being near in nature to it, humility. “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.” (*Matt. xi. 29.*) Indeed, humility is an odoriferous grace, and adds a kind of sweetness and lustre to all other graces. As balsam, which is the chief of precious ointments, used to be tried, and that is the truest and best, put into any liquor, which goes to the bottom; that but slight which swims above; so these graces are most upright that are accompanied with most humility. And that this may be out of doubt, you know that CHRIST (of whom we now speak) as he had most grace, so he was most exemplary in humility; and certainly, the sweet smell of this good ointment did fill the whole house, when he washed his disciples’ feet; as it is said of the ointment that Mary poured upon his feet, in the foregoing chapter. (*John xii.*)

Amongst many other of his gracious qualities that might be mentioned, we cannot but take particular notice of his love; the rather, because the fragrant smell of his graces is here said to beget love. Now you know that one of the strongest attractives of love, is love: *Magnes amoris amor.* What made him empty himself of his glory, but because

he was full of love? What made him take on him the form of a servant, suffer heat and cold, and hunger and poverty, but love? What other was it made him digest the persecutions, revilings, and the contradiction of sinners, but love? But the great wonder of his love is this,—He died to become our life: “who hath loved me, and given himself for me,” says the great Apostle. “And hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us,” says the beloved Apostle. Was it the nails that held him fast to the cross, when they tauntingly bade him come down? No; it was his love, that was stronger than death. But all this was nothing to the angry countenance of his FATHER, nor would he ever have ventured upon that, if infinite love had not persuaded him: no wonder if the Apostle calls it a love that passeth knowledge. “That you may know,” saith he, “the love of CHRIST which passeth knowledge.” (*Eph. iii. 19.*) Know it we may and should; but we must know withal, that we cannot know it fully. And this is our comfort, that it is greater than we can comprehend; for if it were not so, it would be less than we stand in need of. So much of his love we may understand as may abundantly inflame our hearts with love to him: for this purpose hath he revealed it, and made his name like an ointment poured out. And that is the second thing.

“His name.” That is, the report and manifestation of his excellencies; and if you will take it properly of his name JESUS, and CHRIST, or the MESSIAH, it is true of them, for they are significative of these excellencies. Ask an afflicted conscience, if JESUS, that is, a Saviour, be not a precious word, that hath a sovereign value, both a refreshing smell and a healing virtue? The hammer of the law may break a stony heart in pieces, but it is only the blood of JESUS that can soften it; and where it is effectually poured, either upon a wounded soul, it heals it, or upon a hard heart, it mollifies it. For that other name, CHRIST, well may it be called an ointment poured out, for it signifies his anointing; and that the sweet savour of this name may affect you, read but that one passage;



“The SPIRIT of the LORD GOD is upon me, because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings, &c.” (*Isai. lxi. 1.*) What inestimable riches of consolation are there in each of these effects, to which CHRIST was anointed! And yet, we find not a word amongst them all for a proud stiff-necked sinner. Here are good tidings,—but it is to the meek; comfortable binding up,—but it is for the broken-hearted; liberty,—but it is for captives and prisoners, groaning under their chains, and desirous to be delivered; not for such as delight in their bondage; there is “oil of joy, and garments of praise,”—but they are provided for mourning, dejected spirits, that need them; not for the impenitent: On the contrary, there is a terrible word interjected in the midst of these promises: “The day of vengeance of our GOD:” and that is the portion of CHRIST’S enemies; and such are all incorrigible sinners.

Thus it is, at the same banquet from which you come, one may be filled with spiritual joy, and the very person that sits next be filled with a secret curse, and return more miserable than he came. But let the lamenting sinner lift up his head, and behold CHRIST the SON of GOD anointed a Prophet to preach salvation and liberty to such; a Priest to purchase it, and a King to give it.

Now the pouring out of this name is divers. Before the coming of the MESSIAH, his name was poured out in prophecies and promises, in types and legal ceremonies; but more fully when the “Word was made flesh:” then angels and holy men, yea, and women, spake clearly of him. What was his FATHER’S voice at his baptism? The HOLY GHOST’S descending? What was his own preaching, and miracles, and conversation, but all the pouring forth of his precious name? And in his sufferings and death, what think you? Was not his name then poured forth, yea, his blood with it? Yes, truly; being extended on the cross, and his body pierced in divers places, his precious ointments were shed abroad towards all the quarters of the world: their smell both reached heaven and the visible earth. GOD the FATHER (as he was said to do in NOAH’S sacrifice,) did much more smell in his sacrifice

a savour of rest, appeasing his wrath; and all believers a savour of peace, a quieting of their consciences. And as aromatic spices, when they are pounded out and beaten, send forth their sweet smells most liberally, so in these his sufferings, did the obedience, patience, and love, and all the graces, and the name of our SAVIOUR, most clearly manifest themselves to the world.

After he was dead they embalmed his body, but they knew not that his own virtue would do more than all the ointments and spices in the world could do, not only by preserving his body from corruption, but by raising it the third day. And truly, after his resurrection, his own disciples knew his name better than ever before, and yet more fully after his ascension, when the HOLY GHOST came down upon them, which was poured from heaven on them for this very end, that they might pour forth CHRIST'S name to the earth: (*Acts ii. 8:*) and they did so, carrying this precious treasure in earthen vessels. And ever since, God hath continued the pouring forth of this name, by the ministry and preaching of the Gospel.

It is true, there are too many of those that are employed in this work, that seek themselves, and their own ends, rather than his glory. And they that are more upright are sinful men, but how mean and unworthy soever, yet despise not the Gospel. Let the sweet name which they pour forth, prevail for itself, that so you may reverence and love it, if you would have salvation by it; and there is no other name under heaven, by which that can be obtained.

As this name is poured forth in the Gospel preached, so in the Sacraments annexed to it; and particularly in this, when the bread is broken, and the wine poured out. And was not this the earnest desire of the receivers of it this day? It should have been to have our share in it, for the refreshment and curing of our souls. Nor shall any that came thus be disappointed; and if not presently, yet most certainly, and that in due time, they shall find the sweet fruits of it.

You have heard many ways how the name of CHRIST is poured out; yet there is one more, without which all the rest are ineffectual. It is this, The secret and powerful working of the SPIRIT of GOD in the soul. The ordinances and means of salvation do indeed pour forth the name of CHRIST round a man; but until the SPIRIT concur with them, not one drop falls within the soul. And is he not so much the more miserable, that hears much of CHRIST, and partakes nothing of him? Yes, surely; a man may have much knowledge of CHRIST, and may understand well, yea, may preach well, concerning his worth and graces, and yet not love him. But there is a particular knowledge of him by the infusion of the SPIRIT, and where the smallest measure of this is, it presently wins the affection. There is a shedding abroad of the love of GOD in our hearts, and this draws us after him; for our love to GOD is nothing else but the reflection of his love to us. So then, though many hear of CHRIST, yet because there are but few that have this knowledge of him, therefore it is that so few truly esteem him, and love him, and they are such as are here called virgins. And that is the third thing.

“The virgins.” Similitude and conformity of nature begets friendship. Pure affections delight in a pure object, and make them such; for the truth is, CHRIST doth not find men naturally suitable to himself, but as he took on him our nature, so he washeth away the sinfulness of our nature, and makes it that way conformable to his; and they that are so changed, though they were formerly lovers of sin, yet by conversion, which is called regeneration, they are born again, and so become not only chaste, but even virgins, spiritually; for by virgins here, are not meant such as Romish votaries fancy them to be: no, this virginity may well consist with any lawful state of life.

These virgins are such as be truly holy, and pure in heart and life; who, though they are not perfectly free from all sin, yet they have affection to no sin. These are singularly delighted with the smell of CHRIST’S name and

graces, while the voluptuous person and the profane worldling dislike and despise it. The virgins bestow their affection whole and entire upon CHRIST.

How grossly do you delude yourselves, that make your hearts dens of pride, filthy lust, malice, and envy, and thousands of vanities, and yet think to find a corner in them to lodge CHRIST too! Truly you would but straiten him in room, and give him very bad neighbours. No; they that think not a whole heart too little for him, shall never enjoy him.

“The virgins love thee.” Grace destroys not the natural passions of the soul, but corrects them, by destroying their corruption; and so they become not only not contrary to grace, but are made the subject and seat of grace. This of love, which is the chief of them, we see it abolisheth not, but rectifies it, recalling it to its due object, and turning it into the right channel, by which it may empty itself into the ocean of goodness.

And this love may well consist with the purity of virgins; yea, it is this love that purifies and makes them such. The virgins love: but whom? Thee: and it is as reasonable a love as it is pure. “Therefore they love thee,” because thou hast made them, in some measure, apprehensive of thy worth, which commands the love of all that know it; not a cold and indifferent affection, but a superlative ardent love, far overtopping all their other desires; and good reason, since CHRIST doth infinitely and beyond all comparison surpass all other things desirable. Ask your own hearts if you love CHRIST thus? For if not thus, you love him not at all. ST. PAUL’S love was of this size: “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for CHRIST; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win CHRIST.” (*Phil.* iii. 7, 8.)

Thus love will not only undergo difficulties and sufferings for CHRIST, without either repining or fainting, but

it will even be glad to meet with them, as opportunity is, to exercise and testify itself. Hard things will seem most easy for his sake, and bitter things exceeding sweet. In a word, to him that loves, scarce any thing is impossible. Love is the leading passion of the soul; all the rest conform themselves to it: desire, and hope, and fear, and joy, and sorrow. If then you love CHRIST, the desires and breathings of your soul after him are strong and earnest. If He withdraw himself, or appear angry; if either you see him not, or see him look discontented, your grief will be so deep that it cannot be allayed by any worldly enjoyments: yet upon some former tokens of his love, hope will uphold the soul, until the beams of his grace scatter the cloud and break through. Though our JOSEPH seem strange, and speak roughly for a while, He cannot long refrain from discovering his affection. Again, love you him? Unspeakable will be your joy when he smiles upon you: as great will be your delight in possession, as your desire is in pursuit; and while you have his presence, it will be too hard a task for any affliction to dismay you. Have you indeed heard CHRIST speak comfortably to you this day at his holy table? How will this enable the soul, and arm it against dangers and distrustful fears! "Perfect love casteth out fear," that is, all base and servile fear; but there is one fear that is in no heart but where love begets it,—Fear to offend.

You know how wary and loath men are to displease those they love; therefore it is, that love to CHRIST and a careful observing of his commandments, are inseparable companions; yea, love itself "is the fulfilling of the law," for it gives up the heart to GOD, and consequently the whole man. Then there is no return of duty which your receiving of CHRIST calls for,—and what doth it not call for?—there is none, I say, but is comprised under this one of love. Do you owe him praises? Yes, surely; then love him; that will stir you up to praise him. You never knew, but where much love was in the heart, it made the tongue ready and active upon all occasions to praise the

party loved. Love will entertain small courtesies with great thanks ; much more where the benefit so far exceeds all possible thankfulness. Ought you to serve and obey him? Doubtless he hath for that purpose redeemed you with his precious blood ; and truly there is no obedience nor service so full and so cheerful as that which flows from love. Should you study conformity to CHRIST, and labour to be like him? Yes, for this is to walk worthy of CHRIST : then there is nothing assimilates so much as love. Men delight in their society whom they love, and by their society they insensibly contract their customs, and become like them. These virgins that love CHRIST for his graces, love to converse with him ; and by conversing with him, they receive of his graces, and have a smell of his perfumes. Not only do they by the smell of his garments, obtain the blessing ; but likewise smell like him, by the participation of sanctifying grace : of his wisdom and holiness, in a pure and godly conversation, abstaining from the lusts and pollutions of the world ; of his meekness and humility. Never think that one and the same soul can have much pride and much of CHRIST ; ever the more grace a man hath, the more sense hath he of his own unworthiness, and GOD'S free mercy ; and consequently, the more humility.

If you love CHRIST, you cannot choose but be like him in love to your brethren. This is expressly compared, by the Psalmist, to the precious ointment poured upon AARON'S head, that ran down to the very skirts of his garments. Our Head and High Priest, the LORD JESUS, hath incomparably testified his love to believers, whom he is pleased to call his brethren : they are far from equalling him, either in love to him, or one to another ; but they imitate him in both. This is his great commandment, that we "love another, even as he loved us ;" which is expressed both as a strange motive, and a high example. It is not possible that a spirit of malice and hatred can consist with the love of CHRIST. Finally, should you be ready to suffer for CHRIST? Yes. Then love is that

which will enable you ; and if you were inflamed with this fire, then, though you burned for him, that fire would only consume your dross, and be soon extinguished, but this would endure for ever.

By these and the like evidences, try whether you indeed love the **LORD JESUS CHRIST**. You that profess to love him, testify the sincerity of your love ; and be assured, that if you be now found amongst those virgins that love him, you shall one day be of the number of those virgins that are spoken of *Rev. xiv. 3, 4*, that sing a new song before the throne of **GOD**.

If you hate the defilements of the world, and be not polluted with inordinate affection to the creature, it shall never repent you to have made choice of **CHRIST** : “ He shall fill your hearts with peace and joy in believing.” When you come to his house and table, he shall send you home with joy and sweet consolation, such as you would not exchange for crowns and sceptres ; and after some few of these running banquets here below, you shall enter into the great marriage-supper of the Lamb, where faith shall end in sight, and hope in possession, and love continue in perpetual and full enjoyment ; where you shall never be weary, but for ever happy in beholding the face of the blessed Trinity. Amen.

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AN  
EXTRACT  
FROM  
THOUGHTS ON RELIGION :  
BY  
DR. BEVERIDGE.

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## THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

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WHEN in my serious thoughts I begin to look within myself, and consider what I am, I presently find myself to be a reasonable creature; for, was I not so, it would be unreasonable for me to reason and reflect. But, am I a reasonable creature? Why, then, I am sure, within this veil of flesh there dwells a soul, and that of a higher nature than either plants or brutes are endued with; for they have souls indeed, but yet they know it not, and though they act, they know it not; being not possible for them to look within themselves, or reflect upon their own existencies and actions. But it is not so with me: I not only know I have a soul, but that I have such a soul, which can consider of itself, and deliberate of every particular action that issues from it.

And, indeed, was there never another argument in the world, to convince me of the spiritual nature of my soul, this alone would be sufficient: for, what below a spirit can reflect upon itself? Or, what below a spirit can put forth itself in such actions, as I find I can exercise myself in? My soul can in a moment mount from earth to heaven, fly from pole to pole, and view all the courses and motions of the celestial bodies, the sun, moon, and stars; and then, the next moment returning to myself again, I can consider, where I have been, what glorious objects have been presented to my view; and wonder at the activity of my soul, that can run over so many millions of miles, and finish so great a work in so small a space of time. And are such acts as these the effects of gross earth, or impenetrable matter? Can any thing below a spirit raise itself so much beyond the reach of material actions?

But stay a little: What is this soul of mine, that it is so

nimble in its actions, and so spiritual in its nature? Why, it is that which actuates and informs the several organs and members of my body, and enables me not only to perform the natural actions of life and sense, but likewise to understand, consult, argue, and conclude; to will and nill, hope and despair, desire and abhor, joy and grieve, love and hate; to be angry now, and again appeased. It is that by which, at this very time, my hand is writing, and my heart resolving, what to believe, and how to practise. In a word, my soul is myself; and therefore, when I speak of my soul, I speak of no other person but myself.

Not as if I totally excluded this earthly substance of my body from being a part of myself: I know it is. But I think it most reasonable to denominate myself from my better part. For, alas! take away my soul, and my body of course moulders into dust, from whence it was taken. "All flesh is grass," says the Prophet, "and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field."

And this is no metaphorical expression, but a real truth; for what is that which I feed upon but merely grass, digested into corn, flesh, and the like, which, by a second digestion, is transfused and converted into the substance of my body? And hence it is, that my body is but like the grass, or flower of the field, fading, transient, and momentary; to day flourishing in all its glory, tomorrow cut down, dried up, and withered.

But how far is this beneath the spiritual and incorruptible nature of my soul, which subsists of itself, and can never be dissolved; being not compounded of any earthly or elementary matter, as the body is, but a pure spiritual substance, infused into me by God, to whom, after a short abode in the body, it is to return, and live for ever, either in a state of happiness or misery!

But must it so indeed? How much then does it concern me, seriously to bethink myself where I had best to lead this everlasting life, in eternal glory, or infernal misery! But betwixt these, as there is no medium, so there is no comparison; and therefore I shall not put it to

the question, which place to choose to live in? but I, this morning, with the leave of the Most High God, do choose the land of Canaan, the kingdom of heaven, to be the lot of mine inheritance, the only seat of bliss and glory, for my soul to rest and dwell in to all eternity.

But the King of that glorious place hath told me, that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads to eternal life, and that there be but few that find it;” (*Matt.* vii. 14;) yea, and that “many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” (*Luke* iii. 21.)

What, therefore, must I do? Why, I must either resolve to make it my whole business to get to heaven, or else I must never hope to come thither. Without any further dispute, therefore, I resolve, in the presence of Almighty God, that from this day forward I will make it my whole business upon earth, to look after my happiness in heaven, and to walk circumspectly in those blessed paths that God hath appointed all to walk in, that ever expect to come to him.

Now, though there be but one way, and that a narrow one too, that leads to heaven; yet there are two things requisite to all those that walk in it, and they are faith and obedience: to believe and to live aright. And these two are so inseparably united, that the latter cannot well be supposed without the former; for I cannot obey what God hath commanded me, unless I first believe what he hath taught me; and they are both equally difficult as they are necessary. Indeed, of the two, I think it is harder to lay the sure foundation of faith, than to build the superstructure of obedience upon it; for it seems next to impossible for one that believes every truth, not to obey every command, that is written in the word of God.

But it is not so easy a thing, as is commonly thought, to believe the word of God; especially in these times, in which there are so many pernicious errors and damnable heresies crept into the articles of some men’s faith, as do not only shock the foundation of the Church of CHRIST, but strike at the root of all religion.

The first thing, therefore, that, by the grace of **GOD**, I am resolved to do in reference to my everlasting estate is, to see my faith, that it be both rightly placed, and firmly fixed, that I may not be as a “wave, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning craftiness of those that lie in wait to deceive;” but that I may be thoroughly settled in my faith concerning those things, the knowledge of which is absolutely necessary to my future happiness. Let, therefore, what times soever come upon me; let what temptation soever be thrown upon me; I am resolved, by the grace of **GOD**, steadfastly to believe as followeth:—

### ARTICLE I.

*I believe there is one **GOD**, the Being of all Beings.*

IN that I think I am, sure I am; and in that I am, I am sure there is a **GOD**; for if there was no **GOD**, how came I to be? How came I hither? Who gave me my being? Myself? That could not be; for before I had a being I was nothing, and therefore could do nothing, much less make myself a being. Did my parents give me my being? Alas! they knew not what I should be, before I was; and, therefore, certainly could not give me my being when I was not.

As to my soul, it is plain they could not give me that, because it is a being of a spiritual nature, quite distinct from matter, as my own experience tells me, and therefore could not be the product of any material agent; for, that a bodily substance should give being to a spiritual one, implies a contradiction; and if it could neither make itself, nor take its rise from any earthly cause, I may certainly conclude, that it must be infused by **GOD**, though I am not able to determine either when or how it was done.

As to my body, I must own it was derived from my

parents, who were immediately concerned in bringing the materials of it together; but then, who made up these coarse materials into the form or figure of a body? Was this the effect of natural generation? But how came my parents by this generative power? Did they derive it by succession from our first parents in paradise? Be it so. But whence came they? Did they spring out of the earth? No. What then? Were they made by chance? This could not be; for as chance never produces one effect that is regular and uniform, so it cannot be supposed that a being of such admirable beauty, symmetry, and proportion, and such a nice contexture of parts, as the body of a man is, should ever be jumbled together by a fortuitous concourse of atoms.

And the like may be said of all other created beings in the world: for there is no natural cause can give being to any thing, unless it has that being it gives in itself; for it is a received maxim in philosophy, that nothing can give what it has not. And so, however the bodies of men, or brutes, or plants, may now, in the ordinary course of nature, be produced by generation, yet there must needs be some one Supreme Almighty Being in the world, that has the being of all other beings in itself, who first created these several species, and endued them with power to propagate their kind; and this Supreme Being is that which we call God.

Hence it is that there is not a leaf, no, not a line in this great book of the creation, wherein we may not plainly read the existence and perfections of the great and glorious Creator. For who is it that bedecked yonder stately canopy of heaven with those glittering spangles, the stars? Who is it that commands the sun to run its course, and the moon to ride its circuit so constantly about the world? Who is it that formed me so curiously in my mother's womb? Who is it that gives my stomach power to digest such variety of meats into chyle, and my heart or liver to turn them all to blood, and thence to send each particle to its proper place, and all to keep up this crazy carcase?

Doubtless these, however ordinary or natural they may appear, are very great and wonderful effects, that must at first be produced by some infinitely powerful Agent, the high and mighty God, who is not only the Chief of beings, but the Being of all beings whatsoever.

I say the Being of all beings, because whatsoever excellency or perfection is in any other thing, is eminently, yea, infinitely comprehended in him; yea, He is not only all-wise, all-good, all-mighty, &c., but he is all wisdom, all goodness, all might, all mercy, all justice, all glory, &c. And as He is the ocean of all these perfections in himself, so is He the fountain of them all to us; inso-much that we have nothing, not so much as the least moment of life, but what is communicated to us from this everlasting God. And not only what we poor sinful worms are, or have, but even whatsoever those nobler creatures, the angels, have, it is but a beam darted from this Sun; it is but a stream flowing from this overflowing Fountain.

Lift up thine eyes, therefore, O my soul, and fix them a little upon this glorious object! How transcendently glorious must He needs be who is the Being of all beings, the perfection of all perfections, the very glory of all glories, the eternal God? He is the glory of all love and goodness, who is good, and doeth good continually unto me, though I be evil, and do evil continually against him. He is the glory of wisdom and knowledge, unto whom all the secret thoughts, the inward motions of my soul, are exactly known and manifest.

Never did a thought lurk so secretly in my heart, but his all-seeing eye could espy it out. Even at this time he knows what I am now thinking of, and what I am now doing, as well as myself. And, indeed, well may he know what I think, and speak, and do, when I can neither think, nor speak, nor do any thing, unless himself be pleased to give me strength to do it. He is the glory of might and power, who did but speak the word, and there presently went out that commanding power from him by

which this stately fabric of the world was formed and fashioned.

And as he created all things by the word of his power, so I believe he preserves and governs all things by the power of the same word. Yea, so great is his power, that he can as easily frown my soul from my body into hell or nothing, as I can throw this book out of my hand upon the ground; nay, he need not throw me into nothing, but as, if I should let go my hold, the book would presently fall; so, should God but take away his supporting hand from under me, I should of myself immediately fall down to nothing. This, therefore, is that God whom I believe to be the Being of all beings: and so the Creator, Preserver, Governor, and Disposer of all things in the world.



## ARTICLE II.

*I believe that whatsoever the Most High God would have me to believe or do, in order to his glory and my happiness, he hath revealed to me in his Holy Scriptures.*

UPON the same account that I believe there is a God, I believe, likewise, that this God is to be worshipped; the same light that discovers the one, discovering the other too.

Worship being that which is contained in the very notion of a Deity; which is, that he is the Being of all beings, upon whom all other things or beings do depend. And if there be such a Being, that is the spring and fountain of all other beings, it is necessary that all other should reverence and worship him, without whom they could not subsist; and therefore it is that men are generally more superstitious in their worshipping than they ought



to be, rather than deny that worship to him which they ought to give.

That, therefore, there is a God, and that this God is to be worshipped, I do not doubt; but the great question is, who is this God, whom I ought to worship? And, what is that worship which I ought to perform unto him? The former I have resolved upon in the foregoing article; the latter I am resolved to search out in this, *viz.*, Which of all the several kinds of worship, that men perform to the Deity, I had best make choice of. The general inclinations which are naturally implanted in my soul to some religion, it is impossible for me to shift off; but there being such a multiplicity of religions in the world, I desire now seriously to consider which of them all to restrain these my general inclinations to.

For though I do not in the least question but that I shall, upon inquiry, find the Christian Religion to be the only true religion in the world, yet I cannot say it is, unless I find it, upon good grounds, to be so indeed: for, to profess myself a Christian, and believe that Christians are in the right, only because my forefathers were so, is no more than the Heathens and Mahometans have to say for themselves.

That, therefore, I may make impartial inquiry into all religions, and so be sure to find out the best, I shall, for a time, look upon myself as one not at all interested in any particular religion whatsoever, but only as one who desires, in general, to serve and obey him that made me in a right manner, and thereby to be made partaker of that happiness my nature is capable of. In order to this, it will be necessary to propose to myself some certain marks or characters, whereby I may be able to judge and make choice of the religion I intend to embrace: and they are, in general, these two, *viz.* :—

*First*, That is the best religion wherein God is worshipped and served most like himself, *i. e.*, most suitably and conformably to his nature and will. And,

*Secondly*, Since all men naturally desire happiness, and our greatest happiness consists in the fruition of God, that is certainly the best religion, which gives me the best and most comfortable assurances of being happy with God to all eternity.

To embrace a religion without these marks would be worse than to have no religion at all; for better it is to perform no worship to God, than such as is displeasing to him; to do him no service than such as will be ineffectual to make me happy, and not only frustrate my expectations of bliss, but make me for ever miserable.

The religion, then, that I am to look after, must be such a one, wherein I may be sure to please God, and to be made happy with him; and, by consequence, such a one, wherein all the cause of his displeasure and my misery may be removed; and that is, sin. For sin being infinitely opposite to him, as he is a Being of infinite holiness, must certainly set me at the greatest distance from him, and render me most odious in his sight; and whatsoever does so, must make me miserable.

For as our holiness consisteth in likeness, so doth our happiness in nearness to God: and if it be our happiness to be near unto him, it must certainly be our misery to be at a distance from him. In enjoying him we enjoy all things, he being and having all things in himself; and so, in not enjoying him, we are not only deprived of all that we can enjoy, but made liable to the punishments that are the consequence of it.

That there is no such thing in nature as virtue and vice, as good and evil, is what I can, by no means, persuade myself to; for my conscience tells me that there is: and not only mine, but every one that ever yet lived upon the face of the earth; all people, of whatsoever nation or language, still acknowledging sin to be sin, and that the displeasing the Deity, which they worship, is indeed an evil that ought to be carefully avoided. And therefore, the very Heathens did not only upbraid others with it, but likewise often checked themselves for it: and all men naturally desire

to seem, though not to be, holy. But let others say what they will, I, for my own part, cannot but see sin in myself; for, if **GOD** be **GOD**, He must be just and perfect; and if I be not so, I am not like him, and therefore, must needs displease him; it being impossible any thing should please him, but what is like unto him. And this disagreement with the will and nature of **GOD**, is that which we call sin.

And being thus conscious to myself that I have sinned against my Maker, I may reasonably conclude that as he is omniscient, and, by consequence, a witness of these my offences, so must He likewise be just in the punishment of them; and these punishments must be infinite and eternal: for wherein doth the nature of divine justice consist, but in giving to sin its just punishments, as well as to virtue its due rewards? Now, that the punishment of sin in this world is not so much as it deserves, nor, by consequence, as much as, in justice, ought to be laid upon it, to me is clear, in that every sin being committed against an infinite **GOD**, deserves infinite punishment; whereas all the punishments we suffer in this world cannot be any more than finite.

Upon these grounds I am fully satisfied that I am a sinner; and that it cannot stand with the justice of **GOD** that made me, to pardon my sins, without satisfaction made to his divine justice for them; and yet, that unless they be pardoned, it is impossible for me to be happy here, or hereafter; and therefore must I look after some religion, wherein I may be sure my sins may be thus pardoned, and my soul made happy; wherein I may please **GOD**, and **GOD** bless me. Which that I may be the better able to discover, I shall take a brief survey of all the religions I ever heard of.

Now, though there be as many kinds of religions as nations, yea, almost as particular persons in the world; yet may they all be reduced to these four; the Paganish, Mahometan, Jewish, and Christian Religion.

As to the first, it is indeed of a very large extent, and

comprehends under it all such as neither acknowledge Mahomet to be a Prophet, nor expect a promised Messiah, nor believe in a crucified JESUS. Now let me see, whether the Paganish religion, being farther extended, and more generally professed than any, or indeed all the rest, be not the true religion, wherein GOD is most rightly worshipped, and I may be the most certainly saved. And here, when I take a view of this religion, as it is dispersed through several parts of Asia, Africa, and America, I find them very devout in worshipping their deities, such as they are, and they have great numbers of them: some worship the sun; others, the moon and stars; others, the earth and other elements, serpents, trees, and the like. Others pay adoration to images and statues, in the fashion of men and women, hogs, horses, and other shapes, and some to the Devil himself.

But now, to go no farther, this seems to me, at first sight, to be a very strange and absurd sort of religion; or rather, it is quite the reverse of it: for, the true notion we have of religion, is the worshipping the true GOD, in a true manner; and this is the worshipping false gods, in a false manner. For I cannot entertain any other notion of GOD, than as one supreme Almighty Being, who made and governs all things, and who, as he is a Spirit, ought to be worshipped in a spiritual manner; and, therefore, as the very supposing more deities than one, implies a contradiction; so the paying divine homage, in a gross, carnal manner, to material and corporeal beings, which are either the work of men's hands, or, at best, but creatures like ourselves, which can neither hear nor understand what we say to them, much less give us what we desire of them, is not religion, but idolatry and superstition, or rather madness and delusion.

So that this religion, I see, if I should embrace it, would be so far from making me happy, that the more zealous I should be for it, the more miserable I should be by it; for he that made these things cannot but be very angry at me, if I should give that worship to them which is only

due to himself; and so, the way, whereby I expect my sins should be pardoned, they would be more increased. Therefore, leaving their superstitious idolatries, and diabolical delusions, I must go and seek for the true religion somewhere else.

The next religion, that hath the most votes on its side, is the Mahometan Religion; so called from one MAHOMET an Arabian, who about a thousand years ago, by the assistance of one SERGIUS, a Nestorian Monk, compiled a book in the Arabian tongue, which he called Al Koran, and made the rule of his followers' faith and manners; pretending that it was sent from heaven to him by the hand of the angel GABRIEL.

This book I have perused, and find many things in it agreeable to right reason; as, that there is but one God, gracious and merciful, the LORD of the whole universe; that this GOD we are to resign ourselves wholly to; that all that obey him shall be certainly rewarded, and all that disobey him, as certainly punished. But yet I dare not venture my soul upon it, because, as there are many things consonant, so are there many things dissonant to the light that is implanted in me; as, that GOD should swear by figs and olives, by Mount Sinai, as this book makes him to do in the Chapter of the Figs; that SOLOMON should have an army composed of men, and devils, and birds; and that he should discourse with a bird, which acquainted him with the affairs of the Queen of Sheba.

As to the argument, whereby he would persuade us that this book was sent us from GOD, *viz.*, That there are no contradictions in it, I take it to be very false and frivolous; for, besides that there are many books compiled by men, which have no contradiction in them, it is certain, there are a great many plain contradictions in this book. Thus, in the Chapter of the Table, he saith, that "all that believe in God, and the resurrection of the dead, and have done good works, shall be saved;" but in the Chapter of Gratification, he saith, "All that do not believe in the Koran shall be destroyed." In like manner, he tells us in the

Chapter of the Table, that the books of the Old and New Testament were sent from **GOD**; and, at the same time supposes, that the **Koran** was sent from him too; which, to me, seems impossible. For my reason tells me, that **GOD**, who is truth and wisdom itself, cannot be guilty of falsehood or contradiction: and if these books contradict one another, as it is evident they do in many instances, it is plain **GOD** could not be the author of both; and by consequence, if the Scripture be true, the **Koran** must of necessity be false. To instance but in one particular: the **Koran** says, in the Chapter of Women, ‘**GOD** hath no Son;’ the Scripture, **GOD** said of **JESUS**, “This is my beloved **SON**, in whom I am well pleased:” (*Matt. iii. 17*;) and it expressly calls that “**JESUS**, the **SON** of **GOD**.” (*Heb. iv. 14*.) Now it is impossible that both these should be true; or, by consequence, that that should be true which says both are so.

But there is still another objection against this religion, and that is, the rewards therein promised will not avail to make me happy, though I should be partaker of them; for all the promises made to us in this Paradise are but mere sensible pleasures; as, that we shall have all manner of herbs and fruits, and drinks, and women with exceeding great and black eyes; and such pleasures as these, though they may indeed affect my body, yet they cannot be the happiness of my soul.

Indeed, I know not how this book should promise any higher happiness than that of the body, because it shows no means of attaining to it; it shows no way how my sins may be pardoned, and so my soul made happy. It saith, I confess, that **GOD** is gracious and merciful, and therefore will pardon them; but my reason tells me, that as **GOD** is gracious and merciful, and therefore will pardon sin; so is he also just and righteous, and therefore must punish it. And how these two can stand together, is not manifested in the **Koran**; and therefore I dare not trust my soul with it.

Thus, upon diligent search, have I found the two

religions, that are most generally professed, to have little of religion in them. I shall, therefore, in the next place, take a view of that religion which hath the fewest followers, and that is, the Jewish : a religion, not established by any human laws, nor indeed generally professed in any nation ; but only by a company of despicable people scattered up and down the world.

The principles of this religion are contained in a book, written in the Hebrew tongue, which they call the Law, composed of several precepts, promises, and threatenings ; together with histories of things past, and prophecies of things to come. This book, they say, was written by men inspired by God himself ; and, therefore, they avouch it not to be a human invention, but merely of divine institution.

This book, also, I have diligently read and examined into, and must ingenuously confess, that at the very first glance methought I read divinity in it, and could not but conclude, from the majesty of its style, the purity of its precepts, the harmony of its parts, the certainty of its promises, and the excellency of its rewards, that it could be derived from no other author but God himself. It is here only that I find my Maker worshipped under the proper notion of a Deity, as he is JEHOVAH ; and that in the right manner, for we are here commanded “ to love and serve him with all our hearts, with all our souls, our might and mind ; ” (*Deut.* iv. 5, x. 12 ; ) which is, indeed, the perfection of all true worship. And as God is here worshipped aright, so is the happiness which is here entailed upon this true worship, the highest that it is possible a creature should be capable of ; being nothing less than the enjoyment of him we worship, so as to have him to be “ a God to us, and ourselves to be a people to Him.” (*Jer.* xxxi. 33.)

But that which I look upon still as the surest character of the true religion is, its holding forth the way, how I, being a sinner, can be invested with this happiness ; or how God can show his justice in punishing sin in itself,

and yet be so merciful as to pardon and remit it to me, and so receive me to his favour; which the religions I viewed before did not so much as pretend to, nor offer at all at. And this is what this Book of the Law does likewise discover to me, by showing, that **GOD ALMIGHTY** would not visit our sins upon ourselves, but upon another person; that he would appoint and ordain one to be our Sponsor or Mediator, who, by his infinite merit, should bear and atone for our iniquities, and so show his love and mercy in justifying and acquitting us from our sins, at the same time that he manifests his justice in inflicting the punishment of them upon this person, in our stead. A method so deep and mysterious, that if **GOD** himself had not revealed it, I am confident no mortal man could ever have discovered or thought of it!

Neither are there any doubts and scruples concerning this great mystery, but what this book does clearly answer and resolve; as will appear more plainly from a distinct consideration of the several objections that are urged against it.

As, *Obj.* 1. That it does not seem agreeable to reason, that one man should bear the sins of another, because every man has enough to do to bear his own burden; and since sin is committed against an infinite **GOD**, and therefore deserves infinite punishment, how can any finite creature bear this infinite punishment, especially it being due to so many thousands of people as there are in the world?

But this book sufficiently unties this knot, by showing me, that it is not a mere man, but **GOD** himself, that would bear these my sins, even He whose name is, “The **LORD** our Righteousness,” (*Jer.* xxxiii. 6,) where the essential name of the Most High **GOD**, which cannot possibly be given to any but to Him who is the Being of all beings, is given to him who should thus bear my sins and justify my person; whence **DAVID** also calleth him **LORD**. (*Psal.* cx. 1.) **ISAIAH** calleth him, “The mighty **GOD**.” (*Isai.* ix. 6.) Yea, and the **LORD** of Hosts



himself, with his own mouth, calleth him "His Fellow."  
(*Zech. xiii. 7.*)

*Obj. 2.* But how can GOD suffer any punishments? Or, suppose he could, how can one nature satisfy for the offences of another? It was man that stood guilty; and how can it stand with the justice of GOD not to punish man for the sins he is guilty of?

To resolve this doubt, this holy book assures me, that this GOD should become man; expressly telling me, that as his name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty GOD, the everlasting FATHER, the Prince of Peace," (*Isai. ix. 6.*) so should he be born a child, and given as a Son. And therefore at the same time that the LORD of Hosts calls him "His Fellow," he calls him a man too: "Against the man that is my Fellow, says the LORD of Hosts."  
(*Zech. xiii. 7.*)

*Obj. 3.* But if he be born as other men are, he must needs be a sinner, as other men be; for such as are born by natural generation, must necessarily be born also in natural corruption.

To remove this obstacle, this holy book tells me, that "a virgin shall conceive and bear this SON, and his name shall be IMMANUEL." (*Isai. vii. 14.*) And so being begotten, but not by a sinful man, himself shall be a man, but not a sinful man; and so being GOD and man, he is every way fit to mediate betwixt GOD and man, to reconcile GOD to me, and me to GOD; that my sins may be pardoned, GOD's wrath appeased, and so my soul made happy in the enjoyment of him.

But there is one thing that keeps me from settling upon this religion; and that is, the expiration of the time in which this book promiseth this person should come into the world; for it is expressly said, "That seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy city, to finish the transgressions, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision, and the prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." (*Dan. ix. 24.*)

From which anointing, he is in the next verse called “**MESSIAH**, the Anointed;” (under which name he is, from hence, expected by the Jews;) and the beginning of these seventy weeks is expressly said, “to be at the going forth of the commandment to build and restore Jerusalem.” (*Ver.* 25.) Now, if we understand these seventy weeks in the largest sense, for seventy weeks, or “Sabbaths of years,” (as it is expressed, *Lev.* xxv. 8,) the time of the **MESSIAH**’s coming must have been but 490 years after the commandment for the building of the city; whereas, whether we understand it of the decree and commandment that **CYRUS** made, (*2 Chron.* xxxvi. 22, 23, *Ezra* i. 1—3,) or that which **DARIUS** made, (*Ezra* vi.,) or that **ARTAXERXES** made, (*chap.* vii.,) it is evident, that it is above 2000 years since they were all made; and therefore the time of this person’s coming hath been expired above 1600 years at least.

So likewise doth this Book of the Law (as they call it) assure us, that “the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until **SHILOH** come;” (*Gen.* xlix. 10;) where the Jews themselves, **JONATHAN** and **ONKELOS**, expound the word **SHILOH** by **MESSIAH**; and so doth the Jerusalem Targum too. Now, it is plain, that there hath been neither sceptre nor lawgiver in Judah, nor any political government at all among the Jews, for above 1600 years; which plainly shows, that either their prophecies of a Messiah are false, or he came into the world many ages since.

So likewise it was expressly foretold in this book, that “the glory of the second temple should be greater than the glory of the former.” (*Hag.* ii. 9.) Now the Jews themselves acknowledge, that there were five of the principal things, which were in the first, wanting in the second temple, *viz.*, 1. The Ark, with the mercy-seat, and cherubim. 2. The Shechinah, or Divine presence. 3. The Holy Prophetical Spirit. 4. The Urim and Thummim. 5. The Heavenly Fire. Yea, and when the very foundation of the second temple was laid, the old men

that had seen the first, wept to see how far short it was likely to come of the former. (*Ezra* iii. 12.) To make therefore the glory of the second temple to be greater than the glory of the first, notwithstanding the want of so many glorious things, they must, of necessity, understand it of the coming of the MESSIAH into it, who is called, "The Desire of all Nations;" (*ver.* 8;) whereas the Jews themselves cannot but confess, that this temple hath been demolished above 1600 years; and therefore it is impossible now for the MESSIAH to come into it.

Indeed, the time of the MESSIAH's coming was so expressly set down in these and the like places, that ELIAS, one of their great Rabbies, gathered from hence, that the world should last 6000 years; 2000 without the Law, 2000 under the Law, and 2000 under the MESSIAH; (*Sanh.* c. 11;) which computation of the MESSIAH's coming after 4000 years from the beginning of the world, comes near the time of the sceptre's departing from Judah, and the end of DANIEL's seventy weeks.

Hence it is that my reason draws me into this dilemma, either that book which the Jews receive as the word of God is indeed not so, or else they do not rightly apply it; and therefore I must go hence, and seek some other religion to fix my soul upon. Not as if my reason told me, that the prophecies I have mentioned were false in themselves: I cannot shake off my faith in this law, especially now I have so seriously perused it, and so deliberately weighed and considered it; neither can I believe that ever any Mahometan, or Indian, that did, without prejudice, set himself to read it through, and to examine every particular by the light of unbiassed reason, could say, it was ever hatched in a human brain; but that it is indeed of a heavenly stamp, and divine authority; and therefore, though I am forced by the strength of reason to shake hands with this religion, yet the same reason will not suffer me to lay aside that Law which they do profess, but only their profession of it. So that whatsoever religion I settle upon, my conscience still commands me to stick

close to this book of the Jewish law, and to receive and entertain it, as the word of the glorious JEHOVAH, the Being of all beings.

There is but one religion more generally professed in the world, that I am to search into; and that is, the Christian Religion, so named from JESUS CHRIST, whose doctrine, life, and death, are recorded by four several persons, in a book which they call the Gospel. And this book appears to me to be of undoubted authority, as to the truth and certainty of those things that are therein recorded; for, if they had been false, both the persons that wrote them, and he of whom they wrote, had so many malicious enemies, ready upon all occasions to accuse them, that they had long ago been condemned for lies and forgeries. But now these writings having been extant for above 1600 years, and even by the worst of enemies acknowledged to be a true relation of what passed in the world about that time; my reason will not permit me to be their first accuser, but enjoins me to receive them under that notion, in which they have been brought down to me through so many generations. For this general reception, on all hands, is a sufficient ground for me to build my faith upon, as to the truth of the relation, though not a sufficient ground to believe every thing contained in the book to be the word of God himself: for, in this particular, it is not the testimony of others that I am to build upon, but its own: I may read its verity in man's testimony, but its divinity only in its own doctrines.

This book I have also diligently perused, and find it expressly asserts that JESUS CHRIST, whose life and death it records, was indeed that person who was long promised by God; and that all the Prophecies under the old law concerning that MESSIAH, God-Man, were actually fulfilled in this Person; which, if upon diligent search I find to be true, I shall presently subscribe both with hand and heart to this religion. It is a comfort to me, that it acknowledgeth the Jewish law to be sent from God: for truly, if it did not, my conscience would scarce permit me to give any

credit to it, being so fully convinced that *that* book is indeed of a higher extract than human invention. And therefore it is, that I cannot, I dare not believe, but that every particular Prophécy contained in it, either is or shall be certainly fulfilled, according to every circumstance of time and place mentioned therein; and, by consequence, that this prophecy in particular, concerning the MESSIAH's coming, is already past; the time wherein it was foretold he should come being so long expired. So that I do not now doubt, whether the MESSIAH be come or no, but whether this JESUS CHRIST was indeed the person. And this I shall best find out by comparing the Christian Gospel with the Jewish Law; or the histories of CHRIST under the one, with the prophecies of the MESSIAH under the other; still concluding, that if whatsoever was foretold concerning the MESSIAH, was fulfilled in this JESUS CHRIST, then he was indeed the MESSIAH that was to come into the world; and to make this comparison the more exact, I shall run through the several circumstances that attended his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

And first, for the birth of the MESSIAH, the Law saith, he was to be "born of the seed of ABRAHAM," (*Gen.* xxii. 18,) and "DAVID," (*2 Sam.* vii. 12,) and of "the stem of JESSE." (*Isai.* xi. 1.) From whence he is frequently called by the Jews, "the Son of DAVID." The Gospel saith, that "JESUS CHRIST was the Son of DAVID, the Son of ABRAHAM." (*Matt.* i. 1.) The Law, that he was to be "born of a virgin;" (*Isai.* vii. 14;) the Gospel, that "MARY, a virgin, brought forth this JESUS." (*Matt.* i. 18; *Luke* i. 27, 31, 35; ii. 5—7.) The Law, that "he was to be born at Bethlehem Ephrata;" (*Micah* v. 2;) the Gospel, that this JESUS was born there. (*Matt.* ii. 1; *John* vii. 42.)

The Law says, that "he was to be brought out of Egypt;" (*Hos.* xi. 1;) the Gospel, that JESUS was called thence. (*Matt.* ii. 19, 20.) The Law saith, that "one should go before the MESSIAH," (*Mal.* iii. 1,) and should "cry in

the wilderness ;” (*Isai. xl. 3*;) the Gospel, that JOHN BAPTIST did go before CHRIST. (*Matt. iii. 1, 3*; *Mark i. 2, 3*.) The Law, that the MESSIAH should preach the doctrine of salvation in Galilee, who, sitting before in darkness, should see great light ; (*Isai. ix. 1, 2*;) the Gospel, that JESUS did so. (*Matt. iv. 12, 23*.) The Law, that in the MESSIAH’S days, the “eyes of the blind should be opened, and the ears of the deaf should be unstopped, and the lame leap, and the tongue of the dumb sing ;” (*Isai. xxxv. 5, 6*;) the Gospel, that it was so in the days of JESUS CHRIST. (*Matt. iv. 23* ; *xi. 5*.)

But for all these wonders and miracles, the Law saith, “they should hear, but not understand ; and see, yet not perceive ;” (*Isai. vi. 9*;) and the Gospel, that “seeing, they did not see, and hearing, they did not hear, neither did they understand.” (*Matt. xiii. 13* ; *Mark iv. 12*.) The Law, that he should be “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ;” (*Isai. liii. 3*;) the Gospel, that JESUS CHRIST “had not where to lay his head.” (*Matt. viii. 20*.) “His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death ;” (*Matt. xxvi. 38*;) yea, he was in “an agony, and his sweat was as drops of blood,” (*Luke xxii. 24*;) so well was he acquainted with grief. The Law says, that “he should ride into Jerusalem upon an ass, upon a colt, the foal of an ass ;” (*Zech. ix. 9*;) and the Gospel, that JESUS CHRIST, “as he was going to Jerusalem, having found an ass, sat thereon :” (*John xii. 14* ; *Matt. xxi. 6*;) at which time, the Law saith, the people should cry, Hosanna, “blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD ;” (*Psa. cxviii. 26*;) the Gospel, that the multitude did so to CHRIST. (*Matt. xxi. 9*.) The Law, that “one of his own familiar friends, in whom he trusted, which did eat of his bread, should lift up his heel against him ;” (*Psa. xli. 9*;) the Gospel, that JUDAS, who was one of CHRIST’S disciples, and so eat of his bread, did betray him into the hands of the Jews. (*Matt. xxvi. 47* ; *Luke xxii. 46*.) The Law, that he should be “prized at and sold for thirty pieces of silver,” with which should be

“bought the potter’s field ;” (*Zech. xi. 12, 13*;) the Gospel, that “they covenanted with JUDAS, to betray JESUS for thirty pieces of silver,” (*Matt. xxvi. 15*;) with which they afterwards “bought the potter’s field.” (*Chap. xxvii. 7*.) The Law, that “he should be numbered amongst transgressors ;” (*Isai. liii. 12*;) the Gospel, that “JESUS was crucified betwixt two thieves.” (*Mark xv. 27*; *Matt. xxvii. 38*.) The Law saith, they “should pierce his hands and feet ;” (*Psa. xxii. 16*; *Zech. xii. 10*;) the Gospel, that “they crucified JESUS ;” (*Matt. xxvii. 35*; *Luke xxiii. 33*;) which was a death, wherein they used to pierce the hands and feet of those that were nailed to the cross. But though they should pierce his flesh, yet the Law saith, they should not break his bones, no, not one of them ; (*Exod. xii. 46*; *Num. xi. 12*; *Psa. xxxiv. 20*;) the Gospel, that “they brake not the legs of CHRIST.” (*John xix. 33, 36*.) The Law saith, that they that “should see him, should laugh him to scorn, shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in the LORD that he would deliver him, let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him ;” (*Psa. xxii. 8*;) the Gospel, that the Scribes and Elders did so to CHRIST. (*Matt. xxvii. 42, 43*.) The Law saith, they should “give him gall for meat, and vinegar to drink ;” (*Psa. lxix. 21*;) and the Gospel, that they gave CHRIST “vinegar to drink, mingled with gall.” (*Matt. xxvii. 34, 48*.) The Law, that they should “part his garments amongst them, and cast lots upon his vesture ;” (*Psa. xxii. 19*;) the Gospel, that “they parted JESUS’s garments, casting lots.” (*Matt. xxvii. 34*; *John xix. 23*; *Mark xv. 24*.)

And as for the time of his coming into the world, it is certain, that this JESUS came before the second temple was demolished ; by which means “the glory of the second temple is greater than the glory of the first,” according to the prophecy : (*Hag. ii. 9*;) and as for JACOB’S prophecy, that “the sceptre should not depart from JUDAH, nor the Lawgiver, until SHILOH,” or the MESSIAH, “come ;” (*Gen. xlix. 10*;) it is certain, that it did not depart from

JUDAH, until HEROD, by the Senate of Rome, was made King of Judea: in whose days this JESUS was born. (*Matt.* ii. 1; *Luke* i. 5.) And so did DANIEL'S seventy weeks, or 490 years, exactly reach unto, and were determined in, the days of this JESUS: so that all the old prophecies concerning the time of the MESSIAH'S coming, are perfectly fulfilled in this JESUS of Nazareth.

But farther, the Law saith, that though the MESSIAH should be crucified, yet "God would not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption." (*Psa.* xvi. 10.) Now the Gospel saith, that this "JESUS rose from the dead;" (*Matt.* xxviii. 6; *Luke* xxiv. 6;) and that "he was seen of several after his resurrection," as of MARY MAGDALENE, (*Matt.* xxviii. 9,) "of the eleven disciples," (*ver.* 16—18; *Mark* xvi. 14,) of "the two that were going to Emmaus," (*Luke* xxiv. 13—15,) of PETER, (*ver.* 34,) and of "the disciples that were gathered together, the door being shut." (*John* xx. 19.) "And he did eat before them;" (*Luke* xxiv. 43;) which it is impossible for a spirit to do; yea, "he was seen of above five hundred at one time," (*1 Cor.* xv. 6,) and of PAUL himself. (*Ver.* 8.) Neither did he lie so long as to see corruption; for he was buried but the day before the sabbath, (*Mark* xv. 42,) and rose the day after. (xvi. 1.)

Lastly, The Law saith, "he was to ascend on high, to lead captivity captive, and to give gifts to men." (*Psa.* lxxviii. 18.) And that JESUS did so, is likewise evident from the Gospel; for, "after he had spoken with them, he was received up into heaven, and there sat at the right hand of God." (*Mark* xvi. 19; *Luke* xxiv. 51.) And he gave such gifts to men, that his disciples of a sudden, were enabled to "speak all manner of languages," (*Acts* ii. 8,) to "work many signs and wonders," (*ver.* 12,) "to heal all manner of diseases," (*ver.* 15, 16,) yea, with a word speaking, "to cure a man lame from his mother's womb."

*Chap.* iii. 6, 7.)

Thus the Gospel is a perfect transcript of the Law, and the histories of JESUS are nothing but the prophecies of



CHRIST turned into a history. And when to this I join the consideration of the piety of the life which this man led, the purity of the doctrine which he taught, and the miraculousness of the works he wrought, I cannot but be farther confirmed in the truth of what is here related. The miracles which he wrought, as the healing of the sick with a word of his mouth, raising the dead, feeding so many thousands with five loaves, and the like, were so powerful and convincing, that his very enemies, that would not believe him to be the MESSIAH, could scarce deny him to be a God. (*Joseph. Antiq. l. xviii. c. 4.*)

Neither was the doctrine of the Gospel only established at the first, but likewise propagated by miracles afterwards. And it was no doubt a great miracle, that doctrine so contrary to flesh and blood should be propagated by any means whatsoever; but a far greater, that it should be propagated by a company of simple and illiterate men, who had neither power to force, nor eloquence to persuade, men to the embracing of it. For who would have thought, that such persons as these were, should ever make any of the Jews, who expected a King for their Messiah, to advance them to temporal dignities, believe, that *that* JESUS, whom themselves crucified at Jerusalem, was the person? Or, that they should be able to propagate the Gospel amongst the Gentiles also, who neither believed in the true God, nor expected any Messiah to come and redeem them? But this they did, and brought over, not only many persons, but whole nations to the profession of the Gospel; propagating this most holy doctrine, amongst the most barbarous and sinful people in the world, in spite of all the opposition that the world, the flesh, and the Devil, could make.

Now, can any man, that exerciseth his reason, think they did all this purely by their own strength? No, sure none of these wonderful effects could ever be produced by any thing less than the wisdom, and power, and faithfulness of their LORD and Master, whose service they were engaged in, and who promised to be with them "to the

end of the world." (*Matt.* xxviii. 20.) Questionless it was nothing else but the SPIRIT of the Most High God that went along with them, and accompanied the word they preached; otherwise it never could have made such deep impression upon the hearts of them that heard it, as not only to command their attention, but to hinder them from resisting the power and authority by which the disciples spake.

And now I perceive that it is CHRIST, and CHRIST alone, I am to cast my soul upon; that it is he alone that is the way to life, and his word alone, the word of life, which, "whosoever believes and is baptized into, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Away, then, with your Paganish idolatries, your Mahometan superstitions, and Jewish ceremonies; it is the Christian Religion I am resolved to live and die in, because it is this alone in which I am taught to worship God aright, and to obtain the pardon of my sins, and to be made eternally happy.

And since all its doctrines and precepts are contained in the Holy Scriptures, it is necessary that I should assent unto them, as a standing revelation of God's will, and an eternal treasure of divine knowledge; whereby all that sincerely believe in CHRIST, may be sufficiently instructed, as well as thoroughly furnished, unto every good word and work.

Without any more ado, therefore, I believe, and am verily persuaded, that all the books of the ancient Law, with all those that have been received into the canon of the Scripture, by the Church of God, since the coming of CHRIST, which we call the New Testament, are indeed the word of the eternal God, dictated by his own SPIRIT, and that they contain in them a perfect rule of faith and manners; upon the due observance of which, I cannot fail of worshipping God, in such a manner as will be acceptable to him here, and of enjoying hereafter all that he has reserved in heaven for such as do so.

Unto these books, therefore, of the Law and Gospel, I

am resolved by His grace that wrote them, to conform all the ensuing articles of my faith, and all the actions and resolutions of my life, insomuch, that whatever it hath pleased him herein to assert, I believe it is my duty to believe; and whatsoever he hath been pleased to command me, I believe it is my duty to perform.



### ARTICLE III.

*I believe, that as there is One GOD, so this One GOD is Three Persons, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.*

THIS, I confess, is a mystery which I cannot possibly conceive, yet it is a truth which I can easily believe: yea, I can easily believe it, because it is so high that I cannot possibly conceive it; for it is impossible any thing should be true of the Infinite Creator, which can be fully expressed to the capacities of a finite creature: and, for this reason, I ever did, and ever shall, look upon those apprehensions of GOD to be the truest, whereby we apprehend him to be the most incomprehensible.

Upon this ground, therefore, it is, that the mysteries of the Gospel, which I am less able to conceive, I think myself the more obliged to believe; especially this mystery of mysteries, the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, which I am so far from being able to comprehend, or indeed to apprehend, that I cannot set myself seriously to think about it, but I immediately lose myself: That GOD the FATHER should be one perfect GOD of himself; GOD the SON, one perfect GOD of himself; and GOD the HOLY GHOST, one perfect GOD of himself; and yet these Three should be but one perfect GOD.

O heart-amazing, thought-devouring, inconceivable mystery! Though I cannot possibly conceive how it should be so, I believe it really to be so, *viz.*, That the

Being of all beings is but One in essence, yet Three in subsistence; but One nature, yet Three Persons; and that those Three Persons in that One nature, though absolutely distinct from one another, are yet but the same God.

And I believe these Three Persons in this one nature, are indeed to one another, as they are expressed to be to us; that the one is really a FATHER to the other, that the other is really a SON to him, and the Third the product of both; yet, that there is neither first, second, nor third amongst them, either in time or nature; so that he that begat was not at all before him that was begotten, nor he that proceeded from them both any whit after either of them.

And what I think myself obliged to believe is, that it was not the divine nature, but the divine person of the FATHER, which did from eternity beget the divine person of the SON; and from the divine person of the FATHER and of the SON, did, from eternity, proceed the divine person of the HOLY GHOST; and so one not being before the other, in time or nature, as they are from eternity three perfectly distinct Persons, so they are but one co-essential God.

But dive not, O my soul, too deep into this bottomless ocean, this abyss of mysteries! It is the Holy of Holies; presume not to enter into it; but let this suffice thee, that He, who best knows himself, hath avouched it of himself, and therefore thou oughtest to believe it. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.” (*Matt.* xxviii. 19.) And again, “There are three that bare record in heaven, the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY GHOST: and these Three are One.” (*1 John* v. 7.)

## ARTICLE IV.

*I believe that I was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity ; and that ever since, I have been continually conceiving mischief, and bringing forth vanity.*

UNLESS my heart was naturally very sinful and corrupt, it would be impossible for me not to believe that which I have so much cause continually to bewail ; or if I do not bewail it, I have still the more cause to believe it ; and therefore am so much the more persuaded of it, by how much the less I find myself affected with it ; for certainly I must be a hard-hearted wretch indeed, steeped in sin, and fraught with corruption to the highest, if I know myself so oft to have incensed the wrath of the Most High God against me, as I do, and yet not be sensible of my natural corruption, nor acknowledge myself to be, by nature, a child of wrath, as well as others ; for I verily believe, that the want of such a due sense of myself, argues as much original corruption, as murder and whoredom do actual pollution ; and I shall ever suspect those to be the most under the power of that corruption, that labour most by arguments to divest it of its power.

And therefore, for my own part, I am resolved, by the grace of God, never to go about to confute that by wilful arguments, which I find so true by woeful experience.

If there be not a bitter root in my heart, whence proceeds so much bitter fruit in my life ? Alas ! I can neither set my head nor heart about any thing, but I still show myself to be the sinful offspring of sinful parents ; nay, I do not only betray the inbred venom of my heart by poisoning my common actions, but even my most religious performances, with sin. I cannot pray, but I sin ; I cannot hear, or preach a sermon, but I sin ; I cannot give an alms, or receive the sacrament, but I sin ; nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them ; my repentance needs to be

repented of, my tears want washing with the blood of my Redeemer.

Thus, not only the worst of my sins, but even the best of my duties, speak me a child of ADAM; insomuch, that whensoever I reflect upon my past actions, methinks I cannot but look upon my whole life, from the time of my conception to this very moment, to be but as one continued act of sin.

And whence can such a continued stream of corruption flow, but from the corrupt cistern of my heart? And whence can that corrupt cistern of my heart be filled, but from the corrupt fountain of my nature? Cease, therefore, O my soul, to gainsay the power of original sin within thee, and labour now to subdue it under thee.

But why do I speak of my subduing this sin myself? Surely this would be both an argument of it, and an addition to it. It is to thee, O my God, who art both the searcher and cleanser of hearts, that I desire to make my moan! It is to thee I cry out in the bitterness of my soul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Who shall? O, who can do it but Thyself? Arise thou, therefore, O my God, and show thyself as infinitely merciful in the pardoning, as thou art infinitely powerful in the purging away, my sins.



#### ARTICLE V.

*I believe the SON of GOD became the Son of Man, that I, the son of man, might become the son of GOD.*

O HOW comfortably does this raise me from the lowest abasement of sin and misery, to the highest exaltation of happiness and glory! This is that great article of faith by which all the benefits of our SAVIOUR'S death and passion are made over to me in the New Covenant, and by

which, if I perform the conditions therein required, I shall not only be retrieved from the bondage and corruption that is inherent in me, as a child of wrath, but be justified and accepted as the son of God, and be made a joint-heir with CHRIST.

This is a point of the greatest moment, which, by the assistance of him, of whom I speak, I shall therefore be the more exact in examining into.

Now, when I say and believe that God became man, I do not so understand it, as if the divine nature took upon it a human person, but that a divine person took upon him the human nature, *i. e.*, it was not the divine nature in general, without respect to the persons, but one of the persons in the divine nature, which took flesh upon him; and yet, to speak precisely, it was not the divine person distinct from the divine nature, but it was the divine nature in that person which thus took upon it the human: and this was not the first or third, but the second person only in the Sacred Trinity.

But, on the other side, as it was not the divine nature, but a divine person that did assume, so neither was it a human person, but the human nature, that was assumed; for otherwise, if he had assumed the person of any one man in the world, his death had been beneficial to none but him; whereas now that he has assumed the nature of man in general, all that partake of that nature are capable of partaking of the benefits he purchased for us, by dying in our stead; and thus, under each ADAM, as the representation was universal, so were the effects designed to be: "For as in ADAM all died, even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. xv. 22.)

Again, when I say, the SON of GOD became the Son of Man, I do not mean, as if by this he should cease to be what he was before,—the SON of GOD; for he did not leave his Godhead to take upon him the manhood; but I believe he took the manhood into his Godhead. GOD, therefore, so became man, as to be both perfectly GOD and perfectly man, united together in one person.

I say, in one person ; for if he should be **God** and man in distinct persons, this would avail me more than if he should be **God** only, and not man ; or man only, and not **God** ; because the merit and value of both his active and passive obedience is grounded merely upon the union of the two natures in one and the same person. He therefore, by his life and death, merited so much for us, because the same person that so lived and died was **God** as well as man ; and every action that he did, and every passion that he suffered, was done and suffered by him that was **God**, as well as man.

And hence it is that **CHRIST**, of all the persons in the world, is only fit to be my Redeemer, Mediator, and Surety, because he alone is both **God** and man in one person. If he was not man, he could not undertake that office ; if he was not **God**, he could not perform it. If he was not man, he could not be capable of being bound for me ; if he was not **God**, he would not be able to pay my debt.

It was man by whom the covenant was broken, and therefore man must have suitable punishment laid upon him ; it was **God** with whom it was broken, and therefore **God** must have sufficient satisfaction made unto him ; and as for that satisfaction, it was man that had offended, and therefore man alone could make it suitable ; it was **God** that was offended, and therefore **God** alone could make it sufficient.

The sum of all this is :—Man can suffer, but he cannot satisfy ; **God** can satisfy, but he cannot suffer : but **CHRIST**, being both **God** and man, can both suffer and satisfy too, and so is perfectly fit both to suffer for man, and to make satisfaction unto **God**, to reconcile **God** to man, and man to **God**. And thus, **CHRIST** having assumed my nature into his person, and so satisfied divine justice for my sins, I am received into grace and favour again with the Most High **God**.

Upon this principle, I believe that I, by nature the son of man, am made by grace the son of **God**, as really as



CHRIST, by nature the SON of GOD, was made, by office, the Son of Man; and so, though in myself I may say to corruption, "Thou art my mother," yet in CHRIST I may say to GOD, "Abba, Father."

I believe, that in the same propriety of speech that my earthly father was called the father of my natural self, is GOD the father of my spiritual self. For why was my earthly father called my father, but because that I, as to my natural being, was born of what proceeded from him, *viz.*, his seed? Why so, as to my spiritual being, am I born of what proceeds from GOD,—his SPIRIT.

Thus it is, that I believe that CHRIST, the SON of GOD, became the Son of Man; and thus it is, that I believe myself, the son of man, to be made thereby the son of GOD. "I believe," O my GOD and Father, "do thou help mine unbelief!" And every day more and more increase my faith, until itself shall be done away, and turned into the most perfect vision and fruition of thine own most glorious Godhead!



## ARTICLE VI.

*I believe that CHRIST lived to GOD, and died for sin, that I might die to sin, and live with GOD.*

AND thus, by faith, I follow my SAVIOUR from his incarnation to his death and passion, believing all that he did or suffered to be for my sake; for CHRIST did not only take my nature upon him, but he suffered and obeyed, he underwent miseries, and undertook duties for me; so that not only his passive, but likewise his active obedience unto GOD, in that nature, was still for me. Not as if I believed his duty as man was not GOD's debt by the law of creation: yes, I believe that he owed that obedience unto GOD, that if he had committed but one sin, and that

of the lightest tincture, in all his lifetime, he would have been so far from being able to satisfy for my sins, that he could not have satisfied for his own : “For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those High Priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s.” (*Heb. vii. 26, 27.*)

So that if he had not had these qualifications, in their absolute perfection, he could not have been our High Priest, nor, by consequence, have made atonement for, nor expiated any sins whatsoever; but now, though both as man, and as GOD-Man, or Mediator too, it behoved him to be thus spotless; yet, as being GOD, co-equal with the FATHER, it was not out of duty, but merely upon our account, that he thus subjected his neck to the yoke of his own law; himself, as GOD, being the Lawgiver, and so no more under it than the FATHER himself.

And hereupon it is that I verily believe, that whatsoever CHRIST either did or suffered in the flesh was meritorious: so that I believe my person is as really accepted, by his righteousness imputed to me, as that my sins were laid upon him.

And as for his death, I believe it was not only as much, but infinitely more satisfactory to divine justice, than though I should have died to eternity; for by that means justice is actually and perfectly satisfied already, which it could never have been by my suffering for my sins myself; for if justice, by that means, could ever be satisfied,—if it could ever say, ‘It is enough,’ it could not stand with the same justice, now satisfied, still to inflict punishment; nor, by consequence, could the damned justly scorch in the flames of GOD’s wrath for ever. Neither did the death of my SAVIOUR reach only to the condemning, but likewise to the commanding power of sin; it did not only pluck out its sting, but likewise deprive it of its strength; so that he did not only merit by his death that I should never die for sin, but likewise that I should

die to it. Neither did he only merit by his life that I should be accounted righteous in him before God, but likewise that I should be made righteous in myself by God. Yea, I believe that CHRIST, by his death, hath so fully discharged the debt I owe to God, that now, for the remission of my sins, and the accepting of my person, (if I perform the conditions He requires in his covenant,) I may not only appeal to the throne of grace, but likewise to the judgment-seat of God; I may not only cry, 'Mercy, mercy, O gracious Father,' but 'Justice, justice, my righteous God.' I may not only say, 'LORD, be gracious and merciful,' but 'Be just and faithful to acquit me from that debt, and cancel that bond which my Surety hath paid for me, and which thou hast promised to accept of; being not only "gracious and merciful," but "just and faithful, to forgive me my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness.'" (1 John i. 9.)



## ARTICLE VII.

*I believe that CHRIST rose from the grave, that I might rise from sin: and that he is ascended into heaven, that I may come unto him.*

As CHRIST came from heaven to earth, so I believe he went from earth to heaven, and all for the accomplishment of my salvation; that after he had lived a most holy life, he died a most cruel death; that he was apprehended, arraigned, accused, and condemned, by such as could not pronounce the sentence against him, did not himself, at the same time, vouchsafe them breath to do it. But yet, as it was not in the power of death long to detain the LORD of Life, so I believe he rose again from the dead the third day; he lay three days, that I might believe he was not alive but dead; he rose the third day, that I might

believe he is not dead, but lives: he is now ascended up into heaven, that he may make intercession to GOD's mercy for my soul: thither I believe he is gone, and there I believe he is, not as a private person, but as the Head and SAVIOUR of his Church; and, under this capacity, I believe he is as really preparing my mansion for me there, as I am preparing myself for that mansion here. Nay, I believe that he is not only preparing a mansion for me in heaven, but that himself is likewise preparing me for this mansion upon earth, continually sending down and issuing forth from himself fresh supplies and influences of his grace and SPIRIT, to qualify me for his service, and "make me meet to be partaker of his inheritance with the saints in light."

Which inheritance, I believe, he claims for me, himself having purchased it with the price of his own blood; and as he hath purchased the inheritance itself, so likewise the way unto it for me, and therefore sues out for the pardon of those sins, and subduing those corruptions, which would make me unworthy of it, and for the conveyance of those graces to me, whereby I may walk directly to it; not only saying to his FATHER, concerning me, as PAUL said to PHILEMON concerning ONESIMUS,—“If this thy servant oweth thee any thing, set it upon my account, I will repay it;” but, ‘What this thy servant oweth thee, it is set upon my score already, and I have paid it: what punishment he is indebted to thee, for all the offences he hath committed against thee, behold I have borne them already; see how I have been “wounded for his transgressions, and bruised for his iniquities; the chastisement of his peace was upon me; with my stripes, therefore, let him be healed.”’ (*Isai. liii. 5.*)

Thus, as he once shed his blood for me amongst men, he now pleads it for me before GOD; and that not only for the washing out the guilt of my transgressions, but likewise for the washing away the filth of my corruptions; himself having purchased the donation of the SPIRIT from

the FATHER, he there claims the communication of it unto me.

And that he hath thus undertaken to plead my cause for me, I have it under his own hand and seal; himself, by his SPIRIT, assuring me, that if "I sin, I have an advocate with the FATHER, even JESUS CHRIST the Righteous." (1 John ii. 1.) So that I believe he is not so much my Solicitor at the mercy-seat, as my Advocate at the judgment-seat of GOD; there pleading my right and title to the crown of glory, and to every step of the way that I must go through the kingdom of grace unto it.



### ARTICLE VIII.

*I believe that my Person is only justified by the merit of CHRIST imputed to me; and that my nature is only sanctified by the SPIRIT of CHRIST implanted in me.*

THUS I believe only CHRIST to be my SAVIOUR. It was he alone that trod the wine-press of his FATHER'S wrath; it was he that carried on the great work of my salvation, being himself both the Author and Finisher of it: he alone; for what person or persons in the world could do it besides himself? The angels could not, if they would; the devils would not, if they could; and as for my fellow-creatures, I may as well satisfy for their sins as they for mine; and how little able even the best of us are to do either, *i. e.*, to atone either for our own transgressions, or those of others, every man's experience will sufficiently inform him: for how should we, poor worms of the earth, ever hope to raise a tower, "whose top may reach heaven?" Can we expect, by the strength of our own hands, to take heaven by violence? Or, by the price of our works, to purchase eternal glory? It is a matter of

admiration to me, how any one that pretends to the use of reason, can imagine, that he should be accepted before **GOD** for what comes from himself! For how is it possible that I should be justified by good works, when I can do no good works at all before I be justified? My works cannot be accepted as good, until my person be so; nor can my person be accepted by **GOD**, until first engrafted into **CHRIST**; before which engrafting into the true vine, it is impossible I should bring forth good fruit; for the “plowing of the wicked is sin,” (*Prov.* xxi. 4,) says **SOLOMON**, “yea, the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the **LORD**.” (*Chap.* xv. 8.) And if both the civil and spiritual actions of the wicked be sin, which of all their actions shall justify them before **GOD**?

I know not how it is with others, but for my own part I do not remember, neither do I believe, that I ever prayed with that reverence, or heard with that attention, or received the sacrament with that faith, or did any other work whatsoever, with that pure heart and single eye, as I ought to have done; insomuch that I look upon all my “righteousness but as filthy rags;” and it is in the robes only of the righteousness of the **SON** of **GOD**, that I dare appear before the **Majesty** of heaven. Nay, suppose I could at length attain to that perfection as to do good works, works exactly conformable to the will of **GOD**, yet, they must have better eyes than I, that can see how my obedience in one kind can satisfy for my disobedience in another; or how that which **GOD** commands from me, should merit any thing from him.

No, I believe there is no person can merit any thing from **GOD**, but he that can do more than is required of him; which it is impossible any creature should do. For in that it is a creature it continually depends upon **GOD**, and therefore is bound to do every thing it can for him; especially considering that the creature’s dependance upon **GOD** is such, that it is beholden to him even for every action that issues from it; without whom, as it is impos-

sible any thing should be, so likewise that any thing should act, especially what is good.

Upon this account, I shall never be induced to believe that any creature, by any thing it doeth or can do, can merit or deserve any thing at the hand of GOD, until it can be proved that a creature can merit by that which GOD doeth; or that GOD can be bound to bestow any thing upon us, for that which himself alone is pleased to work in us, and by us.

It is not therefore in the power of any person in the world to merit any thing from GOD, but such a one who is absolutely co-essential with him, and so depends not upon him, either for his existence or actions; and as there is no person can merit any thing from GOD, unless he be essentially the same with him, so likewise unless he be personally distinct from him; forasmuch as, though a person may be said to merit for himself, yet he cannot be said to merit any thing from himself. So that he that is not as perfectly another person from GOD, as really the same in nature with him, can never be said to merit any thing at his hands.

From all which I may safely fix my faith in this Article, *viz.*, That there was only one person in the whole world that could do this great work for me, of justifying my person before GOD, and so glorifying my soul with him; and that was the SON of GOD, the Second Person in the glorious Trinity, begotten of the Substance of the FATHER, from all eternity; whom I believe to have brought about the great work of my justification before GOD, after this or the like manner.

He being, in and of himself, co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal with the FATHER, was in no sort bound to do more than the FATHER himself did; and so, whatsoever he should do, which the FATHER did not, might justly be accounted as a work of supererogation; which, without any violation of divine justice, might be set upon the account of some other persons. And hereupon, out of compassion to fallen man, he covenants with his FATHER,

that if it pleased his Majesty to accept it, he would take upon him the suffering of those punishments which were due from him to man, and the performance of those duties which were due from man to him ; so that whatsoever he should thus humble himself to do or suffer, should wholly be upon the account of man, himself not being any ways bound to do or suffer more in time than he had from eternity.

This motion, the FATHER, out of the riches of his grace and mercy, was pleased to consent unto : And hereupon, the SON, assuming our nature, becomes subject and obedient both to the moral and ceremonial laws of his FATHER ; and at last to death itself, “ even the death of the cross.” In the one he paid an active, in the other, a passive obedience ; and so did not only fulfil the will of his FATHER, in obeying what he had commanded, but satisfied his justice in suffering the punishment due to us for the transgressing of it. His active obedience, as it was infinitely pure and perfect, did, without doubt, infinitely transcend all the obedience of the sons of men, even of ADAM in his primitive state ; for the obedience of ADAM was but the obedience of a finite creature, whereas the obedience of CHRIST was the obedience of one that was infinitely GOD as well as man. By which means, the laws of GOD had higher obedience performed to them than themselves, in their primitive institution, required ; for being made only for finite creatures, they could command no more than the obedience of finite creatures ; whereas the obedience of CHRIST was the obedience of one who was the infinite Creator, as well as a finite creature.

Now this obedience being more than CHRIST was bound to, and only performed upon the account of those whose nature he had assumed ; as we by faith lay hold upon it, so GOD, through grace, imputes it to us, as if it had been performed by us in our own persons. And hence it is, that as in one place CHRIST is said to be “ made sin for us,” (2 Cor. v. 21,) so in another place he is said to be “ made our righteousness.” (1 Cor. i. 30.) And in the fore-cited place, (2 Cor. v. 21,) as he is said to be “ made



sin for us," so we are said to be "made righteousness in Him." But what righteousness? Our own? No; "the righteousness of God;" radically his, but imputatively ours: and in this way we are said to be made "the righteousness of God," even by the righteousness of CHRIST's being made ours, by which we are accounted righteous before God.

[“The righteousness of CHRIST is either internal or external. His internal righteousness is the image of God, stamped upon every power and faculty of his soul. It is a copy of his divine righteousness, so far as it can be imparted to a human spirit. It is a transcript of the divine purity, the divine justice, mercy, and truth. It includes love, reverence, resignation, to his FATHER; humility, meekness, gentleness; love to lost mankind, and every other holy and heavenly temper; and all these in the highest degree, without any defect, or mixture of unholiness.

“It was the least part of his external righteousness, that he did nothing amiss; that he knew not outward sin of any kind, ‘neither was guile found in his mouth;’ that he never spoke one improper word, nor did one improper action. Thus far it is only a negative righteousness, though such an one as never did, nor ever can, belong to any one that is born of a woman, save himself alone. But even his outward righteousness was positive too: He did all things well: In every word of his tongue, in every work of his hands, he did precisely ‘the will of Him that sent him.’ In the whole course of his life, he did the will of God on earth, as the angels do it in heaven. All he acted and spoke was exactly right in every circumstance. The whole and every part of his obedience was complete. ‘He fulfilled all righteousness.’

“But his obedience implied more than all this: It implied not only doing, but suffering; suffering the whole will of God, from the time he came into the world, until ‘he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree;’ yea, till, having made a full atonement for them, he ‘bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.’ This is usually termed

the *passive* righteousness of CHRIST; the former, his *active* righteousness. But as the active and passive righteousness of CHRIST were never in fact separated from each other, so we never need separate them at all, either in speaking or even in thinking. And it is with regard to both these conjointly, that JESUS is called, ‘The LORD our Righteousness.’

“ But when is it that the righteousness of CHRIST is imputed to us; and in what sense is it imputed? It is imputed to every one that believes, as soon as he believes: faith, and the righteousness of CHRIST, are inseparable. All believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of any thing in them, or of any thing that ever was, or ever can be done by them; but wholly and solely, for the sake of what CHRIST hath done and suffered for them. And this is not only the means of our obtaining the favour of GOD, but of our continuing therein.”]

And thus it is into the merit of CHRIST that I resolve the whole work of my salvation; and this, not only as to that which is wrought without me for the justification of my person, but likewise as to what is wrought within me for the sanctification of my nature. As I cannot have a sin pardoned without CHRIST, so neither can I have a sin subdued without him: neither the fire of GOD’s wrath can be quenched, nor yet the filth of my sins washed away, but by the blood of CHRIST.

So that I wonder as much at the doctrine that some men have advanced concerning free-will, as at that which others have broached in favour of good works; and it is a mystery to me, how any that ever had experience of GOD’s method in working out sin, and planting grace in our hearts, should think they can do it by themselves, or any thing in order to it. Not that I do in the least question, but that every man may be saved that will; for this, I believe, is a real truth; but I do not believe, that any man, of himself, can will to be saved. Yea, it is as impossible for my soul to will salvation of itself, as to enjoy salvation with GOD.

And this my faith is not grounded upon a roving fancy,

but the most solid reasons : forasmuch as of ourselves we are not able, in our understandings, to discern the evil from the good ; much less then are we able, in our wills, to prefer the good before the evil ; the will never settling upon any thing, but what the judgment discovers to it.

But now, that my natural judgment is unable to apprehend and represent to my will the true and only good under its proper notion, my own too sad experience would sufficiently persuade me, though I had neither Scripture nor reason for it. And yet, the Scripture also is clear in this point, that I could not have denied it, though I should never have had any experience of it ; the Most High expressly telling me, that “ the natural man receiveth not the things of the SPIRIT of GOD, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. ii. 14.) “ Neither can he know them,” *i. e.*, there is an absolute impossibility in it, that any one remaining in his natural principles, without the assistance of GOD, should apprehend, or conceive the excellency of spiritual objects. So that a man may as soon read the letter of the Scripture without eyes, as understand the mysteries of the Gospel without grace. And this is not at all to be wondered at, especially if we consider the infinite disproportion betwixt the object and the faculty ; the object to be apprehended being nothing less than the best of beings, GOD ; and the faculty, whereby we apprehend it, nothing more than the power of a finite creature, polluted with the worst of evils, sin.

So that I believe, it is a thousand times easier for a worm, a fly, or any other despicable insect whatsoever, to understand the affairs of men, than for the best of men, in a natural state, to apprehend the things of GOD. No ; there is none can know GOD, nor by consequence, any thing that is really good, but only so far as they are partakers of the divine nature : we must, in some measure, be like to GOD, before we can have any true conceptions of him, or be really delighted with him. We must have a spiritual sight, before we can behold spiritual things ; which every natural man being destitute of, he can see

no comeliness in CHRIST, why he should be desired; nor any amiableness in religion, why it should be embraced.

And hence it is that I believe, the first work of God upon the soul, in order to its conversion, is to clear up its apprehensions about spiritual matters, so as to enable the soul to look upon God as the chief good, and the enjoyment of him as the greatest bliss; whereby the soul may clearly discern betwixt good and evil, and evidently perceive that nothing is good but so far as it is like to God; and nothing evil, but so far as it resembles sin.

But this is not all the work that God hath to do upon a sinful soul to bring it to himself; for though I must confess, that in natural things, the will always follows the ultimate dictates of the understanding, so as to choose what the understanding represents as good, and to refuse whatever appears to be evil; I say, though I must confess it is so in natural, yet I believe it is not so in spiritual matters.

For though the understanding may have never such clear apprehension of spiritual good, yet the will is not at all affected with it, without the joint operations of the grace of God upon us; all of us too sadly experiencing, that though our judgments condemn what we do, yet we cannot choose but do it; though our understandings clearly discover to us the excellency of grace and glory, yet our wills, overpowered with their own corruptions, are hurried into sin and misery. I must confess it is a truth which I could scarcely have believed, if I had not daily experience of it: But, alas! there is scarce an hour in a day, but I may go about lamenting, with *Medea*, *Video meliora, proboque; deteriora sequor*: Though I see what is good, yea, and judge it to be the better, yet I very often choose the worse.

And the reason of it is, because, as by our fall from God the whole soul was desperately corrupted, so it is not the rectifying of one faculty that can make the whole straight; but as the whole was changed from holiness to

sin, so must the whole be changed again from sin to holiness.

And hence it is, that where **GOD** intends to work over a soul to himself, he doth not only pass an enlightening act upon the understanding and its apprehensions, but likewise a sanctifying act upon the will and its affections; that when the soul perceives the glory of **GOD**, and the beauty of holiness, it may presently close with, and entertain it with the choicest of its affections. And without **GOD**'s thus drawing it, the understanding could never allure the soul to good.

And therefore it is, that for all the clear discoveries which the understanding may make to itself concerning the glories of the invisible world, yet **GOD** assures us, it is himself alone that affects the soul with them, by inclining its will to them; for it is **GOD** "which worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." (*Phil. ii. 13.*) So that, though **GOD** offer heaven to all that will accept of it in his Holy Scripture, yet none can accept of it but such whom himself stirs up by his **HOLY SPIRIT** to endeavour after it.

Sure, to say none shall be saved but those that will of themselves, would be sad news for me, whose will is naturally so backward to every thing that is good. But this is my comfort, I am as certain my salvation is of **GOD**, as I am certain it cannot be of myself. It is **CHRIST** who vouchsafed to die for me, who hath likewise promised to live within me; it is he that will work all my works, both for me and in me too. In a word, it is to him I am beholden, not only for my spiritual blessings, but even for my temporal ones too, which, in and through his name, I daily put up my petitions for. So that I have not so much as a morsel of bread from **GOD**, but only upon the account of **CHRIST**; not a drop of drink but what flows unto me in his blood. It is He that is the very blessing of all my blessings, without whom my very mercies would prove but curses, and my prosperity would but work my ruin.

“ Whither, therefore, should I go,” my blessed SAVIOUR, “ but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” And how shall I come but by thee? Thou hast the treasures of all grace. O thou that hast wrought out my salvation for me, be pleased likewise to work this salvation in me. Give me, I beseech thee, such a measure of thy grace, as to believe in thee here upon earth; and then give me such degrees of glory, as fully to enjoy thee for ever in heaven.



### ARTICLE IX.

*I believe GOD entered into a double covenant with man: the covenant of works made with the first, and the covenant of grace made in the second, ADAM.*

THAT the Most High GOD should take a piece of earth, work it up into the frame and fashion of a man, and breathe into his nostrils the breath of life, and then should enter into a covenant with it, and should say, “ Do this and live,” when man was bound to do it, whether he could live by it or no, was, without doubt, a great and amazing act of love and condescension; but that when this covenant was broken by the first, GOD should instantly vouchsafe to renew it in the second, ADAM, and that too upon better terms, and more easy conditions than the former, was yet a more surprising mercy: for the same day that ADAM eat of the forbidden fruit, did GOD make him this promise, that “ the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” (*Gen. iii. 15.*)

And this promise he afterwards explained and confirmed by the mouth of his Prophet JEREMIAH, saying, “ This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days; I will put my law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be to them a

God, and they shall be to me a people." (*Jer.* xxxi. 33.) And again, by ST. PAUL, under the New Testament, almost in the self-same words. (*Heb.* viii. 10.)

A covenant so gracious and condescending, that it seems to be made up of nothing else but promises. The first was, properly speaking, a covenant of works, requiring on man's part a perfect and unsinning obedience, without any extraordinary grace or assistance from GOD to enable him to perform it; but here in the second, GOD undertakes both for himself and for man too, having digested the conditions to be performed by us into promises to be fulfilled by himself, *viz.*—

That he will not only pardon our sins if we do repent, but that he will give us repentance, that so we may deserve his pardon; that he will not only give us life if we come to CHRIST, but even draw us to CHRIST, that so he may give us life; and so, not only make us happy, if we will be holy, but make us holy, that so we may be happy.

But still, all this is in and through CHRIST, the Surety and Mediator of this covenant, in whom all "the promises are yea, and Amen." (*2 Cor.* i. 20.) So that CHRIST may be looked upon, not only as a surety, but as party in this covenant of grace, being not only bound to GOD, but likewise covenanting with him for us. As GOD-man, he is a surety for us; but as man, he must needs be a party with us, even our Head in the covenant of grace, as ADAM was in the covenant of works.

What therefore, though I can do nothing in this covenant of myself? Yet this is my comfort, that He hath undertaken for me, who can do all things. And therefore it is called a covenant of grace, and not of works, because in it there is no work required from me, but what, by grace, I shall be enabled to perform.

And as for the tenor in which this covenant runs, it is express in these words,—“I will be your GOD, and you shall be my people.” GOD covenants with us, that we shall be his people; we covenant with GOD that he shall

be our **GOD**. And what can **GOD** stipulate more to us, or we restipulate more to him than this? What doth not **GOD** promise to us, when he promises to be our **GOD**? And what doth he not require from us, when he requires us to be his people?

*First*, He doth not say, I will be your hope, your help, your light, your life, your sun, your shield, and your exceeding great reward; but I will be your **GOD**, which is ten thousand times more than possibly can be couched under any other expressions whatsoever, as containing under it whatsoever **GOD** is, whatsoever **GOD** hath, and whatsoever **GOD** can do. All his essential attributes are engaged for us; we may lay claim to them, and take hold of them; so that what the Prophet saith of his righteousness and strength, "Surely shall one say, In the **LORD** have I righteousness and strength," (*Isai. xlv. 24.*) I may extend to all his other attributes, and say, Surely in the **LORD** have I mercy to pardon me, wisdom to instruct me, power to protect me, truth to direct me, grace to crown my heart on earth, and glory to crown my head in heaven: and if what he is, then much more what he hath, is here made over by covenant to me: "He that spared not his own Son," saith the Apostle, "but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (*Rom. viii. 32.*) But what hath **GOD** to give me? Why all he hath is briefly summed up in this short inventory; whatsoever is in heaven above, or in earth beneath is his.

Indeed reason itself will conclude this, That he that is the Creator and Preserver, must of necessity be the owner and possessor of all things; so that let me imagine what possibly I can, in all the world, I may with the pen of reason write under it, This is **GOD**'s; and if I take but the pen of faith with it, I may write, This is mine in **JESUS CHRIST**.

As for example: Hath he a **SON**? he hath died for me. Hath he a **SPIRIT**? it shall live within me. Is earth his? it shall be my provision. Is heaven his? it shall be my



portion. Hath he angels? they shall guard me. Hath he comforts? they shall support me. Hath he grace? that shall make me holy. Hath he glory? that shall make me happy: For "the LORD will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those that walk uprightly." (*Psa. lxxxiv. 11.*)

And as he is nothing but what he is unto us, so he doeth nothing but what he doeth for us. So that whatsoever GOD doeth by his ordinary Providence, or (if our necessity requires) whatsoever he can do by his extraordinary power, I may be sure he doeth and will do for me.

Now he hath given himself to me, and taken me unto himself, what will he not do for me that he can? And what can he not do for me that he will? Do I want food? GOD can drop down manna from the clouds, or bid the quails come down and feed me with their own flesh: or, he can send me ravens to bring me bread and flesh, as they did his Prophet ELIJAH. Am I thirsty? GOD can broach the rocks, and dissolve the flints into floods of water. Am I cast into a fiery furnace? He can suspend the fury of the raging flames. Am I thrown amongst the devouring lions? He can stop their mouths, and make them as harmless lambs. Am I swallowed up by the merciless waves of the tempestuous ocean? GOD can command a fish to come and ship me safe to land. Am I in prison? GOD can but speak the word, as he did for ST. PETER, and the chains shall immediately fall off, and the doors fly open, and I shall be set at liberty. And thus I can have no wants, but GOD can supply them; no doubts, but GOD can resolve them; no fears, but GOD can dispel them; no dangers, but GOD can prevent them. And it is as certain that he will, as that he can, do these things for me; himself having by covenant engaged and given himself unto me.

And as in GOD's giving himself he hath given whatsoever he is, and whatsoever he hath, unto me, and will do whatsoever he can do for me; so in my giving myself to him, whatsoever I have I am to give to him, and whatsoever I do I am to do for him.

But now, though we should thus give ourselves up wholly to God, and do whatever he requires of us; yet there is an infinite disproportion betwixt the grant on God's part, and that on ours, in that he is God, and we but creatures, the work of his own hands, to whom it was our duty to give ourselves, whether he had ever given himself to us or no. He is ours by covenant only, not by nature; we are his by covenant and nature too.

Hence we may infer, that it is not only our duty to do what he hath commanded us, because he hath said, "Do this, and live;" but because he hath said "do this;" yea, though he should say, Do this, and die, it would still be our duty to do it, because we are his; wholly of his making, and therefore wholly at his disposing.

But if it were my duty to obey his commands, though I should die for it, how much more when he hath promised I shall live by it? Nay, I shall not only live if I obey, but my obedience itself shall be my life and happiness; for if I be obedient unto him, he is pleased to account himself as glorified by me; "for herein is my FATHER glorified, if ye bring forth much fruit." Now what greater glory can possibly be desired, than to glorify my Maker? It is not therefore my duty only, but my glory, to give myself, and whatsoever I am, unto him; "to glorify him both in my body and in my spirit, which are his;" (1 Cor. vi. 20;) to lay out whatsoever I have for him; "to honour him with all my substance;" (*Prov.* iii. 9;) "and whether I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, to do all to his glory." (1 Cor. x. 31.) Not as if it was possible for God to receive more glory from me now than he had in himself from all eternity. No; he was infinitely glorious then, and it is impossible for him to be more glorious now: all that we can do, is duly to acknowledge that glory which he hath in himself, and to manifest it before others; which, though no addition to his glory, yet is the perfection of ours, which he is pleased to account as his.

As for the grant, therefore, in the covenant of grace, I believe it to be the same on our parts with that in the

covenant of works ; *i. e.*, That we Christians are as much bound to obey the commands he lays upon us now, as the Jews under the old covenant were. What difference there is, is wholly and solely on GOD's part ; who, instead of expecting obedience from us, is pleased in this new covenant to give this obedience to us. Instead of saying, "Do this, and live," he hath in effect said, I will enable you to do this, that so you may live. "I will put my laws into your minds, and write them in your hearts ; and I will be to you a GOD, and you shall be to me a people." (*Heb. viii. 10.*) So that GOD doth not require less from us, but only hath promised more to us in the new than he did in the old covenant. Nay, as we have more obligations to obedience upon us now than we had before, by reason of GOD's expressing more favour to us than formerly he did ; so I believe he expects more from us under the new, than he did under the old covenant. In that he expected the obedience of men ; in this, he expects the obedience of Christians, such as are by faith united unto CHRIST, and in CHRIST, unto himself ; and so are to do what they do, not by the strength of man, but by the strength of the eternal GOD himself ; who, as he at first created me for himself, so he hath now purchased me to himself, received me into covenant with him, and promised to enable me to perform the obedience he requires from me ; and therefore he now expects I should lay out myself, even whatsoever I have or am, wholly for his glory.

This therefore being the tenor of this covenant of grace, it follows, that I am now none of my own, but wholly GOD's : I am his by creation, and his by redemption, and therefore ought to be his by conversation.

Why therefore should I live any longer to myself, who am not my own, but GOD's ? And why should I grudge to give myself to him, who did not grudge to give himself to me ? Or rather, why should I steal myself from him, who have already given myself to him ? But did I say I have given myself to my GOD ! Alas ! it is but the restoring myself to him, whose I was ever since I had a

being, and to whom I am still infinitely more engaged, that I can thus cordially engage myself to him ; for as I am not my own but his, so the very giving myself to him, is not from myself, but from him. I could not have given myself to him, had he not first given himself to me, and even wrought my mind into this resolution of giving myself to him.

But having thus solemnly, by covenant, given myself to him, how doth it behove me to improve myself for him ! My soul is his, my body is his, my parts his, my gifts his, my graces his, and whatsoever is mine is his ; for without him I could not have been, and therefore could have had nothing. So that I have no more cause to be proud of any thing I have, or am, than a page hath to be proud of his fine clothes, which are not his but his master's ; who bestows all his finery upon him, not for his page's honour, but for his own.

And thus it is with the best of us in respect of God. He gives men parts, and learning, and riches, and grace : But to what end ? Not to gain honour and esteem to ourselves, but to give him the honour due to his name ; and so employ them as instruments in promoting his glory and service. So that whensoever we do not lay out ourselves to the utmost of our power for him, it is downright sacrilege ; it is robbing God of that which is more properly his, than any man in the world can call any thing he has his own.

Having therefore thus wholly given up myself to God, so long as it shall please his Majesty to entrust me with myself, to lend me my being in the lower world, or to put any thing else into my hands, as time, health, or strength ; I am resolved, by his grace, to lay out all for his glory, all the faculties of my soul, as I have given them to him : my understanding shall be his, to know him ; my will his, to choose him ; my affections his, to embrace him ; and all the members of my body shall act in subserviency to him.

And thus, having given myself to **GOD** on earth, I hope **GOD**, in a short time, will take me to himself in heaven ; where, as I gave myself to him in time, he will give himself to me to all eternity.



## ARTICLE X.

*I believe, that as **GOD** entered into a covenant of grace with us, so hath he signed this covenant to us by a double seal, Baptism, and the **LORD**'s Supper.*

As the covenant of works had two Sacraments, *viz.*, “The Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil ;” the first signifying and sealing life and happiness to the performance ; the other, death and misery to the breach of it ; so the covenant of grace was likewise sealed with two typical sacraments, Circumcision, and the Passover. The former was annexed at **GOD**'s first making his covenant with **ABRAHAM**'s person ; the other was added at his fulfilling the promises of it, to his seed or posterity, which were therefore styled, “the promised seed.” But these being only typical of the true and spiritual sacraments that were afterwards to take place upon the coming of the **MESSIAH**, there were then two other sacraments substituted in their stead, *viz.*, “Baptism, and the Supper of the **LORD**.” And these sacraments were both correspondent to the types by which they were represented.

As to the first, *viz.*, Circumcision, whether I consider the time of conferring it, or the end of its institution, I find it exactly answers to the Sacrament of Baptism in both these respects. For, as the children under the Law were to be circumcised in their infancy, at eight days old ; so are the children under the Gospel to be baptized in their infancy too.

And as the principal thing intended in the rite of circumcision, was to admit the children of the faithful into the Jewish Church; so the chief design of baptism now, is to admit the children of Christians into the Church of CHRIST. And for this reason, I believe, that as under the Old Testament children had the grant of covenant privileges and church-membership, as really as their parents had; so this grant was not repealed, as is intimated, (*Acts* ii. 39,) but farther confirmed in the New Testament, in that the Apostle calls the children of believing parents, holy: (*1 Cor.* vii. 14:) which cannot be understood of a real and inherent, but only of a relative and covenanted holiness, by virtue of which, being born of believing parents, themselves are accounted in the number of believers, and are therefore called holy children, in the same sense that the people of Israel were called a holy people: (*Deut.* vii. 6; xiv. 2, 21:) as being all within the covenant of grace, which is sealed to them in their baptism.

And though the seal be changed, yet the covenant privileges, wherewith the parties stipulating unto GOD were before invested, are no whit altered or diminished; believers' children being as really confederates with their parents, in the covenant of grace now, as they were before under the Jewish administration of it. And this seems to be altogether necessary; for otherwise, infants should be invested with privileges under the type, and be excluded from them under the more perfect accomplishment of the same covenant in the thing typified; and so, the dispensation of GOD's grace would be more strait and narrow since, than they were before the coming of our SAVIOUR, which I look upon to be no less than blasphemy to assert.

And, upon this ground, I believe it is as really the duty of Christians to baptize their children now, as ever it was the duty of the Israelites to circumcise theirs.

For children's right to baptism is grounded upon the outward profession of their believing parents; so that, as a king may be crowned in his cradle, not because he is

able to wield the sceptre, or manage the affairs of his kingdom, but because he is heir to his father; so here, children are not therefore baptized because they are able to perform the conditions of the covenant, which is sealed to them, but because they are children to believing parents. And this seems yet to be farther evident from the very nature of seals, which are not administered or annexed to any covenant, because the conditions are already performed, but rather, that they may be performed; and so children are not baptized, because they are already true Christians, but that they may be so hereafter.

As for a command for infant baptism, I believe that the same law that enjoined circumcision to the Jewish, enjoins baptism likewise to Christian children, there being the same reason for both. The reason why the Jewish children were to be circumcised, was, because they were Jewish children, born of such as professed the true worship of God, and were in covenant with him; and there is the same reason why Christian children are to be baptized, even because they are Christian children, born of such as profess the true worship of the same God, and are confederates in the same covenant with the Jews themselves.

And as there is the same reason, so likewise the same end for both, *viz.*, That the children might be actually admitted into the same covenant with their parents, and have it visibly confirmed to them by this initiating seal put upon them: so that circumcision and baptism are not two distinct seals, but the same seal diversely applied; that one being but as a type of the other, and so to give place to it, whensoever, by the institution of CHRIST, it should be brought into the Church of God. And therefore, the command for initiating children into the Church by baptism remains still in force, though circumcision, which was the type and shadow of it, be done away. And for this reason, I believe that were there never a command in the New Testament for infant baptism, yet, seeing there is one for circumcision in the Old, and for baptism, as coming into the place of it, in the New, I should look upon baptism as

necessarily to be applied to infants now, as circumcision was then.

But why should it be supposed, that there is no command in the New Testament for infant baptism? There are several texts that imply its being practised in the first preaching of the Gospel, as particularly in the case of **LYDIA**, and the Keeper of the prison; (*Acts* xvi. 15—33;) who had their whole families baptized; and we no where find, that children were excepted: on the contrary, **ST. PETER**, exhorting the converted Jews to be baptized, makes use of this argument to bring them to it,—“For the promise,” says he, “is unto you, and to your children;” (*Acts* ii. 38, 39;) which may as reasonably be understood of their infants, as of their adult posterity. But besides, it was the express command of **CHRIST** to his disciples, that they should “go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the **FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.**” (*Matt.* xxviii. 19.) The meaning of which words I take to be this: “Go ye, and preach the Gospel amongst all nations,” and endeavour thereby to bring them over to the embracing of it; that leaving all Jewish ceremonies, and heathenish idolatries, they may profess my name, and become my disciples, receive the truth, and follow me; which if they do, I charge you to “baptize them in the name of the **FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.**” For the word *μαθητεύσατε* doth not signify to teach, but to make disciples, denoting the same here, that *μαθητὰς ποιεῖ* doth upon the like occasion. (*John* iv. 1.)

And this is the sense that all the ancient translations agree in; nor indeed will the text itself bear any other, especially not that of teaching; for though the Apostles should have taught all nations, yet they were not presently to baptize them, unless they became disciples, and professors of the doctrine that they were taught. A man may be taught the doctrine of the Gospel, and yet not believe it; and even though he should believe, yet unless he openly professes his faith in it, he ought not to be baptized.

So that a man must, of necessity, be a professed disciple



of the Gospel, before he can be admitted into the Church of CHRIST. And hence it is, that the words must necessarily be understood of discipling, or bringing the nations over to the profession of the Christian religion; or else, we must suppose what ought not to be granted, that our SAVIOUR must command many that were visible enemies to his cross, to be received into his Church; for many of the Jews were taught the doctrines of the Gospel, who notwithstanding were inveterate enemies to CHRIST.

Now, as it was in the Jewish Church, when any one became a proselyte, not only himself, but whatsoever children he had, were to be circumcised; so in the Church of CHRIST, whensoever any person is brought to the profession of the Christian religion, his seed are all invested with the outward privileges of it, though they be not as yet come to years of discretion, nor able of themselves to make their profession of that religion they are baptized into. For so long as children are in their infancy, they are looked upon as parts of their parents, and are therefore accounted holy by the outward profession which their parents, under whom they are comprehended, make of it.

And hence I verily believe, that in the commission which our SAVIOUR gave to his Apostles, to "disciple and baptize all nations," he meant, that they should preach the Gospel in all nations, and thereby bring over all persons of understanding to the profession of his name, and in them, their children; and so engraft both root and branch into himself, the true vine, by baptizing both parents and children, in "the name of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST."

And as baptism thus comes in the place of the Jews' circumcision, so doth our LORD's Supper answer to their Passover. Their Paschal Lamb represented our Saviour CHRIST, and the sacrificing of it, the shedding of his blood upon the cross: and as the Passover was the memorial of the Israelites' redemption from Egypt's bondage, (*Exod.* xii. 14,) so is the LORD's Supper of our redemption from the slavery of sin; or rather, it is a solemn representation of

the death of CHRIST, and offering it again to GOD, as an atonement for sin, and reconciliation to his favour.

So that I believe this sacrament of the LORD'S Supper, under the Gospel, succeeds to the rite of sacrificing under the Law, and is properly called the Christian sacrifice, as representing the sacrifice of CHRIST upon the cross; and the end of both is the same: for, as the sacrifices under the Law were designed as a propitiation for sins, by transferring the punishment from the offerer to the thing offered; so, under the Gospel, we are told, that it was for this end our SAVIOUR died, and suffered in our stead, that he might obtain the pardon of our sins, and reconcile us to his FATHER, by laying the guilt of them upon his own person; and accordingly, he says of himself, that "he came to give his life a ransom for many." (*Matt. xx. 28.*) And ST. PAUL tells us, that "he was made sin for us, who knew no sin." (*2 Cor. v. 21.*)

And as the end of both institutions was the same, so were they both equally extended. The Paschal Lamb was offered for all the congregation of Israel, and so is the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper to be administered to all the faithful people in CHRIST. And, for this reason, I believe, that as all the congregation of Israel was to eat the Passover, so is all the society of Christians to receive the LORD'S Supper; those only excepted, who are altogether ignorant of the nature of that covenant, or openly guilty of the breach of the conditions it requires.

But as in the institution of the Passover, there were some particular duties enjoined for the solemnization of it; so there are some preparatory duties required for the celebration of the LORD'S Supper, which, before I presume to partake of it, I must use my utmost endeavours to exercise myself in. And these are,

*First*, That I should examine, confess, and bewail my sins before GOD, with a true sense of, and sorrow for them; and making strong resolutions for the time to come utterly to forsake them, solemnly engage myself in a new and truly Christian course of life.

*Secondly*, That I should be in perfect charity with all men, *i. e.*, that I should heartily forgive those who have any ways injured me ; and make restitution or satisfaction to such whom I have in any respect injured or offended myself. And then,

*Thirdly*, That I should with a humble and obedient heart exercise the acts of faith, and love, and devotion, during the celebration of the holy mystery ; and express the sense I have of this mystery, by devout praises and thanksgiving for the great mercies and favours that God vouchsafes to me therein ; and by all the ways and measures of charity, that he has prescribed, manifest my love to my Christian brethren.

Do thou, O blessed JESUS ! inspire my soul with such heavenly dispositions as these ; and then I need not fear, but that as oft as I eat the flesh of CHRIST, and drink his blood, I shall effectually obtain the pardon of my sins, the sanctifying influences of his HOLY SPIRIT, and a certain interest in the kingdom of glory.



## ARTICLE XI.

*I believe that after a short separation, my soul and body shall be united together again, in order to appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST, and be finally sentenced according to my deserts.*

I KNOW this body, which for the present I am tied to, is nothing else but a piece of clay ; and therefore, as it was first taken from the dust, so shall it return to dust again : But then I believe, that it shall as really be raised from the earth, as ever it shall be carried to it ; yea, though perhaps it may go through a thousand changes before that day come. He who framed me out of the dust, can with as much ease gather all the scattered parts of the body,

and put them together again, as he at first formed it into such a shape, and infused into it a spiritual being.

Thus saith the LORD of Hosts, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." (*Isai.* xxvi. 19.) "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (*Dan.* xii. 2.) And thus saith the SAVIOUR of the world, "who is the way, the truth, and the life; the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." (*John* v. 28, 29.) The same hath it pleased his Divine Majesty to assert and prove with his own mouth, (*Matt.* xxii. 31, 32,) and by his SPIRIT, (*2 Cor.* xv,) and in many other places: From all which, I may with comfort and confidence draw the same conclusion that holy JOB did, and say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see GOD; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me." (*Job* xix. 25—27.)

And, as I believe my body shall be thus raised from the grave, so I believe my soul shall never be carried to it; it shall never die, but shall be as much, yea, more alive when I am dying, than it is now; my soul shall be the more active in itself, the less it is tied and subjected to the body.

And farther, I believe, That so soon as ever my breath is out of my nostrils, my soul shall remove into the other world, there to live to eternity. Yea, I am more certain that my soul shall "return to GOD that gave it," than that my body shall return to the earth: for it is possible my body may be made immortal, but I am sure my soul shall never be mortal. I know, that at the first the body did equally participate of immortality with the soul, and that

had not sin made the divorce, they had lived together to all eternity. And the time will come, when thousands of men and women shall not be dissolved and die, but be immediately changed and caught up into heaven, or to their eternal confusion thrust down into hell; whose bodies therefore shall undergo no such thing as rotting in the grave, or being eaten up of worms, but, together with their souls, shall immediately launch into the vast ocean of eternity. But who ever heard of a soul's funeral? Can any disease arise in a spiritual substance, wherein there is no such thing as contrariety of principles or qualities to occasion any disorder or distemper? Can an angel be sick, or die? And if not an angel, why a soul, which is endowed with the same spiritual nature? No, no! deceive not thyself, my soul; for it is more certain, that thou shalt always live, than that thy body shall ever die.

Not that I think my soul must always live, in despite of Omnipotence itself, as if it was not in the power of the ALMIGHTY, to take my being from me; for I know I am but as a potsherd in the Potter's hands, and that it is as easy for him to dash me in pieces now, as it was to raise me up at the first. I know he could do it if he would, but himself hath said, he will not. I have it under his own hand, that my "dust shall return to the earth as it was, and my spirit to God that gave it." (*Eccles. xii. 7.*) And if it return to God, it is so far from returning to nothing, that it returns to the Being of all beings; and so death to me will be nothing more than going home to my father and mother: my soul goes to my Father, God; and my body to my mother, earth.

Thus likewise, hath it pleased his sacred Majesty to assure me, that if "our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens:" (*2 Cor. v. 1.*) so clearly hath the great God "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." (*2 Tim. i. 10.*) The light of nature shows the soul can never perish without the immediate interposition of God's omnipotence; and

we have his own word, that he will never use that power in the dissolution of it: and therefore I may with the greatest assurance believe, that as really as I now live, so really shall I never die; but that my soul, at the very moment of its departure from the flesh, shall immediately mount up to paradise, there to remain until the grand assizes, the judgment of the great day, when “the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 *Cor.* xv. 52.) And when our bodies, by the word of the ALMIGHTY GOD, shall be thus called together again, I believe that our souls shall be all prepared to meet them, and be united again to them, and so both “appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST, to receive sentence according to what they have done in the flesh, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” And from the light GOD has vouchsafed to give, I have grounds to believe it will be carried on after this manner:—

The day and place being appointed by the King of kings, the glorious Majesty of heaven, JESUS CHRIST, who long ago received his commission from the FATHER, to be the “Judge of quick and dead,” (*John* v. 22; *Acts* xvii. 31,) “shall descend from heaven, with the shout of the archangel, and with the trump of GOD;” (1 *Thess.* iv. 16;) royally attended with an innumerable company of glorious angels. (*Matt.* xxv. 31.) These he shall send with the great sound of a trumpet, and they “shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other;” (*chap.* xxiv. 31;) yea, and the wicked too, from whatsoever place they shall be in; and then shall he “sever the wicked from the just.” (*Matt.* xiii. 49.) So that all nations, and every particular person, that ever did, or ever shall live upon the face of the earth, shall be gathered together before him; and he shall “separate the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats upon the left.” (*Matt.* xxv. 32, 33.)

Things being thus set in order, he shall declare and manifest himself to be the Judge of all the earth, sent by the God of heaven, to judge them that had condemned him, and in that very body that once was crucified at Jerusalem; so that all the world shall then behold him shining in all his glory and majesty, and shall acknowledge him to be now, what they would not believe him to be before, even both God and man, and the Judge of all the world, from whom there can be no appeal.

And the first work he will go upon, will be to open the book of God's remembrance, and to cause all the indictments to be read, that are there found on record against those on his right hand; but behold, all their sins being blotted out with their SAVIOUR'S blood, and nothing but their good works, their prayers, their meditations, their alms, and the like, to be found there; the righteous Judge, before whom they stand, turning towards them, with a serene and smiling countenance, will declare to them, before all the world, that their sins are pardoned, and their persons accepted by him, as having believed in him; and therefore will he immediately proceed to pronounce the happy sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The sentence being thus pronounced, the righteous (and I hope myself among the rest) shall go up with shouts of joy and triumph, to sit with our blessed REDEEMER, to judge the other part of the world, who stand at the left hand of the tribunal, with ghastly countenances and trembling hearts, to receive their last and dreadful doom. Against these, all the sins that ever they committed, shall be brought up in judgment, and the indictment read against every particular person, high or low, for every particular sin, great or small, which they have committed.

And the truth of this indictment shall be attested by their own consciences, crying, Guilty, guilty. I say, by their own consciences, which are as a thousand witnesses;

yea, and by the omniscience of GOD too, which is as a thousand consciences. And therefore, without any farther delay, shall the Judge proceed to pronounce sentence of condemnation, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.”

O may these awful thoughts always accompany me, and strike such a deep and lively impression upon my heart, in every action of life, as to deter me from offending this just and almighty Being, in whose power it is, “to destroy both body and soul in hell;” and engage me in such a course of life, as to be always ready, whenever he shall please to summon me, to give in my accounts at the grand audit, and with a holy assurance fly for mercy and succour into the hands of my REDEEMER, and be permitted to enter into the joys of his rest!



## ARTICLE XII.

*I believe there are two other worlds, besides this I live in; a world of misery for unrepenting sinners, and a world of glory for believing saints.*

I BELIEVE that at the great and general assizes of the world, there will be a glorious entrance opened for the righteous into the holy of holies, the seat and fountain of all bliss and happiness, where they shall draw nigh to the Most High GOD, “behold his presence in righteousness,” and reign with him for ever in glory, “where we shall see him face to face,” (1 Cor. xiii. 12,) “and know him the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom he hath sent.” (John xvii. 3.) And this knowing and beholding GOD face to face, is, I believe, the very heaven of heavens, even the highest happiness that it is possible a creature should be capable of.

O what a happy creature shall I then be, when I



shall know and enjoy him that is all things in himself! What can a creature desire more? yea, what more can a creature be capable of enjoying or desiring? And that which will always accompany this our knowledge and enjoyment, is perfect love to what we enjoy and know, without which we should take pleasure in nothing, though we should have all things to take pleasure in. But who will be able not to love the choicest good, that knows and enjoys him?

And this I believe to be the perfection of my happiness in the other world; that I shall perfectly know and love, and so perfectly enjoy and rejoice in the Most High God; and shall be, as known, so perfectly loved, and rejoiced in by him.

If we have but the least drop of these pleasures here on earth, how strangely do they lift us above ourselves! If we can but at any time get a glimpse of God, and his love, how are we carried beyond all other pleasures whatsoever! How apt are we to say with PETER, "It is good for us to be here!" And if the foretastes of the blessing of Canaan be so unspeakably pleasant, O what will the full possession of him be! What transporting ecstasies of love and joy shall those blessed souls be possessed with, who shall behold the King of Glory smiling upon them, rejoicing over them, and shining forth in all his love and glory!

This is the crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous Judge, reserves in heaven for me, and which, at his second coming, he has promised to bestow upon me, and not upon me only, but upon all them also that love his appearing.

As to the state of the wicked in another life, I believe it will be as exquisitely miserable, as that of the righteous is happy and glorious. They will "be driven for ever from the presence of the LORD," from those bright and blessed regions above, where "CHRIST sits at the right hand of God," to those dark and dismal dungeons below, where the Devil and his angels are for ever doomed to be tormented.

What sort of torments they are there to undergo I am as unable to express, as I am unwilling to experience; but according to the notions which Scripture gives me of these matters, I believe they will be two-fold, *viz.*, 1. Privative; and, 2. Positive; *i. e.*, The wicked will not only be deprived of all that is good and happy, but actually condemned to all that is evil and miserable; and that in the most transcendent degree.

The first part of their punishment will consist in envious melancholy, and self-condemning reflections upon their having lost not only their carnal mirth and sensual enjoyments, their friends, fortunes, and estates in this world, but also all the infinite joys and glories of the next, the presence of God, the society of saints and angels, and all the ravishing delights which flow from the fruition of the choicest good: and what adds to their anguish, is, that they have lost the very hopes of ever regaining any of those enjoyments!

O how infinitely tormenting must such a condition be, which at once gives them a view of the greatest happiness, and the greatest misery, without the least hopes either of recovering the one, or being delivered from the other! How must they tear, torment, and curse themselves for their former follies; and too late wish that they had been stifled in the womb.

And, if the bare privation of happiness be so tormenting, how will it fill their souls with horror and amazement, to behold the eternal God, the glorious JEHOVAH, in the fierceness of his wrath, continually threatening to pour out his vengeance upon them! How much more, when he positively consigns them over to the power of the Devil, to execute his judgment in full measure! When they are gnawed upon by the worm of their own consciences, feel the wrath of the ALMIGHTY flaming in their hearts, and fire and brimstone their continual torture! And all this without the least allay or mixture of refreshment, or the least hopes of ending or cessation!

In a word, when they have nothing else to expect but

misery for their portion, weeping and wailing for their constant employment, and the Devil and damned fiends their only companions to all eternity! And this is that world of misery, which all that will not be persuaded to believe in CHRIST here, must be doomed for ever to live in hereafter!

And what though I never did see the New Jerusalem that is above, nor the flaming Tophet that is below; yet since GOD himself hath both related and described them to me, why should I doubt of them? Why should not I a thousand times sooner believe them to be, than if I had seen them with mine own eyes? I cannot so much believe that I have a pen in my hand, have a book before me, and am writing in it, as I do, and ought to believe, that I shall one day, and that ere long, be either in heaven or hell; in the height of happiness, or depth of misery.

Do thou, O my GOD, keep me steadfast in this faith, and give me grace so to prepare myself to appear before thee in the white robes of holiness, in another world, that whenever my dissolution comes, I may cheerfully resign my spirit into the hands of my Creator and Redeemer, and from this house of clay take my flight into the mansions of glory, where CHRIST sits at the right hand of GOD; and with the joyful choir of saints and angels, and the blessed spirits of "just men made perfect," chant forth thy praises to all eternity.

# RESOLUTIONS

FORMED ON THE

## FOREGOING ARTICLES.

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As obedience without faith is impossible, so faith without obedience is unprofitable: "For as the body," says **ST. JAMES**, "without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (*James* ii. 26.)

Having therefore, I hope, laid a sure foundation, by resolving what and how to believe, I shall now, by the grace of **GOD**, resolve so to order my conversation in all circumstances of life, as to raise a good superstructure upon it, and to finish the work **GOD** has given me to do; *i. e.*, so to love and please **GOD** in this world, as to be happy with him for ever. And it is absolutely necessary that I should be speedy and serious in these resolutions; especially when I reflect with myself how much of my time I have already spent upon vanities and follies.

My heart, alas, is now more hardened, and more averse from **GOD**, than when I first entered into covenant with him; and I have added many actual sins to my original guilt; instead of glorifying **GOD**, I have dishonoured him, and instead of working out my own salvation, I have taken pleasure in such things as would in the end be my destruction: so that before I can make any progress in the duties of religion, or walk in the paths that lead to life, I must be first disentangled from these incumbrances that retard me in my spiritual course; I must have my heart cleansed and softened, humbled and converted to

God, and all my transgressions purged and pardoned by the merits of my Redeemer; and then, being fully persuaded there is no way to come to heaven, but by walking according to the strictest rules upon earth, I must endeavour, by a thorough change of my life, to act in conformity to the Divine Will in all things, and “perfect holiness in the fear of God, without which no man shall see the LORD.”

In order, therefore, to qualify myself for this happiness, it will be necessary to settle firm and steady resolutions to fulfil my duty in all the several branches of it,—to God, my neighbour, and myself; and to take care these resolutions be put in practice, according to the following method:—

### RESOLUTION I.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to walk by Rule, and therefore think it necessary to resolve upon Rules to walk by.*

THE want of such Rules has been the occasion of all, or most of my miscarriages: for, what other reason can I assign to myself for having trifled and sinned away so much time as I have done in my younger years, but because I did not thoroughly resolve to spend it better? What is the reason I have hitherto lived so unserviceably to God, so unprofitably to others, and so sinfully against my own soul, but because I did not apply myself with that sincerity of resolution, as a wise man ought to have done, to discharge my duty in these particulars? I have indeed often resolved to bid adieu to my sins, and enter upon a new course of life; but these resolutions being not rightly formed, the first temptation made way for a relapse, and the same bait that first allured me, has no sooner been thrown in my way, but I have been ready to catch at it again. At other times I have acted without any resolution

at all ; and then, though some of my actions might be good in themselves, yet, being done by chance, without any true intention, they could not be imputed to me as good, but rather the quite contrary. So that the want of resolution has not only been the occasion of my sinful actions, but the corruption of my good ones too.

And shall I still go on in this loose and careless manner? No ; I now resolve, in the presence of the Most High God, not only in general to walk by rule, but to fix the rule I design to walk by ; so that in all my thoughts, and words, and actions, I may still have a sure guide at hand to direct me, such a one as I can safely depend upon, without any danger of being deceived or misled, *i. e.*, the Holy Scripture.

## RESOLUTION II.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to make his Word the Rule of all my Rules.*

As the will of God is the rule and measure of all that is good, so nothing deserves that name, but what is agreeable thereto ; and this will being fully revealed in the holy Scripture, it will be necessary, in directing my course over the ocean of this world, that I should fix my eyes continually upon this star, by which I am to be guided to my wished-for haven.

I must not, therefore, have recourse to the inward workings of my own roving fancy, or the corrupt dictates of my own carnal reason. These are but blind guides, and will certainly lead me into the ditch of error or irreligion, which so many poor souls have been plunged in. Alas ! how many hath the impetuous torrent of blind zeal and erroneous conscience borne down into a will-worship, and voluntary subjection of themselves to the offspring of their

own deluded fancies! If the light that is within them doth but dictate any thing to be done, they presently set about it without ever consulting the Sacred Writings, to see whether it is acceptable to GOD, or displeasing to him. Whereas, I know not how any thing should be worthy of GOD's commanding, which is not suitable to his nature.

I am sure the word of GOD is the good old way that will certainly bring me to my Father's house; for how should that way but lead me to heaven, which Truth itself hath chalked out for me? Not as if it was necessary that every one of my resolutions should be contained word for word in the Holy Scriptures; it is sufficient that they be implied in, and agreeable thereto; so that though the manner of my expressions may not be found in the word of GOD, yet the matter of my resolutions may clearly be drawn from thence.

But let me dive a little into the depth of my sinful heart. What is the reason of my resolving upon such an exact conformity to the will and word of GOD? Is it to work my way to heaven with mine own hands? To purchase an inheritance in the land of Canaan, with the price of my own holiness? Or to swim over the ocean of this world, into the haven of happiness, upon the empty bladders of my own resolutions? No!—

### RESOLUTION III.

*I am resolved, that as I am not able to think or do any thing that is good, without the Divine grace, so I will not pretend to merit any favour from GOD, upon account of any thing I do.*

AND indeed I may very well put this resolution amongst the rest; for should I resolve to perform my resolutions by mine own strength, I might as well resolve never to per-

form them at all : for Truth itself, and mine own experience, hath convinced me, that I am not able, of myself, so much as to think a good thought ; and how then shall I be able, of myself, to resolve upon rules of holiness according to the word of God, or to order my conversation according to these resolutions, without the concurrence of divine grace ?

Alas ! should the great God be pleased to leave me to myself to resolve upon what is agreeable to my nature, what strange resolutions should I make ! What should I resolve upon ? Certainly on nothing but to gratify my appetite with sensual pleasures, to indulge myself in riot and excess, to spend my time, my parts, and talents, in the revels of sin and vanity. But now, to live holily, righteously, and godlily in this present world, to deny my own, that I may fulfil the will of God : alas ! such resolutions as these would never so much as come into my thoughts, much less would they discover themselves in my outward conversation.

But suppose I should be able to make good resolutions, and fulfil them exactly ; yet what should I do more than my duty ? Alas ! this is so far from puffing me up, that I am verily persuaded, should I spend all my time, my parts, my strength, my gifts for God, and all my estate upon the poor ;—should I water my couch with my tears, and fast my body into a skeleton ;—should I employ each moment of my life in the immediate worship of my glorious Creator, so that all my actions, from my birth to my death, should be but one continued act of obedience ;—in a word, should I live like an angel in heaven, and die like a saint on earth, yet should I desire no better epitaph to be engraven on my tomb than, ‘ Here lies an unprofitable servant.’

No, no ; it is CHRIST and CHRIST alone that my soul must support itself upon. Holiness, indeed, is the way to heaven ; but there is none, none but CHRIST can lead me to it. As the worst of my sins are pardonable by CHRIST, so are the best of my duties damnable without him.



But if so, then whither tend my resolutions? Why so strict, so circumspect a conversation? Why, I believe the holier I live here, the happier I shall live hereafter: for though I shall not be saved for my works, yet I believe I shall be saved according to them. And thus, as I dare not expect to be saved by the performance of my resolutions, without CHRIST'S merit, so neither do I ever expect to perform my resolutions without his assisting me therein.

No; it is thyself, my GOD and my guide, that I wholly depend upon. O for thine own name's sake, for thy SON'S sake, and for thy promise' sake, do thou both make me to know what thou wouldest have me to do, and help me to do what thou wouldest have me to know! Teach me first what to resolve upon, and then make me to perform my resolutions, that I may walk with thee in the ways of holiness here, and rest with thee hereafter.

## CONCERNING MY CONVERSATION IN GENERAL.

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HAVING thus far determined in general to form a Resolution for the better regulating of my life, I must now descend to particulars, and resolve my future life and conversation wholly into holiness and religion. I know this is a hard task ; but I am sure it is no more than what my GOD and my FATHER hath set me. Why therefore should I think much to do it ? Shall I grudge to spend my life for Him, who did not grudge to spend his own blood for me ? Shall not I so live, that He may be glorified on earth, who died that I might be glorified in heaven ? Especially, considering that if my whole life could be moulded into an exact conformity unto the will of the Most High, I should be happy beyond expression ? O what a heaven should I then have on earth ! What ravishments of love and joy ! Well ; I am resolved by the grace of GOD to try : and to that end, do this morning set myself apart for GOD, resolving, by the assisting of his grace, to make every thought, word, and action, pay their tribute unto him.

Let this man mind his profit, a second his pleasures, a third his honours, and all their sins ; I am resolved to mind my GOD, so as to make him the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, of my whole life. And that I may always have an exact copy before me, to frame every letter of my life by,—

## RESOLUTION I.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, to make CHRIST the Pattern of my life.*

LET the whole world go whither it will, I am resolved to walk in the steps that my SAVIOUR went in before me. I shall endeavour, in all places I come into, in all companies I converse with, in all the duties I undertake, in all the miseries I undergo, still to behave myself as my SAVIOUR would do, were he in my place.

So that wheresoever I am, or whatsoever I am about, I shall still put this question to myself: Would my SAVIOUR go hither? Would he do this or that? And every morning consider with myself: Suppose my SAVIOUR were in my stead, and had my business to do, how would he demean himself this day? Well: and am I resolved, by strength from himself, to follow him as near as possible? I know I cannot yet perfectly transcribe his copy, but I must imitate it in the best manner I can, that so, by doing as he did in time, I may be where he is to all eternity. But, alas! his life was spiritual, and I am carnal; and every object that doth but please my senses, will be apt to draw away my soul from following his steps. In order, therefore, to prevent this,—

## RESOLUTION II.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, to walk by faith, and not by sight.*

AND truly this resolution is so necessary to the performance of all the rest, that without it I can do nothing.

The reason why I am so much taken with this world's vanities, so as to step out of the road of holiness to catch at them, is only because I look upon them with an eye of

sense ; for could I behold every thing with the eye of faith, I should judge of them not as they seem to me, but as they are in themselves,—“vanity and vexation of spirit.”

For faith has a quick and piercing eye, that can look through the outward surface into the inward essence of things. It is, as the Apostle well defines it, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (*Heb. xi. i.*) It is the substance of whatsoever is promised by **GOD** to me, or expected by me from him : so that by faith, whatsoever I hope for in heaven, I may have the substance of upon earth. And it is “the evidence of things not seen,” the presence of what is absent, the clear demonstration of what would otherwise seem impossible ; so that I can clearly discern, as through a prospective, hidden things, and things afar off, as if they were open and just at hand. I can look into the deepest mysteries as fully revealed, and see heaven and eternity as just ready to receive me.

O could I but always look through this glass, what dreams and shadows would all things here appear to be ! Well ; by the grace of **GOD** I am resolved no longer to tie myself to sense and sight, but always to walk as one of the other world ; to behave myself in all places, and at all times, as an inhabitant of the New Jerusalem ; by faith assuring myself I have but a few days to live below, a little more work to do, and then I shall lay aside my glass, and be admitted to a nearer fruition of **GOD**, and see him face to face.

By this means, I shall always live as if I was daily to die ; always speak as if my tongue, the next moment, were to cleave to the roof of my mouth ; and continually order my thoughts and affections in such a manner, as if my soul were just ready to take its flight. By this means, whatsoever place I am in, or whatsoever work I am about, I shall still be with my **GOD**, and demean myself so as if I heard the voice of the trumpet crying out, “Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment.”

And thus, though I am yet in the flesh, yet I shall look

upon myself as really an inhabitant of heaven. Here I am but as a pilgrim or sojourner, that has no abiding city; but there I have a sure and everlasting inheritance, which CHRIST has purchased and prepared for me. And therefore, as it is my duty, so will I constantly make it my endeavour, to live up to the character of a Christian, whose portion and conversation are in heaven, and think it a disgrace to my profession to stoop to such toys and trifles as the men of the world busy themselves about; or to feed upon husks with swine here below, when it is in my power by faith to be continually supplied with spiritual manna from heaven, till at last I am admitted to it. And that I may awe my spirit into the performance of these, in order hereto,—

### RESOLUTION III.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, always to be looking upon GOD, & always looking upon me.*

WHERESOEVER I am, or whatsoever I am doing, I must still consider the eye of the great GOD as directly intent upon me, viewing all my thoughts, words, and actions, and writing them down in the book of his remembrance; and that all these, unless they be washed out with the blood of my SAVIOUR, must still remain on record, and be brought in judgment against me at the great day.

That, therefore, I may always behave as in his presence, it behoves me thoroughly to consider, that even all the secret thoughts, the inward motions of my soul, all the windings and turnings of my heart, are exactly known and manifest to him.

He knows what I am now thinking, doing, and writing, as well as I do myself; yea, he sees every word whilst it is in my heart, before it be brought forth and set down.

He knows all the resolutions I have made, and how often I have broken them already, since I made them.

Upon this consideration, I resolve to stand my ground against all temptations, and whenever I find myself in danger to be drawn aside by them, to oppose the bent of my corrupt affections, by these or the like questions:—

Am I really in the presence of the ALMIGHTY, the great LORD of heaven and earth, and shall I presume to affront him to his face, by doing such things as I know are displeasing to him! I would not commit adultery in the presence of my fellow-creatures, and shall I do it in the presence of the glorious JEHOVAH?

If fear and shame from men have such an influence upon me, as to deter me from the commission of sin, how ought I to be moved with the apprehension of God's inspection, who does not only know my transgressions, but will eternally punish me for them?

May these thoughts always take place in my heart, and be accompanied with such happy effects in my conversation, that I may live with God upon earth, and so love and fear his presence in this world, that I may for ever enjoy his glory in the next.

## CONCERNING MY THOUGHTS.

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BUT who am I, poor, proud, sinful dust and ashes, that I should expect to live so holy, so heavenly? “Can grapes be gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?” Can the fruit be sweet when the root is bitter? No; I must either get me a better heart, or it will be impossible to lead a better life. But how must I come by this pearl of inestimable value? Can I purchase it with my own riches? Alas! I have endeavoured 'it, but I find by experience I cannot attain to it: I have been lifting and heaving again and again, to raise it out of the mire of sin and corruption; but, alas! it will not stir. I have brought it to the promises; I have shown it the beauty of CHRIST, and the deformity of sin; but yet it is a hard and sinful, an earthly and sensual heart still. What, therefore, shall I do with it? O my GOD, I bring it unto thee! Thou that madest it a heart at first, canst only make it a new heart! O do thou purify and refine it, and “renew a right spirit within me!” Do thou take it into thy hands, and out of thine infinite goodness new mould it by thine own grace into an exact conformity to thine own will. Do thou but give me a new heart, and I shall promise thee, by thy grace, to lead a new life! Do thou but clear the fountain, and I shall endeavour to look to the streams that flow from it! Which that I may do, with the better success,—

### RESOLUTION I.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, to watch as much over the inward motions of my heart, as the outward actions of my life.*

FOR my heart, I perceive, is the womb in which all sin is conceived, and from which, my SAVIOUR tells me, “pro-

ceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." (*Mark* vii. 21, 22.) So that, as ever I would prevent the commission of these sins in my life, I must hinder their conception in my heart; following the Wise Man's counsel, to "keep my heart with all diligence; because out of it are the issues of life." (*Prov.* iv. 23.) Neither is this the only reason why I should set so strict a watch over my heart,—because sinful thoughts lead to sinful acts; but because the thoughts themselves are sinful, yea, the very first-born of iniquity; which though men cannot pry into, yet the all-seeing God does. And O, what thoughts have I formerly entertained, not only against God, but against CHRIST, by questioning the justice of his laws, and doubting of the truth of his revelation, so as to make both his life and death of none effect to me: which, that they may never be laid to my charge, I humbly beseech God to pardon and absolve me from them, and to give me grace, for the remainder of my life, to be as careful of thinking as of doing well, and as fearful of offending him in my heart, as of transgressing his laws in my life and conversation. To this end,—

## RESOLUTION II.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to stop every thought, at its first entering into my heart, and to examine it, whence it comes, and whither it tends.*

So soon as any new thought begins in my soul, I am resolved to examine what stamp it is of; whether it spring from the pure Fountain of living waters, or the polluted streams of my own affections; as also which way it tends, towards the ocean of happiness, or the pit of destruction. This resolution I draw from the experience I have had of the Devil's temptations, and the working of my own cor-



ruptions ; by which I find, that there is no sin I am betrayed into, but what takes its rise from my thoughts. These are the tempters that first present some pleasing object to my view, and then bias my understanding and pervert my will : so that though God is pleased to dart a beam into my heart at the same time, and show me the dangerous effects of such thoughts, yet, I know not how, I find a suggestion within that it is but a thought, and so long as it goes no farther, it cannot do me much hurt. Under this pretence, I persuade myself to dwell a little longer upon it, and finding my heart pleased, I give it a little farther indulgence, until at last my desire breaks out into a flame, and will be satisfied with nothing less than enjoyment. And what water can quench such a raging fire as is thus kindled by the Devil, and blown up by my own inordinate affections, which the more I think of, the more I increase the flame ? How nearly, therefore, does it concern me to take up this resolution, of setting a constant watch at the door of my heart, that nothing may enter in without a strict examination ? Not as if I could examine my thoughts without intermission ; but this must I do : Whosoever I find any thought that bears the face or appearance of sin, I must throw it aside with the utmost abhorrence ; and when it comes in disguise, or when it is a thought I never conceived before, and know not but it may be bad as well as good, then, before I suffer it to settle, I must examine as well as I can, whether it be sent from heaven or hell, and what message it comes about, and what will be the issue of it. And thus, by the Divine assistance, I shall let nothing into my heart but what will bring me nearer to my God, and set me at a greater distance from sin. Neither do I think it my duty only to be so watchful against such thoughts as are in themselves sinful ; but,—

## RESOLUTION III.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, to be as fearful to let in vain, as careful to keep out sinful, thoughts.*

I do not look upon vain thoughts as only tending to sin, but as in themselves sinful ; for that which makes sin to be sin, is the want of conformity to the will of GOD ; and that vain thoughts are not conformable to the divine will, appears, in that GOD himself expressly saith, “I hate vain thoughts.” (*Psa.* cxix. 113.) Again, vain thoughts are therefore sinful, because they are not good : for as there is never a particular act, so neither is there any particular thought, but what is either good or bad. There is not a moment of my life, but it is my duty either to be thinking, or speaking, or doing good ; so that whenever I am not thus employed, I come short of my duty, and, by consequence, am guilty of sin.

But what are these vain thoughts I am resolving against ? Why, all wanderings and distractions in prayer, or in hearing the word of GOD ; all useless, trifling, and impertinent thoughts that do not belong to, nor further the work I am about,—the grand affair of my salvation. And, alas ! what swarms of these are continually crowding into my heart !

These are the vain thoughts that I must for the future endeavour to avoid ; and though it will be impossible for me wholly to prevent their first entering into my mind, yet I resolve, by the grace of GOD, not to harbour or delight myself in them ; and then, notwithstanding they are in some sense sinful, yet they will not be imputed to me as such. Which, that I may be the better able to do,—

## RESOLUTION IV.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to be always exercising my thoughts upon good objects, that the Devil may not exercise them upon bad.*

How much doth it concern me to keep my soul in continual exercise upon what is good? For, be sure, if I do not set it on work, the Devil will; and if it do not work for God, it will work for him. I know sinful objects are more agreeable to a sinful soul; but I am sure, holy thoughts are more conformable to a holy God. Why, therefore, should I spend my thoughts upon that which will destroy my soul? No, no; I shall henceforth endeavour to have good subjects constantly at hand to think upon; as, the attributes of God, the glory of heaven, the misery of hell, the merits of CHRIST, the corruption of my nature, the sinfulness of sin, the beauty of holiness; and likewise to take occasion from the objects I meet with in the world, to make such remarks and reflections as may be for my advantage. •

It is, indeed, a singular advantage of that high and heavenly calling, in which the Most High, of his wisdom and goodness, has been pleased to place me, that all the objects we converse with, and all the subjects we exercise our thoughts upon, are either God and heaven, or something relating to them; so that we need not go out of our common road to meet with this heavenly company,—good thoughts.

But then, I do not account every thought of God, or heaven, which only swims in my brain, to be a good thought, unless it sinks down into my heart and affections, *i. e.*, unless to my meditations of God and another world I join a longing for him, a rejoicing in him, and a solacing myself in the hopes of a future enjoyment of him.

Neither will this be any hinderance, but a furtherance to my studies; for as I know no divine truths as I ought, unless I know them practically and experimentally, so I

have no clear apprehensions of **GOD**, until my affections are inflamed towards him; nor do I ever understand any divine truth aright, until my heart be brought into subjection to it.

This resolution, therefore, extends itself not only to the matter of my thoughts, but also to the quality of them, with regard to practice; that they may influence my life and conversation, that whether I speak, or write, or eat, or drink, or whatsoever I do, I may still season all, even my common actions, with heavenly meditations; there being nothing I can set my hand to, but I may likewise set my heart a working upon it. Which accordingly I shall endeavour, by the blessing of **GOD**, to do. .

These are the methods by which I resolve to regulate my thoughts; and since I can do nothing without the divine assistance, I earnestly beg of **GOD** to give me such a measure of his grace, as may enable me effectually to put these resolutions in practice.

## CONCERNING MY AFFECTIONS.

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### RESOLUTION I.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to make my affections subservient to the dictates of my understanding; that my reason may not follow, but guide my affections.*

The affections being of themselves blind, unless they are directed by reason, they either move toward a wrong object, or pursue the right in a wrong way. And this judgment must be mature and deliberate, such as arises from a clear apprehension of the nature of the object, and a thorough consideration of the several circumstances that attend it. And great care must be taken that I do not impose upon myself; that I do not mistake fancy for judgment, or the capricious humours of my roving imagination for the dictates of a well-guided reason: for my fancy is as wild as my affections; and “if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch.”

And, alas, how oft am I deceived in this manner! If I do but fancy a thing good and lovely, how eager are my affections in the pursuit of it! If I do but fancy any thing evil and hurtful, how doth my heart presently rise up against it! And this, I believe, hath been the occasion of all the extravagancies I have been guilty of through my past life, divesting me of my reason, and subjecting my soul to the powers of sense. Thus, for instance, I have not loved grace, because my fancy could not see its beauty; I have not loathed sin, because my fancy could not comprehend its misery; and I have not truly desired heaven, because my fancy could not reach its glory:

whereas, if the transient beauty of this world was but presented to my view, how has my fancy mounted up to the highest pitch of pleasure and ambition?

And thus have I been carried about with the charms of sense, without having any other guide of my affections, but what is common to the brutes that perish; fancy supplying that place in the sensitive, which reason does in the rational soul. And, alas! what is this but, with NEBUCHADNEZZAR, to leave communion with men, and herd myself with the beasts of the field? And what a shame and reproach is this to the image of God, in which I was created!

O Thou that art the author of my nature, help me, I beseech thee, to act more conformably to it, that I may no longer be bewildered or misled by the blind conduct of my straggling fancy, that hurries me to the pit of destruction, but may bring all my affections and actions to the standard of a clear and sound judgment; and let that judgment be guided by the unerring light of thy word; that so I may neither love, desire, fear, nor detest any thing but what my judgment, thus formed, tells me I ought to do!

I know it will be very hard thus to subject my affections to the dictates of my judgment: but howsoever, it is my resolution, this morning, in the presence of ALMIGHTY GOD, to endeavour it, and never suffer my heart to settle its affections upon any object, until my judgment hath passed its sentence upon it. And as I will not suffer affections to run before my judgment, so, whenever that is determined, I steadfastly resolve to follow it, that so my apprehensions and affections always going together, I may be sure to walk in the path of God's commandments, and enter the gate that leads to everlasting life. And the better to perform this general resolution, it being necessary to descend to particulars,—

## RESOLUTION II.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, to love GOD, as the best of goods ; and to hate sin, as the worst of evils.*

THE affections of love and hatred being the ground of all the rest, I must have a great care, that I do not mistake or miscarry in them : for if these be placed upon wrong objects, it is impossible any of the rest should be placed upon right ones. In order, therefore, to prevent this, as GOD is the greatest good, and sin the greatest evil, I resolve to love GOD above all things else, to hate sin to the same degree ; to love other things, only in relation to GOD ; and to hate nothing, but in reference to sin.

As for the loving GOD above all things, there is nothing more reasonable ; inasmuch as therè is nothing lovely in any creature, but what it receives from GOD ; and by how much the more it is like to GOD, by so much the more lovely it is. Hence it is, that grace is the most loving thing in the world ; as being the image of GOD, himself stamped upon the soul : nay, it is not only the image and representation, but the communication of himself to us ; so that the more we have of grace, we may safely say, so much the more we have of GOD within us. Why, therefore, should I grudge my love to him, who only deserves it ; who is not only infinitely lovely in himself, but the author and perfection of all loveliness in his creatures ?

And as I shall endeavour to love GOD, so likewise to hate sin, above all things ; and this is as necessary as the former : for all things else have something of good in them, as they are made by GOD ; but sin has nothing of beauty or amiableness in it. On the contrary, it is a compound of deformity and defilement, that is always attended with punishment and misery, and must, therefore, be the object of my hatred, wheresoever I find it : for as GOD is the centre of all that is good, so is sin the fountain of all the evil in the world.

Whensoever, therefore, I find myself begin to detest any evil, I shall endeavour to turn my eyes to the Spring-head, and detest the fountain that sends forth all those bitter streams. And, for this reason, I am resolved to hate sin, wheresoever I find it; whether in myself, or in others; in the best of friends, or the worst of enemies. I resolve, in all my expressions of love to my fellow-creatures, so to love the person, as to hate his sins; and so to hate his sins, as to love his person.

Having thus fixed my resolutions, with regard to those two commanding passions of my soul, Love and Hatred,—

### RESOLUTION III.

*I am resolved, by the assistance of divine grace, to make God the principal object of my joy, and sin the principal object of my sorrow.*

THE affections of joy and grief are the immediate issues of love and hatred. Having therefore resolved to love, I cannot but resolve likewise to rejoice in GOD above all things; for the same measure of love I have towards any thing, the same measure of delight I have in the enjoyment of it. As therefore I love GOD above all things, and other things only in subserviency to him, so must I rejoice in GOD above all things, and in other things only as coming from him. I know I not only may, but must, rejoice in the blessings that GOD confers upon me; but it is still my duty to rejoice more in GOD himself, than in what he is pleased to communicate to me: so that I am not only bound to rejoice in GOD when I have nothing else, but when I have all things else to rejoice in. Let therefore my riches, honours, or my friends, fail me; let my pleasures, my health, and all fail me; I am resolved, by his grace, to “rejoice in the LORD, and to joy in the GOD of my salvation.” On the other hand, let honour or riches be multiplied upon me; let joy and pleasure, and all that I can desire, be



thrown upon me ; yet am I resolved, that as it is my business to serve God, so shall it be my delight to rejoice in him.

And as God shall thus be my chief joy, so shall sin be my greatest grief ; for I account no condition miserable, but that which results from, or leads me unto sin : so that when any thing befalls me, which may bear the face of suffering, I shall still endeavour to keep off the smart until I know from whence it comes. If sin has kindled the fire of God's wrath, and brought these judgments upon me, O what a heavy load shall I then feel ! and how shall I groan under the burden of it ! But if there be nothing of the poison of sin dropped into this cup of sorrows, though it may prove bitter to my taste, yet it will prove healthful to my soul ; as being not kindled at the furnace of God's wrath, but at the flames of his affection for me : so that I am so far from having cause to be sorry for these sufferings, that I have great cause to rejoice in them : " For whom the LORD loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." (*Heb. xii. 6.*)

And having thus resolved to rejoice in nothing but God, and grieve for nothing but sin, I must not be cast down at every providence which men count a loss or affliction.

For it is God that is the portion of my soul ; and, therefore, should I lose every thing besides, yet, having God, I cannot be said to lose any thing, because I have him that hath and is all things.

Whensoever, therefore, any thing befalls me, that uses to be matter of dejection, I must not presently be affected with it, but still behave like an heir of heaven, and living above the smiles and frowns of this world, account nothing matter of joy, but so far as I enjoy of God's love ; nor any thing matter of sorrow, but so much as I see of his anger in it.

## RESOLUTION IV.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to desire spiritual mercies more than temporal; and temporal mercies only in reference to spiritual.*

HAVING rectified the balance of my judgment according to Scripture, when I would begin to weigh temporal things with spiritual, I find there is no proportion, and so no comparison to be made betwixt them. Alas! What is there in the world, that can fill the vast desires of my soul? Will riches do it? No: I may as soon undertake to fill my barns with grace, as my heart with gold.

Do I hunt after pleasures? These may delight my senses, but can never be proportionate to my spiritual faculties. Do I grasp at honour and popularity? These are as unsatisfying as the former: they may make me look high and great in the eye of the world, or puff up my heart with pride, but they can never fill up the measure of its desires. If I should have the whole world at my command, would this content me? Rather, should I not sit down and weep, that I had not another world to conquer and possess? Whereas, God being an infinite good, it is impossible for me to desire any thing which I may not enjoy in him. Let me, or any other creature, extend our desires never so far, still the graces and blessings of this infinite God will be infinitely beyond them all; insomuch that though ten thousand worlds are not able to satisfy one soul, yet one God is able to satisfy ten thousand; yea, as well as if there was only one soul in all the world to satisfy.

Come, therefore, my LORD and SAVIOUR! whilst thy servant is breathing after thee, and possess my heart with the blessings of grace and faith, peace and charity; and let none of the empty delights of this world stand in competition with them! Thou art the centre of all my wishes and desires: even "as the hart panteth after the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God!" When

shall I appear in thy presence? When, when shall that blessed time come, that I shall see thy sacred Majesty, face to face? This is a mercy, I confess, which I cannot expect, whilst imprisoned in the body; but, howsoever, though I must not yet appear before thee, do thou vouchsafe to appear in me, and give me such glimpses of thy love here, as may be an earnest of the glory I am to enjoy hereafter!

### RESOLUTION V.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to hope for nothing so much as the promises, and to fear nothing so much as the threatenings of God.*

MY soul being inflamed with desires after God, cannot but be big with the expectation of him: and truly as there is nothing that I can absolutely desire, so neither is there any thing that I can assuredly hope for, but God himself; for as all things derive their being from him, so they are all at his command; all the secondary causes are in his hand, and he turns them which way soever he will; so that however improbable and disproportionate the means he uses may appear, he never fails to accomplish the end. And, therefore, wherever I meet with any promises in his word, (since they are the promises of one who is infinitely just and true,) I cannot doubt but they will be punctually fulfilled; yea, I have as much assurance of being partaker of them, as if I had them actually in possession.

And suppose God, instead of the blessings of health and prosperity, should visit me with crosses and afflictions; yet I have still the same grounds for my hope and confidence in him, and may say with the Psalmist, “The LORD is my helper, I will not fear what [the Devil, or] man, can do unto me.” For though their malice may afflict me; yet, since I am assured they are only as instruments in

the hand of **GOD**, that cannot go beyond their commission, nor make me suffer more than I am able to bear, I may comfort myself under all these afflictions by the same promise that **ST. PAUL** had recourse to on the like occasion : “ That all shall work together for good to them that love **GOD**.” The Devil could not touch the possessions of **JOB**, until he had received a commission from **GOD**; nor could he come near his body until that commission was renewed : and so neither can he, or any creature whatsoever, throw any evil upon me without the divine permission ; and even that, though it seems to be evil, shall in the end turn to my advantage.

O what a sovereign antidote is this against all despair, even under the severest trials ! Permit me, O my **GOD**, to apply this sacred promise to myself; and say, I am assured of it by my own experience: for I can hardly remember any one thing that ever happened to me in the whole course of my life, even to the crossing of my most earnest desires, and highest expectations, but what I must confess has really, in the end, turned to my advantage another way.

O make me truly sensible of all thy promises to, and dealings with me; that whatever storms may arise in the tempestuous ocean of this world, I may still fix the anchor of my hope in thee, who art the spring of all blessings, and without whom no calamity could ever befall me !

And as the promises of **GOD** upon all these accounts are to be the object of my hope, so are his threatenings to be of my fear and aversion : as the former are of excellent use to revive the most drooping hearts, so the latter are of weight enough to depress the stoutest and most undaunted spirits.

Not to mention the miseries denounced against the wicked in the next world, there is one punishment threatened to be inflicted here, which is of itself sufficient to this ; and that is, “ If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, saith the **LORD** of Hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings.” (*Mal. ii. 2.*)

Most dreadful sentence! which none that consider aright can read without trembling and astonishment. Alas! if GOD should curse me, where should I seek for blessing; since he is the only fountain from which it flows? And if He should curse my very blessings, what could I hope for but misery and despair? My health, my wealth, my relations, nay, my very life itself, would all be accursed to me; and what is yet worse, even my spiritual exercises, my preaching, praying, and communicating, would all become a snare and a curse to me: yea, and CHRIST himself, who came into the world to bless me, if I walk not in his fear, will himself be a curse to me.

So that I may say of every thing I have, or enjoy, or expect, 'all these GOD has made curses on me, because I have not glorified him in them. O, who would not tremble at these threatenings! Who would not fear thee, O King of nations, who art thus terrible in thy judgments! Who would not love and obey thee, who art so gracious in thy promises! Teach me, I beseech thee, so to place my fear upon the former, that I may still fix my hope upon the latter; that though I fear thy dreadful curses, yet I may never despair of thy tender mercies!

### RESOLUTION VI.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, to press through all duties and difficulties, for the advancement of GOD's glory, and my own happiness.*

CHRISTIANITY is well termed a warfare; for a warfare it is, wherein no danger can be prevented, no enemy conquered, no victory obtained, without much courage and resolution.

I have not only many outward enemies to grapple with, but I have myself, my worst enemy, to encounter. How necessary is it then, that I should raise up all my force and courage, put on my spiritual armour, and make myself

“strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might.” I know I must strive, before I can enter in at the strait gate; I must win the crown before I can wear it. I must go through a solitary wilderness, and conquer many enemies, before I come to the land of Canaan. What, then, shall I let go my eternal possession to save myself from hardship? Alas! if CHRIST had laid aside the great work of my redemption, to avoid the undergoing of GOD’s anger and man’s malice, what a miserable condition had I been in!

Therefore, I firmly resolve, notwithstanding the strength of sin, and of my own corrupt affections, to undertake all duties, and undergo all miseries, that GOD in his infinite wisdom thinks fit to lay upon me, or exercise my patience in.

### RESOLUTION VII.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, so to be angry as not to sin, and therefore to be angry at nothing but sin.*

THE former part of this resolution is founded in the express command of ST. PAUL, “Be ye angry, and sin not:” (*Eph. iv. 26*;) and the latter is an explication of it, as well as an inference drawn from it. For if anger be not only lawful, but a duty, when it does not involve us in sin; the only difficulty is to know how that passion ought to be qualified to justify the exercise of it.

The thing that I am to aim at in my actions is, the honouring, serving, and pleasing of GOD: How can I serve and please GOD, in being angry at any thing but what I know is displeasing to him? I may be scorned, reproached, and vilified among my equals, or accused, condemned, and punished by my superiors: and these are treatments that are but too apt to transport men into anger and revenge.

But then, before I suffer this passion, I ought to con-

sider, whether I have not behaved myself so as to deserve this treatment? If I have, then there is no injustice done me, and therefore I ought not to be angry at it: If I have not, I must not be angry at the persons who act thus, but only at their sin; for, to speak properly, it is not the person that offends me, but the sin.

And this, not because it is injurious to me, but because it is displeasing to God; for to be angry at any thing but what displeases God, is to displease God in being angry.

Whenever, therefore, I receive any affronts or provocations, I am resolved, by God's grace assisting, never to be moved at them, farther than they are sinful, and at the same time to pray for the pardon of them that are guilty of them.

But how shall I be sure to be angry at nothing but sin? When any thing happens that may inflame my passion, I must immediately stop its career, until I have duly considered the motives and occasions that raised it.

And as this will be a means to regulate the object of my anger, so likewise the measure of it: for he that is slow to wrath takes time to consider; and, by consequence, puts his passion under the conduct of his reason; and whoever does so, will never suffer it to be transported beyond its proper bounds. In order therefore to prevent the fatal consequences of this passion, I now resolve never to speak or do any thing while I am under the influence of it; but take time to reflect upon the several circumstances of the action or object it arises from; and as oft as I find any thing in it displeasing to God, to be regularly angry at that, to correct, rebuke, and reprove it, with a zeal and fervour of spirit, suitable to the occasion; but still to keep within the bounds of the Christian temper, which is always distinguished by love and meekness.

## CONCERNING MY WORDS.

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### RESOLUTION I.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, never to speak much, lest I often speak too much ; and not to speak at all, rather than to no purpose.*

“ It is the voice of fools that is known by the multitude of words :” (*Eccles. v. 3 :*) In which there are “ divers vanities,” (*ver. 6,*) and sin too : whereas, “ he that refraineth his lips is wise.” (*Prov. x. 19.*)

This is that piece of Christian wisdom, which I now resolve to look after ; and, therefore, never to deliver my words out by number, but by weight : not amusing those I converse with, with impertinence and circumlocution, but coming directly to the matter, so as never to speak more than the matter requireth, nor to speak at all when no matter requireth. For why should I spend my breath for nothing ? Alas ! that is not all ; if I spend it ill, it will be far worse than spending it for nothing ; for our blessed SAVIOUR has told me, that I must answer “ for every idle ” and unprofitable, as well as profane, “ word.” (*Matt. xii. 36.*) But now, if all the vain words I ever spoke should be written, as I have cause to believe they are, in the book of GOD’S remembrance, how many vast volumes must they make !

But I trust, through the blood of my Redeemer, they will all be washed out before I appear before him. In order to this, as I heartily bewail my former follies, so I firmly resolve to use my utmost endeavours for the time to come, not to give way to any idle words ; but always to consider well beforehand, what, and how, and why, I



speaking; and suffer “no corrupt communication to proceed out of my mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.” (*Eph.* iv. 29.)

And I must always take care, so that my words may not only be such as have no malignity in them, but such as may be useful and beneficial: not only be such as to do no hurt, but likewise such as may do good to others as well as myself. To this end, I firmly resolve, by the grace of God, never to speak only for the sake of speaking; but to weigh each word before I speak it, and consider the tendency of it, whether it may be the occasion of good or evil.

## RESOLUTION II.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to make my tongue and heart go together.*

As my happiness consisteth in union with, so doth my holiness in likeness to, God.

Now, one great title which the Most High is pleased to give to himself is, the God of truth: so that I shall be so much the liker to the God of truth, by how much I am more constant to the truth. And the farther I deviate from this, the nearer I approach to the nature of the Devil, who “is the father of lies.” To avoid the scandal, as well as the dangerous malignity of this sin, I am resolved by the blessing of God, never to speak any thing but what I think really to be true; so that if ever I speak what is not true, it shall not be the error of my will, but of my understanding.

I know lies are commonly distinguished into officious, pernicious, and jocose: and some may fancy some of them more tolerable than others. But for my own part, I think they are all pernicious, and therefore not to be indulged upon any pretence whatsoever.

But there is another sort of lies most men are apt to fall

into, and they are promissory lies ; to avoid which, I am resolved never to promise any thing but what I intend to perform ; and never to intend to perform any thing, but what I am sure I can perform. For this is the occasion of most promissory lies, that we promise that absolutely, which we should promise only conditionally : for though I may intend to do as I say, yet a thousand things may intervene which may hinder the performance of my promise. So that unless I be absolutely sure I can do a thing, I must never absolutely promise to do it ; and therefore in all such promises shall still put in, ‘ By the help of God : ’ at the same time lifting up my heart to God, lest I take his name in vain.

### RESOLUTION III.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to speak of other men's sins only before their faces, and of their virtues only behind their backs.*

To commend men when they are present, I esteem as great a piece of folly, as to reprove them when they are absent. But to rail at others when they hear me not, is the highest folly imaginable ; for as it is impossible they should get any good, so it is impossible but that I should get much hurt by it. For such sort of words may not only prove injurious to the person of whom, but even to whom they are spoken ; by wounding the credit of the former, and the charity of the latter, and by consequence, my own soul ; nay, even though I speak that which is true in itself, and known to be so to me : and therefore this backbiting ought by all means to be avoided.

But I must much more have a care of raising false reports concerning any one, or of giving credit to them that raise them, or of passing my judgment, until I have weighed the matter, lest I transgress the rules of charity, which command me not to censure any one upon other's

rumours, or my own surmises: nay, if the thing be in itself true, still to interpret it in the best sense. And if I reprove, I must still fit my reproof to the time when, the person to whom, and the sin against which it is designed; still contriving with myself how to carry on this duty so as that, by “converting a sinner from the evil of his ways, I may save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins:” (*James* v. 29 :) Not venting my anger against the person, but my sorrow for the sin that is reproved. Hot and reviling words will not so much exasperate a man against his sin, as against the person that doth reprove it. “It is not the wrath of man that worketh the righteousness of God.” (*James* i. 10.) This, of all duties, must be performed with a spirit of love and meekness. I must first insinuate myself into his affections, and then press his sin upon his conscience, and that directly or indirectly, as the person, matter, or occasion, shall require; that so he that is reproved by me now, may have cause to bless God for me to all eternity.

#### RESOLUTION IV.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to speak reverently to my superiors, humbly to my inferiors, and civilly to all.*

THE Most High God, the Master of this great family, the world, for the more orderly government of it, hath, according to his infinite wisdom, set some in higher, some in lower places; hath made some as stewards, others as under servants; and according to every man's work that he expects from him, he measures out his talents to him. Blessed be his name for it, he hath set me in a middle form; so that I have both superiors to reverence, and inferiors to condescend to: and accordingly it is my duty so to behave towards them, that the expressions of my mouth may manifest the obedient subjection of my heart, to the authority God has given them over me.

It is the express command of the Gospel, that we should render to every man his due, “fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour, belongeth;” (*Rom. xiii. 13*;) which words plainly imply, both that it is some men’s due to receive honour, and other men’s duty to give it: and accordingly we find PAUL, when he was brought before FESTUS, doth not say, Art thou he whom they call FESTUS? but, “Most noble FESTUS.” (*Acts xxvi. 25*.) In like manner ST. JOHN doth not call her he writes to, in his second Epistle, being a person of quality, woman, but “elect lady.” And this sort of reverence is farther confirmed to us, not only by the constant custom of all nations, in all ages of the world, but by the rules of right reason, as well as the order of government: for as there is both a natural and civil superiority, a superiority in gifts and age, and a superiority likewise in office and station; so there is nothing can be more necessary, than that there should be, in both these respects, a respect paid answerable to these distinctions.

And as there is a reverence due from inferiors to their superiors, in point of conversation, so likewise are there some decent regards to be showed even by superiors to their inferiors; who are always to be treated with candour and condescension, in their ordinary capacities; and even where they are considered as criminals, with meekness and moderation: Insomuch, that methinks it is one of the worst sights in the world, to see some men that are gotten upon a little higher ground than their neighbours, to look scornfully down upon all that are below them, disdain- ing them the least favour or respect whatsoever. Such churlish NABALS as these, are not only very unjust and unreasonable in their behaviour to others, but they are great enemies to themselves; not only by drawing upon them the hatred and enmity of all that are about them, but likewise by tormenting themselves with such frivolous things, as such spirits commonly do. Wherefore, that I may please God, my neighbour, and myself, in what I speak, though I could exceed other men (which is impossible for

me to suppose) in every thing; I resolve, by God's grace, always to behave myself so, as if I excelled them in nothing; and not only to speak reverently to them that are above me, but humbly and civilly to those that are beneath me. I will always endeavour to use such winning words, as to manifest more of my love to them than my power over them; I will always season my tongue with savoury, not bitter expressions, not making my mouth a vent for passion, but rather an instrument to draw love and affection; still speaking as civilly unto others, as I would have them speak to me.

## CONCERNING MY ACTIONS.

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### RESOLUTION I.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do every thing in obedience to the will of God.*

It is not sufficient that what I do is the will of God, but I must therefore do it because it is the will of God. For, what saith my FATHER? "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." (*Prov. xxiii. 26.*) So that my FATHER will not only have my hand, but my heart too: and my feet must not walk in the ways of God, until my eyes have discerned them to be so. I may do an action that in itself is good, and yet at the same time not do a good action, if I do not therefore do it because it is so; *ex. gr.*, I may give an alms to the poor, feed the hungry, or clothe the naked; but let me examine upon what principle these actions are founded, whether I therefore do them, because God hath commanded them; if not, my feeding of the poor will be no more a good action, than the ravens feeding the Prophet was. (*1 Kings xvii. 6.*) Their feeding of the Prophet was commanded by God, as well as my feeding of the poor; but I cannot say they did a good action, because though they did do this which was commanded by God, yet being irrational creatures they could not reflect upon that command, and so could not do this in obedience to it.

There are some persons, to the very disposition of whose spirits some sins are odious and abominable. Thus I have known some, whose very constitutions have carried them into an antipathy to luxury; and others again, who could never endure to drink beyond their thirst, much less to unman themselves by drinking. And the like may be

observed of covetousness, which LUTHER was such an enemy to, that it is said to be against his very nature. Now, I say, though the abstaining from these sins be commendable in all persons, yet unless, together with their natural disposition, there be likewise a spiritual desire to please GOD, their abstaining from these vices is no more than the brute beasts themselves do, who always act according to the temper of their bodies, and are never guilty of any excesses that are prejudicial to them.

Hence, servants are commanded to be "obedient to their masters, with good-will doing service as to the LORD, and not to men:" (*Eph.* vi. 5—7:) which clearly shows, that though a servant doth obey his master, yet if he doth not do it in obedience unto GOD, he will not find acceptance with him. So that whensoever I set my hand to any action that is good, I must still fix my eye upon GOD's commanding of it, and do it only in respect to that; as knowing, that if I give but a farthing to the poor in all my life, and do it in obedience to GOD's commands, it shall be accepted sooner than theirs who feed hundreds at their table every day, and have not respect to the same command.

Do I see a poor wretch ready to fall down to the earth for want of a little support, and my bowels begin to yearn towards him? Let me search into my heart, and see what it is that raises this compassion in me: if it flows only from a natural tenderness, without regard to GOD who has commanded it, the poor man may be relieved, but GOD will not be pleased with it. Again, do my friends stir me up to pray or hear, or do any other spiritual or civil actions, and I therefore only do it because of their importunity? I may satisfy my friends' desire, but cannot properly be said to obey the commands of GOD: so that the only foundation I must resolve to build all the actions of my life upon is, an uniform obedience to that GOD, by whom alone I am enabled to perform them.

## RESOLUTION II.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do every thing with prudence and discretion, as well as with zeal and affection.*

WHILST I am in this earthly tabernacle I live almost as in a dungeon, having no light to work by, but a little that springs in at the narrow crevices of my understanding; so that I had need to make use of all that light I have, to regulate the zeal that sometimes sits upon my spirit: for good passions may sometimes carry me into bad actions; my zeal, when hot in the pursuit of GOD'S glory, may sometimes hurry me beyond his laws, especially where Christian prudence hath not first chalked out the way, and set the bounds for it. As in discourse, my zeal may put me upon throwing pearls before swine; so in my actions, unless discretion govern my affections, I shall frequently run into such as would be altogether impertinent, and therefore ought to be omitted, and daily neglect several duties which ought to be performed.

But my discretion is chiefly requisite for the ordering of time and place, and other particular circumstances, the irregular management of which may easily spoil the best of actions: for instance, that may be a good work at one time and place, which is not at another; and may be very innocent and becoming in one person, though quite contrary in another. It is, therefore, the proper office of my understanding to point out the fittest time, and place, and person, for the performance of each action I engage in: as for example: In distributing to the poor, my hand of charity must be guided by the eye of understanding, where, when, how much, and to whom, to give; or else I may, at the same time, not only offend GOD, but wrong my neighbour and myself too. And so for all other actions, which I ought never to set about, without consulting the rules of wisdom modelled by the law of GOD.



## RESOLUTION III.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, never to set my hand, my head, or my heart, about any thing but what I verily believe is good in itself, and will be esteemed so by God.*

“WITHOUT faith,” the Apostle tells me, “it is impossible to please GOD:” (*Heb. xi. 5:*) “For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin:” (*Rom. xiv. 23:*) Where, by faith, we are to understand, that whereby I believe my works shall be accepted by GOD; for faith here is opposed to doubting; and that, not about CHRIST’S dying for me, but about the particular actions of my life. “He that doubteth,” saith the Apostle, “is damned if he eat;” that is, he that eateth that which he doubteth whether he may lawfully eat or no, is damned, because he sins in doing it, and therefore may be damned for it. But why so? Because “he eateth not of faith;” because he doeth that which he knows not whether he may do or no, not believing it to be really good in itself, or acceptable unto GOD. And though the Apostle here instances only in that particular action of eating, yet what he says with relation to that is properly applicable to all the other actions of life; for he afterwards subjoins, “Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin:” whatsoever it is, good or bad, if not done by faith, it is sin.

And truly this will be of use through my whole life, for the avoiding of many sins; for many things which are good in themselves, may, for want of faith, become otherwise to me. My heart not believing, what I do is good, my hand can never make it so; or if I think what I do is bad, though it be not so in itself, yet my very thinking it so, will make it so to me.

And this is that which we call doing any thing with a good conscience, or “keeping,” as ST. PAUL did, “our conscience void of offence.” And to go contrary to the

dictates of my conscience, is to transgress the command of God; for in this, conscience is as God's vicegerent in my soul: what conscience commands, God commands; what conscience forbids, God forbids: that is, I am as really under the power of conscience, as the commands of God, in such a case; so that if I do not obey the former, it is impossible for me to obey the latter. How much, then, doth it behove me to see that my conscience be rightly informed in every thing? For, as if a Judge be misinformed, it is impossible he should pass righteous judgment; so, if conscience be misinformed, it is impossible I should do a righteous act. And what a miserable case shall I then be in? If I do what in itself is sinful, though my conscience tells me it is good, yet I sin, because the act in itself is sinful; and if I do what in itself is good, and my conscience tells me it is bad, I sin, because my conscience tells me it is so: so that as my conscience is, so will my actions be.

For this reason, I resolve never to do any thing until I have first informed my conscience, from the word of God, whether it be lawful for me or no; or, in case it be not determined there, to make a strict inquiry into each circumstance of it, considering with myself what good or evil may issue from it, and so what good or evil there is in it; and according as my conscience, upon hearing the arguments on both sides, shall decide, I shall do, or not do it; never undertaking any thing upon mere surmises, because it may be good, but upon a thorough persuasion that it is so.

#### RESOLUTION IV.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do all things for the glory of God.*

As I was not made by, so neither for myself; for "God," says the Wise Man, "made all things for himself."

(*Prov.* xvi. 4.) And being thus made for GOD, it follows that I ought to act for GOD; otherwise I shall frustrate the end of my creation; insomuch, that whatsoever I make my chief aim in what I do, I make that my god. Do I aim at the glory of the all-glorious JEHOVAH? It is him I make my GOD. Do I aim at riches? Then it is mammon I make my god; and therefore it is, that covetousness is called idolatry. (*Col.* iii. 5.) Do I aim at pleasures? It is my senses I make my god. (*Phil.* iii. 19.) Do I aim at applause, or worldly advancements; or do I aim at my own health or life? These are my gods: for what is worshipping, but making all the powers of my soul, and actions of my body, to bow and stoop to them? Hence it is that the Most High GOD, who hath said, "He will not give his glory to another," hath been so express in commanding me to do all things to his glory: "Whether ye eat, or drink," says the Apostle, "or whatsoever ye do, do all things to the glory of GOD." (1 *Cor.* x. 31.)

But how can I be said to do any thing to the glory of the eternal GOD? Why, in the same manner as he is said to do what he doeth for his own glory. And how is that? By manifesting his glory unto others. Thus, if I can but so live and act, as thereby to evidence that the GOD I serve is a glorious GOD, glorious in holiness, glorious in goodness, glorious in wisdom, glorious in power; this is doing all things to the glory of GOD. For example: By praying to GOD, I avouch him to be a GOD infinite in knowledge; that He is present with me, and hears me pray, wheresoever I am; and I own him to be infinite in mercy, in that he will suffer such a sinful creature as I am to address myself to him, &c. And so there is not the least action I undertake, but I am so to manage it as to manifest the glory of GOD by it; otherwise let me do what I will, I am sure to sin: for though I confess a good end can never make a bad action good, yet a bad end will always make a good action bad: so that as ever I would do any thing that is good, I must be sure to do it to the glory of GOD.

## CONCERNING MY RELATIONS.

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BUT be not deceived, O my soul! Thou art not yet advanced far enough. It is not sufficient to pretend to holiness in my thoughts and affections, and in my words and actions, unless I express it likewise in all the relations and conditions of life. The commandments of GOD are exceeding broad; they extend to every capacity I can possibly be in, not only enjoining me to live soberly in respect to myself, but righteously to my neighbour; and therefore, if I would be thoroughly religious, I must endeavour to fix my resolutions with regard to the several duties the Most High expects from me in all the particular relations I bear him during my sojourning here on earth.

### RESOLUTION I.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to honour and obey the King, whom God is pleased to set over me, as well as to expect he should protect me, whom God is pleased to set under him.*

THE King of Kings, and LORD of Lords, the Monarch of all the world, having enacted many gracious laws, is pleased to set over every nation such persons as may put them in execution; so that I cannot but look upon a lawful King, as truly a representative of the Most High GOD as a Parliament is of the people; and am therefore

persuaded, that whosoever rebels against him, rebels against God himself; not only in that he rebels against the ordinance of God, and so against the God of that ordinance, but because he rebels against him whom God hath set up as his Vicegerent, to represent his person, and execute his laws, in such a part of his dominions.

Hence it is that these two precepts, “Fear God, and honour the King,” are so often joined together in Holy Writ: for he that fears God’s power, cannot but honour his authority; and he that honours not the King, that represents God, cannot be said to fear God, who is represented by him. And hence, likewise, it is, that God hath been as express in enjoining obedience to our Governors, as to himself: For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.” Why? Because “there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” (*Rom. xiii. 1.*)

And he has denounced as great a judgment against such as rebel against the Magistrate, as against those that rebel against himself: “for whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation.” (*Ver. 2.*) So that the wrath of God shall as certainly fall upon those that rise up against the King, as upon those that fight against God. And no wonder that the punishment should be the same, when the fault is the same: for he that fights against the King, fights against God himself, who hath invested him with that power to govern his people, representing his own glorious Majesty before them.

Upon this ground it is, that I believe the wickedness of a Prince cannot be a sufficient plea for the disobedience of his subjects; for it is not the holiness but the authority of God he represents, which the most wicked person may be endowed with: And therefore, when the Gospel first began to spread itself over the earth, though there was no Christian King, or Supreme Magistrate, of what title soever, to cherish and protect it; nay, though the civil powers were then the greatest enemies to it; yet even

then were the 'disciples of CHRIST enjoined to "submit themselves to every ordinance of man for the LORD's sake."

Insomuch, that did I live amongst the Turks, I should look upon it as my duty to obey the Grand Signior in all his lawful edicts, as well as the most Christian King in the world. For supposing a Prince be ever so wicked, and never so negligent in his duty of protecting me, it doth not follow that I must neglect mine of obeying him.

In such a case, I have another duty added to this, and that is, to intercede with GOD for his conversion : for thus hath the King of Kings commanded, that "prayers, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made," as "for all men," so more particularly, "for Kings, and those that are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." (1 *Tim.* ii. 1, 2.)

So that whensoever I address to the court of heaven, I must be sure to remember my sovereign on earth, that GOD would be pleased to enable his servant to reign on earth, as himself doth in heaven, in righteousness and mercy. But especially, in case of any seeming or real default, though I do not think it a subject's duty to judge, or censure his sovereign's actions, I am to be the more earnest in my intercessions for him ; but upon no account to fight or rebel against him.

And if I am thus strictly obliged to honour, obey, and pray for, a bad prince, how much more should I pay those duties to one who represents GOD, not only in his authority, but in his holiness too ? In this case sure, as there is a double engagement to reverence and obedience, so I am doubly punishable, if I neglect to show it, either to the Prince himself, or those that are set under him ; for the same obligations that lie upon me, for my obedience to the King, bind me likewise to obey his officers and magistrates, that act under him ; and that for this reason, because as he represents GOD, so they represent him : and

therefore, whatever they command in his name, I look upon it as much my duty to obey, as if it was commanded by his own mouth ; and accordingly do from this moment, by the grace of GOD, resolve to put this duty in practice.

## RESOLUTION II.

*I am resolved, by the same divine grace, to be as constant in loving of my wife, as cautious in choosing her.*

THOUGH it be not necessary for me to resolve upon marrying, yet it may not be improper to resolve, in case I should, to follow these rules : first, in the choice of a wife ; secondly, in the affection that I ought to bear her.

As for the first, I shall always endeavour to make choice of such a woman for my spouse, who hath first made choice of CHRIST as a spouse for herself ; that none may be made one flesh with me, who is not made one spirit with CHRIST my SAVIOUR. For I look upon the image of CHRIST, as the best mark of beauty I can behold in her ; and the grace of GOD, as the best portion I can receive with her.

These seem to be such necessary qualifications, that my heart trembles at the thoughts of ever having a wife without them. What, shall I marry one that is wedded already to her sins ; or have possession of her body only, when the Devil has possession of her soul ? Shall such a one be united to me here, who shall be separated from me for ever hereafter, and condemned to scorch in everlasting burnings ? No ; if ever it be my lot to enter into that state, I beg of GOD that he would direct me in the choice of such a wife, as will so live and pray, and converse with me upon earth, that we may both sing, rejoice, and be blessed together for ever in heaven.

That this therefore may be my portion, I firmly resolve, never to set upon such a design, before I have first begged of my heavenly FATHER, to honour me with the partnership of one of his beloved children; and shall afterwards be as careful as I can, never to fix my affections upon any woman for a wife, until I am thoroughly persuaded of the grounds I have to love her as a true Christian.

If I could thus be happy, so as to meet with a wife of these qualities, it would be impossible for me not to be sincere in my affection towards her: for how could I choose but love her who has GOD for her Father, the Church for her Mother, and heaven for her portion; who loves GOD, and is beloved of him? Especially when I consider, that thus to love her will not only be my duty but my happiness too.

### RESOLUTION III.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, to do my endeavour to give to GOD whatsoever children he shall be pleased to give me.*

I HAVE sometimes wondered at the Providence of GOD, in bringing so many millions of people out of the loins of one man; and cannot but make this use of it, to stir up myself to a double diligence, in bringing up my children in the nurture and admonition of the LORD. For who knows but the salvation of ten thousand souls may depend upon the education of one single child?

If I train up my son in the ways of religion, and teach him what it is to keep a "conscience void of offence, towards GOD and man;" he will then not only have an inward sense of his own duty, but take all possible care to instil it into others, whether children or servants, that are committed to his charge: and these again will do the same to theirs, by teaching them to walk in the same



path; until, by degrees, the holiness of one man hath diffused itself to all succeeding generations.

But, on the other hand, if I neglect the care of my son's education, and suffer the leprosy of sin to corrupt him, it is great odds but the infection may spread itself over all my posterity, and so draw upon me the curses and accusations of ten thousand souls in hell, which might otherwise have been praising God for me to all eternity in heaven.

Hence it is that I am resolved to endeavour to be a spiritual as well as a natural father to my children; yea, to take more care to get a portion for their souls in heaven, than to make provision for their bodies on earth. For if he be worse than an infidel that provides not for his family the sustenance of their bodies, what is he that suffers his family to neglect the salvation of their souls?

That nothing of this, therefore, may be laid to my charge, if ever Providence sees fit to bless me with children of my own, I will take all occasions, and make use of all means, to work the knowledge of God into their heads, and the grace of CHRIST into their hearts, by teaching them to "remember their Creator in the days of their youth," by acquainting them with the duties that he expects from them; with the rewards they shall feel if dutiful, and the punishments they shall have if disobedient children; still accommodating my expressions to the shallow capacity of their tender years.

But I must still take care to let them understand, that what I do is from a principle of love, else God may correct me, for correcting them; I may set before my children such an example of indiscreet passion, as they will be apt enough to learn without my teaching them.

On the other hand, it behoves me, if possible, so to order my family, that my children may not see or hear, and so not learn any thing but goodness in it; for commonly, according to what we learn when young, we practise when we are old.

And it behoves me to take all opportunities of dis-

coursing to them of GOD and CHRIST, of the immortality of their souls, and the future state, that, according as they grow in years, they may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOUR CHRIST. And when they come to years of discretion, capable of doing farther service to GOD and their country, by some calling or profession, I must be sure to place them in such a one, as may be no hinderance to that high and heavenly calling, which they have in CHRIST JESUS, but rather promote it; that being like tender plants engrafted into the true Vine, they may bring forth much fruit to GOD's glory, to my comfort, and their own salvation.

#### RESOLUTION IV.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do my duty to my servants, as well as expect they should do theirs to me.*

IT was JOSHUA's, and by GOD's grace, it shall be my resolution, "that I and my house will serve the LORD." I, in the first place, and then my house; for if I myself do not, I cannot expect that they should. So that for the ordering of my family in general, I must not only press their duty upon them, but likewise practise my own duty in praying every day at the least twice with them; in expounding the principles of religion to them, and in calling for an account of every discourse they hear, either in private or in public; in seeing that they constantly frequent the divine ordinances, and that they behave themselves so conscientiously therein, that they may be, some way or other, the better by them. And to these ends, I think it my duty to allow my servants some time, every day, wherein to serve GOD, as well as to see they spend their other hours in serving me; and to make them sensible that they do not serve me only for myself, but ultimately

in reference to GOD ; their serving me making way for my better serving GOD.

And for this reason, I cannot believe but it is as great a sin to cumber my servants, as myself, with too much worldly business. For how can they spend any time in the service of GOD, when I require all their time in my own? And how justly should I be condemned, if by this means I should bring them into a sort of necessity of sinning, either in not obeying GOD, or not obeying me? Not that I think it a servant's duty to neglect his Creator to serve his master ; on the contrary, he is obliged, in all cases, where their commands interfere, "to obey GOD rather than man." But where they do not, there is a strict injunction upon all servants, that they should be "obedient to their masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto CHRIST." (*Ephes. vi. 5.*) But how with fear and trembling? Why fearing lest they should offend GOD, in offending them, and trembling at the thoughts of being disobedient to the divine command, which enjoins them to "be obedient to their masters in all things, not answering again ; (*Tit. ii. 9 ;*) that is, not repining at their master's lawful commands, as some are apt to do ; for it is as great a sin in servants to speak irreverently to their masters, as in masters to speak passionately to their servants.

But how are servants to give obedience to their masters with singleness of heart, as unto CHRIST? Why, by obeying them only in obedience unto CHRIST ; that is, they are therefore to do their master's will, because it is the LORD's will they should do it ; serving them, "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of CHRIST, doing the will of GOD from the heart, with good-will doing service, as to the LORD, and not to men." (*Ephes. vi. 6, 7 ; Col. iii. 22.*)

This is the duty, therefore, that I should be oft inculcating upon my servants, and shall as oft be reflecting upon myself, that what I require for my own service may

be always in subordination to **God's**, who is our common Lord and Master, whose laws are equally obliging to all conditions of men, and in whose sight "there is no respect of persons."

### RESOLUTION V.

*I am resolved, by the grace of **God**, to feed the flock, that **God** shall set me over, with wholesome food; neither starving them by idleness, poisoning them with error, nor puffing them up with impertinencies.*

**AND** here I cannot but declare that ever since I knew what it was to study, I have found, by experience, that spiritual pleasures do as far surpass sensual, as the soul exceeds the body; and for this reason, as I always thought the study of Divinity to be the most agreeable of all others; so I have often wondered, that the greatest persons in the world should not be desirous of devoting themselves to it.

But stay, my soul, let not thy thoughts run only upon the dignity of thy function; but think, likewise, upon the strict account thou must give of it in another life: the serious consideration of which, as it cannot but be a great comfort to the faithful pastor, who has diligently fed his flock with the sincere milk of **God's** word; so must it be a great terror to the negligent, who have either carelessly lost, or treacherously deluded, the souls of those committed to their charge, which they must one day answer for, as well as for their own.

And therefore, that nothing of this kind may ever be laid to my charge, I solemnly resolve before **God**, so to demean myself in the exercise of my ministerial function, as to make the care of souls, especially of those committed to my charge, the business of my life.

And that without partiality or exception; I must not

single out some of the best of my flock, such as I have the highest respect for, or have received the greatest respect from, or have received the greatest obligations from ; but minister to every one according to their several necessities ; even though I should meet with such as hate to be reformed, and cast my words behind them. And therefore, I shall always endeavour “ to strengthen the weak, heal the wounded, and bind up the broken heart ; ” to call in those that err and go astray, and “ to seek and save those that are lost.”

To these ends, though preaching is, without doubt, a most necessary duty, (especially if it be performed as it ought, with zeal and reverence, and the doctrine applied and pressed home with sincerity of affection,) yet I shall not think it sufficient to instruct my people only from the pulpit, but take all opportunities to instil good principles into their minds in private. I know it is impossible for all Ministers frequently to visit every particular person in their parish, there being in some parishes many thousands of souls : But, howsoever, if it should please the LORD to call me to such a flock, though I cannot visit all, I shall visit as many as I can ; especially those that are sick and infirm, and be sure to feed them with the sincere milk of the word, such as may turn to their spiritual nourishment, and make them grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. I will not fill their heads with speculative notions and niceties in Divinity, but shall instruct them in those necessary truths, which their Christian faith indispensably obliges them to know, and press them to the performance of those duties, without which they cannot be saved ; meekly and impartially reproofing the particular vices they are most inclined to, and cheerfully encouraging whatever virtuous actions they are, any of them, exemplary in, and whatever good habits or inclinations the divine grace has put into their hearts.

And since love is the great characteristic of our pro-

fession, the bond and cement of all other Christian duties, in order to make my ministry the more successful, I resolve in the last place, not only to avoid all differences and disputes with them myself, but amicably to compose all such as may arise among the neighbours. In a word, I shall make it my endeavour, in all things, so to approve myself as a faithful Minister, both in life and doctrine, that at the last day, when the great God shall call for my parish and myself to appear before him, I may be fitly prepared to give an account of both; and may, with joy and comfort, pronounce this sentence of my SAVIOUR, “Behold I and the children which thou hast given me.”

#### RESOLUTION VI.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to be as faithful and constant to my friend, as I would have my friend to be faithful and constant to me.*

HAVING before resolved to be zealous in loving God, I here resolve to be as constant in loving my friend. But why do I resolve upon this? Is it possible to live and not to love? This to me seems as plain a contradiction, as to live, and not to live: For love, in my opinion, is as much the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body. So that for my own part, I shall expect to cease to live, at the very moment that I cease to love; nay, I do not look upon love only as my life, but as the joy and comfort of it too. And for this reason, I shall never envy any man his riches, pleasures, or preferments, provided that I can but enjoy the persons my soul delights in, *viz.*, CHRIST in the first place, and my friend in the second.

But then I must have a great care, where, and how, I place this affection; for if I place it wrong, my very loving will be sinning: and therefore, I shall always

endeavour to make such only my friends, as are friends to God.

My meaning is, that I will make none my friends, but such as I know to be good men, and good Christians, such as deserve my love in a spiritual, as well as a natural sense: and since I may lawfully love my friend in both these senses, the one is so far from being exclusive, that it is really perfective of the other. And for this reason, as the spiritual good of my friend is always to be preferred before that which is temporal, I am resolved to found the one upon the other. I will always be ready, as oft as he stands in need, to do him all the kind offices I can in his worldly affairs; to promote his interest, vindicate his character from secret aspersions, and defend his person from open assaults; to be faithful and punctual in the performance of my promises to him, as well as in keeping the secrets he has entrusted me with.

But all these things are to be done with a tender regard to the honour of God, so that the services I do him in his temporal concerns, must still be consistent with, and subservient to, the spiritual interest and welfare of his immortal soul, in which I am principally obliged to manifest my friendship towards him. If I see him wander out of the right way, I must immediately take care to advertise him of it, and use the best means I can to bring him back to it. Or if I know him to be guilty of any vices, I must endeavour to convince him of the danger of them, and importune and persuade him to forsake them.

And, *Lastly*, I must be as constant in keeping my friend, as cautious in choosing him; still continuing the heat of my affections towards him, in the day of his affliction, as well as in the height of his prosperity.

These are the rules whereby I resolve to express my friendship unto others, and whereby I would have others to express that friendship unto me.

## CONCERNING MY TALENTS.

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HAVING so solemnly devoted myself to God, according to the covenant he hath made with me, and the duty I owe to him; not only what I am, and what I do, but likewise what I have, is still to be improved for him. And this I am bound to, not only upon a federal but even a natural account; for whatsoever I have, I received from him, and therefore all the reason in the world, whatsoever I have, should be improved for him. For I look upon myself as having no other propriety in what I enjoy, than a servant hath in what he is entrusted with to improve for his master's use; thus, though I should have ten thousand pounds a year, I should have no more of my own, than if I had but two pence in the world; for it is only committed to my care for a season, to be employed and improved to the best advantage, and will be called for again at the grand audit, when I must answer for the use or abuse of it; so that whatsoever, in a civil sense, I can call my own, that in a spiritual sense I must esteem as God's. And therefore, it nearly concerns me, to manage all the talents I am entrusted with, as things I must give a strict account for at the day of judgment. As God bestows his mercies upon me, through the greatness of his love, so I am to restore his mercies back again to him, by the holiness of my life and conversation. In a word, whatever I receive from his bounty, I must, some way or other, lay out for his glory, accounting nothing my own, any farther than as I improve it for God's sake, and the spiritual comfort of my own soul.

In order to this, I shall make it my endeavour, by the blessing of God, to put in practice the following resolutions:--



## RESOLUTION I.

*I am resolved, if possible, to redeem my time past, by using double diligence for the future, to employ and improve all the gifts and endowments, both of body and mind, to the glory and service of my great Creator.*

TIME, health, and parts, are three precious talents, generally bestowed upon men, but seldom improved for GOD. To go no farther than myself: How much time and health have I enjoyed, by GOD's grace? And how little of it have I laid out for his honour? On the contrary, how oft have I offended, affronted, and provoked him, even when he has been courting me with his favours, and daily pouring forth his benefits upon me? This, alas, is a sad truth, which whensoever I seriously reflect upon, I cannot but acknowledge as the greatest instance of GOD's mercy and goodness, as well as the greatest motive to my gratitude and obedience.

In a due sense, therefore, of the vanities and follies of my younger years, I desire to take shame to myself for what is past, and do, this morning, humbly prostrate myself before the throne of grace, to implore GOD's pardon, and to make solemn promises and resolutions for the future, "to cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light;" and not only so, but to redeem the precious minutes I have squandered away, by husbanding those that remain to the best advantage. I will not trifle or sin away my time in the pleasures of sense, or the impertinencies of business, but shall always employ it in things that are necessary and useful, and proportion it to the weight and importance of the work or business I engage myself in, allotting such a part of it for this business, and such a part for that, so as to leave no intervals for unlawful or unnecessary actions to thrust themselves in, and pollute my life and conversation.

For, since it has pleased GOD to favour me with the blessing of health, and I am not certain how soon I may

be deprived of it, and thrown upon a bed of sickness, which may deprive me of the use of my reason, or make me incapable of any thing else but grappling with my distemper, it highly concerns me to make a due use of this blessing while I have it ; to improve these parts and gifts that GOD has endowed me with, to the manifestation of his glory, the salvation of my soul, and the public good of the community whereof I am a member.

To these ends, it will be requisite for me frequently to consider with myself, which way my weak parts may be the most usefully employed, and to bend them to those studies or actions which they are naturally the most inclined to and delighted in, with the utmost vigour and application ; more particularly in spiritual matters, to make use of all opportunities for the convincing others of GOD's love to them, and their sins against GOD ; of their misery by nature, and happiness by CHRIST ; and when the truth of GOD happens to be any way traduced or opposed, to be as valiant in the defence of it as its enemies are violent in their assaults against it. And as I thus resolve to employ my inward gifts and faculties for the glory and service of GOD, so,—

## RESOLUTION II.

*I am resolved, by the divine grace, to employ my riches, the outward blessings of Providence, to the same end ; and to observe such a due medium in the dispensing of them, as to avoid prodigality on the one hand, and covetousness on the other.*

THIS, without doubt, is a necessary resolution, but it is likewise very difficult to put in practice, without a careful observance of the following rules :—

First, Never to lavish out my substance, like the prodigal, in the revels of sin and vanity, but, after a due provision for the necessities and conveniences of life, to lay up

the overplus for the acts of love and charity towards my indigent brethren. I must consider the uses and ends for which God has entrusted me with such possessions: that they were not given me for the pampering my body, the feeding my lusts, or puffing me up with pride and ambition, but for advancing his glory, and my own and the public good. But why do I say given, when, as I before observed, I have no propriety in the riches I possess? They are only lent me for a few years, to be dispensed and distributed, as my great LORD and Master sees fit to appoint, *viz.*, for the benefit of the poor and necessitous, which he has made his deputies, to call for and receive his money at my hands. And this, indeed, is the best use I can put it to, for my own advantage, as well as theirs: for the money I bestow upon the poor, I give to God to lay up for me, and I have his infallible word and promise for it, that it shall be paid me again with unlimited interest, out of his heavenly treasure, which is infinite, eternal, and inexhaustible. Hence it is, that whensoever I see any fit object of charity, methinks I hear the Most High say unto me, Give this poor brother so much of my stock, which thou hast in thy hand, and I will place it to thy account, as given to myself; and, "look what thou layest out, it shall be paid thee again."

The second rule is, Never to spend a penny, where it can be better spared; nor to spare it, where it can be better spent. And this will oblige me, whensoever any occasion offers, of laying out money, considerately to weigh the circumstances of it, and according as the matter upon mature deliberation requires, I must not grudge to spend it; or if at any time I find more reason to spare, I must not dare to spend it; still remembering, that as I am strictly to account for the money God has given me, so I ought neither to be covetous in saving or hoarding it up, nor profuse in throwing it away, without a just occasion.

The main thing to be regarded is, the end I propose to myself in my expenses: whether it be really the glory of God, or my own carnal humour and appetite. For in-

stance: If I lay out my money in clothing my body, the question must be, whether I do this only for warmth and decency, or to gratify my pride and vanity? If the former, my money is better spent; if the latter, it is better spared than spent. Again: Do I lay it out in eating and drinking? If this be only to satisfy the necessities of nature, and make my life the more easy and comfortable, it is, without doubt, very well spent; but if it be to feed my luxury and intemperance, it is much better spared; better for my soul, in keeping it from sin, and better for my body in preserving it from sickness. And this rule is the more strictly to be observed, because it is as great a fault in a servant, not to lay out his master's money when he should, as to lay it out when he should not.

In order, therefore, to avoid both these extremes, there is a third rule to be observed, under this resolution; and that is, to keep a particular account of all my receipts and disbursements: to set down in a book every penny I receive at the hands of the ALMIGHTY, and every penny I lay out for his honour and service. By this means, I shall be in a manner forced both to get my money lawfully, and to lay it out carefully; for how can I put that amongst the money I have received from GOD, which I have got by unlawful means? Certainly, such money I may rather account as received from the Devil for his use, than from GOD for his. And so must I either lay every penny out for GOD, or otherwise I shall not know where to set it down; for I must set down nothing but what I lay out for his use; and if it be not for his use, with what face can I say it was? And by this means also, when GOD shall be pleased to call me to an account for what I received from him, I may with comfort appear before him, and having improved the talents he had committed to my charge, I may be received into his heavenly kingdom, with a "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into thy master's joy."

## RESOLUTION III.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, to improve the authority GOD gives me over others, to the suppression of vice, and the encouragement of virtue; and so, for the exaltation of GOD's name on earth, and their souls in heaven.*

THAT all power and authority hath its origin from GOD, and that one creature is not over another, but by the providence and will of him who is over all; and by consequence, that all the authority we have over men is to be improved for GOD, is clear, not only from that question, "Who made thee to differ from another? And what hast thou which thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. iv. 7;) but likewise, and that more clearly, from that positive assertion: "The powers that be are ordained of GOD." (Rom. xiii. 1.) That, therefore, I may follow my commission, I must stick close to my present resolution, even in all the power GOD gives me, to behave myself as one invested with that power from above, to restrain vice and encourage virtue, as oft as I have an opportunity so to do, always looking upon myself as one commissioned by him, and acting under him.

For this reason, I must still endeavour to exercise my authority, as if the Most High GOD was in my place in person, as well as power. I must not follow the dictates of my own carnal reason, much less the humours of my own biassed passion, but still keep to the acts which GOD himself hath made either in the general statute-book for all the world, the Holy Scriptures, or in the particular laws and statutes of the nation wherein I live.

And questionless, if I discharge this duty as I ought, whatever sphere of authority I move in, I am capable of doing a great deal of good, not only by my power, but by my influence and example. For common experience teaches us, that even the inclinations and desires of those that are eminent for their quality or station, are more

powerful than the very commands of God himself; especially among persons of an inferior rank and more servile disposition, who are apt to be more wrought upon by the fear of present punishment, or the loss of some temporal advantage, than any thing that is future or spiritual. Hence it is, that all those whom God has entrusted with this precious talent, have a great advantage and opportunity in their hands, for the suppressing sin, and exalting holiness in the world. A word from their mouths against whoredom, drunkenness, profanation of the sabbath, or the like; yea, their very example and silent gestures, being able to do more than the threatenings of Almighty God, either pronounced by himself in his word, or by his Ministers in his name.

This, therefore, is my resolution: That whatsoever authority the Most High God shall be pleased to put upon me, I will look upon it as my duty, and always make it my endeavour, to demolish the kingdom of sin and SATAN, and establish that of CHRIST and holiness in the hearts of all those to whom my commission extends; looking more at the duty God expects from me, than at the practice of other men. In a word, I will so exercise the power and authority God puts into my hands here, that when the particular circuit of my life is ended, and I shall be brought to the General Assize to give an account of this, amongst my other talents, I may give it up with joy; and so exchange my temporal authority upon earth, for an eternal crown of glory in heaven.

#### RESOLUTION IV.

*I am resolved, by the divine grace, to improve the affections God stirs up in others towards me, to the stirring up of their affections towards God.*

IF the authority I have over others, then questionless the affection others have to me, is to be improved for God; and that because the affection they bear to me in a natural sense, hath a kind of authority in me over them in a

spiritual one. And this I gather from my own experience : for I find none to have a greater command over me, than they that manifest the greatest affection for me. Indeed, it is a truth generally agreed on, that a real and sincere esteem for any person, is always attended with a fear of displeasing that person ; and where there is fear in the subject, there will doubtless be authority in the object ; because fear is the ground of authority, as love is, or ought to be, the ground of that fear. The greatest Potentate, if not feared, will not be obeyed ; if his subjects stand in no awe of him, he can never strike any awe upon them ; nor will that awe have its proper effects in curbing and restraining them from sin and disobedience, unless it proceeds from, and is joined with, love.

But how comes this under the notion of a talent received from GOD, and so to be improved for him ? Why, because it is he, and he alone, that kindles and blows up the sparks of pure love and affection in us, and that by the breathings of his own SPIRIT. It was the LORD that gave JOSEPH favour “in the sight of the keeper of the prison ;” (*Gen. xxxix. 21* ; ) and that brought DANIEL into favour and tender love with the “Prince of the eunuchs :” (*Dan. i. 9* ; ) and so of all others in the world. For we are told elsewhere, that as GOD “fashioneth the hearts of men, so he turneth them which way soever he will ;” insomuch that I can never see any express their love to me, but I must express my thankfulness to GOD for it ; nor can I feel in myself any warmth of affection towards others, without considering it as a talent hid in my breast, which I am obliged in duty to improve for him, by stirring up their affections unto him, whose affections himself hath stirred up towards me. And this will be the more easy to affect, if I take care, in the first place, to express the zeal and sincerity of my own love to GOD, by making him the chief object of my esteem and adoration, and manifest my aversion to the sins they are guilty of, by representing them as most loathsome and abominable, as well as most dangerous and damnable : for wherever there is a true affection to any person, it is apt to bias

those that are under the influence of it, to choose the same objects for their love or aversion, that such a person does, *i. e.*, to love what he loves, and hate what he hates. This, therefore, is the first thing to be done, to stir up the affections of others to love and serve God.

Another way of my improving the affections of others to this end is, by setting them a good example; for commonly what a friend doeth, be it good or bad, is pleasing to us, because we look not at the goodness of the thing which is done, but at the loveliness of the person that doeth it. And if the vices of a friend seem amiable, how much more will his virtues shine? For this reason, therefore, whensoever I perceive any person to show a respect for, or affection to me, I shall always look upon it as an opportunity put into my hands to serve and glorify my great Creator, and shall look upon it as a call from heaven, as much as if I heard the ALMIGHTY say to me, I desire to have this person love me, and therefore have I made him to love thee; do thou but set before him an example of goodness and virtue, and his love to thy person shall induce and engage him to direct his actions according to it. This, therefore, is the rule that I fully resolve to guide myself by, with relation to those who are pleased to allow me a share in their esteem and affection, which I hope to improve to their advantage in the end; that as they love me, and I love them now, so we may all love God, and God love us to all eternity.

### RESOLUTION V.

*I am resolved, by the grace of God, to improve every good thought to the producing of good affections in myself, and as good actions with respect to God.*

WHATSOEVER comes from God being a talent to be improved to him, I cannot but think good thoughts to be as precious talents, as it is possible a creature can be blessed with. But let me esteem them as I will. I am sure my



Master will reckon them amongst the talents he entrusts me with, and will call me to an account for ; and therefore I ought not to neglect them. The Scripture tells me, “ I am not sufficient of myself to think any thing, as of myself, but that my sufficiency is of God.” (2 Cor. iii. 5.) And if I be not sufficient to think any thing, much less am I able of myself to think of that which is good ; forasmuch as to good thoughts there must always be supposed a special concurrence of GOD’S SPIRIT ; whereas to other thoughts, there is only the general concurrence of his presence. Seeing therefore they come from GOD, how must I lay them out for him ? Why, by sublimating good thoughts into good affections. Does GOD vouchsafe to send down into my heart a thought of himself ? I am to send up this thought to him again, in the fiery chariot of love, desire, and joy. Doth he dart into my soul a thought of holiness and purity ? I am to dwell and meditate upon it, until it break out into a flame of love and affection for him. Doth he raise up in my spirit a thought of sin, and show me the ugliness and deformity of it ? I must let it work its desired effect, by making it as loathsome and detestable as that thought represents it to be.

But good thoughts must not only be improved to produce good affections in my heart, but likewise good actions in my life. So that the thoughts of GOD should not only make me more taken with his beauty, but more active for his glory ; and the thoughts of sin should not only damp my affection to it, but likewise deter and restrain me from the commission of it.

### RESOLUTION VI.

*I am resolved, by the grace of GOD, to improve every affliction GOD lays upon me, as an earnest or token of his affection towards me.*

EVERY thing that flows from GOD to his servants, coming under the notion of talents, to be improved for himself, I am sure afflictions, as well as other mercies,

must needs be reckoned amongst those talents GOD is pleased to vouchsafe. Indeed, it is a talent without which I should be apt to forget the improvement of all the rest; and which, if well improved, itself “will work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2 Cor. iv. 7.) It is the non-improvement of an affliction that makes it a curse; whereas, if improved, it is as great a blessing as any GOD is pleased to scatter amongst the children of men; and therefore it is, that GOD most frequently entrusteth this precious talent with his own peculiar people: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities.” (Amos iii. 2.)

It is this that shows us the folly and pride of presumption, as well as the vanity and emptiness of all worldly enjoyments, and deters us from provoking him, from whom all our happiness, as well as our afflictions flow. Therefore whatever crosses or calamities befall me, I am still resolved to bear them all, not only with a patient resignation to the divine will, but even to rejoice in them as the greatest blessings. For instance, Am I seized with pain and sickness? I shall look upon it as a message from GOD, sent on purpose to put me in mind of death, and to convince me of the necessity of being always prepared for it by a good life, which a state of uninterrupted health is apt to make us unmindful of. Do I sustain any losses or crosses? The true use of these is to make me sensible of the fickleness and inconstancy of this world’s blessings, which we can no sooner cast our eye upon, but they immediately “take to themselves wings and fly away” from us. And so, all other afflictions GOD sees fit to lay upon me, may, in like manner, be some way or other improved for my happiness.

But besides the particular improvements of particular chastisements, the general improvement of all, is the increasing of my love to that GOD, who brings these afflictions upon me. For the furnace of afflictions which GOD is pleased at any time to throw me into, is not heated at

the fire of his wrath, but at the flames of his affection to me. The consideration whereof, as it should more inflame my love to him, so shall it likewise engage me to express a greater degree of gratitude towards him, when he singles me out, not only to suffer from him, but for him too. For this is an honour, which, if he should be pleased ever to prefer me to, I shall look upon it as upon other afflictions, to be improved for his glory, the good of others, and the everlasting comfort of my own soul.

Thus I have reckoned up the talents God hath or may put into my hands, to be improved for his glory. May the same Divine Being that entrusted me with them, and inspired me with these good resolutions concerning them, enable me, by his grace, to make a due use of them, and carefully to put in practice what I have thus religiously resolved upon.

END OF VOL. XX.

