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THE

CHRISTIAN

IN

COMPLETE ARMOUR.
THE
CHRISTIAN
IN COMPLETE ARMOUR:

OR, A TREATISE ON
The Saints' War with the Devil;
WHEREIN A DISCOVERY IS MADE
OF THE POLICY, POWER, WICKEDNESS, AND STRATAGEMS
MADE USE OF BY
THAT ENEMY OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE;
A MAGAZINE OPENED,
FROM WHENCE
THE CHRISTIAN IS FURNISHED WITH SPIRITUAL ARMS
FOR THE BATTLE,
ASSISTED IN BUCKLING ON HIS ARMOUR,
AND TAUGHT THE USE OF HIS WEAPONS;
TOGETHER WITH
THE HAPPY ISSUE OF THE WHOLE WAR.

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CONTENTS OF THE CHAPTERS
IN VOL. II.

VERSE 14. Stand therefore, &c.

CHAP. 1. Wherein is briefly shewed the necessity of resisting Satan's temptations, with the danger of yielding to them. ........................................... 2

2. Wherein is shewed, what it is for a Christian to stand in order, together with his duty in this particular, and the danger of stragglers from their own place........ 8

3. Wherein is contained the third and last importance of the word "Stand," and the Christian's duty of standing on his watch spoken to; why he is to watch, and how he should. ......................... 18

Having your loins girt about with truth.

CHAP. 1. Wherein is contained a brief explication of the words. 26

2. Wherein is shewn, it is the Christian's duty to labour for a judgment established in the truth, with the reasons of it; as also some application of the point.... 29

3. Some directions for the establishing the judgment of professors in the truth. ......................... 40

4. Wherein is contained the second way of having our loins girt with truth, viz. so as to make a free and bold profession of it; and why this is our duty; and a short exhortation to it. ......................... 47

5. A direction or two for the girding of truth closer to us in the profession of it. ......................... 53

6. Of the second kind of truth, truth of heart, or sincerity, with the kinds of it; and in particular of moral uprightness, together with its deficiency, and a double caution about this, the one to the saints, the other to the morally upright person. ......................... 66

7. Of evangelical or godly sincerity, what it is, and what uncomeliness this girdle covers, as also how it covers them. ................................. 74

8. An account why sincerity covers the saints' uncomeli-
nesses..................................................... 88

9. Of the odious nature of hypocrisy, and hatefulness of it to God. ................................. 97
CONTENTS.

CHAP. 10. Where all are stirred up to put themselves upon the trial, whether sincere or not; three arguments used to provoke to the work; and four false characters, by which the hypocrite flatters himself into a conceit of being upright............................................. 110

11. The weak grounds whereby tempted souls argue against their own uprightness. ............................................. 118

12. Four characters of truth of heart, or sincerity............. 128

13. A word of direction to those who are found unsound, and false-hearted. ............................................. 142

14. An exhortation to those who upon trial are found to be true in heart, or sincere, to wear this belt close girt to them in the daily exercises of it; with directions for that purpose............................................. 149

15. Counsel and comfort to those who are sincere, but drooping doubting souls, who neither are condemned absolutely in their consciences for hypocrites, nor fully absolved from the suspicion of it in their own thoughts............................................. 166

16. Wherein the second reason of the metaphor is opened; why sincerity is set out by the soldier's belt; viz. from the establishing and strengthening nature of this grace, particularly of a preserving strength it hath; with some special seasons wherein the hypocrite falls off............................................. 177

17. Of a recovering strength that sincerity hath, and whence. 184

18. Of a supporting and comforting property sincerity hath, shewn in several particular instances. ............................. 187

19. A brief applicatory improvement of the point, both in general and particular branches also. ............................. 200

And having on the breast-plate of righteousness.

CHAP. 1. Contains the explication of the words................. 206

2. A short point from the connection of this piece of armour with the first; righteousness with truth............... 213

3. Wherein the grand point from the words is laid down, that the Christian's especial care should be to keep on his breast-plate, i.e. maintain the power of holiness in his conversation; with the first reason of the point, taken from God's design as to this............. 216

4. The second reason why the Christian should wear this breast-plate of righteousness, and maintain the power of holiness, taken from Satan's great design against it. 225

5. The third reason, taken from the excellence of righteousness and holiness. ............................................. 229
CONTENTS.

CHAP. 6. Contains the first instance wherein the Christian is to express the power of holiness, and that is in his behaviour towards sin; branched into several particulars. 239

—— 7. A second instance wherein the power of holiness is to appear in the Christian’s life, i.e. the duties of God’s worship. 246

—— 8. A third instance, wherein the power of holiness must appear, and that is in the Christian’s worldly employments. 252

—— 9. Of expressing the power of holiness, in and to our family relations. 257

—— 10. Of exercising the power of holiness in our carriage to our neighbours without doors. 266

—— 11. Contains nine or ten directions towards the helping those that desire to maintain the power of a holy righteous conversation. 270

—— 12. Wherein the first policy or stratagem of Satan is defeated, which he useth to make the Christian throw away his breast-plate of righteousness, as that which hinders the pleasure of his life. 284

—— 13. Wherein is defeated Satan’s second wile, by which he would cheat the Christian of his breast-plate, presenting it as prejudicial to his worldly profits. 294

—— 14. Wherein is defeated the third stratagem Satan useth to disarm the Christian of his breast-plate; and that is by scaring him with the contradiction, opposition, and feud, it brings from the world. 298

—— 15. Contains two uses of the point. 302

—— 16. An exhortation to the saints in three branches. 312

VERSE 15. And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.

CHAP. 1. Wherein the glad news that the Gospel brings is declared from five particulars, requisite to fill up the joyfulness of a message; with a word to stir up our bowels in pitying those that never heard any of this news. 321

—— 2. A lamentation for the unkind welcome that Gospel-news finds in the world; with two or three sad grounds of fear as to us in this nation; taken from the present entertainments the Gospel hath among us, with a double exhortation to the saints to rejoice in this joyous message. 328

—— 3. A fourfold peace attributed to the Gospel, and in particular peace of reconciliation, where it is proved there
CONTENTS.

is a quarrel betwixt God and man, as also that the Gospel can only take it up, and why God thus laid the method of man's recovery. .......... 339

4. A more particular account why God reconciled sinners to himself by Christ. .......... 347

5. An exhortation to embrace this peace of reconciliation offered in the Gospel. .......... 356

6. Four directions by way of counsel to sinners yet in an unreconciled state, how they may be at peace with God. .......... 367

7. An exhortation to such as are at peace with God, in six particulars .......... 378

8. That peace of conscience is a blessing to be obtained from the Gospel, and only the Gospel, with a double demonstration thereof. .......... 385

9. A reproof to three sorts of persons that offend against this peace which the Gospel brings .......... 396

10. Where we have a trial of our peace, from four characters of Gospel peace or comfort. .......... 407

11. That the Gospel alone can unite the hearts of men together in true peace, and how the Gospel doth it. .......... 417

12. Wherein is shewn the difference between the peace that is among saints, and which is among the wicked; the greatness of their sin who are ministers of peace, and yet stir up strife; and the reason why there is no more peace and unity among saints in this life. .......... 424

13. An exhortation to the saints to maintain peace among themselves and promote it to their utmost .......... 430

14. The duty of a Christian to stand shod with a heart prepared for all sufferings, with one reason of the point. .......... 445

15. The second reason of the point, taken from the excellency of this frame of spirit. .......... 456

16. The number of true Christians but little, shewn from this readiness to suffer that is required in every Christian, more or less; with an exhortation to the duty, from two arguments. .......... 464

17. Six directions for the helping on of this spiritual shoe. .......... 471

18. Sheweth who is the person that is shod and prepared for sufferings, i.e. he that hath the Gospel's peace in his bosom; and how this peace doth prepare for suffering; with a brief application of all. .......... 480
THE CHRISTIAN

In Complete Armour.

PART II.

EPHESIANS, vi. 14.

Stand therefore and

The Apostle had laid down in general, verse 13, what armour the Christian soldier must use: "Armour of God." Now lest any should stamp divinity upon what is human, and make bold to set God's name on their counterfeit ware, calling that armour of God which comes out of their private forge, as Papists and many carnal Protestants also do, who invent weapons to fight the devil with that never came into God's heart to appoint; he therefore comes more particularly to shew what this whole armour of God is, describing it piece by piece, which together make up the complete suit, and every way furnisheth the Christian to take the field against this his enemy. We shall handle them in that order we find them here laid by the Apostle. Only something would briefly be first said to the posture given us in charge, as that which we are to observe in the use of every piece, and therefore prefixed to all, because it hath influence upon all. The posture lies in these words: "Stand therefore." This word "stand" is the same with the last in the preceding verse; but neither in the same mood, nor sense: there put for victory and triumph when the war is done, here for the Christian's posture in the fight, and in order to it. It
Stand therefore.

is a military expression, a word of command that captains use upon different occasions to their soldiers, and so imports several duties that are required at the Christian's hands.

CHAP. 1.

WHEREIN IS BRIEFLY SHEWED THE NECESSITY OF RESISTING SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS, WITH THE DANGER OF YIELDING TO THEM.

FIRST, to stand, is opposed to a cowardly flight from, or treacherous yielding to the enemy. When a captain sees his men begin to shrink, and perceives some disposition in them to flee or yield, then he bids "stand," that is, stand manfully to it, and make good your ground against the enemy, by a valiant receiving his charge, and repelling his force. The word taken thus, points at a suitable duty incumbent on the Christian, which take in this note.

Satan in his temptations is stoutly to be resisted, not in any wise yielded unto.

Reason 1. The command is express for it: "whom resist, steadfast in the faith," 1 Pet. 9. v. Set yourselves in battle against him, as the word imports, fight him whenever he comes. Soldiers must keep close to their commission, whatever comes on it. When Joab sent Uriah to stand in the fore-front of the battle, in the face of death itself, he could not but see his danger, yet he disputes not the matter with his general; obey he must, though he loses his life upon the place. Cowardice and disobedience to the leader's command are counted among the Turks the most damning sins; and shall they be thought peccadillos, little ones, by us that have Christ for our captain to serve, and sin and the devil for enemies to fight? To resist some temptations may cost us dear: "Ye have not
yet resisted unto blood (saith the Apostle) striving against sin;" Heb. xii. 4, implying, it may come to that; and if it should, it alters not the case, nor gives a dispensation to shift for ourselves, by chusing to sin rather than to suffer. The Roman captain said it was necessary to sail, not to live; and shall a Christian be afraid of his duty, when it is attended with outward hazard? The soldier carries his prince's honour into the field with him, and so doth the Christian his God's, whenever he is called to contest with any temptation: now it will be seen, at what rate he values his honour. David's subjects valued him worth ten thousands of their lives, and therefore would die every man of them, rather than hazard him; oh how unworthy is it then to expose the name of God to reproach, rather than ourselves to a little scorn, temporal loss, or trouble? It was Pompey's boast, that at a word or nod of his, he could make his soldiers creep up the steepest rock on their hands and knees, though they were knocked down as fast as they went up. Truly God is not prodigal of the blood of his servants, yet sometimes he tries their loyalty in hard services, and sharp temptations, that he may from their faithfulness to him, and holy stoutness in their sufferings for him, triumph over Satan, who was so impudent as to tell God, that one of his choicest servants did but serve himself in serving of him: "Doth Job fear God for nought?" As if when any sharp encounter came, he would turn head, and rather curse God than submit to him; and therefore we find the Lord glorifying over Satan, "still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movest me against him," Job ii. 2. as if the Lord had said, What dost think now, Satan? Hath not Job proved thee a loud liar? I have some servants thou seest, that will serve me without a bribe, that will hold fast their integrity when they can hold fast nothing else. Thou hast got away his estate, servants, and children, and yet he stands his ground, and thou hast not got thy will of him, nor his integrity from him.

2. God furniseth us with armour for this end, that we should stand it out valiantly, and not yield to Satan tempting. To deliver up a castle into an enemy's hand, when it is well provided with ammunition to defend it, is
shameful and unworthy of such a trust. This makes the Christian’s sin more dishonourable than another’s, because he is better appointed to make resistance. Take a graceless soul, when solicited to a sin that promises carnal pleasure, or profit, it is no great wonder that he yields at first summons, and delivers up himself prisoner to Satan: the poor wretch, alas! hath no armour on to repel the motion: he tastes no sweetness in Christ; what marvel is it, if his hungry soul, for want of better food, falls on board upon the devil’s cheer? that he, who hath no hope for another world, be made to shark and prowl to get some of this? The goat, we say, must browse where she is tied, and the sinner feed on earth and earthly things, to which he is staked down by his carnal heart; but the Christian hath a hope in his bosom of another glory than this peddling world can pretend to; yea, a faith that is able to entertain him at present with some of heaven’s joys, it being the nature of that grace to give existence to the good things of the promise; this helmet on, and shield lifted up, would keep off a whole shower of such arrows from hurting the Christian. God hath reason to take it the worse at his hands to yield, that might have stood, would he but have made use of those graces which God hath given him for his defence, or called in help from Heaven to his succour. “Hast thou eaten (saith God to Adam) of the tree whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat?” Gen. iii. The emphasis lies in “thou.” It was not sure for hunger: thou hadst a whole Paradise before thee; hast thou eaten that wert provided so well to have withstood him? Hast thou, may God say to the Christian, eaten of the devil’s dainties who hast a key to go to my cupboard? Does thy heavenly father keep so starved a house, that the devil’s scraps will go down with thee?

3. The Christian’s safety lies in resisting. All the armour here provided is to defend the Christian fighting, none to secure him flying. Stand, and the day is ours; fly, or yield, and all is lost. Great captains, to make their soldiers more resolute, do sometimes cut off all hope of a safe retreat to them that run away: thus the Norman conqueror, as soon as his men were set on
English shore, sent away his ships in their sight, that they might resolve to fight or die. God takes away all thought of safety to the coward. Not a piece to be found for the back in all God's armoury. Stand, and the bullets all light on your armour; fly, and they enter into your hearts. It is a terrible place, Heb. x. 38, "The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." He that stands to it believingly comes off with his life; but he that recoils, and runs from his colours, as the word ἀποστειλεῖται imports, God will have no pleasure in him, except it be in the just execution of his wrath on him. And doth not he make a sad change, that from fighting against Satan, engageth God as an enemy against him? There is comfort in striving against sin and Satan, though to blood; but none to lie sweating under the fiery indignation of a revenging God. What Satan lays on, God can take off; but who can ease, if God lays on? What man would not rather die in the field fighting for his prince, than on a scaffold by the axe, for cowardice or treachery?

4. The enemy we have to do with is such as is only to be dealt with by resisting. God is an enemy that is overcome by yielding, the devil only by force of arms.

First, he is a cowardly enemy; though he sets a bold face on it in tempting, he carries a fearful heart in his breast. The work is naught he goes about, and as a thief is afraid of every light he sees, or noise he hears, in the house he would rob, so Satan is discouraged where he finds the soul waking, and in any posture to oppose him. He fears thee, Christian, more than thou needest him: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know," (said the devil) Acts xix, 15. That is, I know them to my shame, they have both put me to flight; and if ye were such as they, I should fear you also. Believe it, soul, he trembles at thy faith; put it forth in prayer to call for help to Heaven against him, and exert it vigorously by rejecting the motions he makes, and thou shalt see him run. Did soldiers in a castle know that their enemies besieging them were in a distracted condition, and would certainly upon their sallying out, break up, and fly away, what mettle and courage would not this fill them with? The Spirit of God
Stand therefore.

(who knows well enough how affairs stand in the Devil's camp) sends this intelligence unto every soul that is beleaguered by his temptations: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Jam. iv. 8. He cannot hurt us without our leave. The devil is not so good a drawer, but when he finds it comes not, the soul yields not, his heart then fails him, at least for the present; as in Christ's combat, it is said, "he departed from him for a season." When the devil continues long the same suit, it is to be feared, that person though he hath not fully promised him, yet he hath not given him a peremptory denial. He is a suitor, that listens for something to drop from the creature that may encourage him to prosecute his motion; no way to be rid of him but to shut the door upon him, and deny all discourse with him: which prompts to the second character.

2. He is an encroaching enemy, and therefore to be resisted. "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath (saith the Apostle), neither give place to the devil," Eph. iv. 26. as soldiers by cowardly leaving some outwork they are set to defend, give place to their enemy, who enters the same, and from thence doth more easily shoot into the city then he could before; thus yielding in one temptation, we let the devil into our trench, and give him a fair advantage to do us the more mischief. The angry man, while he is raging and raving, thinks, may be, no more but to ease his passion by disgorging it in some bitter keen words; but, alas! while his fury and wrath is sallying out at the portal of his lips, the devil, finding the door open, enters and hurries him farther than he dreamt of. We have not to do with an Hannibal, who though a great swordsman, yet wanted the art of following and improving the advantages his victories gave him; but with a cunning devil that will easily lose no ground he gets;—our best way therefore is to give him no hand-hold, not so much as to come near the door where sin dwells, lest we be hooked in. If we mean not to be burnt, let us not walk upon the coals of temptation; if not to be tanned, let us not stand where the sun lies. They sure forget what an insinuating wriggling nature this serpent hath, that dare yield to him in something, and make us
believe they will not in another; who will set in the company of drunkards, frequent the places where the sin is committed, and yet pretend they mean not to be such; that will prostitute their eyes to unchaste objects, and yet be chaste; that will lend their ears to any corrupt doctrine of the times, and yet be sound in the faith. This is a strong delusion that such are under. If a man hath not power enough to resist Satan in the less, what reason hath he to think he shall in the greater? Thou hast not grace, it seems, to keep thee from throwing thyself into the whirl of temptation; and dost thou think, when in it thou shalt bear up against the stream of it? One would think it is easier when in the ship, to keep from falling overboard, than when in the sea, to get safely into the ship again.

3. He is an accusing enemy, and truly folly is in that man’s name who knows what a tell-tale the devil is; and yet will by yielding to his temptation put an arrand into his mouth, with which he may accuse him to God. Some foolishly report that witches cannot hurt till they receive an alms; but I am sure, so long as thou shewest no kindness to the devil, he cannot hurt thee, because he cannot accuse thee; take up therefore holy Job’s resolution, “My righteousness I hold fast, my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.” Job. xxvii. It is never sad indeed with the soul till the barking is within doors; conscience (not the devil) is the blood-hound that pulls down the creature. Oh, let not that reproach thee; and thou art well enough.
Stand therefore.

CHAP. II.

WHEREIN IS SHEWED WHAT IT IS FOR A CHRISTIAN TO STAND IN ORDER; TOGETHER WITH HIS DUTY IN THIS PARTICULAR, AND THE DANGER OF STRAGGLERS FROM THEIR OWN PLACE.

SECONDLY, "To stand," amounts to as much as to stand every one in his rank and proper station, and is here opposed to all disorder, or straggling from our place. When a captain sees his soldiers march or fight out of their rank and order, then he bids stand. Military discipline is so strict in this case, that it allows none to stir from their place without special warrant. It hath cost some their lives for fighting out of their place, though with great success. Mauleius killed his own son for no other fault. From hence the note is,

That it should be the care of every Christian to stand orderly in the particular place wherein God hath set him. The devil's method is first to rout, and then to ruin. Order supposeth company; one that walks alone cannot go out of his rank. This place therefore and rank wherein the Christian is to stand, relates to some society or company in which he walks. The Christian may be considered relating to a threefold society, church, commonwealth, and family. In all there are several ranks and places. In the church, officers and private members. In the commonwealth, magistrates and people. In the family, masters and servants; parent and children; husband and wife. The welfare of these societies consisteth in the order that is kept, when every wheel moves in its place without clashing, when every one contributes by performing the duty of his place to the benefit of the whole society. But, more distinctly, then a person stands orderly in his place when he doth these three things.

First, When he understands the peculiar duty of his place and relation. "The wisdom of the prudent is to
understand his way,” *Prov.* xiv. 8. his way, that is the way which he in particular is to walk. It will not profit a man to know the way to York, if going to London; yet how prone are we to study another’s way and work than our own; the servant what his master’s duty is, not what his is to his master; the people what the minister in his place should do, rather than what is incumbent on themselves to such as are over them in the Lord. It is not knowing another’s duty, no nor censoring the negligence of another, but doing our own, will bring us safely and comfortably to our journey’s end; and how can we do it, except we know it? Solomon in no one thing gave a greater proof of his wisdom, than in asking of God wisdom to enable him for the duty of his place.

Secondly, When, knowing the duty of our place, we conscientiously attend to it, and lay out ourselves for God therein. What Paul charged Timothy in his place, that every Christian must do in his; he must meditate on these things, and give himself wholly to the discharge of his duty as a Christian in such a place and calling, *ex toutois isthi*, *1 Tim.* iv. 15. be in them; let thy heart be on thy work; and thou wholly taken up about it. The very power of godliness lies in this. Religion, if not made practicable in our several places and callings, becomes ridiculous, and vanisheth into an empty notion that is next to nothing. Yet many there are that have nothing to prove themselves Christians but a naked profession, of whom we may say, as they do of the cinnamon tree, that the bark is more worth than all they have besides. Such the Apostle speaks of, “they profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.” *Tit.* i. 16. What good works the Apostle means will appear by the next words, *chap.* ii. 1, where, in opposition to these, he presseth those duties which Christians in their particular places and relations (as becometh holiness) ought to perform. A good Christian and a disobedient wife, a godly man and an unfaithful servant, or undutiful child, is a contradiction that can never be reconciled. He that walks not uprightly in his house, is but an hypocrite at church. He that is not a Christian
in his shop, is not in his closet a Christian, though upon
his knees in prayer. Wound religion in one part, and it
is felt in every part. If it declines one way, it cannot
thrive in any other. All that miscarry in religion do not
the same way miscarry. As it is in the regard of our
natural life, some (it is observed) die upwards, some
downwards: in one, the extreme parts, his feet, are
first dead, and from them death creeps up to the legs,
and so at last takes hold on the vitals; in another his
superior parts are first invaded. Thus in profession,
some their declining appears first in a negligence of
duties about their particular callings, and duties they owe
by their place and relation to man, who all this while
seem very forward and zealous in the duties of worship
to God, much in hearing, praying, and such like: others
falter first in these, and are at the same time very strict in
the other; both destructive alike to the soul, they both
meet in the ruin of the power of godliness. He stands
orderly that makes conscience of the whole duty that
lies on him in his place to God or man.

Thirdly, to stand orderly, it is requisite that we keep
the bounds of our place and calling. The Israelites were
commanded "to pitch every man by his own standard,"
Numb. ii. 2. The Septuagint translates it, kata tagma,
according to order. God allows no stragglers from their
station in his army of saints. "As the Lord hath called
every man, so let him walk." 1 Cor. vii. 17. Our walk
must be in that path which our call beats out. We are
therefore commanded every one "to do his own busi-
ness," 1 Thess. iv. 11. That which is the commander's
business in an army, is not the private soldier's; the ma-
gistrate's, not the subject's; the minister's, not the peo-
ple's. That which is justice in the ruler, is murder in
another. They are our own things that come within
the compass of our general or particular calling; out of
these, we are out of our diocese. O what a quiet world
should we have, if every thing and person knew his own
place! If the sea kept its own place, we should have no
inundations; if men had kept theirs, we should neither
have seen such floods of sin nor miseries as this unhappy
age has been almost drowned with. But it must be a
strong bank indeed that can contain our fluid spirits within our own limits. Peter himself was sharply chid for prying, out of a curiosity, into that which concerned him not. "What is that to thee?" John xxi. 22. as if Christ had said, Peter, meddle with thy own matters, this concerns not thee: which sharp rebuke (saith one) might possibly make Peter afterwards give so strict a charge against, and set so black a brand upon this very sin, as you may find, 1 Pet. iv. 15, where he ranks the busy body among murderers and thieves.

Now to fix every one in his place, and persuade all to stand orderly there without breaking their rank, these five considerations, methinks, may carry some weight, among those especially with whom the word of God in the Scripture yet keeps its authority, to conclude and determine their thoughts.

1. Consider, what thou doest out of thy place is not acceptable to God, because thou canst not do it in faith, "without which it is impossible to please God;" and it cannot be in faith, because thou hast no call. God will not thank thee for doing that which he did not set thee about. Possibly thou hast good intentions; so had Uzzah in staying the ark; yet how well God liked his zeal, see 2 Sam. vi. 7. Saul himself could make a fair story of his sacrificing, but that served not his turn. It concerns us not only to ask ourselves what the thing is we do, but also who requireth this at our hands? To be sure God will at last put us upon that question, and it will go ill with us if we cannot shew our commission. So long we must needs neglect what is our duty, as we are busy about that which is not. The spouse confesseth this, Cant. i. 6, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept;" she could not mind theirs and her own too: our own iron will cool while we are heating another's. And this must needs be displeasing to God, to leave the work God sets us about, to do that he never commanded. When a master calls a truantly scholar to account, that hath been missing some days from school, would this be a good plea for him to tell his master, that he was all the while in such a man's
Stand therefore

shop at work with his tools? No sure, his business lay at school, not in that shop.

2. By going out of our proper place and calling, we put ourselves from under God's protection: the promise is, he will keep us in "all our ways," *Psalm* xci. 11. when we go out of our way, we go from under his wing. We have an excellent place for this, 1 Cor. vii. 24, "Let every one wherein he is called, therein abide with God." Mark that phrase, "abide with God." As we love to walk in God's company, we must abide in our place and calling, every step from that is a departure from God; and better to stay at home in a mean place, and low calling, wherein we may enjoy God's sweet presence, than go to court and there live without him. It is likely you have heard of that holy bishop, that in a journey came to an inn, and by some discourse with the host, finding him to be an atheist, or very atheistical, presently calls for his servant to bring him his horse, saying, he would not lodge there, for God was not in that place. Truly when thou art in any place, or about any work to which thou art not called, we may safely say, God is not in that place, or enterprise; and what a bold adventure is it to stay there, where you cannot expect his presence to assist, or protect? "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place," *Prov.* xxvi. 8. God took special care that the "bird sitting over her eggs in her nest" should not be hurt, *Deut.* xxiii. 6. but we find nothing to secure her if found abroad. In doing the duty of our place, we have Heaven's word for our security; but upon our own peril be it, if we wander; then we are like Shimei out of his precincts, and lay ourselves open to some judgment or other. It is alike dangerous to do what we are not called to, and to neglect or leave undone the duty of our place. As the earth could not bear Korah's usurpation of what belonged not to them, but swallowed them up, so the sea could not but bear witness against Jonah the runaway prophet, disdaining to waft him that fled from his place and work that God called him to. Nay Heaven itself would not harbour the angels, when once they left their own place and office that their Maker had appointed; so those words,
Stand therefore.

Jude vi. I find most probably interpreted. The ruin of many souls breaks in upon them at this door. First they break their ranks, and then they are led further into temptation. Absalom first looks over the hedge in his ambitious thoughts, a king he would be; and this wandering desire beyond his place lets in those bloody sins, rebellion, incest, and murder; and these ripened him for, and at last delivered him up, into the hands of divine vengeance. The Apostle joins order and steadfastness together: "I am with you in the Spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith." Col. ii. 5. If an army stands in close order, every one in his place attending his duty, content with his work, it is impregnable in a manner. How came many in our days to fall from their steadfastness but by breaking their order!

3. We shall never be charged for not doing another's work. "Give an account of thy stewardship," Luke xvi. 2, that is, of what by thy place thou wert entrusted with. We may indeed be accessory to another's sin and miscarriage in his place. "Be not partakers with them," saith the Apostle, Eph. v. 7. there is a partnership (if not very watchful) that we may have with others sins, and therefore we may all say Amen to that holy man's prayer, "Lord, forgive me my other sins." Merchants can trade in bottoms that are not their own; and we may sin with other men's hands many ways, and one especially is, when we do not lend our brother that assistance in his work and duty which our place and relation obligeth too; but it is not our sin that we do not supply another's negligence, by doing that which belongs not to our place. We are to pray for magistrates that they may rule in the fear of God; but if they do not, we may not step upon the bench and do their work for them. God requires no more than faithfulness in our place. We do not find fault with an apple-tree if it be laden with apples (which is the fruit of its own kind) though we can find no figs or grapes growing on it; we expect these only from their proper root and stock. He is a fruitful tree in God's orchard that brings forth his fruit in his season. Psal. i. 3.

4. There is poor comfort in suffering for doing that
which was not the work of our place and calling. Before we launch out into any undertaking, it behoves us to ask ourselves, and that seriously, what our tackling is, if a storm should overtake us in our voyage. It is folly to engage in that enterprise which will not bear us out, and pay the charge of all the loss and trouble it can put us to. Now, no comfort or countenance from God can be expected in any suffering, except we can entitle him to the business we suffer for. "For thy sake we are killed all the day long," saith the Church, Psalms xliv. 22. But if suffering finds us out of our calling and place, we cannot say, "for thy sake" we are thus, and thus afflicted, but for our own sakes; and you know the proverb, Self do, self have. The Apostle makes a vast difference between suffering as a "busy body," and suffering as a "Christian," 1 Pet. iv. 15, 16. It is to the latter he saith, "Let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf;" as for the busy body, he couples him with thieves and murderers, and those, we know, have reason both to be ashamed and afraid. The carpenter that gets a cut or wound on his leg from his axe, as he is at work in his calling, may bear it more patiently and comfortably than one that is wantonly meddling with his tools, and hath nothing to do with such work. When affliction or persecution overtakes the Christian travelling in the way God hath set him in, he may shew the Bible, as that holy man (suffering for Christ) did, and say, "This hath made me poor, this hath brought me to prison," that is, his faith on the truths, and obedience to the commands, in it; and therefore may confidently expect to suffer at God's cost, as the soldier to be kept and maintained by his prince in whose service he hath lost his limbs. But the other that runs out of his place, and so meets with sufferings, he hath this to embitter them, that he can look for nothing from God but to be soundly chid for his pains: as the child is served that gets some hurt while he is gadding abroad, and when he comes home at night with his battered face, meets with a whipping from his father into the bargain for being from home. This lay heavy on the spirit of that learned German, Johannes Funccius, who of a minister
of the Gospel in his prince’s court, turned minister of state to his prince, and was at last for some evil counsel (at least so judged) condemned to die. Before he suffered, he much lamented the leaving of his calling, and to warn others left this distich:

“To keep thy place and calling, learn of me:  
“Flee as the plague a meddler for to be.”

5. It is an erratique spirit that usually carries men out of their place and calling. I confess there is an heroicus impetus, an impulse which some of the servants of God have had from heaven, to do things extraordinary, as we read in Scripture of Moses, Gideon, Phineas, and others. But it is dangerous to pretend to the like, and unlawful to expect such immediate commissions from Heaven now, when he issueth them in a more ordinary way, and gives rules for the same in his Word; we may as well expect to be taught extraordinarily, without using the ordinary means, as to be so called. When I see any miraculously gifted, as the prophets and Apostles, then I shall think the immediate calling they pretend to is authentic. To be sure, we find in the Word extraordinary calling and extraordinary teaching go together. Well, let us see what that erratique spirit is which carries many out of their place and calling. It is not always the same: sometimes it is idleness. First, men neglect what they should do, and then are easily persuaded to meddle with what they have nothing to do. The Apostle intimates this plainly, “they learn to be idle, wandering from house to house, and not only idle but busy bodies.” 1 Tim. v. 13. An idle person is a gadder; he hath his foot on the threshold, easily drawn from his own place, and as soon into another’s diocese. He is at leisure to hear the devil’s chat. He that will not serve God in his own place; the devil, rather than he shall stand out, will send him of his errand, and get him to put his sickle into another’s corn. Secondly, It is pride and discontent that makes persons go out of their place; some men are in this very unhappy, their spirits are too big and haughty for the place God hath set them in. Their calling, may be, is mean and low, but their spirits high and towering; and
whereas they should labour to bring their hearts to their condition, they project how they may bring their condition to their proud hearts. They think themselves very unhappy while they are shut up in such straight limits, (indeed the whole world is too narrow a walk for a proud heart, *astuat infelix angusto limite mundi*: the world was but a little ease to Alexander) shall they be hid in a crowd, lie in an obscure corner, and die before they let the world know their worth? No: they cannot brook it; and therefore they must get on the stage, and put forth themselves one way or other. It was not the priests' work that Korah and his accomplices were so in love with, but the priest's honour which attended the work, this they desired to share, and liked not to see others run away with it from them; nor the zeal that Absalom had to do justice, which made his teeth water so after his father's crown, though this must silver over his ambition. These places of church and state are such fair flowers, that proud spirits in all ages have been ambitious to have them set in their own garden; though they never thrive so well as in their proper soil. In a third, it is unbelief: this made Uzzah stretch forth his hand unadvisedly to stay the ark that shook, which, being but a Levite, he was not to touch, see *Numb*. iv. 15. Alas! good man, it was his faith shook more dangerously than the ark; by fearing the fall of this, he fell to the ground himself. God needs not our sin to shore up his glory, truth, or church. Lastly, In some it is misinformed zeal; many think they may do a thing, because they can do it. They can preach, and therefore they may; wherefore else have they gifts? Certainly the gifts of the saints need not be lost any of them, though they be not laid out in the minister's work. The private Christian hath a large field wherein he may be serviceable to his brethren; he need not break the hedge which God hath set, and thereby occasion such disorder as we see to be the consequence of this. We read in the Jewish law, *Exod*. xxii. that he who set a hedge on fire, and that fire burnt the corn standing in a field, was to make restitution, though he only fired the hedge (may be not intending to hurt the corn), and the reason was, because his firing the hedge was an occasion
of the corn being burnt, though he meant it not. I dare
not say that every private Christian who hath in these
times taken upon him the minister's work, did intend to
make such a combustion in the church, as hath been, and
still sadly is among us (God forbid I should think so).
But, O that I could clear them from being accessory to it,
in that they have fired the hedge which God hath set be-
tween the minister's calling and people's. If we will ac-
knowledge the ministry a particular office in the church
of Christ (and this I think the Word will compel us to
do), then we must also confess it is not any one's work,
(though never so able) except called to the office. There
are many in a kingdom to be found that could do the
prince's errand, it is like, as well as his ambassador; but
none takes the place but he that is sent, and can shew his
letters-credential. Those that are not sent and com-
missioned by God's call for ministerial work, they may
speak truths as well as they that are, yet of him that acts
by virtue of his calling, we may say that he preacheth
with authority, and not like those that can shew no
commission but what the opinion themselves have of
their own abilities gives them. Dost thou like the mi-
nister's work? Why shouldest thou not desire the
office, that thou mayest do the work acceptably? Thou
dost find thyself gifted, as thou thinkest, for the work;
were not the church more fit to judge so than thyself?
and if thou shouldest be found so by them appointed
for the trial, who would not give thee the right hand of
fellowship? There are not so many labourers in Christ's
field, but thy help (if able) would be accepted; but as now
thou actest, thou bringest thyself into suspicion in the
thoughts of sober Christians; as he would justly do, who
comes into the field, where his prince hath an army, and
gives out he comes out to do his sovereign service
against the common enemy, yet stands by himself at the
head of a troop he hath got together, and refuseth to take
any commission from his prince's officers or join himself
with them. I question whether the service such a one
can perform (should he mean as he say, which is to be
feared) would do so much good, as the distraction which
this his carriage might cause in the army would do hurt.
CHAP. III.

WHEREIN IS CONTAINED THE THIRD AND LAST IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD "STAND," AND THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY OF STANDING ON HIS WATCH SPOKEN TO, WHY HE IS TO WATCH, AND HOW HE SHOULD.

THIRDLY, "to stand," is here opposed to sleep and sloth, standing is a waking, watching, posture. When the captain sees his soldiers lying secure upon the ground asleep, he bids "stand to your arms," that is, stand and watch. In some cases it is death for a soldier to be found asleep, as when he is appointed to stand sentinel, or the like; now to sleep, deserves death, because he is to wake, that the whole army may sleep, and his sleep may cost them their lives; therefore a great captain thought he gave that soldier but his due, whom he run through with his sword, because he found him asleep when he should have stood sentinel, excusing his severity with this, that he left him but as he found him: Mortuum inveni et mortuam reliqui, "I found him dead in sleep, and left him but asleep in death." Watchfulness is more needful for the Christian soldier than any other, because other soldiers fight with men that need sleep as well as themselves; but the Christian's grand enemy Satan is ever awake and walking his rounds, seeking whom he may surprise. And if Satan be always awake, it is dangerous for the Christian at any time to be spiritually asleep; that is, secure and careless. The Christian is seldom worsted by this his enemy, but there is either treachery or negligence in the business; either the unregenerate part betrays him, or grace is not wakeful to make a timely discovery of him, so as to prepare for the encounter; the enemy is upon him before he is thoroughly awake to draw his sword. The saint's sleeping time is Satan's tempting time; every fly dares venture to creep on a sleeping lion. No temptation so weak but is strong enough to foil a Christian that is napping in security;
Stand therefore. 19

Sampson asleep, and Delilah cuts his locks. Saul asleep, and his spear is taken away from his very side, and he never the wiser. Noah asleep, and his graceless son has a fit time to discover his father's nakedness. Eutychus asleep, nods, and falls from the third loft, and is taken up for dead. Thus the Christian asleep in security may soon be surprised so as to lose much of his spiritual strength, "the joy of the Lord," which is strength; be robbed of his spear, his armour, graces I mean, at least in the present use of them, and his nakedness discovered by graceless men, to the shame of his profession, as, when bloody Joab could take notice of David's vain glory in numbering the people was not David's grace asleep? yea, he may fall from a high loft of profession, so low, into such scandalous practices, that others may question whether there be any life of grace indeed in him. And therefore it behoves the Christian to stand wakefully. Sleep steals as insensibly on the soul as it doth on the body. The wise virgins fell asleep as well as the foolish, though not so soundly; take heed thou dost not indulge thyself in thy lazy distemper, but stir up thyself to action, as we bid one that is drowsy, stand up, or walk. Yield to it by idleness and sloth, and it will grow upon thee; bestir thyself in this duty and that; and it will over. David first awakes his tongue to sing, his hand to play on his harp, and then David's heart wakes also, Psalm lvii. 8. The lion, it is said, when he first wakes, lashes himself with his tail, thereby to stir and rouse up his courage, and then away he goes after his prey: we have enough to excite and provoke us to use all the care and diligence possible.

First, The Christian's work is too curious to be done well between sleeping and waking, and too important to be done ill and slubbered over no matter how. He had need be awake that walks upon the brim of a deep river, or brow of a steep hill. The Christian's path is so narrow, and the danger is so great, that calls for both a nimble eye to discern, and steady eye to direct; but a sleepy eye can do neither. Look upon any duty or grace, and you will find it lie between Scylla and Charybdis, two extremes alike dangerous. Faith, the great work of God,
cutes its way between the mountain of presumption and gulf of despair. Patience, a grace so necessary that we cannot be without it a day, except we would be all that while besides ourselves. This keeps us that we fall neither into the sleepy apoplexy of a blockish stupidity, which deprives the creature of its senses; nor into a raging fit of discontent, which hath sense enough, and too much, to feel the hand of God, but deprives the man of his reason, that he turns again upon God, and shoots back the Almighty's arrows in his very face in the fury of his froward spirit. The like we might say of the rest. No truth but hath some error next door to her; no duty can be performed without approaching very near the enemy's quarters, who soon takes the alarm, and comes out to oppose the Christian; and ought he not then to have always his heart on the watch?

Secondly, The trouble of watching is not comparable to the advantage it brings.

First, By this, thou frustratest the designs Satan hath upon thee. It is worth watching to keep the house from robbing, much more the heart from rifling by the Devil. "Watch that ye enter not into temptation." He buys his sleep dear, that pays his throat cutting for it; yea, though the wound be not so deep, but may be cured at last. Thy not watching one night may keep thee awake many a night upon a more uncomfortable occasion. And hadst thou not better wake with care, to keep thyself from a mischief, than afterward thy eyes be held open (whether thou wilt or not) with pain and anguish of the wound given thee in thy sleep? You know how sadly David was bruised by a fall got in his spiritual slumber (for what else was he, when in the even-tide he rose from his bed, and walked upon the roof of his house, like a man walking in his sleep?) and how many restless nights this brought over this holy man's head you may perceive by his own mournful complaints of this sin, which is the foot and sad burthen of several mournful psalms.

Secondly, By thy watchfulness thou shalt best learn the evil of a sleepy state; one asleep is not sensible of his own snoring, how uncomely and troublesome to others it is; but he that is awake is apprehensive of both. The
Stand therefore.

man asleep is not sensible if laid naked by some that would abuse him; but he that is awake observes, is ashamed, and covers him. Thus while thou art in a spiritual sense awake; thou canst not but observe many uncomely passages in the lives of those professors who do not watch their hearts, which will fill thy heart with pity to them, to see how they are abused by Satan and their own passions, which, like rude servants, take this their own time to play their pranks in, when they have made sure of their mistress (grace I mean now laid asleep) that should keep them in better rule: yea, it will make the blood come into thy face for shame to see how by their nakedness, profession itself is flaunted at by those that pass by, and see how it is with them. Well, what thou blushest to see, and pitiest to find in another, take heed it befall not thyself; if thou sufferest a spiritual slumber to grow upon thee, thou wilt be the man thyself that all this may come upon, and what not besides? Sleep levels all, the wise man then is no wiser than a fool, to project for his safety; nor the strong man better than the weak to defend himself; if slumber falls once upon thy eye, it is night with thee, and thou art (though the best of saints) but as other men, so far as this sleep prevails on thee.

Thirdly, By thy watchfulness thou shalt invite such company in unto thee as will make the time short and sweet, and that is thy dear Saviour; whose sweet communication and discourse about the things of thy father's kingdom will make thee thou shalt not grudge the ease sleepy Christians get with the loss of such an heavenly entertainment as thou enjoyest. Who had not (that loves his soul better than his body) rather have David's songs, than David's sleep, in the night; and who had not rather have Christ's comforting presence with a waking soul, than his absence with a sleepy slothful one? It is the watchful soul that Christ delights to be with, and open his heart unto. We do not chuse that for the time of giving our friends a visit, when they are asleep in their beds; nay if we be with them, and perceive they grow sleepy, we think it is time to leave them to their pillow; and verily Christ doth so too. Christ withdraws from the spouse, till she be better awake, as a fitter time for her to
receive his loves. Put the sweetest wine into a sleepy man's hand, and you are like to have it all spilt; yea, put a purse of gold into his hand, and the man will hardly remember in the morning what you gave him over night. Thus in the sleepy state of a soul, both the Christian loseth the benefit, and Christ the praise of his mercy; and therefore Christ will stay to give out his choice favours when the soul is more wakeful, that he may both do the creature good, and his creature may speak good of him for it.

**Quest.** But how must the Christian stand upon his watch?

**Answe.** First, constantly. The lamp of God in the tabernacle was to burn always, *Exod. xxvii. 20. xxx. 8,* that is, always in the night, which sense is favoured by several other places. And I pray, what is our life in this world but a dark night of temptation? Take heed, Christian, that thy watch-candle go not out in any part of this darksome time, lest thy enemy come upon thee in that hour. He can find thee, but not thou resist him, in the dark; if once thy eye be shut in a spiritual slumber, thou art a fair mark for his wrath; and know thou canst not be long off thy watch, but the devil will bear on it. The devil knew the Apostles' sleeping time, and then he desires leave to winnow them, *Luke xxiii.* He saw they were in some disorder, the eye of their soul began to be heavy; the thief riseth when honest men go to bed. The devil, I am sure, begins to tempt when saints cease to watch; when the staff is thrown away, then the wolf appears; when the soul puts her danger furthest off, and lies most secure, then it is nearest; therefore labour to be constant in thy holy care: the want of this spoils all. Some you shall have, that after a great fall into a sin that hath bruised them sorely, will seem very careful for a time where they set their foot, how they walk, and what company they come in; but as soon as the soreness of their consciences wears off, their watch is broke up, and they are as careless as ever; like one that is very careful to shut up his shop strongly, and may be sits up late to watch it also, for two or three nights after he hath been robbed, but then minds it no more. Others in an afflic-
tion, or newly come out of the furnace, O how nice and scrupulous are they while the smell of fire is about them, and memory of their distress fresh; they are as tender of sinning, as one that comes out of a hot close room is of the air; they shrink at every breath of temptation stirring; but, alas! how soon are they hardened to commit those sins without remorse, the bare motion of which, but a little before, did so trouble and afflict them? Josephus in his Antiquities tells us that the sons of Noah for some years after the flood, dwelt on the tops of high mountains, not daring to take up their habitation in the lower ground, for fear of being drowned by another flood; yet in process of time (seeing no flood came) they ventured down into the plain of Shinar, where their former fear we see ended in one of the boldest, proudest, attempts against God, that the sun was ever witness to: the building I mean of a tower whose top should reach Heaven, Gen. xi. 2, 3; they, who at first were so maidenly and fearful as not to venture down their hills, for fear of drowning, now have a design to secure themselves against all future attempts from the God of Heaven himself. Thus oft we see God’s judgments leave such an impression in men’s spirits, that for awhile they stand aloof from their sins, as they on their hills, afraid to come down to them; but when they see fair weather continue, and no clouds gather towards another storm, then they can descend to their old wicked practices, and grow more bold and Heaven-daring than ever. But if thou wilt be a Christian indeed, keep on thy watch still, remit not in thy care; thou hast well run hitherto, O lie not down like some lazy traveller, by the way-side to sleep, but reserve thy resting-time till thou gettest home out of all danger. Thy God rested not till the last day’s work in the creation was finished; neither do thou cease to wake or work till thou canst say, thy salvation work is finished.

Secondly, Watch universally. First, watch thy whole man. The honest watchman walks the rounds, and compasseth the whole town; he doth not limit his care to this house or that; so do thou watch over thy whole man. A pore in thy body is a door wide enough to let in a disease if God command, and any one faculty of thy
soul, or member of thy body, to let in an enemy that may endanger thy spiritual welfare. Alas! how few set the watch round; some one faculty is not guarded, or member of the body not regarded. He that is scrupulous in one, you shall find him secure in another. May be, thou seestest a watch at the door of thy lips, that no impure communication offends the ears of men; but how is the Lord's watch kept at the temple-door of thy heart? Is not that defiled with lust? 2 Chron. xxiii. 6. Thou, may be, keepest thy hand out of thy neighbour's purse, and foot from going on a thievish errand to thy neighbour's house; but does not thy envious heart grudge him what God allows him? When thou prayest, thou art very careful thy outward posture be reverent; but what eye hast thou on thy soul, that it performs its part in the duty? Secondly, watch in every thing: if the Apostle bids "in every thing give thanks," then it behoves us, "in every thing to watch," that God may not lose his praise, which he doth in most for want of watching. No action so little almost but we may in it do God or the devil some service, and therefore none too little for our care to be bestowed on. He was a holy man indeed, of whom it was said, "that he ate and drank eternal life." The meaning is, he kept such a holy watch over himself in these things, that he was in Heaven while doing them. There is no creature so little among all God's works but his providence watcheth over it, even to a sparrow and a hair: let there be no word or work of thine, over which thou art not watchful. Thou shalt be judged by them, even to thy idle words and thoughts, and wilt thou not have care of them?

Thirdly, Watch wisely; which thou shalt do, if thou knowest where thou shouldest keep strictest watch, and that must be first in the weightiest duty of the command; tything of cummin and annis must not be neglected, but take heed thou dost not neglect the weightiest things of the "law, judgment, mercy, and faith," Matth. xxiii. 23, making your preciseness in the less a blind for your horrible wickedness in the greater.

Begin at the right end of your work, Christian, by placing your chief care about those main duties to God
Stand therefore.

and man in his law and gospel, in his worship, and in thy daily course, which when thou hast done, neglect not the circumstantialis. Should a master before he goes forth, charge his servant to look to his child, and trim his house up handsomely against he comes home; when he returns, will be thank this servant for sweeping his house and making it trim, as he bade him, if he finds his child through his negligence fallen into the fire, and by it killed or crippled? No sure: he left his child with him as his chief charge, to which the other should have yielded, if both could not be done. There hath been a great zeal of late among us about some circumstantialis of worship; but who looks to the little child, the main duties of Christianity I mean? Was there ever less love, charity, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, or the power of holiness in any of its several walks, than in this sad age of ours? Alas! these, like the child, are in great danger of perishing in the fire of contention and division, which a perverse zeal in less things hath kindled among us. Secondly, Be sure thou art watchful more than ordinary over thyself in those things where thou findest thyself weakest and hast been oftenest foiled. The weakest part of the city needs the strongest guard, and in our bodies the tenderest part is most observed and kept warmest. And I should think it were strange, if thy fabric of grace stands so strong and even, that thou shouldest not soon perceive which side needs the shore most, by some inclination of it one way more than another. Thy body is not so firm, but thou findest this humour over abound, and that part craze faster than another; and so mayest thou in thy soul. Well, take counsel in the thing, and what thou findest weakest, watch most carefully. Is it thy head is weak, thy judgment I mean? watch thyself, and come not among those that drink no wine but that which thy weak parts cannot bear (seraphic notions and high-flown opinions); and do not think thyself much wronged to be forbidden their cup: such strong wine is more heady than hearty, and they that trade most with it are not found of the healthiest tempers of their souls, no more than they that live most of strong water are for their bodies. Is thy impotency in thy passions? Indeed we are weak as they are
strong and violent. Now watch over them as one that
dwells in a thatched house would do off every spark that
flies out his chimney, lest it should light on it and set
all on fire. O take heed what speeches comes from thy
mouth, or from any thou conversest with: this is the little
instrument sets the whole course of nature on flame.
When our neighbour's house is on fire we cast water on
our roof; or cover it with a wet sheet: when the flame
breaks out at another's mouth, now look thou throwest
water on thy own hot spirit; some cooling, wrath-quenching
scriptures and arguments ever carry with thee for that
purpose, and so in any other particular as thou findest
thy weakness.

VERSE 14.

Having your loins girt about with truth.

THE Apostle having ordered the Ephesians, and in them
every Christian, the posture which they are to observe in
fight with their enemy, he comes now to instance in
the several pieces of that armour, which before he had
commended to them only in the general. The first of
which is the "girdle of truth."

CHAP. I.

WHEREIN IS CONTAINED A BRIEF EXPLICATION OF
THE WORDS.

"HAVING your loins girt about with truth." A twofold enquiry is here requisite. First, what he means by
"truth." Secondly, what by "loins," and their being
girt with truth.
First, What is truth here? Some by truth understand Christ, who indeed elsewhere is called "the truth;" yet in this place I conceive not so properly, because the Apostle instanceth here in several pieces and parts of armour, one distinct from another, and Christ cannot so well be said to be a single piece to defend this or that part, as the whole in whom we are complete, compared therefore, Rom. xiii. to the whole suit of armour: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus," that is, be clothed and harnessed with Christ, as a soldier with his armour cap-a-pee. Some by "truth" mean truth of doctrine; others will have it truth of heart, sincerity. They I think best, that comprise both; and so I shall handle it. Both indeed are required to make the girdle complete; one will not do without the other. It is possible to find good meanings, and a kind of sincerity without, yea, against "the truth." Many follow an error, as they Absalom, in the simplicity of their hearts. Such do ill while they mean well. Good intentions do no more make a good action, than a fair mark makes a good shot by an unskilful archer. God did not like Saul's zeal when he persecuted the Christian church, though he thought (no question) he did him good service therein. Neither is it enough to have truth on our side, if we have not truth in our hearts. Jehu was a great stickler against idolatry, but kicked down all again by his hypocrisy. Both then are necessary; sincerity to propound a right end, and knowledge of the word of "truth" to direct us in the right way to that end.

Secondly, What is meant here by "loins," that are to be girt with this girdle? The loins must be like the girdle. This is spiritual, and therefore they must be so. Peter will help to interpret Paul, "gird up the loins of your minds," 1 Pet. i. 13. They are our minds and spirits which must wear this girdle, and very fitly may our spirits and minds be compared to the loins. The loins are the chief seat of bodily strength. Of Behemoth it is said, "his strength is in his loins," Job xl. 16. The loins are to the body as Carina navis, the keel to the ship; the whole ship is knit to that, and sustained by it; and the body to the loins: if the loins fail, the whole body sinks. Hence to "smite through the loins," is a phrase to ex-
Having your loins press destruction and ruin, Deut. xxxiii. 11. Weak loins, and a weak man. If we be but a little weary, nature directs us to lay our hands on our loins to sustain them, as our chief strength: thus as the actings of our minds and spirits are in their faculties and powers, so we are weak or strong Christians. If the understanding be clear in its apprehensions of truth, and the will sincere, vigorous, and fixed in its purposes, for that which is holy and good, then he is a strong Christian; but if the understanding be dark, or uncertain in its notions (as a distempered eye that cannot well discern its object), and the will be waver- ing and unsteady (like a needle that trembles between two loadstones), not able to bring its thoughts to an issue, which—to close with, here the man is weak, and all he doth will be so. Feeble spirits cause an intermitting fal- tering pulse; so want of strength in the mind, to know truth, and resolution in the will, to pursue that which he knows to be holy and good, causeth a man to falter in his course. The use therefore of these two, "truth of doctrine" for the mind, and sincerity for the will, is to unite and establish both these faculties, which they do when they are clasped and girt about the soul, as the girdle about the loins of the body. Though the loins be the strength of the body, yet they need an auxiliary strength from the girdle to keep those parts close, and unite their force, without which men, when they would strain themselves and put forth their strength in any work, find a trembling and looseness in their loins. Hence the "shaking of the loins," is a phrase to express weakness, Psalm lxix. 23. Thus our minds and spirits need this girdle to strengthen them in every work we do, or else we shall act nothing vigorously.

First, We shall begin with "truth of doctrine," or truth of the word, called "the word of truth," Ephes. i. 13, because it is the word of God, who is the God of truth. It behoves every Christian to be well girt with this truth. "Resist the devil (saith Peter), steadfast in the faith;" 1 Pet. v. 9. that is, in the truth; faith being there put for the object of our faith, which is the truth of God, declared in the doctrine of the gospel, this is "the faith which was once delivered to the saints," Jude x. that is
the truth delivered to them to be believed and held fast. And of what importance it is to be thus steadfast in the faith, the apostle Peter, in the following verse of the beforementioned place, shews, by his vehement and earnest praying for them, that God would “establish, strengthen, and settle them.” The heaping of words to the same purpose, implies the great danger they were in of being unsettled by Satan and his instruments, and the necessity of their standing firm and unshaken in the faith. Nothing more frequently inculcated than this in the Epistles; and the more, because in those blustering times it was impossible to have kept the faith from being blown from them, without this girdle to hold it fast. Now, as there is a double design Satan hath to rob Christians of truth, so there is a two-fold girding about with this truth necessary.

First, Satan comes as a serpent in the persons of false teachers, and by them labours to put a cheat on us, and cozen us with error for truth. To defend us against this design, it is necessary we be girt with truth in our understanding, that we have an established judgment in the truths of Christ.

Secondly, Satan comes sometimes as a lion in the persons of bloody persecutors, and labours to scare Christians from the truth with fire and fagot. Now to defend us against this, we need have truth girt about us, so that with a holy resolution we may maintain our profession in the face of death and danger. To begin with the first.

CHAP. II.

WHEREIN IS SHEWED, IT IS THE CHRISTIAN’S DUTY TO LABOUR FOR A JUDGMENT ESTABLISHED IN THE TRUTH, WITH THE REASONS OF IT, AS ALSO SOME APPLICATION OF THE POINT.

IT should be the care of every Christian to get an established judgment in the truth. The Bereans are highly
Having your loins

commended for the enquiry they made into the Scripture to satisfy their judgments concerning the doctrine Paul preached. They did not believe hand over head, but their faith was the result of a judgment, upon diligent search, convinced by Scripture evidence, Acts xvii. 11; it is there said, "they searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so." They carried the preacher's doctrine to the written Word, and compared it with that; and mark, ver. 12, "therefore many believed." As they did not believe before, so they durst not but believe now. I remember Tertullian, speaking of some heretics, their manner of preaching, saith, Persuadendo doceant, non docendo persuadent; they teach by persuading, and not persuade by teaching: that is, they woo and entice the affections of their hearers, without convincing their judgment about what they preach. Indeed, it were a hard work for the adulterer to convince her he would prostitute that the fact is lawful; no: he goes another way to work; first, by some amorous insinuations he inveigles her affections, and they once bewitched, the other is not much questioned, it being easy for the affections to make the judgment of their party. Well, though error, like a thief, comes thus in at the window, yet truth, like the true owner of the house, delights to enter in at the right door of the understanding, from thence into the conscience, and so passeth into the will and affections. Indeed he that hits upon truth, and takes up the profession of it, before he is brought into the acquaintance of its excellency and heavenly beauty by his understanding, cannot entertain it becoming its heavenly birth and descent; it is a prince that travels in disguise, not known, therefore not honoured. Truth is loved and prized only by those who know it; and not to desire to know it is to despise it, as much as knowing it to reject it. It were not hard sure to cheat that man of truth who knows not what he hath. Truth and error are all one to the ignorant man, so it hath but the name of truth. Leah and Rachel were both alike to Jacob in the dark. Indeed it is said "in the morning behold it was Leah," Gen. xxix. 25. so in the morning, when it is day in the understanding, then the deceived person will
See he hath had a false bride in his bosom, and will cry out, Behold it is an error which I took for a truth. You have, may be, heard of the covetous man, that hugged himself in the many bags of gold he had, but never opened them or used them; when the thief took away his gold, and left him his bags full of pebbles in the room, he was as happy as when he had his gold, for he looked not at the one or other. And verily an ignorant person is in a manner no better with truth than error on his side; both are alike to him: day and night is all one to a blind man.

But, to proceed and give some more particular account why the Christian should endeavour for an established judgment in the truth, I shall content myself with three reasons: the first taken from the damming nature of false doctrine, the second from the subtility of seducers to draw into false doctrine, and the third from the universal influence that an established judgment hath on the whole man, and whole course of a Christian.

First, from the damming nature of false doctrines. They hunt for the precious life of souls, as well as any other sin. As imposthume in the head proves oft as deadly as one in the stomach: a corrupt judgment in foundation-truths kills as sure as a rotten heart; indeed it proceeds thence. Jezabel’s children are threatened to be killed with death, Rev. ii. 23. and who are her children, but her disciples, that drink of her cup of fornication, and embrace her corrupt doctrines? But sure this is not believed by some, who though very strict in their lives, and seem as tender in matters of morality as Lot was of his guests, yet are very loose in their principles and judgments, exposing them, as he his daughters, to be defiled with any corrupt doctrine that comes to their door. They would make us think that here men played but at small game, and their souls were not at stake, as in other sins. As if there were not such a question to be asked at the great day, what opinions we held, and whether we were sound in the faith. In a word, as if false doctrines were but an innocent thing, not like the wild gourd which brought death into the prophet’s pot (turning wholesome food, with which it was mingled,
Having your loins into baneful poison) 2 Kings iv. but rather like herb John in the pot, that does neither much good nor hurt. Yea, there be some that speak out, and tell us a man may be saved in any religion, so he doth but follow his light; and are not these charitable men? who, because they would have the company as few as may be that are damned, make as many roads to Heaven as the Scripture tells us there are ways to Hell; contrary to Christ, who tells us of no other way but by him to life: "I am the way, the truth, and the life," John xiv. 6. point blank against Saint John, who tells us but of one doctrine, and that the doctrine of Christ, and he that holds not this to be marked out for a lost man: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." 2 John, verse 9. And how far, I pray, is that man off Hell that hath not God? He that hath not God before he dies, the Devil shall have him when he dies. Well, sirs, the time is coming, yea it hastens, what favour and kindness soever corrupt doctrines find here at man's hand, wherein the obstinate heretic shall receive the same law at Christ's hands with the impenitent drunkard: you may see them both under the same condemnation, as they stand pinioned together for Hell. "I tell you now (saith the Apostle), as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Gal. v. 20, 21, and see I pray if you cannot find the heretic's name amongst them. Ignorance in fundamentals is damming, surely then error in fundamentals much more. If a pound weighs down the scale, there is no doubt then but a stone weight will do it: if the less sin presseth down to Hell, how can we rationally think that the greater should escape it? error stands at a further distance from, yea a fuller contrariety, to truth than ignorance. Error is ignorance with a die on it. He that eats little or nothing, must needs die; much more he that eats rank poison. The Apostle doth not only tell us of "pernicious doctrines, and damnable heresies," but he tells us, they "bring swift damnation" upon those that hold them, 2 Pet. ii. 1. I pray observe, what an accent he lays on the damnation that comes by these corrupt doctrines: he calls it swift damnation. All
rivers find their way at last to the sea from whence they sprang, but some return with a more swift stream, and get sooner to it, than others. Would any make it a shorter voyage to Hell than ordinary, let him throw himself but into this stream of corrupt doctrine, and he is not like to be long in going?

Secondly, Because impostors are so subtle, therefore it behoves the Christian to establish and strengthen his judgment in the truths of Christ. They are a generation of men skilful to destroy the faith of others. There is an orudita nequitia in the world, as one calls it, a learned kind of wickedness, that some have to corrupt the minds of men. The Spirit of God sets them out to life: sometimes comparing them to merchants, who can set a gloss upon their false ware with fine words: they are said with feigned words to make merchandise of souls; 2 Pet. ii. 3, to hucksters that blend and dash their wine with water, 2 Cor. ii. 17; to cheating gamesters, that have a sleight of hand to cog the die, Ephes. iv. 14; yea, to witches themselves: “Who hath bewitched you?” Gal. iii. 1. saith the Apostle. Strange things have been done in our days on those that God has suffered them to practice their sorcery upon; and what counter-charm better than an established judgment? It is observable that in 2 Tim. iii. where the Apostle compares the seducers of that present age to those sorcerers, Jannes and Jambres, that resisted Moses, and shews what kind of persons they were that fell into their snare: “such as, though ever learning, yet never came to the knowledge of the truth,” verse 7, then he turns to Timothy, verse 10, “But thou hast fullyknown my doctrine.” As if he had said, I am out of fear for thee, thou art better grounded in the doctrine of the Apostle than to be thus cheated of it. Indeed those whom seducers lay in wait for are chiefly weak unsettled ones, for as Solomon saith, “in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.” Prov. i. 17. The devil chose rather to assault Eve than Adam, as more likely of the two to be caught; and ever since he takes the same course: he labours to creep over where the hedge is lowest, and the resistance like to be weakest. Three characters you may observe of those who are most commonly seduced.
First, they are called simple ones, *Rom*. xvi. 18, "by good words and fair speeches, deceive the heart of the simple," such who mean well, but want wisdom to discern those that mean ill; incautious ones, that dare pledge every body, and drink of any one's cup, and never suspect poisoning. Secondly, children: "be no more children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine." *Eph*. iv. 14. Now children they are very credulous, prone to believe every one that gives them a parcel of fair words; they think any thing is good if it be sweet; it is not hard to make them eat poison for sugar; they are not swayed by principles of their own, but by others; the child reads, construes, and pierces his lesson as his master saith, and thinks it therefore right; thus poor creatures, that have little knowledge of the word themselves, they are easily persuaded this or that way, even as those of whom they have a good opinion please to lead them; let the doctrine be but sweet, and it goes down glib; they, like Isaac, bless their opinions by feeling, not by sight; hence many poor creatures applaud themselves so much of the joy they have found since they were of this judgment and that way; not being able to try the comfort and sweetness they feel by the truth of their way from the Word, they are fain to believe the truth of it by their feeling, and so, poor creatures, they bless error for truth. Thirdly, they are such as are unstable, *2 Pet*. ii. 14, "beguiling unstable souls," such as are not well grounded and principled. The truth they profess hath no anchor-hold in their understanding, and so they are at the mercy of the wind, soon set adrift, and carried down the stream of those opinions which are the favourites of the present time, and are most cried up, even as the dead fish with the current of the tide.

Thirdly, We are to endeavour after an established judgment in the truth, because of the universal influence it hath upon the whole man. First, upon the memory, which is helped much by the understanding. The more weight is laid on the seal, the deeper impression is made on the wax. The memory is that faculty which carries the images of things. It holds fast what we receive, and is that treasury where we lay up what we desire afterward to use and converse with. Now, the more clear
and certain our knowledge of any thing is, the deeper it sinks and surer it is held by the memory. Secondly, upon the affections. Truth is as light: the more steady and fixed the glass of the understanding is, through which its beams are darted upon the affections, the sooner they take fire. "Did not our hearts burn (saith the disciples) within us, while he opened to us the Scriptures," Luke xxiv. 32. They had heard, no doubt, Christ preach much of what then he said before his passion, but never were they so satisfied and confirmed as now when Scriptures and understanding were opened together; and this made their hearts burn. The sun in the firmament sends his influence where he doth not shed his beams, I mean into the bowels of the earth; but the sun of righteousness imparts his influence only where his light comes: he spreads the beams of truth into the understanding to enlighten that, and while the creature sets under these wings, a kindly heart quickening heat is begot in its bosom. Hence we find, even when the Spirit is promised as a comforter, he comes as a convincer, John xvi. 13; he comforts by teaching. And certainly, the reason why many poor trembling souls have so little heat of heavenly joy in their hearts is, because they have so little light to understand the nature and tenor of the gospel-covenant. The further a soul stands from the light of truth, the further he must needs be from the heat of comfort. Thirdly, an established judgment hath a powerful influence upon the life and conversation. The eye directs the foot; he walks very unsafely that sees not his way, and he uncomfortably that is not resolved whether right or wrong. That which moves must rest on something that doth not move, a man could not walk if the earth turned under his feet. Now the principles we have in our understanding are as it were the ground we go upon in all our actions: if they stagger and reel, much more will our life and practice. It is as impossible for a shaking hand to write a straight line, as an unfixed judgment to have an even conversation. The Apostle joins steadfastness and unmoveableness with "abounding in the work of the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58, and, if I mistake not, he means chiefly in that place a steadfastness of judgment in that
truth of the resurrection which some had been shaking. It is not the many notions we have, but the establishment we have in the truth, makes us strong Christians; as he is a strong man whose joints are well set together and knit, not he who is a spun out at length, but not thickened suitable to his height. One saith well, Men are what they see and judge; though some do not fill up their light, yet none go beyond it. A truth under dispute in the understanding is, as I may so say, stopped in the head, it cannot commence in the heart, or become practicable in the life; but when it passeth clearly there, and upon its commendation, is embraced in the will and affections, then it is held fast, and hath powerful effects in the conversation. The gospel, it is said, came to the Thessalonians in much assurance, 1 Thess. i. 5. that is, evidence of its truth, and see how prevalent and operative it was, verse 6, "ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost." They were assured that the doctrine was of God, and this carried them cheerfully through the saddest afflictions which attended the same.

Use 1. First, to reprove those that, instead of endeavouring to establish their judgments in the truth, make it their great study how to strengthen themselves in their errors. I am persuaded some men take more pains to furnish themselves with arguments to defend some one error they have taken up, than they do for the most saving truths in the bible; yea, they could sooner die at a stake to defend one error they hold, than all the truths they profess. Austin saith of himself when he was a Manichæan, Non tueras, sed error meus erat Deus meus. "Thou, O Lord, wert not, but my error was, my God." O it is hard to reduce a person deeply engaged in the defence of an error. How often had the Pharisees their mouths stopped by our Saviour, yet few or none were reclaimed. Their spirits were too proud to recant. What, they lay down the bucklers, come down from Moses’s chair, and confess what they have taught the people for an oracle, is now false! they will rather go on, and brave it out as well as they can, than come back with shame; though the shame was, not to be ashamed of their error,
but ashamed to confess it. The cynic answered smartly, who coming out of a brothel, was asked whether he was not ashamed to be seen coming out of such a naughty house? No: said he; the shame was to go in but honesty to come out. O sirs, it is bad enough to fall into an error, but worse to persist. The first shews thee a weak man, *humanum est errare*, but the other makes thee too like the devil, who is to this day of the same mind he was at his first fall.

Use 2. Secondly, It reproves those who labour to unsettle the judgments of others, to ungird this belt about Christian loins. They come with the devil's question in their mouths, "Yea, hath God said?" Are you sure this is a truth? do not your ministers deceive you? Labouring slightly to breed suspicions and jealousies in the hearts of Christians towards the truths they have received. Such were they that troubled the Galatians, whom Paul wished cut off for their pains, *Gal. v. 12*, they laboured to puzzle them by starting scruples in their minds concerning the doctrine of the gospel. This is a cunning way at last to draw them from the faith; and therefore they are called "subverters of the faith of others." *2 Tim. ii. 14. Titus i. 11.* The house must needs be in danger, when the groundsils are loosened. Can you think he means honestly that undermines the foundation of your house? This they do that would call in question the grand truths of the gospel? But this is a small fault in our loose age, or else so many seducers would not be suffered (whom I may call spiritual rogues and vagrants) to wander like gypsies up and down, bewitching poor simple souls to their perdition. O it is sad that he who steals the worth of two or three shillings should hold up his hand at the bar for his life, yea, sometimes hang for it; and that those who rob poor souls of the treasure of saving truths, and subvert the faith of whole families, should be let to lift up their heads with impudence, glorying in their impurity; that blasphemy against God should not bear an action, where blasphemy against the king is indicted for treason. It is well that God loves his truth better than men, or else these would escape in both worlds. But God hath declared himself against them; there is a day when they
who rob souls of truth shall be found, and condemned as greater felons than they who rob houses of gold and silver. See how God lays their indictment: "Behold I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my word every one from his neighbour," Jer. xxiii. 30. He means the false prophets, that enticed the people from those truths which the faithful servants of God had delivered to them. There will be none on the bench to plead the blasphemer and seducer's cause, when God shall sit as judge.

Use 3. Thirdly, this might well chastise the strange fickleness and unsettledness of judgment which many labour with in this inconstant age. Truths in many professors minds are not as stars fixed in the heaven, but like meteors that dance in the air; they are not as characters engraven in marble, but writ in the dust, which every wind and idle breath of seducers deface; many entertain opinions as some entertain suitors, not that they mean to marry them, but cast them off as soon as new ones come. Never was there a more giddy age than ours. What is said of fashion-mongers, that some men should they see their pictures in that habit which they wore a few years past, would hardly know themselves in their present garb, is most true in regard of their opinions. Should many, that have been great professors, take a few of their religious principles a dozen years ago, and compare them with their present, they would be found, not the same men; they have so chopped and changed, that they seem to have altered their whole creed; and it is no wonder that so many are for a new baptism, when they have forsaken their old faith; not that the old which they renounce was false, or the new which they espouse is true, but because they were either ignorant of the truth they first professed, or were insincere in the profession of it; and it is no wonder that the one should upon easy terms part with that, which he first took upon as weak grounds as now he leaves it; or that the other who did not love or improve the truth he professed, should be given up of God to change it for an error. If the heathen (who did not glorify God with the light of nature they had) were righteously given up to a reprobate injudicious
mind to do that which was inconvenient and morally absurd; then they who dishonoured God, with the revealed light of Scripture truth, much more deserve that they should be given up to that which is spiritually wicked, even to believe lies and errors for truth. A heavy curse, did we rightly judge of it, to wander and wilder in a maze of error, and yet think they are walking in the way of truth.

Quest. But, may some say, how is it possible that ordinary professors should attain to this established judgment in the truth, when we see many of great parts and eminency much unsettled in their judgments?

Answ. We must distinguish, first, of persons; secondly, of truths. First, of persons: there are many eminent for parts, whose parts want piety to establish them; and-no wonder to see wanton wits unfixed in the truths of God. None sooner topple over into error than such as have not an honest heart joined to a nimble head. The richest soil without culture is most tainted with such weeds. They have been men of unsanctified parts that have been the leaders in the way of error, though the more simple and weak that are led by them. They are knowing men, which first disgorge and vomit error from their corrupt hearts, and ignorant ones that lick it up. And therefore despair not of an established judgment, so long as thou desirest to have an honest upright heart, and conscientiously usest the means. The promise is on thy side: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have they that do his commandments." Psal. cxi. 10.

Secondly, We must distinguish of truths: some are fundamental, others are superstructory. Now though many eminent for piety, as well as parts, are in the dark concerning some of the superstructory and more circumstantial (because mysteriously laid down in the Word) yet there is a sweet harmony among the godly in fundamentals; and in those, poor souls, thou mayest come by a faithful use of means to be established. As for our bodies, God hath so provided that things necessary to preserve their life are more common, and to be had at a cheaper rate, than things for delicacy and state: so also
for our souls. If bread were as hard to come at as sweet-meats, or water as scarce as wine, the greatest part of men must needs famish: so if truths necessary to salvation were as hard to be understood, and cleared from the Scriptures, as some others, many poor Christians of weak parts would certainly perish, without a miracle to help them. But the saving truths of the gospel lie plain, and run clear to all but those who muddy the stream with their own corrupt minds.

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CHAP. III.

SOME DIRECTIONS FOR ESTABLISHING THE JUDGMENT OF PROFESSORS IN THE TRUTH.

QUEST. But what counsel can you give me towards the establishing of my judgment in the truths of Christ?

Answ. First, let thy aim be sincere in embracing truths. A false naughty heart and an unsound judgment, like ice and water, are produced mutually by one another. The reason of the fickleness of some mens' judgments proceeds from the guile of their hearts. A stable mind and a double heart seldom meet. That place speaks full to this, 1 Tim. i. 5, "The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned;" now mark what follows, ver. 6, "from which some having swerved (or as it is in the original, not aiming at) have turned aside to vain jangling." They never aimed at the power of holiness in receiving truth, that by it they might advance in their love, faith, and other graces; and, taking a wrong end and aim, no wonder they turn out of the right way. A naughty heart can easily bribe the judgment to vote on its side. This shall be truth now, and no truth a month hence, if it please. That is truth with many which serves their interest: they tie their judgments to their purse-strings, or preferments, &c. and such men are ready
girt about with truth. 41

(with that weathercock in Queen Mary's days) to sing a new song upon any change in their carnal concerns. When love receives a truth, it is held fast; but if lust after any worldly interest be the cause, then it may be packed away again, when the turn is served. Amnon was soon as sick of Tamar as ever he was for her; and have we not in our days seen some truths and ordinances kicked away, as much scorn and contempt as he did her, and by those that have been sufficiently fond of them a few years past, but never truly in love with them?

Secondly, attend on the ministry of the Word. One great end of its appointment is to establish us in the truth: "He gave some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints." Eph. iv. 11. And mark, ver. 14, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro," &c. He that runs from his guide, will soon be out of his way. It is no small testimony that God hath given to his faithful ministers in this present age, that few leave them but the leprosy of error appears soon on their forehead. And in thy waiting on the ministry of the Word, be sure thou attendest to the doctrinal part of the sermon, as well as to the applicatory. The former is necessary to make thee a solid Christian, as the other to make thee a warm Christian. Indeed, hot affections, without solid knowledge, are but like fire in the pan when the piece is not charged. The Levites, we find, Neh. viii. 7, 8, "gave the sense of the law, and caused the people to understand it." Planting goes before watering, and so should teaching before exhorting. And the same method people should learn in, that we are to preach in.

Thirdly, enslave not thy judgment to any person or party. There is a spiritual suretiship hath undone many in their judgments and principles; be not bound to or for the judgment of any. Weigh truth and tell gold thou mayest after thy father. Thou must live by thy own faith, not another's. Labour to see truth with thine own eyes. That building stands weak which is held up by a shore, or some neighbour's house it leans on, rather than on any foundation of its own; when these go, that will fall to the ground also. Let not authority

VOL. II.
Having your loins from man, but evidence from the Word, conclude thy judgment: that is but a shore, this a foundation. Quote the Scripture rather than men for thy judgment. Not, So saith such a learned holy man; but, Thus saith the holy Scripture. Yet take heed of bending this direction too far the other way, which is done when we contemn the judgment of such whose piety and learning might command reverence: there is sure a mean to be found between defying men, and deifying them. It is admiring of persons that is the traitor to truth, and makes many cry "hosanna" to error, and "crucify" to truth. Eusebius out of Josephus tells us of Herod (that Herod whom we read, Acts xii. to be eaten up of worms) coming upon the theatre gorgeously clad, and that while he was making an eloquent oration to the people, his silver robe, which he then wore, did by the reflection of the sunbeams shining on it, so glister as dazzled the eyes of the spectators; and this, saith he, occasioned some flatterers to cry out, "The voice of God, and not of man." And truly the glistering varnish which some men's parts and rhetoric put upon their discourses, does often so blind the judgments of their admirers, that they are too prone to think all divine they speak; especially if they be such whom God hath used as instruments of any good to their souls formerly. O it is hard then (as he said) amare hominem humaniter, to love and esteem man as a man, to reverence such so as not to be in danger of loving their errors also. Augustine had been a means to convert Alypius from one error, and he confesseth this was an occasion why he was so easily led by him into another error, no less than Manichism: Alypius thought he could not pervert him here, that had converted him. Call therefore none Father on earth: despise none, adore none.

Fourthly, Beware of curiosity. He is half gone into error that vainly covets novelties, and listens after every new-fangled opinion. We read of itching ears, 2 Tim. iv. 3. this itch commonly ends in a scab of error. Tamar lost her chastity by gadding, castitas mentis est fides incorrupta. The chastity of the mind is its soundness in the faith. And this they are in danger of losing who
will go into all companies, and lend an ear to all doctrines that are preached; first be a hearer, and then a disciple of them. Many indulge themselves so far in this curiosity of conversing with every sect and opinion, that at last they turn sceptics, and can settle upon nothing as truth. Augustine confesseth of himself that he had gone through so many errors and delusions of the Manichees (which he once cried up for truths, but afterwards saw them abominable errors) that at last he was afraid of truth itself, which he heard Ambrose preach. Ut malum medicum expertus, etiam bono timeat se committere. As (saith he) one that hath had experience of an unskilful physician, is at last afraid to put himself into the hands of him that is skilful. O take heed that you who will now hear any thing, come not in the end that you will believe nothing.

Fifthly, Humbly beg of God an established judgment. No travellers lose their way sooner than they who think they know it so well that they need not ask it; and no professors are so much in danger of being drawn from the truth as they who lean to their own understandings, and acknowledge not God in their way by consulting with him daily. Mark pride (however it may seem to soar aloft in profession at present) and you shall find it at last laid in the ditch of error or profaneness: this is the bed God hath made for it, and it must lie there where God hath appointed its lodging. It is very necessary such men should be left to be bewildered, and so put to shame; that when their understanding returns to them (if God hath such a mercy in store for them), they may, with Nebuchadnezzar, bless the Most High, and acknowledge him at their return, whom they neglected so unworthily at their setting forth. O take heed therefore of pride, which will soon make thee a stranger at the throne of grace. Pride takes little delight in begging: it turns humble praying for Truth into a busy stickling and ambitious disputing about truth; there is honour to be got here, and thus many to get victory have lost truth in the heat of the battle. Lay this deep in thy heart, that God, which gives an eye to see truth, must give a hand to hold it fast when we have it. Quæ
Having your loins

_habemus ab eo, tenere non possimus sine eo._ Bern. What we have from God, we cannot keep without God. Keep therefore thy acquaintance with God, or else truth will not keep her acquaintance long with thee. God is light: thou art going into the dark as soon as thou turnest thy back upon him. We stand at better advantage to find truth, and keep it also, when devoutly praying for it, than fiercely wrangling and contending about it. Disputes disturb the soul, and raise the dust of passion; prayers sweetly comesth the mind, and lays the passions which disputes draw forth; and I am sure a man may see further in a still clear day, than in a windy and cloudy. When a person talks much, and rests little, we have great cause to fear his brain will not long hold; and truly when a person shall be much in talking and disputing about truth without a humble spirit in prayer to be led into it, God may justly punish that man's pride with a spiritual frenzy in his mind, that he shall not know error from truth.

Sixthly, Look thou takest not offence at the difference of judgments and opinions that are found amongst the professors of religion. It is a stone which the Papist throws (in these divided times especially) before our feet. How know you, saith he, which is truth, when there are so many judgments and ways amongst you? Some have so stumbled at this, that they have quitted the truth they once professed, and, by the storm of dissensions in matters of religion, have been, if not thrown upon the rock of atheism, yet driven to and fro in a fluctuation of mind, not willing to cast anchor any where in their judgment till they see this tempest over, and those that are scattered from one another by diversity of judgment meet together in an unity and joint consent of persuasions in matters of religion. A resolution, as one saith very well, as foolish and pernicious to the soul, if not more, than it would be to the body if a man should vow he would not eat till all the clocks in the city should strike twelve just together; the latter might sooner be expected than the former.

Seventhly, Rest not till thou feelest the efficacy of every truth thou holdest in thy judgment, upon thy heart.
girt about with truth.

One faculty helps another. The more clear truth is in the understanding, the more abiding in the memory; and the more operative truth is on the will, the more fixed in the judgment. Let a thing be never so excellent, yet if a man can make little or no use thereof, it is little worth to him, and may easily be got from him. Thus many rare libraries have been parted with by rude soldiers, into whose hands they have fallen, for little more than their covers were worth, which would by some (that could have improved them) have been kept as the richest prize. And verily, it fares with truth according as they are into whose hands it falls; if it lights upon one that falls to work with it, and draws out the strength and sweetness of it, this man holds it so much faster in his judgment, by how much more operative it is on his heart; but if it meets with one that finds no divine efficacy it hath to humble, comfort, sanctify him, it may soon be turned out of doors, and put to seek for a new host; such may for a time dance about that light, which awhile after themselves will blow out. When I hear of a man, that once held original sin, and the universal pollution of man's nature, to be a truth, but now denies it, I cannot but fear he did either never lay it so close to his heart, as to abase and humble him kindly for it; or that he grew weary of the work, and by sloth and negligence lost the efficacy of that truth in his heart, before he lost the truth itself in his judgment. I might instance in many other particulars, wherein professors in these changing times have slid from their old principles. Singing of psalms hath been a duty owned and practised by many, who now have laid it down: and it were a question worth the asking of them, whether formerly they never enjoyed sweet communion with God in that duty as well as in others? whether their hearts did never dance and leap up to God with heavenly affections, while they sang with their lips? And verily I should think it strange to hear a godly person deny this. Well, if ever thou didst, Christian, meet with God at this door of the tabernacle (for I cannot yet think it other), let me ask thee again, whether thy heart did not grow common, cold, and formal in the duty before thou durst cast off the duty, and if so (which I am
very ready to believe), I desire such in the fear of God to consider these four questions.

First, Whether they may not fear that they are in an error; and that this darkness is befallen their judgments as a punishment for their negligence and slightness of spirit in performing the duty, when they did not question the lawfulness of it?

Secondly, Whether it were not better they laboured to recover the first liveliness of their affections in the duty, which would soon bring them again acquainted with that sweetness and joy they of old found in it, than to cast it off, upon so weak evidence as they who can say most bring in against it?

Thirdly, Whether such as neglect one duty, are likely to thrive by any other, and keep up the savour of them fresh in their souls?

Fourthly, Whether, if God should suffer them to decline in their affections to any other ordinance (which he forbid if it be his will), it were not as easy for Satan to gather together arguments enough to make them scruple and in time cast off that also as well as this? And that there is reason for such a question, these times will tell us; wherein every ordinance hath had its turn to be questioned, yea disowned, some by one, some by another. One will not sing; another will not have his child baptized; a third will not have any water-baptism, nor supper neither; a fourth bungs up his ear too from all hearing of the Word, and would have us expect an immediate teaching. Thus when once ordinances and truths become dead to us through our miscarriage under them, we can be willing (how beautiful soever they were once in our eye), yea call to have them buried out of our sight. These things, sadly laid to heart, will give you reason to think, though this direction be placed last in order of my discourse, yet it should find neither the last nor least place (among all the other named) in your Christian care and practice.
girt about with truth.

CHAP. IV.

WHEREIN IS CONTAINED THE SECOND WAY OF HAVING OUR LOINS GIRT WITH TRUTH, VIZ. SO AS TO MAKE A FREE AND BOLD PROFESSION OF IT, AND WHY THIS IS OUR DUTY; AND A SHORT EXHORTATION TO IT.

THE second way that truth is assaulted is by force and violence: the devil pierceth the fox's skin of seducers with the lion's skin of persecutors. The bloodiest tragedies in the world have been acted on the stage of the church, and the most inhuman massacres and butcheries committed on the harmless sheep of Christ. The first man that was slain in the world was a saint, and he for religion; and, as Luther said, Cain will kill Abel unto the end of the world. The fire of persecution can never go out quite, so long as there remains a spark of hatred in the wicked's bosom on earth, or a devil in Hell to blow it up. Therefore there is a second way of having truth girt about the Christian's loins, as necessary as the other; and that is in the profession of it. Many that could never be beaten from the truth by dint of argument, have been forced from it by fire of persecution. It is not an orthodox judgment will enable a man to suffer for the truth at the stake; then that poor Smith, in our English martyrology, would not have sent such a dastardlike answer to his friend, ready to suffer for that truth which he himself had been the means to instruct him in; that indeed it was the truth, but he could not burn. Truth in the head, without holy courage, makes a man like the sword-fish, which Plutarch saith hath a sword in the head, but no heart to use it. Then a person becomes unconquerable, when from Heaven he is endued with a holy boldness, to draw forth the sword of the Spirit, and own the naked truth, by a free profession of it in the face of death and danger. This, this is to have our loins girt about with
Having your loins

truth. So that the note from this second kind of girding with truth is,

Doct. That it is the saints' duty, and should be their care, not only to get an established judgment in the truth, but also to maintain a steadfast profession of the truth. This the Apostle presseth: "let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," *Heb.* x. 23. He speaks it in opposition to those who in those hazardous times declined the assemblies of the saints, for fear of persecution; he calls it a wavering, and he that stagers is next door to apostacy. We must not spread our sails of profession in a calm, and furl them up when the wind riseth. Pergamus is commended, *Rev.* ii. 13, for her bold profession: "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan hath his throne, and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antypas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you." It was a place where Satan sat in the magistrate's seat, where it was *grande satis picaculum mortem mereri, Christianum esse;* matter enough to deserve death to be a Christian; yea, some blood was now shed before their eyes, and even in those days they denied not the truth. This God took kindly. It is a strict charge Paul gives Timothy, "But thou O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness," *1 Tim.* vi. 11. While others are prowling for the world, lay about thee for spiritual riches, pursue this with as hot a chace as they do their temporal. But, what if this trade cannot be peaceably driven? must shop-windows then be shut up, profession laid aside, and he stay to be religious till more favourable times come about? No such matter, *ver.* 12, he bids him "fight the good fight of faith;" do not basely quit thy profession, but lay life and all to stake to keep this: and that he might engage him beyond a retreat, see *ver.* 13, "I charge thee in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things; and Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment;" as if he had said, If ever you will see the face of Christ with comfort at the resurrection (who chose to lose his life rather than deny or dissemble the truth) stand to it, and flinch not from your colours.
Augustine in his Confessions, lib. 8, chap. 2, hath a notable story of one Victorinus, famous in Rome for rhetoric, which he taught the senators; this man in his old age was converted to Christianity, and came to Simplicianus (one eminent at that time for his piety) whispering in his ears softly these words, Ego sum Christianus, I am a Christian. But this holy man answered, Non credo, nec deputabo te inter Christianos nisi in Ecclesia Christi te videro; I will not believe it, or count thee so, till I see thee among the Christians in the church. At which he laughed, saying, Ergone parietes faciant Christianum; do then those walls make a Christian? cannot I be such except I openly profess it, and let the world know the same? This he said for fear, being yet but a young convert, though an old man; but awhile after (when he was more confirmed in the faith, and seriously considered that if he should continue thus ashamed of Christ, he would be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels) he changed his note, and came to Simplicianus, saying, Eamus in Ecclesiam, Christianus volo fieri. Let us go to the church; I will now in earnest be a Christian. And there, though a private profession of his faith might have been accepted, chose to do it openly, saying, that he had openly professed rhetoric, which was not a matter of salvation, and should he be afraid to own the word of God in the congregation of the faithful? God requires both the religion of the heart and mouth: "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 10. Confession of the mouth without faith in the heart, is gross hypocrisy; to pretend faith, without profession of the mouth, is both hypocrisy and cowardice.

Reas. I shall give but one reason of the point; and that is taken from the great trust which God puts in his saints concerning his truth, this is the great depositum which God delivers to his saints, with a strict and solemn charge to keep against all that undermine or oppose it. Some things we trust God with, some things God trusts us with. The great thing which we put into God's hand to be kept for us, is our soul: "He is able to keep that
which I have committed unto him against that day,"
2 Tim. i. 12. That which God trusts us chiefly with
is his truth. It is therefore said to be delivered to them;
as a charge of money to a friend, whom we confide in:
"contend for the faith which was once delivered to the
saints." Jude iii. "To them (saith the Apostle speaking of
the Jews) were committed the oracles of God," Rom.
iii. 2. They were con credited with that heavenly trea-
sure. So Paul exhorts Timothy, 1 Epist. chap. i. "to
hold fast the form of sound words," and this, ver. 14, he
calls, "the good thing which was committed to him." If
he that is entrusted with the keeping of the king's crown
and jewels, ought to look carefully to his charge, that
none be lost or stolen; much more the Christian that
hath in his charge God's crown and treasure. Rob God
of his truth, and what hath he left? The word of truth is
that testimony which the great God gives of himself to
man. The saints are his chosen witnesses above others,
whom he calls forth to vouch his truth, by a free and
holy profession thereof before men (called therefore the
Rev. xi. 3. He that maintains any error from the Word,
bears false witness against God. He that for fear or
shame deserts the truth, or dissembles his profession,
he denies God his testimony; and who can express what
a bloody sin this is, and to what a high contempt of
God it amounts? It were a horrid crime, though but in a
man's case, as when one is falsely accused in a court, to
speak something that might clear the innocency of the
man, and yet should suffer him to be condemned, rather
than hazard himself a little by speaking the truth in open
court. O what then is his sin, that when God himself,
in his truth, stands at sorry man's bar, dares not speak
for God when called in to declare himself; but lets truth
suffer by an unjust sentence, that himself may not at man's
hands, for bearing witness to it!

Object. But this may seem too heavy a burden to lay
on the Christian's back; must we lay all at a stake, and
hazard all that is dear to us, rather than deny or dis-
semble our profession of the truth? Sure Christ will have
but few followers, if he holds his servants to such hard
terms.
girt about with truth.

**Ans.** Indeed it is hard to flesh and blood; one of the highest stiles to be gone over in our way to Heaven; a carnal heart cannot hear this, but he is offended presently, *Matth.* xiii. 21. Therefore such as are both to lose Heaven, and yet unwilling to venture thus much for it, have set their wits to work to find out an easier way thither. Hence those heretics of old, Priscillianists, and others, whose chief religion was to save their own skin, made little of outward profession. They thought they might say, and unsay; swear, and forswear (according to their wretched principle, *juro*, *perjuro*, *mentem injuratam gero*), so in their heart they did but cleave to the truth. O what fools were the Prophets, Apostles, and other holy Martyrs, that have sealed to the truth with their blood, if there might have been such a fair way of escaping the storm of persecution. Bold men, that to save a little trouble from man, for truth’s sake, durst invent such detestable blasphemies against the truth; yea, deface those characters which nature itself engraves upon the conscience. The same window that lets in the light of a Deity, would with it let in this also, that we should walk in the name of this God. The very Heathen know this: “All people will walk, every one in the name of his God,” *Micah.* iv. Socrates to blood held there was but one God; and in his apology for his life, said, “If they would give him his life, on condition to keep this truth to himself, and not teach it to others, he would not accept it.” Behold here the powerful workings of a natural conscience; have they not then improved the knowledge of the Scripture well, in the mean time, that are so far outshot from nature’s weak bow? Religion would soon vanish into an empty nothing, if, for fear of every one we meet, we must (like run-away soldiers) pluck off our colours, and put our profession as it were in our pockets, lest we should be known to whom we belong. What doth God require by a free profession of his truth, more than a master doth of his servant, when he bids him take his livery and follow him in the streets? or, when a prince calls his subjects into the field, to declare their loyalty, by owning his quarrel against an invading enemy? And is it reasonable what man requires of these, and
only hard from God's hands? nay, it is no more, nor so much, as we desire of God for ourselves. Who would not have God make profession of his love to us, and bear witness for us against Satan and our own sins, at that great day when men and angels shall be spectators? And shall we expect that from God, which he owes us by no law, but of his own free promise, and deny him that which we are under so many bonds to pay? If it be but in some affliction (while we are here) how disconsolate are we, if God's face be a little overcast, and he doth not own us in our distress. And is there no kindness to be shewn to that God that knows your soul in adversity? When his truth is in an agony, may not Christ look that all his friends should sit up and watch with it. O it were shame with a witness, that any such effeminate delicacy should be found among Christ's servants, that they cannot break a little of their worldly rest and enjoyments to attend on him and his truth.

Use. Let this stir us up to get the girdle of truth close girt to us, that we may be able to hold fast the profession of it even in the face of death and danger, and not be offended when persecution ariseth. Blessed be God it is not yet come to that; we have the truth at a cheaper rate, but how soon the market may rise we know not. Truth is not always to be had at the same price; buy it we must at any, but sell it upon no terms. And let me tell you, there hath, is, and will be a spirit of persecution in the hearts of the wicked, to the end of the world; and as Satan was considering Job, before he laid his foul hands on him, so now persecution is working in the spirits of the ungodly; there are engines of death continually preparing in the thoughts and desires of Satan, and his instruments, against the sincere professors of the truth; it is already resolved upon what they would do, might power be given and opportunity to put their malice in execution; yea, we are half-way already towards a persecution. Satan comes first with a spirit of error, and then of persecution; he first corrupts men's minds with error, and then enrageth their hearts with wrath against the professors of truth. It is impossible that error, being a brat of Hell, should be peaceable; it
would not then be like its father. That which is from beneath can neither be pure nor peaceable. And how far God hath suffered this sulphureous spirit of error to prevail is so notorious, that no apology is broad enough to cover the nakedness of these unhappy times. It is therefore high time to have our girdle of truth on, yea, close girt about us, in the profession of it. Not every one that now applauds truth will follow it, when once it comes to shew them the way to prison; not every one that preacheth for it, or disputes for it, will suffer for it. Arguments are harmless things, blunt weapons, they fetch no blood; but when we suffer, then we are called to try it with truth’s enemies at sharps. This requires something more than a nimble tongue, a sharp wit, and a logical head. Where then will be the wise, the disputers, the men of parts and gifts? alas! they will (like cowardly soldiers) be wanting in the fight, though they could be as forward as the best at a muster, or training, when no enemy was in the field; when to appear for truth was rather a matter of gain or applause, than loss and hazard. No: God hath chosen the foolish, to confound the wise, in this piece of service: the humble Christian, by his faith, patience, and love to the truth, to shame men of high parts and no grace.

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CHAP. V.

A DIRECTION OR TWO FOR THE GIRDING OF TRUTH CLOSE TO US IN THE PROFESSION OF IT.

QUEST. But how may a soul get to be thus girt with truth in the profession of it?

Answ. First, labour to get an heart inflamed with a sincere love to the truth; this is only able to match the enemies of truth. The worst they can do is bonds or death, and “love is stronger than death.” It kills the
very heart of death itself, it makes all easy. Command-
mandments are not grievous to love, nor doth it com-
plain of sufferings: with what a light heart did Jacob,
for the love of Rachel, endure the heat of the day and
cold of the night? It is venturous: Jonathan threw a
kingdom at his heels, and conflicted with the anger of
an enraged father, for David’s sake. Love never thinks
itself a loser, so long as it keeps its beloved; yea, it is
ambitious of any hazardous enterprize, whereby it may
sacrifice itself in the service of its beloved: as we see in
David, who put his life in his hands for Michal; how
much more when our love is pitched upon so transcend-
ant an object as Christ and his truth? Alas! they are
but faint spirits which are breathed from a creature;
weak beams that are shot from such sorry beauties. If
these lay their lovers under such a law, that they cannot
but obey, though with the greatest peril and hazard;
what constraint then must a soul ravished with the love
of Christ be under? This has made the saints leap out of
their estates, relations, yea, out of their bodies, with joy,
counting it not their loss to part with them, but to keep
them with the least prejudice to the truth. “They loved
not their lives unto the death,” Rev. xii. 11. Mark, not
to the loss of some of the comforts of their lives, but to
death; life itself they counted an enemy, when it would
part them and truth: as a man doth not love his arm
or leg when it hazards the rest, but bids, cut it off. Can-
not we live, (say these noble spirits) but to the clouding
of truth, and calling our love to it and Christ into ques-
tion; welcome then the worst of deaths. This kept up
David’s courage when his life was laid for: “The wicked
have waited for me to destroy me; but I will consider
thy testimonies.” Psal. cxxix. 95. A carnal heart would
have considered his estate, wife, and children, or at least
his life, now in danger; but David’s heart was on a better
subject, he considered the testimonies of God, and so
much sweetness pours in upon his soul, while he is robing
them in his meditation, that he cannot hold. “O how I
love thy law,” ver. 97. This made him set light by all the
troubles he met with for his cleaving to the truth. It is
a great mystery to the world, that men for an opinion; (as
they call it) should run such desperate hazard. Therefore Paul was thought by his judge to be out of his wits. And that question which Pilate asked Christ seems rather to be slightly than seriously spoken, *John* xviii. Our Saviour had told him, *ver. 37*, that the end why he was born and came into the world was, that he should "bear witness to the truth." Then Pilate, *ver. 38*, asks Christ, "What is truth?" and presently flings away, as if he had said, Is this now a time to think of truth, when thy life is in danger? what is truth, that thou shouldst venture so much for it? But a gracious soul may better ask, in a holy scorn, what are riches and honours, what the fading pleasures of this cheating world, yea, what is life itself, that any, or all these, should be set in opposition to truth? O sirs, look what has your love, that will command purse, credit, life, and all. *Amor meus pondus meum*, every man goes where his love carries him. If the world has your love, on it you will spend your lives; if truth has your hearts, you will catch the blow that is made at it in your own breasts, rather than let it fall on it. Only be careful that your love to truth be sincere, or else it will leave you at the prison door, and make you part with truth, when you should most appear for it. There are three sorts of pretenders to truth, whose love is not likely to endure the fiery trial.

First, Such as embrace truth for carnal advantage. Sometimes truth pays well for her board in the world's own coin, and so long every one will invite her to his house; these do not love truth, but the jewel at her ear. Many are observed in Henry the Eighth's time to be very zealous against abbeys, that loved their lands more than they hated their idolatry. Truth finds few that love her gratis; and those few only will suffer with truth and for it. As for the other, when the worldly dowry that truth brought be once spent, you will find they are weary of their match. This kitchen fire burns no longer than such gross fuel of profit, credit, and the like, does feed it. If you cannot love naked truth, you will not fadge to go naked for truth. If you cannot love disgraced truth, you will not endure to be disgraced for truth; and what usage truth finds that her followers must expect.

Secondly, Such who commend truth, and cry it up
Having your loins

highly; but if you mark them, they do but compliment with it, all this while they keep at a distance, and do not suffer truth to come within them, so as to give law unto them. Like one that entertains a suitor, speaks well of him, holds discourse with him, but will not hear of marrying him. Bucholcerus would oft say, *Multi osculantur Christum, pauci verò amant*; many kiss Christ, but few love him. True love to Christ is conjugal; when a soul delivers up itself from an inward liking it bath to Christ as to her husband, to be ruled by his Spirit, and ordered by his word of truth, here is a soul loves Christ and his truth; but where truth has no command, and bears no rule, there dwells no love to truth in that heart. She that is not obedient, cannot be a loving wife: because love would constrain her to be so: and so would love in the soul enforce obedience to the truth it loves. Nay: he that doth not obey truth, is so far from loving it, that he is afraid of truth; and he that is slavishly afraid of truth, will sooner prove a persecutor of truth than a sufferer for truth. So true is that of Hierome, *quem metuit, quis, odis, quem odit, perisse cupit*, whom we fear, we hate; whom we hate, we wish they were destroyed. Saul feared David, and that made him more industriously seek his ruin; Herod feared John, and that cost him his life. Slavish fear makes the naughty heart imprison truth in his conscience, because, if that had its liberty and authority in the soul, it would imprison, yea, execute every lust that now rules there; and he that imprisons truth in his own bosom, will hardly lie in prison himself as a witness for truth.

Thirdly, Such as have no zeal against truth's enemies. Love goes ever armed with zeal; this is her dagger she draws against all the opposers of truth. *Qui non zelat, non amat*; he that is not zealous, doth not love. Now right zeal acts like fire, *adultimum sui posse*, to its utmost power, yet ever keeping its place and sphere. If it be confined to the breast of a private Christian, whence it may not flame forth in punishing truth's enemies, then it burns inwardly the more for being pent up, and preys, like a fire in his bones, upon the Christian's own spirits, consuming them, yea, eating him up for grief to see truth trod under foot of error or profaneness, and he not
able to help it up. It is no joy to a zealous lover to out-
live his beloved; such there have been, who could have
chose rather to have leaped into their friend's grave, and
lain down with them in the dust, than here pass a dis-
consolate life without them. "Let us go and die with
him," said Thomas, when Christ told them Lazarus was
dead. And I am sure zealous lovers of truth count it as
melancholy living in evil times, when that is fallen in the
streets. The news of the taking of the ark frighted good
Eli's soul out of his body; and this may charitably
be thought to have given life to Elijah's wish, yea so-
lemn prayer for death, "It is enough, take away my life;"
1 Kings xix. 4. The holy man saw how things went among
the great ones of those wicked times; idolaters were
courted, and the faithful servants of God carted (as I may
so say), yea killed; and now this zealous prophet thinks
it a good time to leave the world in, rather than live in
torment any longer, to see the name, truth, and servants
of God trampled on, by those who should have shewn
most kindness to them. But if zeal hath power put
into her hands, wherein she may vindicate truth's cause,
(as when she is exalted into the magistrate's seat) then
truth's enemies shall know and feel that she "bears
not the sword in vain." The zealous magistrate will
have an arm to relieve and defend truth; the Israelite a
hand to smite blasphemy, error, and profaneness in the
Egyptian, when any of them assault her. O how Moses
laid about him (that meek man, who stood so mute in
his own cause, Numb. xii.) when the people had com-
mited idolatry; his heart was so fired within him,
that (as well as he loved them) he could neither open his
mouth in a prayer for them to God, nor his ear to re-
ceive any petition from them, till he had given vent to
his zeal in an act of justice upon the offenders. Now such,
and such only, are the persons that are likely (when
called) to suffer for the truth, who will not let it suffer if
they can help it. But as for neutral Gallio-like spirits,
that can see truth and error scuffling, and not do their
utmost to relieve truth, by interposing their power and
authority, if a magistrate; by preaching the one up and
the other down, if a minister; and by a free testimony to,
Having your loins fervent prayer for, and affectionate sympathizing with truth (as it fares ill or well) if a private Christian: I say, as for such, who stand in this case (as some spectators about two wrestlers) not caring much who hath the fall, these are not the men that can be expected to expose themselves to much suffering for truth. That magistrate who had not zeal enough to stop the mouths of truth's enemies when he may, will he open his mouth in a free profession of it, when death and danger face him? That minister, who hath neither love nor courage enough to apologize for truth in the pulpit; can it be thought he would stand to her defence at a stake? In a word, that private Christian whose heart is not wounded through truth's sides, so as to sympathize with it, will he interpose himself betwixt truth and the blow that bloody persecutors make at it, and chuse to receive it into his own body (though to death) rather than it should light on truth? If the fire of love within be out, or so little that it will not melt the man into sorrow for the wrongs done to truth by men of corrupt minds, where will the flame be found that should enable him to burn to ashes under the hand of bloody men? He will never endure the fire in his body, that hath no more care to keep that sacred fire burning in his soul; if he cannot shed tears, much less will he bleed for truth.

Quest. If any now should ask, how they may get their hearts inflamed with this heavenly fire of love to truth? I answer first:

Answ. 1. Labour for an inward conformity of thy heart to truth. Likeness is the ground of love. A carnal heart cannot love truth, because it is not like to truth. Such a one may love truth, as he did Alexander: Regem non Alexandrum; the king, not the person that was king. Truth in its honour and dignity, when it can prefer him; but not naked truth itself. How is it possible an earthly soul should love truth that is heavenly; an unholy heart, truth that is pure. O it is sad indeed, when men's tenets and principles in their understandings do clash and fight with the principles of their hearts and affections; when men have orthodox judgments, and heterodox hearts! There must needs be little love to truth, because the judgment and will are so unequally yoked.
Truth in the conscience reproving and threatening lust in the heart; and that again controlling truth in the conscience. Thus, like a scolding couple, they may awhile dwell together, but taking no content in one another, the wretch is easily persuaded to give truth a bill of divorce at last, and send her away, as Ahashuerus did Vashti, that he may espouse other principles, which will suit better with his corrupt heart, and not cross him in the way he is in. This I am persuaded hath parted many and truth in these licentious days. They could not sin peaceably while they kept their judgments sound; truth ever and anon would be chiding them; and therefore to match their judgments with their hearts they have taken up principles suitable to their lusts. But, soul, if truth had such a power upon thee to transform thee, by the renewing of thy mind, into its own likeness, that as the scion turns the stock into its own nature, so truth hath assimilated thee, and made thee bear fruit like itself, thou art the person that wilt never part with truth; before thou canst do this, thou must part with that new nature, which by it the Spirit of God hath begot in thee. There is now such a near union betwixt thee and truth, or rather thee and Christ, as can never be broken. We see what a mighty power there goes along with God's ordinance of marriage, that two persons, who possibly a month before never knew one another, yet their affections once knit by love, and their persons made one by marriage, they can now leave friends and parents to enjoy each other: such a mighty power, and much greater, goes along with this mystical marriage between the soul and Christ, the soul and truth, that the same person who before conversion would not have ventured the loss of a penny for Christ or his truth, yet now knit to Christ and his truth by a secret work of the Spirit, new forming him into the likeness thereof, he can bid adieu to the world, life, and all for these. As that martyr told him that asked whether he did not love his wife and children, and was not loth to part with them: "Yes," saith he, "I love them so dearly, that I would not part with any of them for all that the Duke of Brunswick is worth (whose subject he was) but for Christ's sake and his truth, farewel to them all."
Secondly, Labour to get thy heart more and more fired with the love of God, and this will work in thee a dear love to his truth. Love observes what is precious and dear to its beloved, and loves it for his sake: David's love to Jonathan made him enquire for some of his race, that he might shew kindness to them for his sake. Love to God will make the soul inquisitive to find out what is near and dear to God; that by shewing kindness to it he may express his love to him. Now upon a little search, we shall find that the great God sets a very high price upon the head of truth: "thou hast magnified thy Word above all thy name," Psalm cxxxviii. 2. That is, God's name, by which he is known. Every creature hath God's name upon it; but to his word and truth therein written he hath given pre-eminence above all other things that bear his name. Take a few considerations whereby we may a little conceive of the high value God sets on truth. First, God when he vouchsafeth his word and truth to a people, hemakes account that he gives them one of the greatest mercies they can receive, or he give; he calls them the "great things of his law," Hosea viii. 12. A people that enjoy his truth are by Christ's own judgment lifted up to Heaven; whatever a people have at God's hands, without this, bears no more comparison with it, than Hagar's loaf of bread and bottle (which was Ishmael's portion) would with Isaac's inheritance. God that knows how to prize and rate his own gifts, saith of his Word which he "sheweth to Jacob, and testimonies that he gives to Israel, that he hath not dealt so with any nation," Psalm cxlvii. 20, that is, not so richly and graciously. Secondly, consider God's especial care to preserve his truth: whatever is lost, God looks to his truth. In shipwrecks at sea, and fires at land, when men can save but little, they chuse not things of no worth, but what they esteem most precious. In all the great revolutions, changes, and overturning of kingdoms, and churches also, God hath still preserved his truth. Thousand of saints' lives have been taken away; but that which the devil spite more than all the saints, yea, which alone he spites them for (that is his truth) this lives, and shall triumph over his malice; and sure if
truth were not very dear to God, he would not be at this
cost to keep it with the blood of his saints; yea, which is
more, the blood of his Son; whose errand into the world
was by life and death "to bear witness to the truth,"
John xviii. 37. In a word, in that great and dismal con-
flagration of heaven and earth, when the elements shall
melt for heat, and the world come to its fatal period, then
truth shall not suffer the least loss, but "the word of
the Lord endureth for ever," 1 Pet. 1, 25. Thirdly,
consider the severity of God to the enemies of truth. A
dreadful curse is denounced against those that shall "take
away from it, or add the least to it," that embase or clip
this heavenly coin, Rev. xxii. 18. The one pulls upon him
all "the plagues that are written in the word of truth;"
from the other shall be taken away "his part out of the
book of life, and out of the city, and from the things, (that
is, the good things of the promises) which are written in
this book." All these speak at what a high rate God
values truth; and no wonder, if we consider what truth is,
that truth which shines forth from the written Word.
It is the extract of God's thoughts and counsels which
from everlasting he took up, and had in his heart to ef-
fec t. Nothing comes to pass but as an accomplishment
of this his word. It is the most full and perfect represen-
tation that God himself could give of his own being and
nature to the sons of men, that by it we might know
him and love him. Great princes send their pictures by
their ambassadors to those whom they woo for mar-
rriage. God is such an infinite perfection, that no hand
can draw him forth to life but his own; and this he hath
done exactly in his Word, from which all his saints have
come to be enamoured with him. As we deal with truth,
so we do with God himself; he that despiseth that, de-
spiseth him. He that abandons the truth of God renoun-
ceth the God of truth; though men cannot come to pull
God out of his throne, and ungod him, yet they come
as near this as possible, when they let out their wrath
against the truth; in this they do, as it were, execute God
in effigy. There is reason we see why God should so
highly prize his truth, and that we that love him should
cleave to it.
Thirdly, be much in the meditation of the transcendent excellency of truth. "The eye affects the heart;" this is the window at which love enters. Never any that had a spiritual eye to see truth in her native beauty but had a heart to love her. This was the way that David's heart was ravished with the love of the word of truth: "O how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day;" Psalm cxix. 96, while his thoughts were on it, his love was drawn to it. David found a great difference betwixt meditating on the truths of God's word, and other excellencies which the world cries up so highly; when he goes to entertain himself with the thoughts of some perfection in the creature, he finds it but a dry subject compared with this; he soon tumbles over the book of the world's excellencies, and can find no notion that deserves any long stay upon it: "I have seen (saith he) an end of all perfections," he is at the world's end presently, and in a few thoughts can see to the bottom of all the world's glory; but when he takes up the truths of God into his thoughts, now he meets with work enough for his admiration and sweet meditation: "Thy commandments are exceeding broad." Great ships cannot sail in narrow rivers and shallow waters; neither can minds truly great with the knowledge of God and Heaven, find room enough in the creature to turn and expatiate themselves in. A gracious soul is soon aground and at a stand, when upon these flats; but let it launch out into the meditation of God, his word, the mysterious truths of the gospel, and he finds a place of broad waters, sea room enough to lose himself in. I might here show you the excellency of divine truths from many heads: as from the source and spring-head whence they flow, the God of truth; from their opposite, that mishapen monster, error, &c. But I shall only direct your meditation to a few enamouring properties which you shall find in these truths; you may meet a heap of them together in Psalm xix. 7. and so on. Truth it is pure: this made David love it, Psalm cxix. 140. It is not only pure, but makes the soul pure and holy that embraceth it. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. It is the pure water that God washeth foul souls
clean with: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness will I cleanse you;" Ezek. xxxvi. 25. Foul puddle water will as soon make the face as error make the soul clean. Truth is sure, and hath a firm bottom, Psal. xix. 7. we may lay the whole weight of our souls upon it, and yet not crack under us; cleave to truth and it will stick to thee. It will go with thee to prison, banishment, yea stake itself, and bear thy charges wherever thou goest upon an errand.

"Not one thing (saith Joshua) hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass concerning you, not one thing hath failed thereof," Josh. xxiv. 14. Whatever you find there promised, count it money in your purse. "Fourscore years," said Polycarp, "I have served God, and found him a good master." But when men think by forsaking the truth to provide well for themselves, they are sure to meet with disappointments; many have been flattered from truth with goodly promises, and then served no better than Judas was by the Jews, after he had betrayed his master into their bloody hands: "See thou to that." Though persecutors love the treason, yet they hate the traitor; yea oft, to shew their devilish malice, when some have been got to wound their consciences by denying the truth, have most cruelly butchered them, and gloried in it, as a full revenge to destroy soul and body together. Again, truth is free, and makes the soul free that cleaves to it. "The truth shall make you free," John viii. 32. Christ tells the Jews of a bondage they were in, which that bragging people never dreamed of, ver. 44. "Ye are of your father the devil, and his lusts ye will do;" such slaves are all sinners, they must do what the devil will have them, and dare no more displease him than a child his father with a rod in his hand. Some witches have confessed that they have been forced to send out their imps to do mischief to others, that they might have ease themselves; for till they did send them abroad upon such an errand, they were themselves tormented by them. And he who hath a lust sucking on him, finds as little rest, if he be not always serving of it, and making provision for it. Can the world, think you, shew such another slave as
Having your loins

this poor wretch is? Well, though all the bolts that the
devil hath (lusts I mean) were locked upon one sinner,
and he shut up in the closest dungeon of all his prison,
yet let but this poor slave begin to be acquainted with
the truth of Christ, so as to open his heart to it, and close
with it, you shall soon hear that the foundations of the
prison are shaken, its doors thrown open, and the chains
fallen off the poor creature's legs. Truth cannot itself
be bound, nor will it dwell in a soul that lies bound in
sin's prison; and therefore when once truth and the soul
are agreed, or rather Christ and the soul, who are brought
together by truth, then the poor creature may lift up his
head with joy, for his redemption and gaol-delivery from
this spiritual bondage draws nigh; yea, the day is come,
the key is in the lock already to let him out. It is im-
possible we should be acquainted with truth (as it is in
Jesus) and be mere strangers to this liberty that attends
it, Eph. iv. 19, 20, 21. Lastly, truth is victorious. It is
great, and shall prevail at last. It is the great counsel
of God, and though many fine plots and devices are found
in the hearts of men (which shew what they would do)
yet the counsel of the Lord shall stand. All their eggs are
addled, when they have set longest on them; alas! they
want power to hatch what their malice sits brooding on.
Sometimes I confess the enemies to truth get the militia
of this lower world into their hands, and then truth seems
to go to the ground, and those that witness to it are even
slain; yet then it is more than their persecutors can do
to get them laid under ground in their grave, Rev. xi. 9.
Some, that were never thought on, shall strike in on
truth's side, and forbid the burial. Persecutors need not
be at cost for marble to write the memorial of their vic-
tories in; dust will serve well enough, for they are not
like to last so long. Three days and a half the witnesses
may lie dead in the streets, and truth sit disconsolate by
them; but within awhile they are walking, and truth
triumphing again. If persecutors could kill their suc-
cessors, then their work might be thought to stand strong,
needing not to fear another to pull down what they set
up; and yet then their work would lie as open to Heaven,
and might be as easily hindered, as theirs at Babel. Who
loves not to be on the winning side? chuse truth for thy side, and thou hast it. News may come that truth is sick, but never that it is dead. No, it is error that is short-lived: "a lying tongue is but for a moment;" but truth's age runs parallel with God's eternity. It shall live to see their heads laid in the dust, and to walk over their graves, that were so busy to make one for her. Live, did I say? yea, reign in peace with those who now are willing to suffer with and for it. And wouldest thou not, Christian, be one among that goodly train of victors, who shall attend on Christ's triumphant chariot, into the heavenly city, there to take the crown, and sit down in thy throne with those that have kept the field, when Christ and his truth were militant here on earth; thus wouldest thou but in thy thoughts wipe away the tears and blood, which now cover the face of suffering truth, and present it to thy eye as it shall look in glory, thou couldest not but cleave to it with a love stronger than death.

But, secondly, if yet there remains any qualm of fear on thy heart from the wrath of bloody men threatening thee for thy profession of the truth, then, to a heart inflamed with the love of truth, labour to add a heart filled with the fear of that wrath which God hath in store for all that apostatize from the truth. When you chance to burn your finger, you hold it to the fire, which being a greater fire draws out the other; thus when thy thoughts are scorched, and thy heart seared with the fire of man's wrath, hold them awhile to hell-fire, which God hath prepared for the fearful, Rev. xxi. 8, and all that run away from truth's colours, Heb. x. 39, and thou wilt lose the sense of the one for fear of the other: Ignosce Imperator (said the holy man), tu carcerem Deus gehennam Minatur; pardon me, O emperor, if I obey not thy command; thou threatenest a prison, but God a Hell. Observable is that of David, Psal. cxix. 161; "Princes have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart standeth in awe of thy word;" he had no cause to fear them that had no cause to persecute him: one threatening out of the Word, that sets the point of God's wrath to his heart, scares him more than the worst that the greatest on earth can do to him. Man's wrath, alas! when hottest,
is but a temperate climate to the wrath of the living God. They who have felt both, have testified as much. Man's wrath cannot hinder the access of God's love to the creature, which hath made the saints sing in the fire in spite of their enemies' teeth; but the creature under God's wrath is like one shut up in a close oven, no crevice open to let any of the heat out, or any refreshing in to him.

CHAP. VI.

OF THE SECOND KIND OF TRUTH, TRUTH OF HEART OR SINCERITY, WITH THE KINDS OF IT; AND IN PARTICULAR OF MORAL UPRIGHTNESS, TOGETHER WITH ITS DEFICIENCY, AND A DOUBLE CAUTION ABOUT THIS: THE ONE TO THE SAINTS, THE OTHER TO THE MORALLY UPRIGHT PERSON.

We come now to the second kind of truth, commended to the Christian, under the notion of the soldier's girdle, and that is truth of heart. Where it would be known, first, what I mean by truth of heart; secondly, why compared to a girdle. For the

First, By truth of heart, I understand sincerity, so taken in Scripture, Heb. x. 22. "Let us draw near with a true heart," that is with a sincere heart. We have them oft conjoined, the one explaining the other, Josh. xxiv. 14, "fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth," we read of the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Cor. v. 8. Hypocrisy is a lie with a fair cover over it; an insincere heart is a half heart; the inward frame and motion of the heart comports not with the profession and behaviour of the outward man; like a clock, whose wheels within go not as the hand points without.

Secondly, Sincerity, or truth of heart, may fitly be compared to a girdle, in regard of the twofold use and end
for which a girdle (especially the soldier's belt) is worn. First, the girdle is used as an ornament put on uppermost, to cover the joints of the armour, which would, if seen, cause some uncomeliness. Here, at the loins I mean, those pieces of armour for the defence of the lower parts of the body are fastened to the upper; now, because they cannot be so closely knit and clasped, but there will be some little gaping betwixt piece and piece, therefore they used to put over those parts a broad girdle, that covered all that uncomeliness. Now sincerity doth for the Christian, what the girdle doth for the soldier. The saint's graces are not so close, nor his life so exact, but in the best there are found infirmities and defects, which are as so many gapings and clefts in his armour; but sincerity covers all, that he is neither put to shame for them, nor exposed to danger by them.

Secondly, the girdle was used for strength; by this the loins were staid and united, and the soldier made stronger to fight or march; as a garment, the closer it fits the warmer it is, so the belt, the closer it is girt, the more strength the loins feel; hence God, threatening to enfeeble and weaken a person or people, saith, "their loins shall be loosened," Isaiah xlv. 1. "I will lose the loins of kings," and Job xii. 21, "He weakeneth the strength of the mighty." He looseth the girdle of the strong.

Now sincerity may well be compared in this respect to the soldier's girdle. It is a grace that doth gird the soul with strength, and makes it mighty to do or suffer. Indeed it is the very strength of every grace; so much hypocrisy as is found cleaving to our graces, so much weakness. It is sincere faith that is the strong faith; sincere love that is the mighty love. Hypocrisy is to grace as the worm is to the oak, the rust to the iron; it weakens them, because it corrupts them. The metaphor thus opened affords these two doctrinal conclusions, in handling of which, I shall comprise what I have to say further of this piece of armour.

1. That sincerity, or truth of heart in our ways, covers all the Christian's uncomeliness.

2. That truth of heart or sincerity is of excellent use, to strengthen the Christian in his whole course.
Having your loins

Doct. 1. To begin with the first, Sincerity covers all our uncomeliness. In handling of this point, this is our method.

First, To enquire which is the truth and sincerity that doth this.

Secondly, We shall enquire what uncomelinesses they are that sincerity covers.

Thirdly, How sincerity covers them.

Fourthly, Why sincerity doth this; or some account given for all this.

First, Let us enquire which is that truth and sincerity that covers all uncomeliness and deficiencies in the Christian. Here we must distinguish of a twofold sincerity, one moral, another evangelical.

First, There is a moral truth and uprightness which we may call a field flower, because it may be found growing in the wild and waste of nature. It cannot be denied but one that hath not a dram of sanctifying saving grace, may shew some kind of uprightness and truth in his actions. God himself comes in as a witness for Abimelech, that what he did in taking Sarah was in the uprightness of his heart: “I know (saith God) that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart,” Gen. xx. 6, that is, thou didst mean honestly as to this particular business, and didst not intend any wrong to Abraham, whose wife she was, unknown to thee. Joab, though a bloody man, yet dealt very uprightly and squarely with David concerning the taking of Rabbah, when he had a fair advantage of stealing away the honour from his prince to himself. Many such instances may be given of men that have been great strangers to a work of grace on their hearts; but this is not the uprightness that we mean in the point laid down. It doth indeed render a person very lovely and amiable before men to be thus upright and honest in his dealings; but methinks I bear the Lord saying concerning such, as once he did to Samuel of Eliab, “look not on their countenance,” 1 Sam. xvi. 7, so as to think these are they which he accepts; no, he hath refused them, “for the Lord seeth not as man seeth.” God’s eye looks deeper than man’s. There are two great defects in this uprightness which God rejects it for.
First, it grows not from a good root, a renewed heart. This is a hair on the moral man's pen, which blinds and blots his copy, when he writes fairest. It is like the leprosy to Naaman; that same "but he was a leper," took away the honour of his greatness at court, and prowess in the field; so here it stains the fairest actions of a mere moral man "but he is a Christless, graceless person." The uprightness of such does others more good in this world than themselves in another. They are by this moral honestly profitable to those that have civil commerce with them; but it doth not render themselves acceptable to God. Indeed, had not God left some authority in conscience to awe and keep men (that have no grace) within some bounds of honesty, this world would have been no more habitable for the saints than the forest of wild beasts is now for man. And such is the uprightness of men void of sanctifying grace, they are rather rid by an overpowering light of conscience that scares them, than sweetly led by an inward principle inclining them to take complacency in that which is good. Abimelech himself, for whom (as we heard) God so apologised, yet is let to know that his honesty in that matter came rather from God's restraint upon him, than any real goodness in him. Gen. xx. "I also withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered I thee not to touch her."

Secondly, this moral uprightness falls short of the chief end indispensably necessary to make a person upright indeed. This is the glory of God: "whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. x. 31. The archer may lose his game by shooting short, as well as shooting wide. The gross hypocrite shoots wide, the uprightness moralist shoots short. He may and oft doth take his aim right as to the particular and immediate end of his action, but ever fails in regard of the ultimate end. Thus a servant may be faithful to his master, scorn to wrong him of a farthing, yea cordially seek his master's profit; and yet God not looked at or thought of in all this, and so all worth nothing because God is left out of the story, who is principally to be regarded. Servants are commanded to "do their services as to God, not to man," Eph. vi. 7: that is, not only, not chiefly to man. It is true,
the master is to be looked at in the servant's duty, but in his way only as it leads to the glory of God; he must not when he hath desired to please his earthly master, set down as at his journey's end, but pass on (as the eye doth through the air and clouds to the sun where it is terminated) to God, as the chief end why he is dutiful and faithful to man. Now no principle can lead the soul so high as to aim at God but that which comes from God. See both these excellently couched together: "that ye may be sincere, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." Phil. x. 11. Where you may observe; first, that the sincerity of the right stamp is that which brings forth fruits of righteousness to the praise of God, that is, where the glory of God is the end of all our actions. Secondly, that such fruit cannot be borne "but by Christ," the soul must be planted into Christ, before it can be thus sincere, to bear fruits of righteousness to the praise of God. Hence these fruits of righteousness are said to be by "Jesus Christ." What men do by themselves, they do for themselves: they eat their own fruit, devour the praise of what they do; the Christian only that doth all by Christ, doth all for Christ; he hath his sap from Christ, into whom he is grafted, that makes him fruitful, and therefore he reserves all the fruit he bears for him. Thus we see how this moral uprightness is itself fundamentally defective, and therefore cannot be that girdle which hides and covers our other defects: yet before I pass on to the other, I would leave a two-fold caution for improvement of what hath been said concerning this uprightness; the one is to the sincere Christian, the other is to such as have no more than a moral uprightness.

Caution 1. To the sincere Christian. May there be found a kind of uprightness among men that are carnal and destitute of God's sanctifying grace? O then look you to it, in whose hearts dwells the Spirit of Grace, that you be not put to shame by those that are graceless, which you must needs be when you are taken tardy in those things that they cannot be charged for. Many among them there are that scorn to lie; shall a saint be
taken in an untruth? Their moral principles bind them over to the peace, and will not suffer them to wrong their neighbour; and can cheating, over-reaching, oppression, follow a saint's hand? Except your righteousness exceeds their best, you are not Christians; and can you let them exceed you in those things, which, when they are due, leave them short of Christ and Heaven? It is time for the scholar to throw off his gown, and disclaim the name of an academic, when every schoolboy is able to dunce and pose him; and for him also to lay aside his profession, and let the world know what he is (yea, what he never was), that can let a mere civil man, with his weak bow, only backed with moral principles, outshoot him that pretends to Christ and his grace. I confess it sometimes so falls out, that a saint under a temptation may be outstripped by one that is carnal in a particular case: as a lackey that is an excellent footman, may, from some prick or present lameness in his foot, be left behind by one that at another time should not be able to come near him: we have too many sorrowful examples of moral men outstripping even a saint at a time when under a temptation. A notable passage we meet with concerning Abimelech's speech to Sarah after her dissembling and equivocating speech that Abraham was her brother, Gen. xx. 16. And unto Sarah he said, that is, Abimelech said to her, "behold I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold he is to thee a covering of the eyes unto all that are with thee, and with all other." Now mark the words which follow: "Thus she was reproved." How? where lies the reproof? Here are none but good words, and money to boot also. He promiseth protection to her and Abraham, none should wrong him in wronging her; and tells her what he had freely given Abraham. Well, for all this we shall find a sharp reproof, though lapped up in these sweet words, and silvered over with his thousand pieces. First, she was reproved by the uprightness of Abimelech in that business, wherein she had sinfully dissembled. That he who was a stranger to the true God and his worship, should be so square and honest, as to deliver her up untouched when once he knew her to be another man's wife, and not only so, but
Having your loins

instead of falling into a passion of anger, and taking up thoughts of revenge against them, for putting this cheat upon him (which having them under his power had not been strange for a prince to have done), for him to forget all this, and rather shew such kindness and high bounty to them, this must needs send a sharp reproof home to Sarah's heart; especially considering that he a heathen did all this, and she (one called to the knowledge of God, in covenant with God, and the wife of a prophet) was so poor-spirited, as for fear of a danger, which only her husband, and that without any great ground, surmised, to commit two sins at once, dissemble and also hazard the loss of her chastity; the least of which was worse than the thing they were so afraid of: these things, I say, laid together, amounted to such a reproof, as no doubt made her and Abraham too heartily ashamed before God and man. Again, Abimelech in calling Abraham her brother, not her husband, did give her a smart rebuke, putting her in mind, how with that word he had been deceived by them. Thus godly Sarah was reproved by a profane king. O Christians, take heed of putting words into the mouths of wicked men to reprove you with; they cannot reprove you, but they reproach God. Christ is put to shame with you and by you. For the good name's sake of Christ, which cannot but be dearer to you, if saints, than your lives, look to your walking, and especially your civil converse, with the men of the world; they know not what you do in your closet, care not what you are in the congregation, they judge you by what you are, when they have to do with you. As they find you in your shop, bargains, promises, and such like, so they think of you and your profession. Labour therefore for this uprightness to man; by this you may win some and judge others. Better vex the wicked world with strict walking, as Lot did the Sodomites, than set them on work to mock, and reproach thee and thy profession by any scandal, as David did by his sad fall. They that will not follow the light of thy holiness, will soon spy the thief in thy candle, and point at it.

Caution 2. The second word of caution is to those that are morally upright, and no more. Take heed this
uprightness proves not a snare to thee, and keeps thee from getting evangelical uprightness. I am sure it was so to the young man in the gospel. In all likelihood he might have been better, had he not been so good. His honesty and moral uprightness was his undoing, or rather his conceit of them, to castle himself in them. Better he had been a Publican, driven to Christ in the sense of his sin, than a Pharisee, kept from him with an opinion of his integrity. These, these are the weeds with which many (thinking to save themselves by) keep themselves under water to their perdition. "There is more hope of a fool," Solomon tells us, "than of one wise in his own conceit;" and of the greatest sinner, than of one conceited of his righteousness. If once the disease take the brain, the cure must needs be the more difficult; no offering Christ to one in this frenzy. Art thou one kept from these unrighteous ways wherein others walk? May be thou art honest and upright in thy course, and scornerest to be found false in any of thy dealings. Bless God for it, but take heed of blessing thyself in it; there's the danger, this is one way of being "righteous overmuch;" a dangerous pit, of which Solomon warns all that travel in heaven's road, Eccles. vii. 16. There is undoing in this over-doing, as well as in any under-doing; for so it follows in the same verse, "why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" Thou art not, proud man, so fair for Heaven as thou flatterest thyself. A man upon the top of one hill may seem very nigh to the top of another, and yet can never come there, except he comes down from that where he is: the mount of thy civil righteousness and moral uprightness (on which thou standest so confidently) seems perhaps level in thy proud eye to God's holy hill in Heaven, yea so nigh that thou thinkest to step over from one to the other with ease. But let me tell thee, it is too great a stride for thee to take; thy safer way and nearer way were to come down from thy mountain of self-confidence (where Satan hath set thee on a design to break thy neck) and to go thy ordinary road, in which all that ever got to Heaven went; and that is by labouring to get an interest in Christ and his righteousness, which is provided on purpose for the creature to wrap up his naked
Having your loins

soul in, and to place his faith on; and thus thy uprightness (which before was but of the same form with the Heathen's moral honesty) may commence, or rather be baptized Christian, and become evangelical grace. But let me tell thee this before I dismiss thee, that thou canst not lay hold of Christ's righteousness, till thou hast let fall the lie (thy own righteousness) which hitherto thou hast held so fast in thy right hand. When Christ called the blind man to him, it is said, "he casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus;" Mark x. 50. Do thou so, and then come and welcome.

CHAP. VII.

OF EVANGELICAL OR GODLY SINCERITY, WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT UNCOMELINNESSES THIS GIRDLE COVERS; AS ALSO HOW IT COVERS THEM.

We proceed to the second kind of truth, or uprightness, which I called an evangelical uprightness. This is a plant found growing only in Christ's garden, or the enclosure of a gracious soul. It is, by way of distinction from that I called moral, known by the name of a "godly sincerity," or the sincerity of God: "our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." 2 Cor. i. 12. Now in two respects this evangelical sincerity may be called godly sincerity. First, because it is of God. Secondly, because it aims at God; and ends in God.

SECT. I.

First, It is of God. It is his creature, begot in the heart by his Spirit alone. Paul in the place before-

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girt about with truth.

mentioned, doth excellently derive its pedigree for us. What he calls walking in "godly sincerity" in the first part of the verse, he calls "having our conversation by the grace of God" in the latter part; yea opposeth it to "walking with fleshly wisdom in the world," (the great wheel in the moral man's clock) and what doth all this amount to, but to shew that this sincerity is a babe of grace, and calls none on earth father? But this is not all: this godly sincerity is not only of divine extraction, for so are common gifts that are supernatural, the hypocrite's boon as well as the saint's, but it is part of the new creature, which his sanctifying Spirit forms and works in the elect, and none besides. It is a covenant grace. "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you." Ezek. xi. 19. That "one heart," is this godly sincere heart opposed to the double heart, or a heart and a heart, by which the hypocrite is so often descried in the Word.

Secondly, It aims at God, and ends in God. The highest project and most ultimate end that a soul, thus sincere, is big with, is how it may please God. The disappointment such a godly sincere person meets with from any other, troubles him no more than it would a merchant, who speeds in the main end of his voyage to the Indies, and returns richly laden with the prize of gold and silver he went for, but only loseth his garter or shoe-string in the voyage. As the master's eye directs the servant's hand (if he can do his business to his master's mind he hath his wish, though strangers, who come into the shop, like it not), thus godly sincerity acquiesceth in the Lord's judgment of him. Such a one shoots not at small nor great, studies not to accommodate himself to any, to hit the humour of rich or poor, but singles out God in his thoughts from all other, as the chief object of his love, fear, faith, joy, &c. He directs all his endeavours like a wise archer at this white, and when he can most approve himself to God, he counts he shoots best. Hear holy Paul speaking, not only his own private thoughts, but the common sense of all sincere believers: "we labour, whether present or absent, that we may be accepted of him." 2 Cor. v. 9. The world's true man is he that will not
wrong man; though many go thus far who can make
bold with God, for all their demure carriage to man.
Some that would not steal the worth of a penny from
their neighbour, yet play the notorious thieves with God
in greater matters than all the money their neighbour hath
is worth. They can steal that time from God, to gratify
their own occasions, which he hath enclosed for himself,
and lays peculiar claim to, the Sabbath-day I mean, by
such a title as will upon trial be found stronger than we
can shew for the rest of the week to be ours. Others
will not lie to man possibly in their dealing with him, and
it were better living in the world if there were more of
this truth among us; but these very men (many of them,
yea all that are not more than morally upright) make no-
thing of lying to God, which they do in every prayer
they make, promising to do what they never bestow a
serious thought how they may perform: they say they
will sanctify God's name, and yet throw dirt on the face
of every attribute in it; they pray that the will of God
may be done, and yet while they know their sanctification
is his will, they content themselves with their unholy
hearts, and think it enough to beautify the front of their
lives and natures, that part which faceth man, and stands
to the street (as I may so say) with a few flourishes of ci-
vility and justness in their worldly dealings, though their
inward man lies all in woeful ruins at the same time. But
he is God's true man, that desires to give unto God the
things that are God's, as well as unto man the things that
are man's, yea who is first true to God, and then to man
for his sake. Good Joseph, when his brethren feared as
strangers to him (for yet they knew no other) they should
receive some hard measure at his hands, mark what
course he takes to free their troubled thoughts from all
suspicion of any unrighteous dealing from him: "do this
(saith he) and live, for I fear God," Gen. xlii. 18. As if
he had said, Expect nothing from me but what is square
and upright, for I fear God; you possibly may think be-
cause I am a great man, and you poor strangers (where
you have no friends to intercede for you) that my might
should bear down your right; but you may save your-
selves the trouble of such jealous thoughts concerning
me; for I see one infinitely more above me than I seem to be above you, and him I fear; which I could not do, if I should be false to you. The word, 2 Cor. i. 12, for sincerity is emphatical, ἀληθεία; a metaphor from things tried by the light of the sun: as when you are buying cloth, or such like ware, you will carry it out of the dark shop, and hold it up to the light, by which the least hole in it is discovered; or as the eagle, it is said, holds up her young against the sun, and judgeth them her own if able to look up steadily against it, or spurious if not able. Truly that is the godly sincere soul, which looks up to Heaven and desires to be determined in his thoughts, judgment, affections, and practices, as they can stand before the light which shines from thence through the Word, the great luminary into which God hath gathered all light for guiding souls, as the sun in the firmament is for directing our bodies in their walking to and fro in the world. If these suit with the Word, and can look on it without being put to shame by it, then the sincere soul goes on in his enterprise with courage, nothing shall stop him; but if any of these be found to shew the light of the Word (as Adam would if he could the seeing of God), not being able to stand to its trial, then he is at his journey’s end, and can be drawn forth by no arguments from the flesh; for it goes not on the flesh’s errand, but on God’s; and he that sends him, shall only stay him. Things are true or right, as they agree with their first principles. When the copy agrees with the original writing, then it is true; when a measure agrees with the legal standard, or town bushel, then it is true: now the will of God is standard to all our wills, and he is the sincere man that labours to take the rule and measure of all his affections and actions from that. Hence David is called a man after God’s own heart, which is but a periphrasis of his sincerity, and is as much as if the Spirit of God had said, he was an upright man, he carrieth on his heart the sculpture and image of God’s heart, as it is engraved on the seal of the Word. But enough for the present: this may serve to shew what is evangelical uprightness. Three things would be desired further before we fall on the application.
First, To shew what uncomelinesses they are that sincerity covers.

Secondly, How sincerity covers these.

Thirdly, Why this evangelical sincerity doth cover these. We shall give some account to all.

S E C T. II.

**Quest.** First, what uncomeliness doth sincerity cover?

**Answ.** I answer, all, especially sinful. There are several external temporal privileges, in which if any fall short (such excellency does this vain world put on them more than their intrinsical worth calls for) they are exposed to some dishonour, if not contempt, in the thoughts of others. Now where sincere grace is, it affords a fair cover to them all; yea, puts more abundant honor on the person in the sight of God, angels, and men also, if wise, than the other can occasion contempt.

First, Beauty: this is the great idol which the whole world wanders after, as they after the beast, *Rev.* xiii. which if God denies, and confines the souls of some to a more uncomely body than others, this their mean bodily presence prejudiceth them in the esteem of others. Now grace, if it be but graced with sincerity, shines through the cloud that nature hath darkened the countenance with: "wisdom makes the face to shine." *Eccles.* viii. 1. Who, that hath the use of his reason, would not prize and chuse the vessel in the cellar full of generous wine, before a gilt tun that hangs up empty at the door for a sign? If sincere grace fills not the heart within, the beauty with which nature hath girt the face without makes the person but little worth. A beautiful person without true grace is but a fair stinking weed: you know the best of such a one, if you look on him furthest off; whereas a sincere heart without this outward beauty to commend it, is like some sweet flower, not painted with such fine colours on the leaves, better in the hand than eye, to smell on, than look on; the nearer you come to the sincere soul, the better you find him. Outward uncomeliness to true grace is but as some old mean buildings you sometimes see stand before a goodly stately house, which hide
its glory only from the traveller that passeth by at some distance; but he that comes in sees its beauty, and admires it.

2. Again, a mean parentage and inglorious descent is much despised in the world. Well, how base soever the stock and ignoble the birth be, when grace unfeigned comes, it brings arms with it, it clarifies the blood, and makes the house illustrious. "Since thou wast precious in my eye, thou hast been honourable," Isaiah iv. 4. Sincerity sets a mark of honour; if you see this star shining, though over a mean cottage, it tells thee a great prince dwells there, an heir of Heaven. Sincerity brings the creature into alliance with a high family, no less than of the high God; by which new alliance his own inglorious name is blotted out, and a new name given him; he bears the name of God, to whom he is joined by a faith unfeigned; and who dares say that the God of Heaven's child, or Christ's bride, are of an ignoble birth?

3. Again, a low purse, as well as a low parentage, exposeth to contempt, yea more. Some by their purse redeem themselves in time, as they think, from the scorn of their mean stock: the little spring from whence the water came, by that time it hath run some miles, and swelled into a broad river, is out of sight, and not enquired much after; but poverty, that itself sounds reproach in the ears of this proud world. Well, though a man were poor, even to a proverb, yet if a vein of true godliness, sincere grace, be but to be found running in his heart, here is a rich mine that will lift him up above all the world's contempt. Such a one may possibly say, he hath no money in his house; but he cannot say, that he hath no treasure, that he is not rich, and speak true: he sure is rich, that hath a key to God's treasury. The sincere soul is rich in God; what God hath is his: "all is your's, you are Christ's."

4. Again, in a word, to name no more, parts and endowments of the mind, these are applauded above all the former by some; and indeed they carry in them an excellency that stands more level to his noblest faculty reason than the other, which are so far beneath its spiritual nature, that as some of Gideon's soldiers could not
drink the water till they bowed down on their knees, so neither could man take any relish in these, did he not first debase himself far beneath the lofty stature of his reasonable soul; but knowledge, parts, and abilities of the mind, these seem to lift up man's head, and make him that he losest none of his height; and therefore none so contemptible by the wise world as those that are of weak parts and mean intellectual abilities. Well, now let us see what cover sincerity hath for this nakedness of the mind, which seems the most shameful of all the rest. Where art thou, Christian, that I may tell thee, who sits lamenting and bemoaning thy weak parts and shallow understanding, what a happy man thou art, with thy honest sincere heart, beyond all compare with those whose sparkling parts do so dazzle thy eyes that thou canst not see thy own privilege above them? Their pearl is but in the head, and they may be toads for all that; but thine is in the heart, and it is the pearl of grace, that is the pearl of greatest price. Thy sincere heart sets thee higher in God's heart, than thy weak parts do lay thee low in their deceived opinion; and thou, without the abilities of mind that they have, shalt find the way to Heaven; but they for all their strong parts shall be tumbled down to Hell, because they have not thy sincerity. Thy mean gifts do not make thee incapable of Heaven's glory; but their unsanctified gifts and endowments are sure to make them capable of more of Hell's shame and misery. In a word, though here thy head be weak and parts low, yet for thy comfort know, thou shalt have a better head given thee to thy sincere heart, when thou comest to Heaven; but their knowing heads shall not meet with better hearts in Hell, but be yoked eternally to their own wicked ones in torment. But enough of this: I come to the second kind of uncomeliness which sincerity covers; and that is sinful.

Secondly, Now this sinful uncomeliness must needs be the worse, because it lights on the most beautiful part the soul; if dirt thrown on the face be more uncomely than on another member, because it is the fairest, then no uncomeliness like that which blackens the soul and spirit, because this is intended by God to be the prime seat of
man's beauty. Now that which most stains and deforms the soul must be that which most opposeth its chief perfection, which in its primitive creation was and can still be no other than the beauty of holiness drawn on it by the Holy Spirit's curious pencil; and what can that be but the soul monster which is called sin? This hath marred man's sweet countenance, that he is no more like the beauty God created, than dead Sarah's face was like that beauty which was a bait for the greatest princes, and made her husband go in fear of his life wherever he came; nay, than the foul fiend, now a cursed devil in Hell, is like to the holy angel he was in Heaven. This wound, which is given by sin to man's nature, Christ hath undertaken to cure by his grace in his elect: the cure is begun here, but not so perfected that no scar and blemish remains; and this is the great uncomeliness with sincerity lays its finger on and covers.

S E C T. III.

Quest. But here the question may be, how sincerity covers the saint's sinful uncomelinesses?

Answ. I shall answer to this, First, negatively, and shew how it doth not; Secondly, affirmatively, how it doth.

First, Negatively, how sincerity doth not cover them; and that in several particulars. First, sincerity doth not so cover the saint's failings, as to take away their sinful nature: wandering thoughts are sins in a saint as well as in another; a weed will be a weed wherever it grows, though in a garden among choicest flowers. They mistake then, who, because the saints' sins are covered, deny them to be sins. Secondly, it doth not cover them so as to give us the least ground to think that God doth allow the Christian to commit the least sin more than others; indeed it is inconsistent with God's holiness to give, and with a saint's sincerity to pretend, such a dispensation to be given them. A father, may out of his indulgence and love to his child, pass by a failing in his waiting on him, as if he spills the wine, or breaks the glass he is bringing to him; but sure he will not allow...
him to throw it down carelessly or willingly. Though a man may be easily entreated to forgive his friend that wounded him unawares, when he meant him no hurt, yet he will not beforehand give him leave to do it. Thirdly, it doth not so cover them, as that God should not see them, which is not only derogatory to his omniscience, but to his mercy also; for he cannot pardon what he doth not first see to be sin. God doth not only see the sins of his children, but their failings are more distasteful to him than others; because the persons in which they are found are so dear, and stand so near unto him. A dunghill in a prince's chamber would be more offensive to him than one far off from his court. The Christian's bosom is God's court, throne, temple; there he hath taken up his rest for ever: sin there must needs be very unsavoury to his nostrils. Fourthly, it doth not so cover them, as that the saints need not confess them, be humbled under them, or sue out a pardon for them. A penny is as due debt as a pound, and therefore to be acknowledged; indeed that which is a sin of infirmity in the committing, becomes a sin of presumption by hiding of it, and hardening in it. Job held fast his integrity, throughout his sad conflict; yet those failings which escaped him in the paroxysm of his afflictions brought him upon his knees. "I abhor myself (saith he) and repent in dust and ashes," Job xlii. 6. Fifthly, and lastly, it doth not so cover them, as if our sincerity did the least merit and deserve that God should for it cover our other failings and infirmities. Were there such a thing as obedience absolutely complete, it could not merit pardon for past sins; much less can an imperfect obedience, as sincerity is in a strict sense, deserve it for present failings. Obedience legally perfect is no more than as creatures we owe to the law of God; and how could that pay the debt of sin, which was itself due debt before any sin was committed? much less can evangelical obedience, which is sincerity, do it; that falls short by far of that obedience we owe. If he that owes twenty pounds merits nothing when he pays the whole sum; then surely he doth not, that of the twenty pounds he owes pays but twenty pence. Indeed creditors may take what they please; and if they will say half satisfies
them, it is discharge enough to the debtor. But where did ever God say he would thus compound with his creature? God stands as strictly upon it in the gospel covenant to have the whole debt paid, as he did in the covenant of works. There was required a full righteousness in keeping, or a full curse for breaking of the law; so there is in the evangelical: only here the wards of the lock are changed, God required this at the creature's hand in the first covenant to be personally performed or endured; but in the gospel covenant he is content to take both at the hands of Christ our surety, and impute these to the sincere soul that unfeignedly believes on him and gives up himself to him.

SECTION IV.

Secondly, To shew positively how sincerity covers the saint's failings.

First, Sincerity is that property to which pardoning mercy is annexed. True indeed it is Christ that covers all our sins and failings, but it is only the sincere soul over which he will cast his skirt: "Blessed is he whose sin is covered, blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Psalm xxxii. 2. None will doubt this; but which is the man? the next words tell us his name, "and in whose spirit there is no guile." Christ's righteousness is the garment that covers the nakedness and shame of our unrighteousness; faith the grace that puts this garment on; but what faith? none but the faith unfeigned, as Paul calls it, 2 Tim. i. "Here's water," saith the Eunuch, "what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Acts viii. 36. Now mark Philip's answer, ver. 37, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest;" as if he had said, Nothing but an hypocritical heart can hinder thee. It is the false heart only that finds the door of mercy shut. He that promiseth to cover the sincere soul's failings, threatens to uncover the hypocrite's impiety: "he that perverteth his way, shall be known," Prov. x. 9, that is, to his shame.

Secondly, Where sincerity is, God approves of that soul, as a holy righteous person, notwithstanding that mixture of sin which is found in him. As God doth not
like the saint's sin for his sincerity, so he doth not unsaint him for that. God will set his hand to Lot's testimonial that he is a righteous man. Though many sins are recorded in the Scripture, which he fell into, and foul ones too, yet Job was perfect, because the frame of his heart was sincere, the tenor of his life holy, and he was rather surprised by them as temptations, than they entertained by him upon choice. Though sincerity doth not blind God's eye that he should not see the saint's sin, yet it makes him see it with a pitiful eye, and not a wrathful: as a husband, knowing his wife faithful to him in the main, pities her in other weaknesses, and for all them accounts her a good wife. "In all this (saith God) Job sinned not;" and at the very close of his combat, God brings him out of the field with this honourable testimony to his friends, that had taken so much pains to bring his godliness in question, that his servant Job "had spoke right of him." Truly God said more of Job than he durst of himself. He freely confesseth his unadvised froward speeches, and cries out, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." God saw Job's sins attended with sincerity, and therefore judged him perfect and righteous; Job saw his sincerity dashed with many sad failings, and this made him, in the close of all, rather confess his sins with shame than glory in his grace. God's mercy is larger to his children than their charity is many times to themselves and their brethren. First, to themselves: do you think the prodigal, the emblem of a convert, durst have asked the robe, or desired his father to be at such cost for his entertainment, as his father freely bestowed on him? no sure, a place in the kitchen we see was as high as he durst ask, to be among the meanest servants in the house. Poor soul! he could not conceive he should have such a meeting with his father at first sight. A robe, he might rather look for a rope, at least a rod. A feast at his father's table! O unlooked-for welcome! I doubt not but if any had met him on his way, and told him that his father was resolved as soon as he came home not to let him see his face, but presently pack him to Bridewell, there to be whipped, and fed with bread and water for many months, and then perhaps he would at last
look on him, and take him home, but in his starving condition this would have been good news to him; but as God hath strange punishments for the wicked, so he hath strange expressions of love and mercy for sincere souls. He loves to outdo their highest expectations; kiss, robe, feast, all in one day, and that the first day of his return, when the memory of his outrageous wickednesses were fresh, and the stinking scent of his swill and swine, from which he was but newly come, hardly gone. What a great favourite is sincerity with the God of Heaven! Again, God's mercy is larger to his children than their charity is towards one another. Those whom we are ready to unsaint for their failings that appear in their lives, God owns for his perfect ones, because of their sincerity. We find Asa's failings expressed, and his perfection vouched, by God together, as I may say, in a breath, 2 Chron. xv. 17. It was well God cleared that good man; for had but the naked story of his life, as it stands in the Scripture, been recorded, without any express testimony of God's approving him, his godliness would have hazarded a coming under dispute in the opinion of good men, yea many more with him (concerning whom we are now put out of doubt, because we find them canonized for saints by God himself) would have been cast, if a jury of men, and those holy men too, had gone upon them. Elijah himself, because he saw none have such zeal for God and his worship as to wear their colours openly in a free profession, and hang out a flag of defiance against the idolatry of the times, by a stout opposing it, as he did (which might be their sin) makes a sad moan to God, as if the apostacy had been so general that the whole species of the godly had been preserved in his single person. But God brings the holy man better news: "I have left seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed down to Baal, and every mouth which have not kissed him." 1 Kings xix. 18. As if God had said, Comfort thyself, Elijah; though my number be not great, yet neither is there such a dearth of saints as thou fearest is this ungodly age; it is true, their faith is weak, they dare not justle with the sins of the age, as thou doest, for which thou shalt not
Having your loins lose thy reward; yet those night-disciples, that for fear carry their light in a dark lanthorn (having some sincerity, which keeps them from polluting themselves with these idolatries) must not shall not be disowned by me. Yea, God who bids us be most tender of his lambs, is much more tender of them himself. Observable is that place, 1 John ii. 12, 13, 14. There are three ranks of saints, “fathers, young men, little children,” and the Spirit of God chiefly shews his tender care of them, as by mentioning them first, ver. 12. so by leaving the sweet promise of pardoning mercy in their lap and bosom, rather than either of the other: “Little children, I write unto you, for your sins are forgiven you for my name’s sake.” But are not the fathers’ sins, and young men’s also forgiven? yes, who doubts it? But he doth not so particularly apply it to them as to these; because these, from the sense of their own failings (out of which the others were more grown) were more prone to dispute against this promise in their own bosoms: yea, he doth not only in plain terms tell them their sins are forgiven, but meets with the secret objection which comes forth from their trembling hearts in opposition to this good news, taken from their own vileness and unworthiness, and stops its mouth with this, “forgiven for my name’s sake;” a greater name than the name of their greatest sin which discourageth them from believing.

Thirdly, sincerity keeps up the soul’s credit at the throne of grace, so that no sinful infirmity can binder its welcome with God. It is the “regarding of iniquity in the heart,” (not the having of it) stops God’s ear from hearing our prayer. It is a temptation not a few have found some work to get over, whether such as they, who see so many sinful failings in themselves, may take the boldness to pray, or without presuming to expect audience when they have prayed; and sometimes it prevails so far, that because they cannot pray as they would, therefore they forbear what they should: much like some poor people, that keep from the congregation because they have not such clothes to come in as they desire. To meet with such as are turning away from duty upon this fear, the promises (which are our only
girt about with truth.

ground for prayer, and chief plea in prayer) are accommodated and fitted to the lowest degree in grace; so that as a picture well drawn faceth all in the room alike that look on it, so the promises of the gospel covenant smile upon all that sincerely look to God in Christ. It is not said, If you have faith like a cedar; but, “if you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove.” Matt. xvii. 20. neither is justifying faith beneath miraculous faith in its own sphere of activity; the least faith on Christ, if sincere, as truly removes the mountainous guilt of sin from the soul as the strongest; hence all the saints are said to have “like precious faith.” 2 Pet. i. 1. Sarah’s faith, which in Genesis we can hardly see (as the story presents her wherein it appeared) obtains an honourable mention, Heb. 11. where God owns her for a believer as well as Abraham with his stronger faith. What love is it the promise entails the favours of God upon? not “grace be with them that love our Lord Jesus” with a seraphim’s love, but with a sincere love. Eph. vi. last verse. Not blessed they who are holy to such a measure, this would have fitted but some saints: the greatest part would have gone away and said, There’s nothing for me, I am not so holy; but that no saint might lose his portion, it is “blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness;” and this takes in all the children of God, even to the least babe that is newly born this day to Christ. The new convert hungers after holiness, and that sincerely. And wherefore all this care so to lay the promises, but to shew that when we go to make use of any promise at the throne of grace we should not question our welcome for any of our infirmities, so this stamp of sincerity be upon our hearts? Indeed, if sincerity did not thus much for the saint, there could not be a prayer accepted of God at the hands of any saint that ever was, or shall be, on earth to the end of the world, because there never was nor shall be such a saint dwelling in flesh here below, in whom eminent failings may not be found. The Apostle would have us know that Elijah, who did as great wonders in heaven and earth topo by prayer, as who greater? yet
Having your loins

this man God could soon have picked a hole in his coat. Indeed, lest we attribute the prevalency of his prayers to the dignity of his person, and some eminency which he had by himself in grace above others, the Spirit of God tells us he was of the same make with his poor brethren: "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed," &c. James v. A weak hand with a sincere heart is able to turn the key in prayer.

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CHAP. VIII.

AN ACCOUNT WHY SINCERITY COVERS THE SAINTS' UNCOMELINESSES.

QUEST. Whence is it that sincerity thus covers our failings?

SECT. I.

Reas. 1. It flows from the grace of the Gospel covenant, that relaxeth the rigour of the Law, which called for complete obedience; by resolving all that into this of sincerity and truth of heart. Thus God, when entering into covenant with Abraham, expresseth himself: "I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect," or sincere. Gen. xvii. 1. As if God had said to him, Abraham, see here what I expect at thy hands, and what thou mayest expect at mine. I look that thou shouldest "set me before thee," whom in thy whole course and walking thou wilt sincerely endeavour to please and approve thyself to; and at my hands thou mayest promise thyself what an Almighty God can do, both in protecting thee in thy obedience, and pardoning of thee where thou fallest short of perfect obedience: walk but in the truth of thy heart before me, and in Christ I will accept thee, and thy sincere endeavour, as kindly as I would have done Adam, if he had kept his place in
innocency, and never sinned. Indeed a sincere heart, by virtue of this covenant, might (I mean the covenant would bear him out and defend him in it, relying on Christ) converse with God, and walk before him with as much freedom, and more familiarity (by reason of a nearer relation it hath) than ever Adam did, when God and he were best friends. "If our heart condemn us not," saith the Apostle, "then have we confidence towards God," 1 John iii. 21. And it is not the presence of sin in us (as the covenant now stands) that conscience can or (if rightly informed concerning the tenor of it) will condemn us for. Paul's conscience cleared him, yea afforded matter of rejoicing and holy glorying, at the same time that he found sin stirring in him. No: conscience is set by God to judge for him in the private court of our own bosoms, and it is bound up by a law what sentence to give for or against, and that is the same by which Christ himself will acquit or condemn the world at the last day. Now when we go upon the trial for our lives before Christ's bar, the great inquiry will be whether we have been sincere or no. And as Christ will not then condemn the sincere soul, though a thousand sins could be objected against it, so neither can our hearts condemn us.

Quest. But here it may be asked, how comes God to be so favourable in the covenant of the Gospel, to accept an obedience so imperfect at his saints' hands, who was so strict with Adam in the first, that the least failing, though but once escaping him, was to be accounted unpardonable?

Answ. The resolution of this question takes in these two particulars.

First, in the covenant God made with mankind in Adam there was no sponsor, or surety, to stand bound to God for man's performance of his part in the covenant (which was perfect obedience); and therefore God could do no other but stand strictly with him; because he had none else from whom he might recover his glory, and thereby pay himself for the wrong man's default might do him; but in the Gospel covenant there is a surety, Christ the righteous, who stands responsible to God for
all the defaults and failings which occur in the Christian's course. The Lord Jesus doth not only take upon him to discharge the vast sums of those sins which he finds them charged with before conversion, but for all those dribbling debts, which afterward, through their infirmity, they contract: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins," 1 John ii. 2. so that God may, without any impeachment of his justice, cross his saints' debts, which he is paid for by their surety: it is mercy indeed to the saints, but justice to Christ, that he should. O happy conjunction, where mercy and justice thus combine and kiss each other!

Secondly, God did, and well might, require full and perfect obedience of man in the first covenant, because he was in a perfect state, of full power and ability to perform it; so that God looked to reap no more than he had planted. But in the Gospel covenant God doth not at first infuse into the believer full grace, but true grace; and accordingly he expects not full obedience, but sincere. He considers our frame, and every believer is (if I may so say) rated in God's books as the stock of grace is which God gives to set him up at first.

SECT. II.

Reas. 2. The second reason may be taken from the great love he bears and liking he takes to this disposition of heart, upon which follows this act of grace, to cover their failings where he spies it. It is the nature of love to cover infirmities, even to a multitude. Esther transgressed the law, by coming into Ahasuerus' presence before she was sent for; but love soon erected a pardon-office in the king's breast, to forgive her that fault, and truly she did not find so much favour in the eyes of that great monarch as the sincere soul doth in the eyes of the great God. He did not more delight in Esther's beauty, than God doth in this: "such as are upright in their way, are his delight." Prov. xi. 20; his soul closeth with that man as one that suits with the disposition of his own holy nature, one whose heart is right with his heart; and
so with infinite content to see a ray of his own excellency sparkle in his creature, he delights in him; and takes him by the hand, to lift him up into the bosom of his love. You seldom find any spoken of as upright in the Scripture that are passed over with a plain naked inscription of their uprightness; but some circumstance there is, which, like the costly work and curious engraving about some tombs, tells the passenger they are no ordinary men that lie there. God speaking of Job’s uprightness, represents him as a nonsuch in his age: “None like him in the earth, a perfect man, and upright;” mention was before made of his vast estate, and in that also he was a nonsuch; but when God comes to glory over Satan, by telling what a servant he had to wait on him, he doth not count this worth the telling the devil of. Job i. 6. Not, hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none so rich? but none so upright. When God speaks to Caleb’s uprightness, see to what a height he exalts him: “but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land,” &c. Numb. xiv. 24. As if God had said, Here’s a man I do not count myself disparaged to own him for my servant and special favourite; he is one that carries more worth in him than the whole multitude of murmuring Israelites besides: he had another spirit, that is for excellency and nobleness far above the rest; and wherein did this appear? the next words resolve us, “he hath followed me fully;” now that which gained him great honour from God’s own mouth we shall find to be his sincerity, and especially in that business when sent to search the land of Canaan, Joshua xiv. 7. and verse 9, compared, he had great temptations to tell another tale. The Israelites were so sick of their enterprise, that he should be the welcomest messenger that brought the worst news, from which they might have some colour for their murmuring against Moses, who had brought them into such straits; and of twelve that were sent, there were ten that suited their answer to this discontented humour of the people; so that, by making a contrary report to theirs, he did not only come under the suspicion of a liar, but hazard his life among an
enraged people; yet such was the courage of this holy man, faithfulness to his trust, and trust in his God, that as he saith himself, ver. 7. "He brought him (that is Moses, who had sent him) word again, as it was in his heart;" that is, he did not for fear or favour accommodate himself, but what in his conscience he thought true, that he spake; and this, because it was such an eminent proof of his sincerity, is called by Moses, verse 9, "following God fully;" for which the Lord erects such a pillar of remembrance over his head that shall stand as long as that Scripture itself. To give but one instance more, and that is Nathaniel; at first sight of whom Christ cannot forbear, but lets all about him know how highly he was in his favour: "Behold (saith he of him) an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile," John i. 47. Christ's heart, like the babe in Elizabeth's womb when Mary saluted her, seemed thus to leap at the coming of Nathaniel, yea comes forth in this expression, not to flatter him into an overweening conceit of himself, Christ knew what an humble soul he spake to, but to bear witness to his own grace in him, especially this of sincerity; that, knowing what a high price and value Heaven sets upon the head of this grace, they might like wise merchants store themselves with it more abundantly; his simplicity of heart made him an Israelite indeed. Many goodly shews and pompous outsides were to be seen among the Pharisees, but they were a company of base projectors and designers. Even when some of them came to Christ, extolling him for his sincerity, "Master, we know thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth," Matth. xxii. 16, then did they play the hypocrites, and had a plot to decoy him by this glozing speech into danger; as you may perceive, ver. 15, "they came that they might entangle him." But good Nathaniel had no plot in his head in his coming but to find the Messiah he looked for, and eternal life by him; and therefore, though he was for the present wrapped up in that common error of the times, that "no prophet could come out of Galilee," Joh. vii. 52, much less so great a one as the Messiah out of such an obscure place in Galilee as Nazareth; yet Christ seeing the honesty and uprightness of his heart,
doth not suffer his ignorance and error to prejudice him in his thoughts of him.

S E C T. III.

Now to give some account why this grace of sincerity is so taking with and delightful to God; that it even captivates him in love to the soul where he finds it. There are two things which are the inseparable companions of sincerity, yea effects flowing from it, that are very taking to draw love both from God and man.

First, Sincerity makes the soul willing. When it is clogged with so many infirmities as to disable it from the full performance of its duty, yet then the soul stands on tip-toe to be gone after it. As the hawk upon the hand, as soon as ever it sees her game, launcheth forth, and would be upon the wing after it, though possibly held by its sheath to the fist: thus the sincere soul is inwardly pricked and provoked by a strong desire after its duty, though kept back by infirmities; a perfect heart and a willing mind are joined together, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, it is David's counsel to his son Solomon, "to serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind." A false heart is a shifting heart, puts off its work so long as it dares; and it is little thanks to set about it when the rod is taken down; yet hypocrites are like tops that go no longer than they are whipped; but the sincere soul is ready and forward, it doth not want will to do a duty when it wants skill and strength how to do it. The Levites are said to be more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests were. 2 Chron. xxix. 34. How appeared that? In this, they were more forward and willing to the work. No sooner did the word come out of the good king's mouth, concerning a reformation, ver. 10. but presently the Levites arose to sanctify themselves; but some of the priests had not such a mind to the business, and therefore were not so soon ready, ver. 34, shewing more policy than piety therein, as if they would stay, and see first how the times would prove before they would engage. Reformation-work is but an icy path; cowardly spirits love to have it well beaten by
Having your loins

others before they dare come on it; but sincerity is of better mettle: like the true traveller, that no weather shall keep him from going his journey when set, the upright man looks not at the clouds, stands not thinking this or that to discourage him, but takes his warrant from the Word of God, and having that, nothing but a countermand from the same God that sets him to work shall turn him back. His heart is in unison to the will of God. If God saith, “seek my face,” it rebounds and echoes back again, “thy face will I seek.” Yea, Lord, as if David had said, with a good will; thy word is press-money enough to carry me from this duty to that, whither thou pleasest. May be when the sincere soul is about a duty he doth it weakly, yet this very willingness of the heart is wonderful pleasing to God. How doth it affect and take the father, when he bids his little child go and bring him such a thing, that may be as much as he can well lift, to see him not stand and shrug at the command as hard, but run to it, and put forth his whole strength about it (though at last may be he cannot do it), yet the willingness of the child pleaseth him so that his weakness rather stirs up his father to pity and help him, than provokes him to chide him. Christ throws this covering over his disciples' infirmities: "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." O this obedience, that, like the dropping honey, comes without squeezing, though but little of it, tastes sweetly on God's palate; and such is sincere obedience.

Secondly, Sincerity makes the soul very open and free to God. Though the sincere soul hath many infirmities, yet it desires to cloke and hide none of this from God; no, if it could, it would not: and this is that which delights God exceedingly. To be sure he will cover what such a soul uncovers: "if we confess our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive." 1 John i. 12.

It was a high piece of clemency in Augustus, that having promised by proclamation a great sum of money to any that should bring him the head of a famous pirate, did yet when the pirate (who had heard of this) brought it himself to him, and laid it at his feet, not only pardon him for his former offences against him, but reward him
for his great confidence in his mercy. Truly thus doth God: though his wrath be revealed against all sin and unrighteousness, yet when the soul itself comes freely and humbles itself before him, he cannot stretch forth his arm to strike that soul which gives such glory to his mercy. Indeed, the hypocrite, when he has sinned, hides it, as Achan his wedge of gold; he sits brooding on his lust, as Rachel on her father's idols; it is as hard getting a hen off her nest, as such an one to come off his lusts and disclose them freely to God. If God himself find him not out, he will not betray himself. I cannot set out the different disposition of the sincere and false heart in this matter better than by the like in a mercenary servant and a child: when such a servant breaks a glass, or spoils any of his master's goods, all his care is to hide it; therefore he throws the pieces away into some dark hole or other, where he thinks they shall never be found; and now he is not troubled for the wrong he hath done his master, but glad that he hath handled the matter so as not to be discovered. Thus the hypocrite would count himself a happy man, if he could but lay his sin out of God's sight; it is not the treason he dislikes, but fears to be known that he is the traitor; and therefore, though it be as impossible to blind the eye of the Almighty, as with our hand to cover the face of the sun that it should not shine, yet the hypocrite will attempt it. We find a woe pronounced against such, Isaiah xxix. 15. "Woe unto them that dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord." This is a sort of sinners whose care is to hold their peace, when they have offended, and stand demurely before God, as Gehazi before his master, as if they had been no where but where they should be: these are they whom God will put to shame. The Jews were far gone in this hypocrisy, when they justified themselves as a holy people, and put God so hard to it as to make him prove his charge, rather than confess what was too true and apparent; which God upbraids them for: "How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, and know what thou hast done." Jer. ii. 23. Hast thou such a whorish forehead to justify thyself, and hypocrisi-
tical heart to draw a fair cover over such foul practices? would you yet pass for saints, and be thought a people unpolluted? Now mark, it is not long but this hypocritical people, that thus hid their sin, hath shame enough. "As the thief is ashamed when he is found, (saith the Prophet, ver. 26.) so is the house of Israel ashamed." that is, as the thief, who at first is so insolent as to deny the fact he is accused of, yet when upon search the stolen goods are found about him, and he brought to justice for it, then he is put to double shame, for his theft and impudence also in justifying himself: so is it with this people, and with all hypocrites. Though while in peace and at ease they brag and are bold, yea seem to scorn to be thought what they indeed are; yet there is a time coming (which ver. 24, is called "their mouth wherein they shall be found") when God's hue and cry will overtake them, his terrors ransack their consciences, and bring forth what they so stiffly denied, making it appear to themselves and others also what juggling and deceit they have used to shift off their sin. It is easy to think what shame will cover their faces, and weigh down their heads, while this is doing. God loves to befool those who think they play their game so wisely; because, with Ahab, they fight against God in a disguise, and will not be known to be the men. But the sincere soul takes another course, and speeds better: as a child when he hath committed a fault, doth not stay till others go and tell his father what the matter is; nor till his father makes it appear by his frowning countenance that it is come to his ear, but freely, and of his own accord, goes presently to his father, (being prompted by no other thing than the love he bears to his dear father, and the sorrow with which his heart grows every moment he stays fuller for his offence) and easeth his aching heart, by a free and full confession of his fault at his father's feet; and this with such plain-heartedness, giving his offence the weight of every aggravating circumstance, so that if the devil himself should come after him, to glean up what he hath left, he should hardly find wherewithal to make it appear blacker. Thus doth the sincere soul to God, adding to his simplicity in confession of his sin, such a flow of
sorrow, that God seeing his dear child in such danger of being carried down too far towards despair (if good news from him come not speedily to stay him) cannot but tune his voice rather into a strain of comforting him in his mourning than chiding for his sin.

CHAP. IX.

OF THE ODIOUS NATURE OF HYPOCRISY, AND THE HATEFULNESS OF IT TO GOD.

USE 1. Doth sincerity cover all defects? Then hypocrisy uncovers the soul, and strips it naked to its shame before God, when set forth with the richest embroidery of other excellencies. It is observable the different character that is given of those two kings of Judah, Asa and Amaziah. Of the first, see 1 Kings xv. 14, “the high places were not removed, nevertheless Asa his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.” He passeth current for a gracious person, and that with a non obstante, “nevertheless his heart was perfect;” sincerity like true gold hath grains allowed for its lightness; his infirmities are not mentioned to stain his honour and prejudice him in the opinion of any; but rather as the wart or mole which the curious limner expresseth, on purpose the more to set forth the beauty of the other parts, so his failings are recorded to cast a greater lustre upon his sincerity; which could, notwithstanding these sins, gain him such a testimony from God’s own mouth. But of Amaziah, see 2 Chron. xxv. 2. “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.” The matter of his actions was good, but the scope and drift of his heart in them was naught, and this but makes a foul blot upon all, and turns his right into wrong; wherein his hypocrisy appeared is expressed, “he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father, he did according to all things as Joash his father did.” 2 Kings xiv. 3. He did
for awhile what David did, as to the matter, but imitated Joash as to the manner, whose goodness was calculated to please man rather than God, as appeared in the latter end of his reign upon the death of his good uncle Jehoiada, him did Amaziah write after, and not David in his uprightness; thus we see Asa's uprightness commends him in the midst of many failings, but hypocrisy condemns Amaziah doing that which is right. Sincerity is the life of all our graces, and puts life into all our duties, and as life makes beautiful and keeps the body sweet, so sincerity the soul, and all it doth. A prayer breathed from a sincere heart is Heaven's delight; take away sincerity, and God saith of it, as Abraham of Sarah, whom living he loved dearly, and laid in his bosom, "bury the dead out of my sight;" he hides his eye, stops his nostril, as when some poisonous carrion is before us. "Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination to me; the calling of your assemblies I cannot away with; your appointed feasts my soul hateth, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them." Isa. i. 13, 14. What stinking thing is this, that God cries so out upon? it is nothing but hypocrisy. Surely, friends, that must needs be very loathsome, which makes God speak so coarsely of his own ordinances, yea make them a Nehushtan, prayer no prayer, but a mere idol to be broken in pieces; faith no faith, but a fancy and a delusion; repentance no repentance, but a loud lie. "They returned, and enquired early after God;" Psalm lxxviii. 34, see how the Spirit of God glosseth upon this: "nevertheless they did flatter him with their lips, and they lied unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him," ver. 36, 37. It smoked God out of his own house, and made him out of love with that place whereof he had said it should be his resting-place for ever.

It brought the wrath of God upon that unhappy people to the uttermost: mark how the commission runs which God gave the Assyrian, who was the bloody executioner of his fierce wrath upon them: "O Assyrian, the rod of my anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation, I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him
a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down as mire in the streets." Isa. x. 5, 6. See Jer. vii. 10—13. There needs not the coroner to be sent for or a jury to go upon this miserable people, to find out how they came to their dismal end: they were an hypocritical nation, that was it they died of. God had rather see the abomination of desolation standing in his temple, making havoc of all, than the abomination of dissimulation mocking him to his face, while they worship him with their lips, and their lusts with their hearts. Of the two it is more tolerable in God's account to see a Belshazzar, that never had a name of being his servant, to quaff and carouse it to his gods profanely in the bowls of the sanctuary, than for a people that would pass for his servants to pollute them in his own worship by their cursed hypocrisy: if God be dishonoured, woe to that man of all that doth it under a shew of honouring him. God singles out the hypocrite, as that sort of sinner whom he would deal with hand to hand, and set himself even in this life to bear witness against in a more extraordinary manner than others. The thief, murderer, and other the like sinners, provision is made by God that the magistrate should meet with them, they come under his cognizance; but the hypocrite, he is one that sins more secretly, God alone is able to find him out, and he hath undertaken it: "for every one of the house of Israel which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and cometh to a prophet, to enquire of him concerning me (an excellent description of an hypocrite: he is one that denies God his heart, reserving it for his idols his lusts, yet is as forward as any to enquire after God in his ordinances) I the Lord will answer him by myself." Zeck. xiv. 7. And how will he answer him? "And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign, and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, and ye shall know that I am the Lord," ver. 8. that is, my judgments shall be so remarkable on him that he shall be a spectacle of my wrath for others to see and speak of. Thus God pays the hypocrite often in this life, as Ananias and Sapphira, who died by the hand of God with a lie stick-
Having your loins

ing in their throats; and Judas, who purchased nothing by his hypocritical trade but a halter to hang himself with: his playing the hypocrite with Christ ended in his playing the devil upon himself, when he became his own executioner. But if the hypocrite at any time steals out of the world before his mask falls off and the wrath of God falls on him, it will meet him sure enough in Hell; and it will be poor comfort to him there to think how he hath cheated his neighbours in arriving at Hell whom they so confidently thought under sail for Heaven. The good opinion which he hath left of himself in those that are on earth will cool no flames for him in Hell, where lodgings are taken and bespoken for the hypocrite, as the chief guest expected in that infernal court; all other sinners seem but as younger brethren in damnation to the hypocrite, under whom, as the great heir, they receive every one their portion of wrath, bequeathed to them by the justice of God, Matt. xxiv. 51. there the evil servant is threatened by his master that "he will cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with hypocrites."

Quest. But why should God be so angry with the hypocrite? he seems a tame creature to other sinners, that like wild beasts rage and raven, not fearing to open their mouth like so many wolves against heaven, as if they would tear God out of his throne by their blasphemies and horrid impieties. The hypocrite is not thus filled with impudence to sin at noon-day, and spread his tent with Absalom on the house-top: if he be naught, it is in a corner, his maiden-blush modesty will not suffer him to declare his sin, and be seen in the company of it abroad; nay, he denies himself of many sins which others maintain, and walks in the exercise of many duties which the atheistical spirits of the world deride and scorn—why then should the hypocrite, that lives like a saint to others, be more distasteful to him?

Answ. Indeed the hypocrite at first blush may be taken for a kind of saint, by such as see only his outside, as he passeth by in his holiday dress, which he is beholden to for all the reputation he hath in the thoughts of others, and therefore is fitly by one called the stranger's saint,
but a devil to those who know him better. He is like some cunning cripple, that is fain to borrow help from art to hide the defects of nature; such as false hair to cover his baldness, an artificial eye to blind his blindness from others' sight, and the like for other parts; here's much ado made to commend him for some beautiful person to others, but what a monster would this man appear, should one but see him through the key-hole, as he is in his bed-chamber, where all these are laid aside? Truly, such a one, and far more scaring, would the hypocrite be found, when out of his acting robes, which he makes use of only when he comes forth upon the stage to play the part of a saint before others. It were enough to affright us only to see the hypocrite uncased; what then will it be to himself, when he shall be laid open before men and angels? So odious this generation is to God, that it is not safe standing near them: Moses, that knew Korah, Dathan, and Abiram better than the people (who, taken with their seeming zeal, flocked after them in throngs), commanded them to depart from the tents of those wicked men, except they had a mind to be consumed with them; such horrid hypocrisy he expected vengeance would soon overtake. But that it may appear to be a sin exceeding sinful, I shall give a few aggravations of it, in which so many reasons will be wrapt why it is so odious to God.

First, Hypocrisy is a sin that offers violence to the very light of nature; that light which convinceth us there is a God, tells us he is to be served, and that in truth also, or all is to no purpose. A lie is a sin that would fly in the face of a heathen, and hypocrisy is the loudest lie, because it is given to God himself; so Peter told that dissembling wretch, Acts v. 3. "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" verse 4, "thou hast lied not to man but unto God."

Secondly, Hypocrisy cannot so properly be said to be one single sin, as the sinfulness of other sins, it is among sins, as sincerity among graces; now that is not one grace but an ornament that beautifies and graces all other graces. The preciousness of faith is that it is unfeigned, and of love to be without dissimulation. Thus the
odiousness of sins is when they are committed in hypocrisY. David aggravates the sin of those jeering companions who made him their table-talk, and could not taste their cheer except seasoned with some salt jest quibbled out at him, with this that they were "hypocritical mockers," Psalm xxxv. 16: they did it sily, and wrapt up their scoffs in such language as might make some think, who did not well observe them, that they applauded him. There is a way of commending which some have learnt to use, when they mean to cast the greatest scorn upon those they hate bitterly, and these hypocritical mockers deserve the chair to be given them from all other scorners. Fevers are counted malignant according to the degree of putrefaction that is in them: hypocrisy is the very putrefaction and rottenness of the heart; the more of this putrid stuff there is in any sin, the more malignant it is. David speaks of the iniquity of his sin: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Psalm xxxii. 5. This sin seems very probably to have been his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, by his long keeping silence, ver. 3. by the pardon he had immediately given in upon confessing, ver. 5. which we know Nathan delivered to him, and by his further purpose to continue confessing of it, which appeared by the mourning Psalm li. that followed upon his discourse with Nathan. Now David, to make the pardoning mercy of God more illustrious, saith he did not only forgive his sin, but the iniquity of his sin, and what was that? surely the worst that can be said of that his complicated sin is, that there was so much hypocrisy in it, he woefully juggled with God and man in it; this I do not doubt to say was the iniquity of his sin, and put a colour deeper on it than the blood which he shed. And the rather I lay the accent there, because God himself, when he would set out the heinousness of this sin, seems to do it rather from the hypocrisy in the fact, than the fact itself, as appears by the testimony given this holy man: "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he com-
manded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." 1 Kings xv. 5. Were there not other wry steps that David took besides this? Doth the Spirit of God by excepting this declare his approbation of all that else he ever did? No sure: the Spirit of God records others sins, that escaped this eminent servant of the Lord; but all those are drowned here, and this mentioned as the only stain of his life. But why? surely because there appeared less sincerity, yea more hypocrisy, in this one sin, than in all his other put together: though David in them was wrong as to the matter of his actions, yet his heart was more right in the manner of committing them. But here his sincerity was sadly wounded, though not to the total destruction of the habit, yet to lay it in a long swoon as to any actings thereof. And truly the wound went very deep when that grace was stabbed in which did run the life-blood of all the rest. We see then, God had reason (though his mercy prompted him, yea his covenant obliged him, not to let his child die of this wound, I mean finally miscarry of this sin, either through want of repentance on the one hand, or pardoning mercy on the other) so to heal it, that a scar might remain upon the place, a mark upon the sin, whereby others might know how odious hypocrisy is to God.

Thirdly, those considerations which may seem at first to lessen and pare off something from the heinousness of the hypocrite's sin, viz. that he walks in a religious habit, hath a form of piety which others want, performs duties that others neglect; these and the like are so far from taking from that they add a further weight of aggravation to it. Let us consider the hypocrite in a two-fold respect; and this will appear either in things he trades about, or secondly in the things he lays claim to; these are both high and sacred, and a sin in these can be no ordinary sin. The things he trades in are, the duties of God's worship; the things he lays claim to are relation to God, interest in Christ, consolations of the Spirit, and the like: these are things of high price, a miscarriage about these must be somewhat suitable to their high nature. As is the wool so is the thread and cloth, coarse or fine.
Having your loins

The profane person pretends not to these; he cannot spin so fine a thread, because the work he deals in is coarser: all his impieties will not have so high a price of wrath set upon them, which he hath (being ignorant of God, and a stranger to the ways of God) committed, as the hypocrite's.

SECT. I.

First, the hypocrite trades in the duties of God's worship. Judas sits down with the rest of the Apostles at the Passover, and bids himself welcome as confidently as if he were the best guest, the holiest of all the company. The proud Pharisee gets to the Temple as soon as the broken-hearted Publican; but what work doth the hypocrite make with these things? that would be known indeed. Sad work (the Lord knows) or else God would not so abominate them as to think he hears a dog bark, or a wolf howl, all the while they are praying. We think David had a curious hand at the harp, that could pacify the evil raging spirit of melancholy Saul; but what a harsh unhappy stroke have they in the duties of God's worship, that are able to make the sweet meek Spirit of God angry, yea break out into fury against them? And no wonder, if we consider but these two things.

First, the hypocrite does no less than mock God in all his duties, and of all things God can least bear that: "God will not be mocked." Christ preached this doctrine, when he cursed the fig-tree, which did by her green leaves mock the passenger, making him come for fruit, and go away ashamed without any; had it wanted leaves as well as fruit, it had escaped that curse. Every lie is a mocking of him to whom it is told, because such a one goes to cheat him, and thereby puts the fool upon him: "Why hast thou mocked me (said Delilah to Sampson) and told me lies." Judg. xvi. 10. as if she had said (as is usual upon the like with us) Do you make a fool of me? I leave it to the hypocrite to think seriously what he is going to make of God, when he puts up his hypocritical services. God's command was, none should "appear before him empty;" this the hypocrite
doth, and therefore mocks God, he comes indeed full-mouthing, but empty-hearted. As to the formality of duty he often exceeds the sincere Christian; he, if any, may truly be called a master of ceremonies, because all that he entertains God with in duty lies in the courtship of his tongue and knee. How abhorrent this is to God may easily be judged by the disdain which even a wise man would express to be so served; better to pretend no kindness, than pretending to intend none. It is the heart God looks at in duty: if the wine be good, he can drink it out of a wooden cup; but let the cup be never so gilded, and no wine in it, he makes account that man mocks him that would put it into his hand. It was Christ’s charge against Sardis: “I have not found thy works perfect before God;” Rev. iii. 2. I have not found them full before God, as the original hath it. Sincerity fills our duty, and all our actions; and mark that phrase “before God,” which implies that this church retained such an outward form of devotion as might keep up her credit before men; she had a name to live, but her works were not full before God: he pierced them deeper than man’s probe could go, and judgeth her by what he found her within.

Secondly, the hypocrite performs the duties of God’s worship on some base design or other, and this makes him yet more abominable to God, who disdains to have his holy ordinances prostituted to serve the hypocrite’s lust, used only as a stream to turn about his mill, and handsomely effect his carnal projects. When Absalom had formed his plot within his own unnatural bosom, and was as big with his treason as ever cockatrice was with her poisonous egg, to Hebron he goes in all haste, and that, forsooth, to pay an old vow, which in the time of his affliction he had made to the Lord, 2 Sam. xv. 10, 11. Who would not think the man was grown honest, when he begins to think of paying his old debts? but the wretch meant nothing less: his errand thither was to lay his treason under the warm wing of religion, that the reputation he should gain thereby might help the sooner to hatch it. And I wish that as Absalom died without a son to keep his name in remembrance, so none
Having your lairs had been left behind to inherit his cursed hypocrisy, that the world might have grown into a happy ignorance of so monstrous a sin; but, alas! this is but a vain wish, vivit, imo in Teplum venit, this kind of hypocrisy yet lives, yea comes as boldly to outface God in his worship as ever; many making no better use of the exercise of it than some do of their sedans, to carry them unseen to the enjoyment of their lust. And is it any wonder that God, who hath appointed his ordinances for such high and holy ends, should abhor the hypocrite, who thus debaseth them in the service of the devil? Did you invite some to a costly feast at your house, who instead of feeding on the dainties you have provided for them, should take and throw all to their dogs under the table, how would you like your guest? The hypocrite is he that casts God's holy things to his dogs. God invites us to his ordinances, as to a rich feast, where he is ready to entertain us, in sweet communion with himself; what horrid impiety it is then that the hypocrite commits? who, when he is set at God's table, feeds not of these dainties himself, but throws all to his lusts: some to his pride, and some to his covetousness; propounding to himself no other end in coming to them than to make provision for these lusts, as Hamor and Shechem his son, who when they would persuade the people of their city to submit to circumcision, used this as the great argument to move them, that they should grow rich by the shift. "If every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised, shall not their cattle, and their substance, and every beast of theirs be ours?" Gen. xxxiv. 21, 22. a goodly argument, was it not, in a business of such a high nature as coming under a solemn ordinance? they rather speak as if they were going to a horse-market, or cow-fair, than to a religious duty. Truly, though most hypocrites have more wit than thus to print their thoughts, and let the world read what is written in their hearts, yet as Queen Mary said of Calais, if she were ript up it would be found in her heart, so some such low things as vain-glory, worldly profit, &c. would be found engraven in the breast of all hypocrites, as that which they most aim at in the duties of religion.
SECT. II.

Secondly, Consider the hypocrite in the things he lays claim to, and they are no small privileges: relation to God, interest in Christ; who more forward to saint himself, to pretend to the graces and comforts of the Spirit, than the hypocrite? as we see in the Pharisees, whose great design was to get a name, and that not such as the great ones of the earth have for prowess, worldly majesty, and the like, but for sanctity and holiness; and they had it, if it would do them any good. "Verily," saith Christ, "they have their reward." _Matth_. vi. 2. They would be thought for great saints, and so they are by the multitude, who did so applaud them for their holiness, which faced their outside, that they had a proverb, if but two could be saved, one of the two should be a Pharisee. We read of some that "profess they know God, but in works they deny him," _Tit_. i. 16; they boldly brag of their acquaintance with God, and would be thought great favourites of his, though their lives are Antipodes to Heaven: so _Rev_. iii. 9. we meet with some "that say they are Jews, and are not, but lie." They dwell sure by ill neighbours, none would say so much for them but themselves; the hypocrite is so ambitious to pass for a saint, that he commonly is a great censurer of the true graces of others, as too much hindering the prospect of his own; like Herod, who, as Eusebius writes, being troubled at the baseness of his own birth, burnt the Jews' ancient genealogies, the better to defend his own pretended noble descent. Who now is able to give a full accent to this high-climbing sin of the hypocrite? It is a sin that highly reproacheth God, to have such a vile wretch claim kindred with him. Christ indeed is not "ashamed to call, the poorest saint's brethren," but he disdains to have his name seen upon a rotten-hearted hypocrite, as princes to have their effigies stamped on base metals. What scorn was put upon that mock prince, Perkin Warbeck, who, having got some fragments of courtship, and tutored how to act his part, was presented to the world as son to Edward the Fourth of this nation; but when he had aped awhile the state of a prince, was taken, and with his base ignoble pedigree,
written in great letters, piuoned at his back, sent about, that wherever he came he might carry his shame with him, till in the end he was sent to act the last part of his play at the gallows. But what is all this to the hypocrite's portion? who for abusing others here with a seeming sanctity, as if indeed he was of heavenly extraction, a child of God and heir of glory, shall be brought at the great day to be hissed and hooted at by men and angels, and after he hath been put to this open shame, be thrown into the deepest Hell. Of all sinners he doth most mischief in this world, and therefore shall have most torment in the other. There is a double mischief which none stand at like advantage to do as the hypocrite by his seeming saintship. The one he doth while his credit holds, and he passeth for a child of God in the opinion of his neighbours; the other when his reputation is cracked, and he discovered to be what he is, a hypocrite. The mischief he doth when his mask is on is as a deceiver: Machiavel knew what he did in commending to princes a semblance of religion, though he forbade any more; it hath been found the most taking bait to decoy people into their snare, who come in apace when religion is the flag that is set up. Ehud could not have thought on a surer key to open all doors, and procure him admittance into king Eglon's presence, than to give out he had a message from the Lord to him; this raised such an expectation, and bred such a confidence, that room is made for him presently, all depart, and he left alone with the king, yea; the king will rise to hear this message that comes from the Lord, and so gives him a greater advantage to run him through; had not some in our days pretended highly to saintship, I doubt not but they would have found the door shut, where now they have too much welcome, and find it easy to procure belief to their errors. Even the elect are in some danger, when one cried up for a saint is the messenger that brings the error to town, and that under the notion of a message from God. I confess the hypocrite acts his part so handsomely, that he may do some good accidentally; his glistering profession, heavenly discourse, excellent gifts in prayer or preaching, may affect much the sincere soul, and be
an occasion of real good to his soul; as the stage-player, though his tears be counterfeit, may stir up by his seeming passion real sorrow in his spectators, so as to make them weep in earnest; thus the hypocrite, acting his part with false affections, may be a means to draw forth and excite the Christian's true graces; but then is such a one much more in danger to be ensnared by his error, because he will not be readily suspicious of any thing that he brings whom he hath found really helpful to his grace or comfort; and thus the good the hypocrite doth makes him but able to do the greater hurt in the end. Sisera had better have gone without Jael's butter and milk, than by them to be laid asleep against she came with her nail; and it had been far happier for many in our days, not to have tasted of the gifts and seeming graces of some, than to have been so taken with this sweet wine as to drink themselves drunk into an admiration of their persons, which hath laid them asleep, and thereby given them whom they have applauded so much but advantage the more easily to fasten their nail to their heads; errors I mean to their judgments. The other mischief the hypocrite doth is when discovered, and that is as he is a scandal to the ways of God, and servants of God. It is said of Sampson, "the dead which he slew at his death, were more than they which he slew in his life." Judg. xvi. 30. Truly the hypocrite doth more hurt when he is discovered, which is the death of his profession, than when he seemed to be alive. The wicked world, that are not long seeking a staff to beat the saints with, have now one put into their hand by the hypocrite. O how they can run division upon this harsh note, and besmear the face of all professors, with the dirt they see upon one false brother's coat, as if they could take the length of all their feet by the measure of one hypocrite; hence comes such base language as this: They are all of a pack, not one better than another. Indeed this is very absurd reasoning, as if one should say, no coin were current, and right silver, because now and then a brass shilling is found among the rest. But this language fits the mouth of the ungodly world; and woe be to the man that makes these arrows for them by his hypocrisy, which they shoot
against the saints; better he had been thrown with a millstone about his neck into the sea, than have lived to give such an occasion for the enemy to blasphemy.

CHAP. X.

WHERE ALL ARE STIRRED UP TO PUT THEMSELVES UPON THE TRIAL, WHETHER SINCERE OR NOT; THREE ARGUMENTS USED TO PROVOKE TO THE WORK; AND FOUR FALSE CHARACTERS, BY WHICH THE HYPOCRITE FLATTERS HIMSELF INTO A CONCEIT OF BEING UPRIGHT.

USE 2. Secondly, doth sincerity cover all a saint's infirmities? this shews how needful it is for every one to try his ways and search narrowly his heart, whether he be sincere or hypocritical.

SECT. I.

First, All depends on it, even all thou art worth, in another world; it is thy making or marring for ever: "Do good, O Lord, to them that are upright in heart; as for such as turn aside to crooked ways, the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity;" Psalm cxxv. 5. that is the end the hypocrite is sure to come to. He would indeed then fain pass for a saint, and crowd in among the godly; but God "shall lead him forth with workers of iniquity," company that better befits him; it is sincerity shall carry it in that day. "I will come (saith Paul) to you shortly, and will know, not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power; for the kingdom of God is not in word, but power; what will ye, shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love?" 1 Cor. iv. 19. Oh friends, not Paul but Christ will shortly come unto us, and he
will know, not the speech and soothing language of such as are puffed up with an empty name of profession, but will know the power, gage the heart and see what is in it: now will ye that he come with a rod, or in love? to judge you, as hypocrites; or to give you the Edge of a faithful servant? Doth not he spend his time ill, that takes paine in his trade, and lays out all his stock, upon such a commodity, which when he opens his stall, will be seized for false ware, and he clapped up for abusing the country? All that ever the hypocrite did will in the great day of Christ be found counterfeit, and be sure to be laid by the heels in Hell, for going about to cheat God and man; every man's works shall then be manifest, that day shall declare it. Even the sincere Christian, where he hath tampered with hypocrisy, shall lose that his work; but the hypocrite with his work his soul also:

Secondly, Consider hypocrisy lies close in the heart; if thou art not very careful, thou mayest easily pass a false judgment on thyself. They who were sent to search the cellar under the Parliament-house, at first saw nothing but coals and winter provision; but upon a review, when they came to throw away that stuff, they found all but provision for the devil's kitchen; then the mystery of iniquity was uncased, and the barrels of gunpowder appeared. How many are there, that from some duties of piety they perform, some seeming zeal they express in profession, presently cry omnis bene, and are so kind to themselves as to vote themselves good Christians, who, did they but take the pains to throw these aside, might find a soul hypocrite at the bottom of them all: hypocrisy often takes up her lodgling next door to sincerity, and so she passes unfinded, the soul not suspecting Hell can be so near Heaven. And as hypocrisy, so sincerity is hard to be discovered: this grace often lies low in the heart (like the sweet violet in some valley, or near some brook) hid with thorns and nettles, infirmities I mean; so that there requires both care and wisdom, that we neither let the weed of hypocrisy stand, nor pluck up the herb of grace in its stead.

Thirdly, It is practicable: I do not set you about an endless work. The heart of man I confess is as a ruffled
skein of silk, not easily unravelled; yet, with a faithful use of the means, it may be disentangled and wound up on the right bottom of sincerity or hypocrisy. Job, when Satan and his cruel friends laboured to disturb his spirit most, and muddy the stream of his former course and condition, by throwing their objections as so many stones into it, yet he could see, this precious gem at the bottom, sparkling most brightly; yea Hezekiah, on the very brink of the grave, recreates his spirit with it. Indeed, friends, this is a soul's encouragement, that it shall not want God's help in this search, if it goes about it with honest desires. A justice will not only give his warrant to search a suspicious house, but, if need be, will command others to be aiding to him in the business. Word, ministers, Spirit, all, thou shalt have for thy assistance in this work; only have a care thou dost not mock God in the business: that soul deserves to be damned to this sin, who in the search for hypocrisy plays the hypocrite, like a naughty dishonest constable, that willingly overlooks him whom he searcheth for, and then says he cannot find him.

Now, for the fuller satisfaction in this point, and help in the trial, because it is that which both good and bad are mistaken in; the carnal wretch flattering himself his heart is good and honest, the sincere soul kept under fear of being a hypocrite, Satan abusing them both: I shall therefore first lay down the grounds of a hypocrite, with which he shores up his rotten house, and shew the falsities of them. Secondly, I will lay down the grounds of the weak Christian's fear of his being a hypocrite, and the weakness of them. Thirdly, shew positive discoveries of sincerity, which no hypocrite ever did or can reach to.

S E C T. II.

First, For the hypocrite, he will stand upon his defence; his heart is sincere. Well, how will he prove it?

First, The hypocrite will say, Sure I am no hypocrite, for I cannot endure it in another.

Answ. This is not enough to clear thee from being a hypocrite, except thou canst shew thou dost this from a
holy ground. Jehu that asked Jehonadab whether his heart was right, carried at that same time a false one in his own breast. It is very ordinary for a man to decry that in another, and smartly to declaim against it, which he all the while harbours himself. How severe was Judah against Tamar? he commands in all haste to burn her, Gen. xxxviii. 24. Who would not have thought this man to be chaste? yet he was the very person that had defiled her. There may be a great cheat in this piece of zeal, sometimes the very place a man is in may carry him as the *primum mobile* does the stars, in a motion which his own genius and liking would never lead him to; thus many that are magistrates give the law to drunkards and swearers, merely to keep the decorum of their place, and shun the clamour that would arise from their neglect, who can possibly do both when they meet with place and company fit for their purpose. The zeal of some against another's sin is kindled at the disgrace which reflects upon them by it, in the eye of the world, and this falls out when the sin is public, and the person that committed it stands related; this is conceived to be Judah's case, who was willing his daughter should be taken out of the way, that the blot which she had brought on his family might with her be out of sight. Some again find it a thriving trade, and make this advantage of inveighing against others' faults, to hide their own the better, that they may carry on their own designs with less suspicion. Absalom asperseth his father's government, as a stirrup to help himself into the saddle. Jehu loved the crown more than he hated Jezabel's whoresomes, for all his loud cry against them. In a word (for it is impossible to hit all) there may be much of revenge in it, and the person is rather shot at than his sin; this was observed of Antony's zeal against Augustus, *odit tyrannum amavit tyrannidem*; he hated the tyrant, but loved well enough the tyranny.

Secondly, saith the hypocrite, I am bold and fearless in dangers, sure I am no hypocrite: "fearfulness surpriseth the hypocrite," but it is "the righteous that is bold as a lion."

*Answ.* The better way sure were to try thy boldness.
by thy sincerity, than to conclude thy sincerity by thy boldness. Truly, confidence and a spirit undaunted at death and danger are glorious things, when the Spirit and Word of Christ stand by to vouch them, when the creature can give some account of the hope that is in him, as Paul who shews how he came by it. This Christian (not Roman) courage, Rom. v. 1—4. many rooms he passeth before he comes to this, which indeed joins upon Heaven itself. Faith is the key which lets him into all. First, it opens the door of justification, and lets it into a state of peace and reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" ver. 1. through this he passeth on to another, the presence-chamber of God's favour, and is admitted nigh unto him, as a traitor once pardoned is, "by whom also we have access by him into this grace wherein we stand," ver. 2. that is, we have not only our sins pardoned, and our persons reconciled to God by faith in Christ, but now, under Christ's wing, we are brought to court as it were, and stand in his grace as favourites before their prince; this opens into a third, and "rejoice in the hope of glory;" we do not only at present enjoy the grace and favour of God, and communion with him here, but have from this a hope firmly planted in our hearts for heaven's glory hereafter. Now he is brought to the most inward room of all, which none can come at but he that goes through all the former, ver. 3. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." If thou hast not entered at these doors, thou art a thief and a robber, thou gettest thy confidence too quickly to have it brought to thy hand by God; if God means thee well for eternity, he will make thee smart for this thy boldness, as he did Jacob for stealing his father's blessing; and therefore content not thyself with a bare boldness and confidence in dangers, but enquire whether it hath a Scripture bottom and basis to stand on, or whether the pillars supporting it be not ignorance in thy mind, and stupidity in thy conscience? If the latter, thou art in a sad condition; thy boldness will last no longer than thou seest it doth in one that is drunk, who when he is wine-sprung thinks (as
girt about with truth.

they say) he can skip over the moon, and ventures to go without fear upon precipices and pitfalls; but when sober, trembles to see what he did in his drunken fit. Nabal, that feared nothing when drunk, his heart dies within him, and becomes as a stone, at the story Abigail told him in the morning, when the wine was gone out of him. 1 Sam. xxv. 37. Therefore, as he when his cause miscarried through the sleepiness of the judge on the bench, appealed from the judge asleep to the judge awake; so do I here with you, that through the present stupidity of conscience are bold and fearless of death, and from this plead your uprightness: I appeal from your conscience asleep, to the sentence it will give when it shall be awake, which I wish may be in this world, that you may see your mistake where you may amend it.

Thirdly, Sure, saith another, I am not a hypocrite; for I perform secret duties in my closet: the hypocrite he is nobody, except on the stage; it is the brand of the hypocrite, he courts the world for its applause, and therefore does all abroad.

Answ. Though the total neglect of secret duties in religion speaks a person to be a hypocrite, yet the performing of duties in secret will not demonstrate thee a sincere person. Hypocrisy is in this like the frogs brought on Egypt, no place was free of them, no not their bed-chambers, they crept into their most inward rooms: and so doth hypocrisy into closet duties, as well as public; indeed though the place be secret where such duties are performed, yet the matter may be so handled, and is by some hypocrites, that they are not secret in their closets; like the hen who goes into a secret place to lay her egg, but by her cackling tells all the house where she is, and what she is doing. But where this is not, it is not enough, for we must not think but some hypocrites may and do spin a thread finer than others; in all arts there are some exceeding others, and so in this trade of hypocrisy: the gross hypocrite, whose drift is to deceive others, his religion commonly is all without doors, but there is a hypocrite that labours to keep a fair quarter with himself, and is very desirous to make conscience on his side, which to procure he will go to the utmost link of his chain,
and do any thing that may not separate him and his beloved lusts. Now secret prayer and other duties may be so performed as that they shall not more prejudice a man’s lusts than any other; it is not the sword, though very sharp, that kills, but the force it is thrust with; indeed there are some secret duties, as examination of our hearts, trying of our ways, and serious meditation of the threatenings of the Word against such sins as we find in our own bosoms, with close application of them to ourselves, would put sin hard to it; but the hypocrite can lay this sword so easily and favourably on, that his lusts shall not cry, Oh! at it; therefore still there needs a melius inquirendum, a further search, before thou canst come off.

Fourthly, Surely I am not a hypocrite, for I do not only pray, and that in secret too, against my sins, but I also fight against them, yea and that to good purpose, for I can shew you the spoils of my victories that I have got over some of them. There was a time, I could not go by the ale-house but my lust bid me stand and pulled me in; but now, I thank God, I have got such a mastery of my drunken lust that I can pass by without looking in.

Answ. It is good what thou dost say, and I wish all thy drunken neighbours could speak as much, that when the magistrate will not or cannot spoil that drunken trade, they that keep those shops for the devil might even shut up their windows for want of customers. But is it not pity that what is good should be marred in the doing? yet it is too common, and may be thy case.

First, Let me ask thee how long it hath been thus with thee. Lusts, as to the actings I mean, are like agues: the fit is not always on, and yet the man not rid of his disease; and some men’s lust, like some agues, have not such quick returns as others. The river does not move always one way, now it is coming, anon falling water, and though it doth not rise when it falls, yet it hath not lost its other motion: now the tide of lust is up, and anon it is down, and the man recoils and seems to run from it, but it returns again upon him. Who would have thought to have seen Pharaoh in his mad fit again, that should have been with him in his good mood, when he bid Moses and the people go? but, alas! the man was not altered: thus,
may be, when a strong occasion comes, this, like an
easterly wind to some of our ports, will bring in the tide
of thy lust so strongly that thy soul, that seemed as clear
of thy lust as the naked sands are of water, will be in a
few moments covered, and as deep under their waves as
ever. But the longer the banks have held, the better;
yet shouldest thou never more be drunk as to the out-
ward fulfilling of the lust, yet this is not enough to clear
thee from being a hypocrite.

Secondly, Therefore let me ask thee what was the
great motive to take thee off. That may be as bad, in
some sense, which keeps thee from the ale-house now, as
that which heretofore drew thee to it. It is ordinary
for one lust to spoil another's market; he that should
save his money from guzzling it down his throat, to lay
more finery on his back; what doth this man, but rob
one lust to sacrifice it to another? whether was it God or
man, God or thy purse, God or thy pride, God or thy re-
putation, that knocked thee off? if any but God prevailed
with thee, hypocrite is a name will better now become
thee than when in the ale-house. Again, if God: what
apprehensions of God were they that did it? some the
wrath of God for some particular sin hath so shaken, that
as one scared with an apparition in a room cares not for
lying there any more, so they dare not, at least for a long
time, be acquainted with that practice again; and as it is
not the room but the apparition that the one dislikes,
so not the sin, but the wrath of God that haunts it,
which the other flees from. In a word, may be thou
hast laid down this sinful practice; but didst thou hate
it, and love God, and so leave it? thou art become strange
to one, have you not got acquaintance with another in the
room of it? thou hast laid down the commission of an
evil, but hast thou taken up thy known duty? He is a
bad husbandman that drains his ground, and then neither
sows nor plants it: it is all one if it had been under water,
as drained and not improved. What if thou cease to do
evil: if it were possible, and thou learnest not to do well?
It is not thy fields being clear of weeds, but fruitful in
corn, pays thy rent and brings thee in thy profit: nor thy
not being drunk, unclean, or any other sin, but thy being
holy, gracious, thy having faith unfeigned, pure love, and 
the other graces, which will prove thee sound, and bring 
in evidence for thy interest in Christ, and through him of 
Heaven.

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CHAP. XI.

THE WEAK GROUNDS WHEREBY TEMPTED SOULS ARGUE 
AGAINST THEIR OWN UPRIGHTNESS.

WE proceed to the false grounds from which sincere 
souls do many times go about to prove themselves hypoc-
crites, yea for a while conclude they are such.

First, Sure I am a hypocrite, saith the poor soul, or 
else I should not be as I am. God would not thus fol-
low me on with one blow after another, and suffer Sataa 
also to use me as he doth. This was the grand battery 
Job's friends had against his sincerity; and sometimes 
Satan so far prevails as to make the sincere soul set it 
against his own breast, saying, much like him, "If God 
be with us, why is all this befallen us?" if God be in us 
by his grace, why appears he against us?

Answ. This fire into which God casts thee proves thou 
 hast dross, and if because thou art held long in the fur-
nace, thou shouldest say thou hadst much dross, I would 
not oppose; but how thou shouldest spell hypocrite out 
of thy afflictions and troubles. I marvel; the wicked in-
deed make much use of this argument to clap hypocrite 
on them; but the Christian methinks should not use it 
against himself: though the Barbarians presently gave 
their verdict, upon sight of the viper on Paul's hand, that 
he was a murderer, yet Paul thought not worse of him-
self for it. Christian, give but the same counsel to thy-
self, when in affliction and temptation, that thou usest 
to do to thy fellow-brethren in the same condition, and 
thou wilt get out of this snare. Darest thou think thy 
neighbour a hypocrite, merely from the hand of God 
upon him? no, I warrant thee, thou rather pitiest him,
and helpest him to answer the doubts that arise in his spirit from this very argument. It would make one smile to see how handsomely and roundly a Christian can untie the knots and scruples of another, who afterward, when brought into the like condition, is gravelled with the same himself; he that helped his friend over the stile, is now unable to stride it himself. God so orders things that we should need one another. She that is midwife to others cannot well do that office to herself: nor he that is the messenger to bring peace to the spirit of another able to speak it to his own. The case is clear, Christian; affliction cannot prove thee a hypocrite, which wert thou without altogether thou mightest safer think thou wert a bastard; the case I say is clear, but thy eyes are held for some further end God hath to bring about by thy affliction. But, may be, thou wilt say, it is not simply the affliction makes thee think thus of thyself; but because thou art so long afflicted, and in the dark also as to any sense of God’s love in thy soul. Thou hast no smiles from God’s sweet countenance to alleviate thy affliction; and if all were right, and thou a sincere child of God, would thy heavenly father let thee lie groaning, and never look in upon thee to lighten thy affliction with his sweet presence? As to the first of those, the length of thy affliction, I know no standard God hath set for to measure the length of his saints’ crosses by, and it becomes not us to make one ourselves; which we do, when we thus limit his chastisements to time, that if they exceed the day we have writ down in our own thoughts, which is like to be short enough if our hasty hearts may appoint, then we are hypocrites. For the other, thou must know, God can, without any impeachment to his love, hide it for awhile; and truly he may take it very ill that his children, who have security enough given them for his loving them, besides the sensible manifestation of it to their souls, should call this in question, for not coming to visit them, and take them up in his arms, when they would have him: in a word, may be thy affliction comes in the nature of purging physic; God intends to evacuate some corruption by it, which endangers thy spiritual health, and hinders thy thriving in godliness. Now
the manifestation of his love God may reserve, as physicians do their cordials, to be given when the physic is over.

Secondly, I fear I am a hypocrite, saith the tempted soul, why else are there such decays and declensions to be found in me? it is the character of the upright, that he goes from strength to strength, but I go backward from strength to weakness. Some Christians are like those that we call close men in the world; if they lose any thing in their trade, and all goes not as they would have it, we are sure to hear of that over and over again, they speak of their losses in every company; but when they make a good market, and gains come in apace, they keep this to themselves, not forward to speak of them. If Christians would be ingenuous they should tell what they get, as well as what they lose. But to take it for granted that thou dost find a decay, and direct our answer to it:

A ev. I. I grant it is true that the sincere soul grows stronger and stronger; but how? even as the tree grows higher and bigger, which we know meets with a fall of the leaf and winter, that for awhile intermits its growth. Thus the sincere soul may be put to a present stand by some temptation; as Peter, who was far from growing stronger when he fell from professing to denying; from denying Christ to swearing and cursing if he knew him: yet as the tree, when spring comes, revives and gains more in the summer then it loseth in the winter, so doth the sincere soul; as we see in Peter, whose grace that squatted in for awhile, came forth with such a force that no cruelty from men could drive it in ever after; shaking temptations end in settlement, according to the Apostle's prayer: "the God of all grace, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Pet. v. 10.

Secondly, There is great difference between the decay of a sincere soul and of a hypocrite. The hypocrite declines out of an inward dislike of the ways of God; hence they are called "backsliders in heart," Prov. xiv. 14. So long as they served his lust, and contributed any help to the obtaining his worldly interest, so long he had a seeming zeal; but that argument taken away, he
begins to remit by degrees, till he comes to be key-cold, yea as heartily sick of his profession as Amnon of Tamar; when the hypocrite begins to fall, he goes apace, like a stone down the hill, knows no ground but the bottom. Now speak freely, poor soul, dares thou say that there is an inward dislike to the ways of God? may be thou dost pray not with that heat and fervency which thou hast, but is it because thou dost not like the duty as formerly? thou dost not hear the word with such joy, but dost thou not therefore hear it with more sorrow? in a word, canst thou not say with the spouse, "when thou sleepest, thy heart waketh," Cant. v. 2, that is, thou art not pleased with thy present declining state, but heartily wishest thou wert out of it; as one that hath a great desire to rise, and be at his work, his heart is awake, but he is not able at present to shake off that sleep which binds him down; this will clear thee from being a hypocrite.

Thirdly, I fear, saith the poor soul, I am a hypocrite, because I have such a divided heart in the duties I perform; I cannot for my life enjoy any privacy with God in duty, but some base lust will be crowding into my thoughts, when I am at prayer, hearing of the word, or meditating; now I am lifted up with a self-applauding thought, anon cast down to the earth with a worldly thought, what with one and another, little respite have I from such company. And do such vermin breed any where but in the dunghill of a false hypocritical heart?

Answer. Woe were it to the best of saints, if the mere rising and stirring of such thoughts as these, or worse than these, did prove the heart unsound; take heed thou concludest not thy state therefore from the presence of these in thee, but from the comportment and behaviour of thy heart towards them. Answer therefore to these few interrogatories, and possibly thou mayest see thy sincerity through the mist these have raised in the soul.

First, What friendly welcome have such thoughts with thee, when they present themselves to thee in duty? Are these the guests thou hast expected and trimmed thy room for? didst go to duty to meet those friends, or do they unmannerly break in upon thee, and forcibly carry...
thee, as Christ foretold of Peter in another case, whither thou wouldest not? If so, why shouldest thou bring thy sincerity into dispute? dost thou not know the devil is a bold intruder, and dares come where he knows there is none will bid him sit down; and that soul alone he can call his own house where he finds rest, Luke xii. 24. Suppose in your family, as you are kneeling down to prayer, a company of rioters should stand under your window, and all the while you are praying, they should be roaring and hollowing, this could not but much disturb you; but would you from the disturbance they make fall to question your sincerity in the duty? Truly it is all one whether the disturbance be in the room or in the bosom, so the soul likes the one no more than he doth the other.

Secondly, Dost thou sit contented with this company, or use all the means thou canst to get rid of them as soon as may be? Sincerity cannot sit still to see such doings in the soul; but as a faithful servant, when thieves break into his master's house, though overpowered with their strength and multitude, that he cannot with his own hands thrust them out of doors, yet he will send out secretly for help, and raise the town upon them: prayer is the sincere soul's messenger, it posts to Heaven with full speed in this case, counting itself to be no other than in the belly of Hell with Jonah, while it is yoked with such thoughts; and as glad when aid comes to rescue him out of their hands, as Lot was when Abraham recovered him from the kings that had carried him away prisoner.

Object. But may be thou wilt say, though thou darest not deny that thy cry is sent to Heaven against them, yet thou hearest no news of thy prayer, but continuest still pestered with them as before, which encreaseth thy fear that thy heart is naught, or else thy prayer would have been answered, and thou delivered from these inmates.

Answ. Paul might as well have said so, when he besought the Lord thrice, but could not have the thorn in his flesh plucked out, 2 Cor. xii. 8. He doth not by this shew thee to be a hypocrite, but gives thee a fair advantage of proving thyself sincere; not much unlike his dealing with the Israelites, before whom he did not (as
they expected) hastily drive out the nations, but left them as thorns in their sides, and why? hear the reason from God's own mouth: "that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not." Judges ii. 22. Thus God leaves these corruptions in thee, to prove whether thou wilt at last fall in and be friends with them, or maintain the conflict with them, and continue praying against them, by which perseverance thou wilt prove thyself to be indeed upright. A false heart will never do this. He is soon answered that doth not cordially desire the thing he asks. The hypocrite, when he prays against his corruption, goes of his conscience's errand, not his will's; just as a servant, that doth not like the message his master sends him about, but dares not displease him, and therefore goes, and may be knocks at the man's door whither he is sent, yet very faintly, loth he should hear him; all that he doth is that he may but bring a fair tale to his master, by saying he was there: even so prays the hypocrite, only to stop the mouth of his conscience with this flam that he hath prayed against his lust; glad he is when it is over, and more glad that he returns re infectā. Observe therefore the behaviour of thy heart in prayer, and judge thyself sincere or not sincere by that, not by the present success it hath. God can take it kindly that thou askest what at present he thinks better to deny than give. Thou wouldest have all thy corruptions knocked down at one blow, and thy heart in a posture to do the work of thy God without any stop or rub from lust within, or devil without; wouldest thou not? God highly approves of your zeal, as he did of David's, who had a mind to build him a temple; but as he thought not fit that the house should in David's time be reared (reserving it for the peaceful reign of Solomon) so neither doth he that this thy request should be granted in this life, having reserved this immunity, as an especial part of the charter of the city that is above, which none but glorified saints, who are inhabitants there, enjoy. He hath indeed taught us to pray (let thy will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven), but we must expect the full answer to it when
we come there. But learn therefore, poor soul, to take this denial, as David did his: because God would not let him build the house in his days, he did not therefore question the love and favour of God, neither did he desist from preparing materials for it, but did what he might towards it, though he might not what he would. Far be it from thee also, that thou shouldst for this either cast away thy confidence in God, or lay aside thy endeavour for God, in mortifying thy corruptions, and adding to the store thou hast at present of his graces, which, though now imperfect and unpolished, he will make use of in the heavenly building which he intends thee for, where all the broken pieces, as I may so say, of our weak graces shall be so improved by the power and wisdom of God that they shall make up one glorious structure of perfect holiness, more to be admired by angels in Heaven, for the rare workmanship of it, than Solomon's temple was on earth by men, when in its full glory.

Object. Oh but, saith the tempted soul, I have sometimes inward checks from my own conscience that this duty I did hypocritically, and in that action there was much falseness of heart discovered itself; and if my heart condemn me, how can it be otherwise but I must needs be a hypocrite?

Answer. I shall help to resolve this, by laying down two distinctions, and applying them to the case in hand.

First, We must distinguish between conscience proceeding by a right rule in its judgment, and conscience proceeding by a false rule.

Secondly, Between a conscience that goes by a right rule, and is also rightly informed how to use it; and a conscience that judgeth by a right rule, but is not rightly informed in its use. To apply the first.

First, Then conscience proceeds by a right rule, when it grounds its charge upon the Word of God; for, being but an under officer, it is bound up to a law by which it must proceed; and that can be no other than what God appoints it, who gives it commission, and puts it in office; and that is the Word of God, and that only; so that we are to give credit to our consciences, commanding or forbidding, condemning or acquitting us, when it can shew
its warrant from the Word of God for these; otherwise, as subjects that are wronged in an inferior court, and cannot have justice there, may appeal higher, so may and ought we from conscience to the Word of God. And you must know conscience is a faculty that is corrupted as much as any other by nature, and is very often made use of by Satan to deceive both good and bad, godly and ungodly. Many that now their consciences, they say, speak peace to them, will be found merely cheated and gulled when the books shall be opened; no such discharge will then be found entered in the book of the Word as conscience hath put into their hand. And many gracious souls, who passed their days in a continual fear of their spiritual state, and were kept chained in the dark dungeon of a troublesome conscience, shall then be acquitted, and have their action against Satan for false imprisonment, and abusing their consciences to the disturbing their peace. And now let me ask thee, poor soul, who sayest thy conscience checks thee for a hypocrite; art thou a convicted hypocrite by the Word? Doth conscience shew thee a word from Christ’s law, that proves thee so? or rather doth not Satan abuse thy own fearfulness, and play upon the tenderness of thy spirit, which is so deeply possessed with the sense of thy sins that thou art ready to believe any motion in thee that tells any evil of thee? I am sure it is often so; the fears and checks which some poor souls have in their bosoms, are like those reports that are now and then raised of some great news, by such as have a mind to abuse the country; a talk and murmur you shall have in every one’s mouth of it, but go about to follow it to the springhead, and you can find no ground of it, or author of credit that will vouch it. Thus here, a clamour there is in the tempted Christian’s bosom, and a noise heard as it were continually whispering in his ears, I am a hypocrite, my heart is naught, all I do is dissembling; but when the poor creature in earnest sets upon the search, to find out the business, calls his soul to the bar, and falls to examine it upon those interrogatories which the Word propounds for trial of our sincerity, he can fasten this charge from none of them all upon himself; and so
last comes to find it but a false alarm of Hell, given out
to put him to some trouble and affright for the present,
though not hurt him in the end; like the politician's lie,
which though it be found false at last, yet doth them
some service the time it is believed for true. As one
serious question, such as this, seriously put to a gross
hypocrite, is able to make him speechless: What pro-
mise in all the Bible hast thou on thy side for thy salva-
tion? so it is enough to deliver the troubled soul from
his fears of being a hypocrite, if he would but, as David,
ask his soul a Scripture reason for his disquietments:
"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou
disquieted within me?" The sincere soul hath firm ground
for his faith at bottom, however a little dirt is cast by
Satan over it, to make him afraid of venturing to set his
foot on it.

Secondly, we must distinguish between a conscience
rightly informed and a conscience misinformed. A con-
science may be regular, so as to chuse the right rule,
but not rightly informed how to use this rule in his par-
ticular case. Indeed, in the saint's trouble of spirit,
conscience is full of Scripture sometimes, on which it
grounds its verdict, but very ill interpreted. O, saith
the poor soul, this place is against me, Psalm xxxii.
"Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not
iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Here,
saith he, is a description of a sincere soul to be one in
whose spirit there is no guile; but I find much guile in
me: therefore I am not the sincere one. Now this is a
very weak, yea false inference. By a spirit without
guile is not meant a person that hath not the least deceit-
fulness and hypocrisy remaining in his heart; this is
such a one as none since the fall (but Christ himself) was
ever found walking in mortal flesh. To be without sin,
and to be without guile, in this strict sense are the same;
a prerogative here on earth peculiar to the Lord Christ,
"who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."
2 Pet. ii. 22. And therefore when we meet with the
same phrase attributed to the saints, as to Levi, Mal.
ii. 6, "iniquity was not found in his lips;" and to Na-
thaniel, John i. 47, "behold an Israelite indeed, in whom
there is no guile," we must sense it in an inferior way, that may suit with their imperfect state here below; and not put that, which only was Christ's crown on earth, and is the glorified saint's robe in heaven to wear, on the weak Christian while militant on earth, not only with a devil without, but a body of sin within him. Wipe thine eyes again, poor soul, and then if thou readest such places, wherein the Spirit of God speaks so highly and hyperbolically of his saints' grace, thou shalt find he doth not assert the perfection of their grace, free from all mixture of sin; but rather, to comfort poor drooping souls, and cross their misgiving hearts (which, from the presence of hypocrisy are ready to overlook their sincerity as none at all), he expresseth his high esteem of their little grace, by speaking of it as if it were perfect, and their hypocrisy none at all. O Christian, thy God would have thee know that thou dost not more overlook thy little grace, for fear of the hypocrisy thou findest mingled with it, than he doth thy great corruptions, for the dear love he bears to the little yet true grace he sees amidst them. Abraham loved and owned his kinsman Lot, when a prisoner, carried away by those heathen kings; so does thy God thy grace (near in blood to him) when sadly yoked by the enemy in thy own bosom; and for thy comfort know, when the books shall be opened, the Word, and also that of thy own conscience, in the great day of Christ, Christ will be the interpreter of both. Not the sense which thou hast, in the distemper of thy troubled soul (when thou readest both with Satan's gloss), put upon them shall stand, but what Christ shall say. And to be sure he hath already declared himself so great a friend to weak grace, when on earth, by his loving converse with his disciples, and free testimony he gave to his grace in them (when, God knows, they were but raw and weak Christians, both as to their knowledge and practice) that, poor soul, thou needest not fear he will then and there condemn what here he commended and so dearly embraced; yea, he that took most care for his little lambs how they might be used gently, when he was to go from them to Heaven, will not be unkind himself to them at his return I warrant thee.
HAVING broke the flattering glasses wherein hypocrites use to look, till they fall in love with their own painted faces, and conceal themselves sincere; as also those which disfigure the sweet countenance and natural beauty of the sincere soul, so as to make it bring the grace of God which shines on it into question, I now proceed to draw a few lineaments, and lay down some undoubted characters of this truth of heart and godly sincerity, whereby we may have the better advantage of stating every one his own condition.

SECT. I.

First, a sincere heart is a new heart. Hypocrisy is called the old leaven. 1 Cor. v. 7. "purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." Dough once soured with leaven will never lose the taste of it; neither will corrupt nature cease to be hypocritical, till it cease to be corrupt nature: either the heart must be made new, or it will have its old quality. There may be some art used to conceal it, and take away its unsavouriness from others for awhile, as flowers and perfumes cast about a rotten carcase may do its scent, yet both the rotten carcase and the corrupt heart remain the same. They say of the peacock, that roast him as much as you will yet his flesh when cold will be raw again: truly, thus let a carnal heart do what it please; force upon itself never such a high strain of seeming piety, so that it appears fire-hot with zeal, yet stay a little, and it will come to its old complexion, and discover itself to be but what it was, naught and false. One heart and a new heart both are covenant mercies, yea so promised that the new is promised in order to the making of the heart one: "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new
spirit in you, and I will take away the stony heart," &c. 
Ezek. xi. 19. God promiseth he will give them one spirit, 
that is, a sincere spirit to God and man; contrary to a 
divided heart, a heart and a heart, the mark of hypocrisy. 
But how will he give it? he tells them, "I will give you 
a new spirit;" and how will he do that? "I will take 
away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh;"
upon which words one very well thus glosseth, I will 
give you one heart, which that I may so do, I will cast 
it anew; and that I may do this also, I will melt and 
soften it; as one that having many pieces of old silver or 
plate lying by him, which he intends to put into one 
bowl, he first resolves to cast it anew, and to that end 
throws it into the fire to melt, and so at last shuts up all 
in one piece. Indeed by nature man's heart is a very 
divided broken thing, scattered and parcelled out, a piece 
to this creature, and a piece to that lust. One while this 
vanity hires him (as Leah did Jacob of Rachel), anon 
when he hath done some drudgery for that, he lets him-
self out to another; thus divided is man and his affec-
tions. Now the elect (whom God hath decreed to be 
vessels of honour, consecrated for his holy use and ser-
vice) he throws into the fire of his Word, that being there 
softened and melted, he may by his transforming spirit 
cast them anew, as it were, into a holy oneness; so that 
he who before was divided from God, and lost among the 
creatures and his lusts (that shared him among them), 
now his heart is gathered in to God from them all; it 
looks with a single eye on God, and acts for him in all 
that he doth. If therefore thou wouldst know whether 
thy heart be sincere, enquire whether it be thus made 
new. Hath God thrown thee into his furnace? Did 
ever his Word like fire take hold upon thee, so as to 
soften thy hard heart, and melt thy drossy spirit, that 
thy now seest that desperate hypocrisy, pride, unbelief, 
and the like, which before lay hid, like dross in the 
metal before the fire finds it out? and not only seest it, 
but seest it sever and separate from thy soul, that thou, 
who before didst bless thyself as in a good condition, 
now bewailest thy folly for it, heartily confessing what 
an unsavoury creature thou wert to God in all thou
didst; the things which appeared so gaudy and fair in thy eye, thy civil righteousness, keeping thy church, slubbering over a few duties in thy family, that for them thou thoughtest Heaven was as it were in mortgage to thee; dost thou lament to think how thou didst mock God with these hypocritical pageants abroad, while thy lusts were entertained within doors in thy bosom, there sucking the heart-blood of thy dearest affections? In a word, canst thou say that thou art not only melted into sorrow for these, but that thou findest thy heart (which was so divided and distracted betwixt lusts and creatures) now united to fear the name of God? Hast thou but one design, that above all thou pursuest, and that to approve thyself to God, though with the displeasing of all beside? one love, how thou mayest love Christ, and be beloved of him? If the streams of thy affections be thus (by the mighty power of God renewing thee) gathered into this one channel, and with a sweet violence run this way, then blessed art thou of the Lord; thou art the sincere soul in his account, though much corruption be found in thee still, that is disturbing thy stream, and endeavouring to stop the free course of thy soul God-ward. This may put thee to some trouble, as the mountains and rocks do the river-water running to the sea, causing some windings and turnings in its course, which else would go the nearest way, even in a direct line, to it: so thy remaining corruptions may now and then put thee out of thy way of obedience; but sincerity will (like the water) on its journey for all this, and never leave till it bring thee, though with some compass, to thy God, whom thou hast so imprinted in thy heart as he can never be forgot by thee. But if thou never hadst the hypocrisy of thy heart thus discovered and made hateful to thee, nor a new principle put into thy bosom, to turn the tide of thy soul contrary to the natural fall of thy affections—only thou, from the good opinion which thou hast of thyself, because of some petty flourishes thou makest in profession, takest it for granted thou art sincere, and thy heart true—I dare pronounce thee an unclean hypocrite. The world may saint thee possibly; but thou wilt never (as thou art) be so in God's
account; when thou hast dizened and spruced thyself up never so finely into the fashion of a Christian, still thou wilt have but a saint's face and a hypocrite's heart. It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel, that hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell within. New trimmings upon an old garment will not make it new, only give it a new shape: and truly it is no good management to bestow a great deal of cost in embellishing an old suit, that will drop in a while to tatters and rags, when a little more might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labour to get a new heart, that all thou doest may be accepted and thou saved, than to lose all the pains thou takest in religion, and thyself also, for want of it?

SECT. II.

Secondly, A sincere heart is a plain heart, a simple heart, sine plicis, a heart without folds. The hypocrite is of the serpent's brood: he can, as the serpent, shrink up, or let out himself for his advantage, unwilling to expose himself much to the knowledge of others; and he has reason to do so, for he knows he hath most credit where he is least known: the hypocrite is one that "digs deep to hide his counsel," Isa. xxix. 15. "their heart is deep," Psal. lxiv. 6. their meaning and intent of heart lies no body knows how far distant from their words; a sincere heart is like a clear stream in a brook, you may see to the bottom of his plots in his word, and take the measure of his heart by his tongue. I have heard say, that diseases of the heart are seen in spots of the tongue, but the hypocrite can shew a clear tongue, and yet have a foul heart. He that made that proverb, loquere ut te videam, speak that I may see you, did not think of the hypocrite, who will speak that you shall not see him. The thickest clouds that he hath to wrap up his villainy in, are his religious tongue and sandy profession. Wouldest thou know whether thou hast a true heart in thy bosom, look if thou hast a plain-dealing heart? see them joined, 2 Cor. i. 12. Paul and the rest of the faithful messengers of Christ had their conversation among the Corinthians, "in simplicity, and godly sincerity." They had no close
box in the cabinet of their hearts, in which they cunningly kept any thing concealed from them of their designs, as the false Apostles did. Now this plain dealing of the sincere heart appears in these three particulars.

First, A sincere heart deals plainly with itself, and that in two things chiefly.

First, In searching and ransacking its own self; this it doth to its utmost skill and power. It will not be put off with pretences, or such a mannerly excuse as Rachel gave Laban, when at the same time she sat brooding on his idols. No, an account it will have of the soul, and that such a one as may enable it to give a good account to God, upon whose warrant it does its office. O the fear which such a one shews, lest any lust should escape its eye, and lie hid (as Saul in the stuff), or that any the least grace of God should be trodden on regardlessly by belying or denying it. When David found his thoughts of God (which used to recreate him, and be his most pleasing company) occasion some trouble in his spirit, Psal. lxxvii. 3, "I thought on God, and was troubled;" this holy man (wondering what the matter should be) do but see what a privy search he makes; he hunts backwards and forwards, what God's former dealings had been, "and communes with his heart, and makes diligent search" there, ver. 6. never gives over till he brings it to an issue; and, finding the disturber of his peace to be in himself, he is not so tender of his reputation as to think of smothering the business, or smoothing it over; but attaches the thief, indicts his sin, and confesseth the fact, to the justifying of God, whom before he had hard thoughts of: "and I said, this is my infirmity." ver. 10. As if he had said, Lord, now I see the Jonas that caused the storm in my bosom, and made me so uncomfortable in my affliction all this while; it is this unbelief of mine, that bowed me down to attend so to the sorrow and sense of my present affliction that it would not suffer me to look up to former experiences; and so while I forgot them, I thought unworthily of thee. Here was an honest plain-dealing soul indeed; what akin art thou, O man, to holy David? is this thy way in searching of thy soul? dost thou do it in earnest, as if thou wert searching for a mar-
derer hid in thy house? as willing to find out thy sin as ever Papist in Queen Mary's days was to find Protestants, whom to discover they would run their swords and forks into beds and hay-mows, lest they should be there? Or when thou goest about this work, art thou loth to look too far, lest thou shouldest see what thou wouldst willingly overlook; or afraid to stay too long, lest conscience should make an unpleasing report to thee? Tertullian said of the Heathen persecutors, *noluerunt audire*, *quod auditum damnare non possint*; they would not let the Christians be heard, because they could not then easily have had the face to condemn them, their cause would have appeared so just. The contrary here is true: the hypocrite dares not put his state upon a fair trial, because then he could not handsomely escape condemning himself; but the sincere soul is so zealous to know its true state, that when he hath done his utmost himself to find it out, and upon this privy search his conscience clears him, yet he contents not himself here, but jealous, lest self-love might blind his eyes, and occasion too favourable a report from his conscience, he calls in help from Heaven, and puts himself upon God's review: "Do not I hate them that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee?" *Psalm cxxxix. 21. His own conscience answers to it: "I hate them with a perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies," ver. 22. Yet David, not wholly satisfied with his own single testimony, calls out to God, ver. 23. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; see if there be any wicked way in me;" and wise physicians will not trust their own judgments about the state of their own health; nor sincere Christians themselves about their soul's welfare; it is God that they attend to; his judgment alone concludes and determines them. When they have prayed, and opened their case to him, with David, they listen what he will say; therefore you shall find them putting themselves under the most searching ministry, from which they never come more pleased than when their consciences are stripped naked, and their hearts exposed to their view, as the woman of Samaria, who commended the sermon, and Christ that preached it, for this unto her neighbours, that "he had
told her all that ever she had done,” *John* iv. 29. whereas a false heart likes not to hear of that; he thinks the preacher commits a trespass when he comes upon this ground, and comes up close to his conscience, and if he could, he would have an action against him for it. This stuck in Herod’s stomach, that John should lay his finger on his sore place; though he feared him, being conscious, yet he never loved him, and therefore was soon persuaded to cut off his head, which had so bold a tongue in it that durst reprove his incestuous bed.

Secondly, The true heart shews its plain dealing with itself, as in searching, so in judging itself, when once testimony come in clear against it, and conscience tells: Soul, in this duty thou betrayest pride, in that affection frowardness and impatience; such a one is not long before it proceeds to judgment, and this it doth with so much vehemency and severity, that it plainly appears, zeal for God, whom he hath dishonoured, makes him forget all self-pity, he lays about him in humbling and abasing himself, as the sons of Levi in executing justice on their brethren, who knew neither brother nor sister in that act; truly such an heroic act is this of the sincere soul judging itself, he is so transported and clothed with a holy fury against his sin, that he is deaf to the cry of flesh and blood, which would move him to think of a more favourable sentence. “I have sinned (saith David) against the Lord,” *2 Sam.* xii; in another place, “I have sinned greatly, and done very foolishly,” *2 Sam.* xxiv; in a third he, as unworthy of a man’s name, takes beast to himself, “so foolish was I and ignorant, as a beast before thee,” *Psalm* lxxiii. 22. But a false heart, if conscience checks him for this or that, and he perceives by this inward murmur in his bosom which way the cause will go, if he proceeds fairly on to put himself upon the trial; the court is sure to be broke up, and all put off to another hearing, which is like to be at leisure; so that as witnesses, with delays and many put-offs, grow at last weary of the work, and will rather stay at home than make their appearance to little purpose, so conscience ceaseth to give evidence where it cannot be heard, or when heard, can have no judgment against the offender.
girt about with truth.

Secondly, A true heart is plain, as with itself so with God also; several ways this might appear, take one for all, and that is in his petitions and requests at the throne of grace; the hypocrite in prayer juggles, he asks what he would not thank God to give him; there is a mystery of iniquity in his praying against iniquity. Now this will appear in two particulars, whether we be plain-hearted in our requests, or not.

First, Observe whether thou art deeply afflicted in spirit when thy request is not answered; or regardest not what success it hath. Suppose it be a sin thou prayest against, or some grace thou prayest for; what is thy temper all the while thy messenger stays, especially if it be long? Thou prayest, and corruption abates not, grace grows not; now thy hypocrisy or sincerity will appear, if sincere: every moment will be an hour, every hour a day, a year, till thou hearest some news from Heaven. Hope deferred will make the heart sick; doth not the sick man, that sends for the physician, think long for his coming? O he is afraid his messenger should miss of him, or that he will not come with him, or that he shall die before he bring his physic; a thousand fears disturb him, and make him passionately wish he were there: thus the sincere soul passeth those hours with a sad heart that it lives without a return of its request: "I am a woman (said Hannah to Eli) of a sorrowful spirit," 1 Sam. i. 15. and why so? alas! she had from year to year prayed to God, and no answer was yet come: thus, saith the soul, I am one of a bitter spirit, I have prayed for a soft heart, a believing heart, many a day and month, but it is not come: I am afraid I was not sincere in the business, could my request so long have hung in the clouds else? such a soul is full of fears and troubles; like a merchant that hath a rich ship at sea, who cannot sleep on land till he sees her, or hears of her. But, if when thou hast sent up thy prayer, thou canst cast off the care and thoughts of the business, as if praying were only like children's scribbling over pieces of paper, which when they have done, they lay aside and think no more of them; if thou canst take denial at God's hands for such things as these, and care no more than a cold
Having your loins

suitor doth when he hears not from her whom he never really loved, it breaks not thy rest, embitters not thy joy, a false heart set thee on work; and take heed that, instead of answering thy prayer, God doth not answer the secret desire of thy heart, which should he do, thou art undone for ever.

Secondly, Observe whether thou usest the means to obtain that which thou prayest God to give. A false heart sits still itself, while it sets God on work; like him, that when his cart was set in a slough, cried, Jupiter help, but would not put his own shoulder to the wheel. If corruptions may be mortified and killed for him, as Goliath was for the Israelites, he like them looking on, and not put to strike stroke, so it is; but for any encounter with them, or putting himself to the trouble of using any means to obtain the victory, he is so eaten up with sloth and cowardice, that it is as grievous, he thinks, as to sit still in slavery and bondage to them. But a sincere soul is conscientiously laborious. "Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto the Lord," Lam. iii. 41, that is, saith Bernard, oremus et laboremus, let us pray and use the endeavour. The hypocrite's tongue wage, but the sincere soul's feet walk and hands work.

Thirdly, The sincere soul discovers its plainness and simplicity to men. We had our conversation among you, (saith Paul) to the Corinthians, "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom." The Christian is one that cannot subject his heart to his head, his conscience to his policy; he commits himself to God in well-doing, and fears not others, if he be not conscious to himself, and therefore he dares not make a hole in his conscience to keep his skin whole, but freely and openly voucheth God without dissembling his profession: while the hypocrite shifts his sails, and puts forth such colours as his policy and worldly interest adviseth; if the coast be clear, and no danger at hand, he will appear as religious as any, but no sooner he makes discovery of any hazard it may put him to, but he tacks about, and shapes another course, making no bones of juggling with God and man; he counts that his right road which leads to his temporal safety; but quite contrary the upright, "the highway of
the upright is to depart from evil." *Prov. xvi. 17.* This
is the road that this true traveller jogs on in, and if he
be at any time seen out of it, it is upon no other account
than a man that hath unwillingly lost his way, never
quiet till he strike into it again.

**S E C T. III.**

Thirdly, The sincere true-hearted Christian is uniform.
As truth in the doctrine differs in this from its opposite,
that it is one, error diverse, there is no harmony among
errors as among truths; so truth of heart or sincerity is
known from hypocrisy by the same character. Indeed
truth in the heart is but the copy and transcript of the
other; they agree as the face in the glass doth with the
face of the man that looks in it, or as the image in the
wax with the sculpture in the seal, from which it is de-

erived; therefore, if truth in the Word be uniform and har-
monious, then truth in the heart, which is nothing but the
impression of the former, must also be so. A sincere
Christian in the tenor of his course is like himself, *vir
unius coloris*, of one colour; not like your changeable
stuffs, so died that you may, by waving of them divers
ways, see divers colours.

There is a threefold uniformity in the sincere Christian’s
obedience; he is uniform, *quoad objectum, subjectum, et
circumstantias obedientia*, as to the object, subject, and
several circumstances that accompany his obedience.

First, As to the object. The hypocrite indeed is in with
one duty, and out with another; like a globous body,
he toucheth the law of God in one point, some particular
command he seems zealous for, but meets not in the rest;
whereas the sincere heart lies close to the whole law of
God in his desire and endeavour. The upright man’s
foot is said to "stand in an even place," *Psal. xxvi. 11.*
he walks not haltingly and uncomely, as those who go
in unequal ways, which are hobbling, and up and
down, or those whose feet and legs are not even, as
Solomon saith, "the legs of the lame are not even," and
so cannot stand in an even place, because one is long
and the other short; the sincere man’s feet are even, and


Having your loins

legs of a length, as I may say; his care alike conscientious to the whole will of God. The hypocrite, like the badger, hath one foot shorter than another, or like a souther horse he doth not stand, as we say, right of all four; one foot at least you shall perceive he favours, loth to put it down. The Pharisees pretended much zeal to the first table: they prayed and fasted in an extraordinary manner; but they prayed for their prey, and when they had fasted all day, they sup at the poor widow's cost, her house they mean to devour: a sad fast, that ends in oppression, and only serves to get them a ravenous appetite, to swallow others' estates under a pretence of devotion. The moralist, he is very punctual in his dealings with men, but very thievish in his carriage to God; though he will not wrong his neighbour of a farthing, sticks not to rob God of greater matters: his love, fear, faith, are due debts to God, but he makes no conscience of paying them. It is ordinary in Scripture to describe a saint, a godly person, by a particular duty, a single grace; sometimes his character is, "one that feareth an oath," Eccles. ix. 2, sometimes one that loves the brethren, 1 John iii. 14, and so of the rest, and why? but because wherever one duty is conscientiously performed, the heart stands ready for any other. As God hath enacted all his commands with the same authority, wherefore it is said, "God spake all these words," Exod. xx. 1. one as well as the other, so God infuseth all grace together, and writes not one particular law in the heart of his children, but the whole law, which is an universal principle, inclining the soul impartially to all; so that if thou likest not all, thou art sincere in none.

Secondly, The sincere Christian is uniform, quoad subiectum; the whole man, so far as renewed, moves one way; all the powers and faculties of the soul join forces, and have a sweet accord together. When the understanding makes discovery of a truth, then conscience improves her utmost authority on the will, commanding it in the name of God, whose officer it is, to entertain it; the will, so soon as conscience knocks, opens herself, and lets it in; the affections, like dutiful handmaids, seeing it a guest welcome to the will (their mistress) express their
readiness to wait on it, as becomes them in their places. But in the hypocrite it is not so; there one faculty fights against another; never are they all found to conspire and meet in a friendly vote. When there is light in the understanding, the man knows this truth and that duty; then oft conscience is bribed for executing its office, it doth not so much as check him for the neglect of it; truth stands as it were before the soul, and conscience will not so much befriend it as to knock and rouse up the soul to let it in: if conscience be overcome to plead its cause, and shews some activity in pressing for entertainment, it is sure either to have a churlish denial, with a frown for its pains, in being so busy, to bring such an unwelcome guest with it, as the froward wife doth by her husband, when he brings home with him one she doth not like, or else a feigned entertainment, the more subtilly to hide the secret enmity it hath against it.

Thirdly, Quoad circumstantias obedientiae. The sincere soul is uniform as to the circumstances of his obedience and holy walking; such as are time, place, and company, and manner. He is uniform as to time: his religion is not like a holyday suit, put on only at set times, but come to him when you will, you shall find him clad alike, holy on the Lord's day and holy on the week-day too: "blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times," Ps. cvi. 3. it is a sign it is not a man's complexion, when the colour he hath while he sits by a fire dies away soon after. There are some if you would see their goodness, and be acquainted with their godliness, you must hit the right time, or else you will find none; like some flowers that are seen but some months in the year; or like some physicians that they call forenoon-men, they that would speak with them to any purpose, must come in the morning, because commonly they are drunk in the afternoon. Thus, may be in the morning you may take the hypocrite on his knees in a saint's posture; but when that fit is over, you shall see little of God in all his course till night brings him again to the like duty. The watch is naught that goes only at first winding up, and stands all the day after; and so is that heart sure that desires not always
to keep in spiritual motion. I confess there may be a great difference in the standing of two watches: one from the very watch itself, because it hath not the right make, and this will ever do so till altered; another possibly is true work, only some dust clogs the wheels, or fall hath a little battered it, which removed, it will go well again; and there is as great difference between the sincere soul and hypocrite in this case: the sincere soul may be interrupted in its spiritual motion and Christian course, but it is from some temptation that at present clogs him; but he hath a new nature, which inclines to a constant motion in holiness, and doth upon the removing the present impediment, return to its natural exercise of godliness; but the hypocrite fails in the very constitution and frame of his spirit, he hath not a principle of grace in him to keep him moving.

Again, The sincere Christian is uniform as to place and company. Wherever he goes he carries his rule with him, which squares him; within doors amidst his nearest relations, David’s resolve is his, Psal. ci. 2. “He will walk within his house with a perfect heart;” follow him abroad, he carries his conscience with him, and doth not bid it, as Abraham his servants, when ascending the mount, to stay behind till he comes back. The Romans had a law that every one should, wherever he went, wear a badge of his trade in his hat, or outward vestment, that he might be known: the sincere Christian never willingly lays aside the badge of his holy profession. No place nor company turns him out of the way that is called holy. Indeed his conscience doth not make him forego his prudence; he knows how to distinguish of place and place, company and company; and therefore, when cast among boisterous sinners and scornful ones, he doth not betray religion to scorn, by throwing its pearls before such as would trample on them, and rend him, yet he is very careful lest his prudence should put his uprightness to any hazard. “I will behave myself wisely (saith David in the forenamed, Psalm) in a perfect way;” that is, I will shew myself as wise as I can, so I may also be upright. Truly, that place and company is, like the torrid zone, uninhabitable to a gracious soul, where profane-
ness is so hot that sincerity cannot look out, and shew itself by seasonable counsel and reproof, with safety to the saint; and therefore they that have neither so much zeal to protest against the sins of such, nor so much care of themselves as to withdraw from thence, where they can only receive evil and do no good, have just cause to call their sincerity into question.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, The sincere Christian is progressive, never at his journey's end till he gets to Heaven: this keeps him always in motion, advancing forward in his desires and endeavours; he is thankful for little grace, but not content with great measures of grace: "When I awake," saith David, "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness," Psalm xvii. 15; he had many a sweet entertainment at the house of God in his ordinances; the Spirit of God was the messenger that brought him many a covered dish from God's table, inward consolations, which the world knew not of, yet David has not enough, it is Heaven alone that can give him his full draught. They say the Gauls, when they first tasted of the wines of Italy, were so taken with their lusciousness and sweetness, that they could not be content to trade thither for this wine, but resolved they would conquer the land where they grew: thus the sincere soul thinks it not enough to receive a little now and then of grace and comfort from Heaven, by trading and holding commerce at a distance with God in his ordinances here below, but projects and meditates a conquest of that holy land and blessed place from whence such rich commodities come, that he may drink the wine of that kingdom in that kingdom. This raiseth the soul to high and noble enterprises, how it may attain to further degrees of grace every day than another, and so climb nearer and nearer Heaven. He that aims at the sky, shoots higher than he that means only to hit a tree. "I press (saith Paul) toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. iii. 13. Others admired Paul's attainments (O that they had Paul's grace, and then they should be happy!), but he
Having your loins

would count himself very unhappy if he might have no more; he professeth he hath not apprehended what he runs for; the prize stands not in the midway, but at the end of the race, and therefore he puts on with full speed, yea makes it the trial of uprightness in all, ver. 15. "Let us therefore as many as be perfect (that is sincere) be thus minded." It is the hypocrite that stints himself in the things of God. A little knowledge he would have, that may help him to discourse of religion among the religious, and for more he leaves it as more fitting for the preacher than himself. Some outward formalities he likes, and makes use of in profession, as attendance on public ordinances, and sins which would make him stink among his neighbours, he forbears; but as for pressing into more inward and nearer communion with God in ordinances, labouring to get his heart more spiritual, the whole body of sin more and more mortified, this was never his design: like some slighty tradesman that never durst look so high as to think of being rich, but thinks it well enough if he can but hold his shop-doors open, and keep himself out of gaol, though with a thousand shifting tricks.

CHAP. XIII.

A WORD OF DIRECTION TO THOSE WHO UPON TRIAL ARE FOUND UNSOUND AND FALSE-HEARTED.

HAVING laid down characters of the sincere heart, it will be necessary to make some improvement of them, as the report shall be that conscience makes in your bosoms, upon putting yourselves to the trial of your spiritual states by the same. Now the report that conscience makes, after examination of yourselves by those notes prefixed, will amount to one of these three inferences: either it will condemn thee for a hypocrite, or pronounce thee a sincere Christian, or thirdly, bring in an ignoramus, and leave thee in doubt whether thou art
sincere or not. That I may therefore find thee, reader, at one door, if I miss thee at another, I shall speak severally to all three.

First, To such who upon the trial are cast. Evidence comes in so clear and strong against them, that their conscience cannot hold, but tells them plainly, if these be the marks of sincerity, then they are hypocrites. The improvement I would make of this trial for your sakes is to give a word of counsel, what in this case you are to do, that you may become sincere.

First, Get thy heart deeply affected with thy present dismal state. No hope of cure till thou art chafed into some sense and feeling of thy deplored condition. Physic cannot be given so long as the patient is asleep; and it is the nature of this disease to make the soul heavy-eyed, and dispose it to a kind of slumber of conscience, by reason of the flattering thoughts the hypocrite hath of himself, from some formalities he performs above others in religion, which fume up from his deceived heart, like so many pleasing vapours from the stomach to the head, and bind up his spiritual senses into a kind of stupidity, yea cause many pleasing dreams to entertain him with vain hopes and false joys, which vanish as soon as he wakes and comes to himself. The Pharisees, the most notorious hypocrites of their age, how fast asleep were they in pride and carnal confidence, despising all the world in comparison of themselves, not afraid to commend themselves to God, yea, prefer themselves before others: “God I thank thee, I am not like this publican;” as if they would tell God they did look to find some more respect from him than others, so far beneath them, had at his hand? Therefore Christ, in his dealing with this proud generation of men, useth an unusual strain of speech; his voice, which to others was still and soft, is heard like thunder breaking out of the clouds when he speaks to them; how many dreadful claps have we almost together in the same chapter fall on their heads, out of the mouth of our meek and sweet Saviour, “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees;” Matth. xxiii, no less than eight woes doth Christ discharge upon them, that by multiplying the woes he might shew, not only the
certainty of the hypocrite’s damnation, but precedence also; and yet how many of that rank do we read of to be awakened and converted by these rousing sermons? Some few there were indeed, that the disease might appear not incurable; but very few, that we may tremble the more at falling into it, or letting it grow upon us. Peter learnt of his master how to handle the hypocrite, who having to do with one far gone in this disease, Simon Magus, Acts viii. 21. he steeps his words as it were in vinegar and gall: “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God;” there he lays the weight of his charge, that he carried a hypocritical heart in his bosom, which was a thousand times worse than his simoniacacl fact, though that was foul enough: it was not barely that fact, but proceeding from a heart inwardly rotten and false, which God gave Peter an extraordinary spirit to discern, that proved him to be “in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity;” only in this better than the damned souls in Hell, they were in the fire, he in the bond of iniquity, like a faggot bound up, fit for it, but not cast in: they past hope, and he so much left as might amount to a “perhaps if the thought of his heart might be forgiven.” To give but one instance more, and that is of a whole church, hypocritical Laodicea: the Spirit of God takes her up more sharply than all the rest, which though be charged with some particular miscarriages, yet finds something among them he owns and commends; but in her, because she was conceited already (as this leaven of hypocrisy naturally puffs up) he mentions nothing that was good in her, lest it should feed that humour that did so abound already, and take away the smartness of the reproof, which was the only probable means left of recovering her. All that inclines to sleep is deadly to a lethargic; and all that is soothing and cockering dangerous to hypocrites. Some say the surest way to cure a lethargy is to turn it into a fever: to be sure the safest way to deal with the hypocrites is to bring them from their false peace to a deep sense of their true misery. Let this then be thy first work; aggravate thy sin, and put thy soul into mourning for it: when a person who was by the priest,
who was to judge in case of leprosy, pronounced unclean, the leper, thus convicted, "was to rend his clothes, go bareheaded, and put a covering upon his upper lip," (all ceremonies used by mourners) and to cry "unclean, unclean." Levit. xiii. 45. Thus do thou, as a true mourner, sit down, and lament this plague of thy heart; cry out bitterly, "unclean, unclean I am," not fit by reason of thy hypocritical heart to come near God or his saints, but to be, like the leper, separate from both. If thou hadst such a loathsome disease reigning on thee as did pollute the very seat thou sittest on, bed thou liest in, and drop such filthiness on every thing thou comest near, even into the meat thou eatest and cup thou drinkest from, that should make all abandon thy nasty company, how great would thy sorrow be, as thou didst sit desolate and musing alone of thy doleful condition? Such a state thy hypocrisy puts thee into: a plague it is more offensive to God than such a disease could make thee to men; it runs like a filthy sore through all the duties and goodly coverings that you can put over it, and defiles them and thee so that God will take an offering out of the devil's hand as soon as out of thine, while thou continuest a hypocrite; and did the saints of God (with whom thou hast may be so much credit as to be admitted to join with them at present) know thee, they would make as much haste from thee as from him on whom they should see the plague-tokens. But should not thy disease be known till thou art dead, and so thou keep thy reputation with them, yea possibly by them be thought when thou diest a saint, will this give thee any content in Hell, that they are speaking well of thee on earth? "O poor Aristotle (said one), thou art praised where thou art not, and burnt where thou art;" he meant it was poor comfort to that great heathen philosopher to be admired by men of learning, that have kept up his fame from generation to generation, if he all the while be miserable in the other world: so here, O poor hypocrite, that art ranked among saints on earth, but punished among devils in Hell.

Secondly, When thy heart is deeply affected with the sin and misery of thy hypocritical heart, thou must be
convinc'd of thy insufficiency to make a cure on thyself. Hypocrisy is like a fistula; it may seem a little matter by the small orifice it hath, but is therefore one of the hardest among wounds to be cured, because it is so hard to find the bottom of it. O take heed thy heart doth not put a cheat upon thyself. It will be very forward to promise it will lie no more, be false and hypocritical no more; but take counsel of a wise man, who bids thee not rely on what it saith: "he is a fool that trusts his own heart," Prov. xxviii. 2. O how many die, because both to be at pains and cost to go to a skilful physician at first? Take heed of self-resolutions and self-reformations; sin is like the king's evil, God, not ourselves, can cure it. He that will be tinkering with his own heart, and not seek out to Heaven for help, will in the end find where he mends one hole he will make two worse; where he reforms one sin, he will fall into the hands of many more dangerous.

Thirdly, Betake thyself to Christ, as the physician on whose skill and faithfulness thou wilt rely entirely for cure. *Si pereundum inter peritissimos,* if thou perish, resolve to perish at his door. But for thy comfort know, never any that he undertook miscarried under his hand, nor ever refused he to undertake the cure of any that came to him on such an errand. He blamed those hypocrites, John v. 40, 43, because they were ready to throw away their lives, by trusting any empiric, who should come in his own name without any approbation or authority from God for the work, but would "not come to him that they might have life," though he came in his Father's name, and had his seal and licence to practice his skill on poor souls for their recovery. And he that blamed those for not coming, will not cannot be angry with thee who comest. It is his calling; and men do not use to thrust customers out, but invite them into their shops. When Christ was on earth, he gave this reason, why he conversed so much with publicans and sinners, and so little among the Pharisees, because there was more work for him, Matth. ix. 11, 12. Men set up where they think trade will be quickest. Christ came to be a physician to sick souls: Pharisees were so well
in their own conceit, that Christ saw he should have little
to do among them, and so he applied himself to those
who were more sensible of their sickness. If thou, poor
soul, art but come to thyself so far as to groan under
thy cursed hypocrisy, and directest these thy groans in
a prayer to Heaven for Christ's help, thou shalt have thy
physician soon with thee, never fear it. He hath not
since he ascended laid down his calling, but still follows
his practice as close as ever; we find him sending his
advice from Heaven in that excellent receipt, Rev. iii. to
Laodicea, what she should do for her recovery out of this
very disease of hypocrisy: "I counsel thee to buy of me
gold- tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white
raiment that thou mayest be clothed," &c. As if he had
said, Laodicea, thou tradest in false ware, deceiving thy-
self and others with appearances for realities, counterfeit
graces for true; thy gold is dross, thy garments rotten
rags, which do not hide, but discover thy shame; come
to me, and thou shalt have that which is for thy turn, and
better and cheaper also; for though here is mention of
buying, no more is meant than to come with a buyer's
spirit, valuing Christ and his grace so high that if they
were to be bought, though with all the money in thy
purse, yea blood in thy veins, thou wouldest have them,
and not go home and say thou wert hardly used neither.
It is the thirsty soul that shall be satisfied, only look
thy thirst be right and deep.

First, Right: a heart-thirst, and not simply a conscience-
thirst. It is a very different heat that causeth the one
and the other: Hell-fire may inflame the conscience, so
as to make the guilty sinner thirst for Christ's blood to
quench the torment which the wrath of God had kindled
in his bosom; but it is Heaven-fire, and only that,
which begets a kindly heat in the heart, that breaks
out in longings of soul for Christ and his Spirit, with
sweet cooling dews of grace to slack and extinguish the
fire of lust and sin.

Again, look it be deep. Physicians tell us of a thirst
which comes from the dryness of the throat, and not any
great inward heat of the stomach; and this thirst may be
quenched with a gargle in the mouth, which is spit out
Having your loins again, and goes not down; and truly there is somet
like this in many that sit under the preaching of the Gos
Some light touches are now and then found upon
the spirits of men and women, occasioned by some spark
that falls on their affections in hearing the Word, whereby
they on a sudden express some desires after Christ and
his grace, that you would think they would in all haste
for Heaven; but being slightly flashes, and weak wishes,
rather than strong volitions and deep desires, their
heat is soon over, and thirst quenched with a little pre
sent sweetness they taste while they are hearing a sermon
of Christ, which they spit out again as soon as they are
gone home almost, as well as may be though they never
enjoy more of him. Labour therefore for such a deep
sense of thy own wretchedness by reason of thy hypocrisy,
and of Christ's excellency by reason of that fulness
of grace in him, which makes him able to cure thee of
thy distemper, that as a man thoroughly athirst can be
content with nothing but drink, and not a little of that
neither, but a full satisfying draught, whatever it costs
him, so thou mayest not be bribed with any thing be
sides Christ and his sanctifying grace, nor with gifts,
profession, or pardon itself, if it could be severed from
grace; no not with a little sprinkling of grace, but long
for whole floods, wherewith thou mayest be fully purged
and freed of thy cursed lust which now so sadly op
presseth thee. This frame of spirit would put thee
under the promise, Heaven's security, that thou shalt
not lose thy longing. If thou shouldest ask silver and
gold, and seek any worldly enjoyment at this rate, thou
mightest spend thy breath and pains in vain; God might
let thee roar like Dives in Hell, in the midst of those
flames which thy covetous lust hath kindled, without af
fording a drop of that to cool thy tongue which thou
so violently panted after. But if Christ and his grace
be the things thou wouldest have, yea must have; truly
then thou shalt have them. "Blessed are they which do
hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be
satisfied." Matth. v. 6.
CHAP. XIV.

An exhortation to those who upon trial are found to be true in heart or sincere, to wear this belt close girt to them in the daily exercise of it, with directions for that purpose.

I come to the second sort; such, I mean, whose consciences, upon diligent enquiry, give a fair testimony for their sincerity that their hearts are true and upright. That which I have by way of counsel to leave with them is, to gird this belt which they have about them close in the exercise and daily practice of it. Gird this belt, I say, close to thee; that is, be very careful to walk in the daily practice and exercise of thy uprightness. Think every morning thou art not drest till this girdle be put on. The proverb is true here, ungirt, unblest; thou art no company for God that day in which thou art insincere. If Abraham will walk with God, he must be upright; and canst thou live a day without his company? Rachel paid dear for her mandrakes, to part with her husband for them: a worse bargain that soul makes that to purchase some worldly advantage pawns its sincerity, which gone, God is sure to follow after. And as thou canst not walk with God, so not expect any blessing from God; the promises, like a box of precious ointment, are kept to be broke over the head of the upright: "do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" Mic. ii. 7. And sure it is ill walking in that way where there is found no word from God to bid us good speed. Some are so superstitious, that if a hair crosseth them they will turn back, and go no further that day; but a bold man is he that dares go on when the Word of God lies cross his way. Where the Word doth not bless it curseth, where it promiseth not, it threatens. A soul in its uprightness, approving itself to God, is safe (like a traveller going about his lawful business betwixt sun and sun); if any harm or loss come to
such soul, God will bear him out; the promise is on his side: by pleading it he may recover his loss at God's hands, who stands bound to keep him harmless. See to this purpose, Psalm lxxxiv. 11. But they are directions, not motives, I am in this place to give.

**SECT. I.**

First, therefore, if thou wouldest walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, Walk in the view of God. That of Luther is most true, *Omnia præcepta sunt in primo tamquam capite sue*, all the commands are wrapt up in the first. For, saith he, all sin is a contempt of God; and so we cannot break any other commands but we break the first. We think amiss of God before we do amiss against God. This God commanded to Abraham *istam omnium*, of sovereign use to preserve his sincerity: "Walk before me, and be thou upright." Gen. xvii. 1. This kept Moses's girdle straight and close to his loins, that he was neither bribed with the treasures of Egypt, nor brow-beaten out of his sincerity with the anger of so great a king; "for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." Heb. xi. 27. He had a greater than Pharaoh in his eye, and this kept him right.

First, walk, Christian, in the view of God's omniscience. This is a girding consideration: say to thy soul, *cave videt Deus*, take heed, God seeth. It is under the rose (as the common phrase is) that treason is spoken, when subjects think they are far enough from their king's hearing; but did such know the prince to be under the window, or behind the hangings, their discourse would be more loyal. This made David so upright in his walking, Psalm cxix. 168. "I have kept thy precepts, for all my ways are before thee. If Alexander's empty chair, which his captains when they met in council set before them, did awe them so as to keep them in good order, what would it for to set God looking on us in our eye? The Jews covered Christ's face, and then buffeted him: Mark xiv. 65. so does the hypocrite; he first saith in his heart, God sees not, or at least he forgets that he sees, and then makes bold to sin against him; like that foolish
bird, which runs her head among the reeds, and thinks herself safe from the Fowler, as if because she did not see him therefore he could not see her. *Te mihi asecondam, non me tibi.* Aug. I may hide thee from my eye, but not myself from thine. Thou mayest, poor creature, hide God by thy ignorance and atheism, so that thou shalt not see him; but thou canst not so as he shall not see thee. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." *Heb.* iv. 13. O remember thou hast to do with God in all thou doest, whether thou art in shop or closet, church or market; and he will have to do with thee, for he sees thee round, and can tell from whence thou comest; when (like Gehazi before his master) thou enterest into his presence, and standest demurely before him in his worship, as if thou hadst been no where, then he can tell thee thy thoughts, and without any labour of pumping them out by thy confession, set them in order before thee; yea, thy thoughts that are gone from thee (like Nebuchadnezzar's dream from him), and thou hast forgot what they were at such a time and in such a place, forty, fifty years ago, God hath them all in the light of his countenance, as atoms are in the beams of the sun, and he can, yea will, give thee a sight of them, that they shall walk in thy conscience to thy horror, as John the Baptist's ghost did in Herod's.

Secondly, walk in the view of his providence and care over thee. When God bids Abraham be upright, he strengthens his faith on him: "I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be perfect;" as if he had said, Act thou for me, and I will take care for thee. When once we begin to call his care in question towards us, then will our sincerity falter in our walking before him. Hypocrisy lies hid in distrust and jealousy, as in its cause: if the soul dare not rely on God, it cannot be long true to God. Abraham was jealous of Abimelech, therefore he dissembled with him: thus do we with God; we doubt God's care, and then live by our wit, and carve for ourselves: "Up, make us gods (say they) we know not what is become of Moses." The unbelieving Jews, flat against the command of God, keep manna while the mor-
Having your loins row, Exod. xvi. 19, and why, but because they had not faith to trust him for another meal? This is the old weapon the devil hath ever used to beat the Christian out of his sincerity with. "Curse God, and die," Job, ii. 9, said he to Job by his wife. As if she had said, What wilt yet hold the castle of thy sincerity for God? captains think they may yield when no relief comes to them; and subjects make account, if the prince protect not them, they are not bound to serve him. Thou hast lain thus long in an afflicted state, besieged close with sorrows on every hand, and no news to this day comes from Heaven of any care that God takes for thee; therefore "Curse God, and die." Yea Christ had him using the same engine to draw him off from his faithfulness to his Father, when he bade him turn stones into bread. We see therefore of what importance it is to strengthen our faith on the care and providence of God for our provision and protection; which is the cause why God hath made such abundant provision to shut out all doubting and fear of this from the hearts of his people. The promises are so fitly placed, that as safe harbours, upon what coast soever we are sailing (condition we are in), if any storm arise at sea, or enemy chase us, we may put into some one or other of them, and be safe, though this one were enough, could we find no more, to serve our turn: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them (or strongly to hold with them) whose heart is perfect towards him." 2 Chron. xvi. 9. God doth not set others to watch, but his own eyes keep sentinel; now to watch with the child, like the own mother, there is the immediacy of his providence: we may say of sincere souls, what is said of Canaan, Deut. xi. 9, 10. "It is a land (so they are a people) the Lord himself careth for, his eyes are always on them." Again, "his eyes run to and fro," there is the vigilance of his providence: no danger no temptation finds him napping; but as a faithful watchman is ever walking up and down, so the eyes of God run to and fro: "He that keepeth Israel (the sincere soul, which is the Israelite indeed) shall neither slumber nor sleep," Psal. cxxi. 4. that is not little or much, not slumber by day, or sleep
by night; two words are there used, one that signifies the short sleep used in the heat of the day, the other for the more sound sleep of the night.

Thirdly, Throughout the whole earth there is the universality and extent of God's care; it is an encompassing providence, it walks the rounds, not any one sincere soul left out of the line of his care; he has the number of them to a man, and all are alike cared for. We disfigure the beautiful face of God's providence, when we fancy him to have a cast of his eye, and to care for one more than another.

Fourthly, To shew himself strong in the behalf of them. There is the efficacy of his care and providence, his eyes do not run to and fro to espy dangers, and only tell us what they are; as the sentinel wakes the city when any enemy comes, but cannot defend them from their fury: a child may do this, yea the geese did this for Rome's capitol; but God watcheth not to tell us our dangers, but to save us from them; the saints must needs be a "happy people, because a people saved by the Lord." Deut. xxxiii. 29. God doth not only see with his eyes, but also fights with his eyes; he gave such a look to the Egyptians as turned the sea on them to their destruction.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Labour to act from love, and not fear. Slavish fear and sincerity cannot agree; if one be in the increase, the other is in the wane always. See them opposed: "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7. that is, sincere; where he implies that fear is weak and impotent, easily scared from God, his truth, and service; and not so only, but unsound also; not trusting such a one with any great matter. The slave, though he works hard (because indeed he dares no other) yet is soon drawn into a conspiracy against his master, because he hates him while he fears him; we see this not only among the Turks, against whom those Christians used as absolute slaves by them in their gallies do, when they have advantage
in fight, often purchase their own liberty, by cutting the throats of their tyrant masters, but also in kingdoms, where subjects rather fear than love their princes; how ready they are to invite another into the throne, or welcome any that should court them: thus fast and loose will he be with God, that is pricked on with the sword’s point of his wrath, and not drawn with the cords of his love. Israel is an example beyond parallel for this: “when God slew them, they sought after him; nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongue, for their heart was not right with him.” Psalm lxxviii. 34, 35. They feared God, and loved their lusts, and therefore they betrayed his glory at every turn, into their hands; as Herod did John’s head, whom he feared, into her hands whom he loved. And truly there is too much of this servile spirit in the saints’ bosoms, or else the whip would not be so often in God’s hand. We find God checking his people for this, and making their servile spirit the reason of his severity towards them. “Is Israel a servant, a home-born slave? why he is spoiled?” Jer. ii. 14. As if God had said, What is the reason that I must use thee, who art my dear child, as courtely as if thou wert a servant, a slave, laying on blow after blow upon thy back with such heavy judgments? Wouldst thou know, read ver. 17, “hast thou not procured this to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?” Thou mayest thank thyself for this my unusual dealing with thee. If the child will forget his own ingenuousness, and nothing but blows will work with him, then the father must deal with his child according to his servile spirit. When God led Israel by the way, as a father his child lovingly, he flung from him; and if they would not lead by love, then no wonder he makes them drive by fear. O Christian, act more by love, and thou wilt save God’s putting thee into fear with his whip; love will keep thee close and true to him. The very character of love is, “it seeks not her own.” 1 Cor. xiii. 5. and what is it to be sincere, but when the Christian seeks Christ’s interest and not his own? Jonathan loved David dearly; this made him incur his father’s wrath, and trample on
the hopes of a kingdom which he had for him and his posterity, rather than be false to his friend. Lot delivers up his daughters to the lust of the Sodomites, rather than his guests. Sampson could not conceal that great secret from Delilah whom he loved, wherein his strength lay, though it was as much as his life was worth to blab it to her. Love is the great conqueror of the world. Thus will thy soul, if inflamed with love to Christ, set all thy worldly interest adrift, rather than put his honour to the least hazard. Abraham did not more willingly put his sacrificing knife to the ram's throat to save his dear Isaac's life, than thou wilt be to sacrifice thy life to keep thy sincerity alive. Love is compared to fire; the nature of which is to assimilate to itself all that comes near it, or to consume them: it turns all into fire or ashes, nothing that is heterogeneous can long dwell with its own simple pure nature. Thus love to Christ will not suffer the near neighbourhood of any thing in its bosom that is derogatory to Christ; either it will reduce or abandon it; be it pleasure, profit, or whatever else. Abraham, who loved Hagar and Ishmael in their due place, when the one began to jostle with her mistress and the other jeer and mock at Isaac, he packs them both out of doors; love to Christ will not suffer thee to side with any thing against Christ, but take his part with him against any that oppose him; and so long thy sincerity is out of danger.

S E C T. III.

Thirdly, Meditate often on the simplicity and sincerity of God's heart to his saints? What more powerful consideration can be thought on to make us true to God, than the faithfulness and truth of God to us? Absalom, though as vile a dissembler as lived, yet when Hushai came out to him, he suspected him: "and Absalom said to Hushai, is this thy kindness to thy friend? why woeast thou not out to thy friend?" 2 Sam. xvi. 17. his own conscience told him, it was horrible baseness for him that had found David such a true friend, now to join in rebellious arms against him; and though Absalom that said this, did
offer greater violence to this law of love, yet he questioned, it seems, whether any durst be so wicked besides himself. When therefore, Christian, thou findest thy heart warping into any insincere practice, lay it under this consideration, and if anything of God and his grace be in thee, it will unbend thee, and bring thee to rights again. Ask thy soul, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" such a friend as God hath been, is, and surely will be to thee for ever? God, when his people sin, to put them to the blush, asks them whether he gives them any cause for their unkind and undutiful carriage to him: "thou saith the Lord, what iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?" Jer. ii. 5. So Moses intending to pay Israel home (before he goes up and dies on Nebo,) for all their hypocrisy, murmuring, and horrible rebellions against God, all along from first setting out of Egypt to that day, he brings in their charge, and draws out the several indictments that they were guilty of. Now to add the greater weight to every one, he in the forefront of all his speech, shews what a God he is that they have done all this against.

He makes way to the declaiming against their sins, by the proclaiming the glory of God against whom they were committed: "I will publish the name of God, ascribe ye greatness to our God." Deut. xxii. 3. And very observable it is what of God's name he publisheth, the more to aggravate their sins, and help them to conceive of their heinous nature: "he is the rock, his work is perfect; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just, and right is he." ver. 4. He chuseth to instance in the truth and sincerity of God's heart to them, in all his dispensations, as that which might make them most ashamed of their doings. Now because this one consideration may be of such use to hedge in the heart, and keep it close to God in sincerity, I shall shew wherein the truth and sincerity of God's love appears to his saints, every one of which will furnish us with a strong argument to be sincere and upright with God.

First, The sincerity of God's heart appears in the principle he acts from and end he aims at in all his dispensations. Love is the principle he constantly acts from,
and their good the end he propounds, from these he never swerves; the fire of love never goes out of his heart, nor their good out of his eye: when he frowns with his brow, chides with his lips, and strikes with his hand, even then his heart burns with love, and his thoughts meditate peace to them. Famous is that place for this purpose; Jer. xxiv. 5. "I will acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good; I will set my eyes on them for good;" and this was one of the sharpest judgments God ever brought upon his people, and yet in this he is designing mercy, and projecting how to do them good. So in the Wilderness, when they cried out upon Moses for bringing them thither to kill them, they were more afraid than hurt; God wished them better than they dreamed of; his intent was "to humble them, that he might do them good in the latter end." So sincere is God to his people, that he gives his own glory in hostage to them for their security; his own robes of glory are locked up in their prosperity and salvation: he will not, indeed he cannot, present himself in all his magnificence and royalty till he hath made up his intended thoughts of mercy to his people; he is pleased to prorogue the time of his appearing in all his glory to the world till he hath actually accomplished their deliverance, that he and they may come forth together in their glory on the same day: "when the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." Psalm cii. 16. The sun is ever glorious in the most cloudy day, but it appears not so till it hath scattered the clouds that muffle it up from the sight of the lower world: God is glorious when the world sees him not; but his declarative glory then appears, when the glory of his mercy, truth, and faithfulness break forth in his people's salvation. Now what shame must this cover thy face with, O Christian, if thou shouldest not sincerely aim at thy God's glory, who loves thee, yea all his children, so dearly, as to ship his own glory and your happiness in one bottom, that he cannot now lose the one and save the other?

Secondly, The truth and sincerity of God to his people appears in the openness and plainness of his heart to
them. A friend that is close and reserved, deservedly comes under a cloud in the thoughts of his friend; but he who carries as it were a window of chrysal in his breast, through which his friend may read what thoughts are writ in his very heart, delivers himself from the least suspicion of unfaithfulness. Truly thus open-hearted is God to his saints: "The secret of the Lord is upon them that fear him." He gives us in his key, that will let us into his very heart, and acquaint us what his thoughts are, yea were towards us before a stone was laid in the world's foundation, and this is no other than his Spirit, one "who knows the deep things of God," 1 Cor. iii. for he was at the council table in Heaven, where all was transacted: this his Spirit he employed to put forth, and publish in the Scripture, indited by him, the substance of those counsels of love which had past between the trinity of persons for our salvation; and that nothing may be wanting for our satisfaction, he hath appointed the same Holy Spirit to abide in his saints, that as Christ in Heaven presents our desires to him, so he may interpret his mind out of his Word to us; which Word answers the heart of God as face answers face in the glass. There is nothing desirable in a true friend as to this openness of heart but God performs in a transcendent manner to his people; if any danger hangs over their heads, he cannot conceal it; "by them (saith David) is thy servant warned," speaking of the Word of God; one messenger or other God will send to give his saints the alarm, whether their danger be from sin within, or enemies without. Hezekiah was in danger of inward pride; God sends a temptation to let him know what was in his heart, that he might by falling once be kept from falling again. Satan had a project against Peter; Christ gives him notice of it, Luke xxii. If any of his children by sin displease him, he doth not (as false friends do) dissemble the displeasure he conceives, and carry it fair outwardly with them, while he keeps a secret grudge against them inwardly; no, he tells them roundly of it, and corrects them soundly for it, but entertains no ill will against them; and when he leads his people into an afflicted state, he loves them so that he cannot leave them
altogether in the dark concerning the thoughts of love he hath to them in delivering them; but, to comfort them in the prison, doth open his heart beforehand to them, as we see in the greatest calamities that have befallen the Jewish Church in Egypt and Babylon, as also the Gospel Church under Antichrist: the promises for the deliverance out of all these were expressed before the sufferings came. When Christ was on earth, how free and open was he to his disciples, both in telling them what calamities should betide them, and the blessed issue of them all, when he should come again to them; and why, but to confirm them in the persuasion of the sincerity of his heart toward them, as those words import: "if it were not so, I would have told you:” John xiv. As if he had said, It would not have consisted with the sincere love I bear to you, to hide any thing that is fit for you to know, from you, or make them otherwise than they are; and when he doth conceal any truths from them for the present, see his candour and sincerity, opening the reason of his veiling them, to be not that he grudged them the communication of them, but because they could not at present bear them. Now, Christian, improve all this to make thee more plain-hearted with God. Is he so free and open to thee, and wilt thou be reserved to him? Doth thy God unbosom his mind to thee, and wilt not thou pour out all thy soul to him? Darest thou not trust him with thy secrets, that makes thee privy to his counsels of love and mercy? In a word, darest thou for shame go about to harbour and hide from him any traitorous lust in thy soul, whose love will not suffer him to conceal any danger from thee? God who is so exact and true to the law of friendship with his people, expects the like ingenuousness from them.

Thirdly, The sincerity of God’s heart and affection to his people appears in the unmoveableness of his love. As there is no shadow of turning in the being of God, so not in the love of God to his people; there is no vertical point, his love stands still like the sun in Gibeah, it goes not down or declines, but continues in its full strength: “with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy redeemer.” Isaiah liv. 7. Sorry man
repents of his love, the hottest affection cools in his bosom; love in the creature is like fire on the hearth, now blazing, anon blinking, and going out; but in God, like fire in the element that never fails. In the creature, it is like water in a river, that falls and riseth; but in God, like water in the sea, that is always full, and knows no ebbing or flowing. Nothing can take off his love, where he hath placed it; it can neither be corrupted nor conquered: attempts are made both ways, but in vain.

First, His love cannot be corrupted. There have been such that have dared to tempt God, and court yea bribe the holy one of Israel to desert and come off from his people. Thus Balaam went to win God over to Balak's side against Israel; which to obtain, he spared no cost, but built altar after altar, and heaped sacrifice upon sacrifice, yea what would they not have done to have gained but a word or two out of God's mouth against his people? But he kept true to them; yea left a brand of his displeasure upon that nation for hiring Balaam, and sending him on such an errand to God. Deut. xxxiii. 4. This passage we find of God minding his people to continue in them a persuasion of his sincere steadfast love to them: Micah vi. 5. "O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, from Shittim unto Gilgal;" and why should they remember this? "that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord;" that is, that you may know how true and faithful a God I have been to you. Sometimes he makes use of it to provoke them to be sincere to him, as he in that proved himself to them, Josh. xxiv. 9: he tells them how Balak sent Balaam to set God a cursing them; but, saith the Lord, "I would not hearken to him," but made him that came to curse you, with his own lips entail a blessing on you and your's. And why is this story mentioned? see ver. 14. "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth." A most natural and reasonable inference from the premises of God's truth and faithfulness. O Christian, wouldest thou have thy love to God made incorruptible, embalm it often in thy thoughts, with the sweet spices of God's sincere love to thee, which is immortal, and cannot see cor-
ruption. Believe God is true to thee, and be false to him if thou darest. It is a solecism, and barbarism in love, to return falseness for faithfulness.

Secondly, The love of God to his saints cannot be conquered. That which puts it hardest to it, is not the power of his people's enemies (whether men or devils), but his people's sins. God makes nothing of their whole power and wrath, when combined together; but truly the sins of his people, these put omnipotency itself to the trial. We never hear God groaning under or complaining of the power of his enemies, but often sadly of his people's sins and unkindnesses; these load him, these break his heart, and make him cry out as if he were at a stand in his thoughts, to use a human expression, and found it not easy what to do, whether love them or leave them; vote for their life or death. Well, whatever expressions God useth to make his people more deeply resent their unkindnesses shewn to him, yet God is not at a loss what to do in this case; his love determines his thoughts in favour of his covenant people, when their carriage least deserves it, Hosea xi. 9. The devil thought he had enough against Joshua, when he could find some filth on his garment, to carry this in a tale, and tell God what a dirty case his child was in; he made just account to have set God against him, but he was mistaken; for instead of provoking him to wrath, it moved him to pity; instead of falling out with him, he finds Christ prayer for him. Now improve this in a meditation, Christian. Is the love of God so unconquerable, that thy very sins cannot break or cut the knot of that covenant which ties thee to him? and does not it shame thee that thou shouldest be so fast and loose with him; thou shouldest labour to have the very image of thy heavenly father's love more clearly stamped on the face of thy love to him. As nothing can conquer his love to thee, so neither let any thing prejudice thy love to him; say to thy soul, Shall not I cleave close to God, when he hides his face from me, who hath not cast me off, when I have sinfully turned my back on him? shall not I give testimony to his truth and name, though others desert the one and reproach the other, who hath kept love burning in his heart to me, when I have

vol. ii. x
been dishonouring him? What, God yet on my side, and gracious to me, after such backslidings as these, and shall I again grieve his Spirit, and put his love to shame with more undutifulness? God forbid, this were to do my utmost to make God accessory to my sin, by making his love fuel for it.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, Beware of presumptuous sins, these give the deepest wound to uprightness, yea are inconsistent with it. "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, lest they not have dominion over me, then shall I be upright." Psal. xix. 13. One single act of presumption is inconsistent with the actual exercise of uprightness; as we see in David, who by that one foul sin of murder, lost the present use of uprightness, and was in that particular too like one of the fools in Israel, and therefore stands as the only exception to the general testimony which God gave unto his uprightness, 1 Kings, xv. 5. "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hit- tite." that is there was not such presumption in any other sin committed by him, and therefore they are here discounted as to this, that they did not make such a breach on his uprightness as this one sin did. And as one act of a sin, presumptuous, is inconsistent with actual uprightness; so habitual uprightness is very hardly consistent with habitual presumption: if one act of a presumptuous sin, and as I may so say, one sip of this poisonous cup, doth so sadly infect the spirits of a gracious person, and change his complexion, that he is not like himself; how deadly must it needs be to all uprightness, to drink from day to day in it? And therefore as Daniel purposed in his heart, "that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat," Dan. xviii. so do thou daily put thyself under some such holy bond, that thou wilt not defile thyself with any presumptuous sin; for indeed this is properly the king's meat, I mean the devil's, that prince of darkness, who can himself commit
girt about with truth.

none but presumptuous sins, and chiefly labour to desile
souls by eating of this his dish; say as Austin in another
case, errare possum, Hereticus esse nolo, I may err, but I
am resolved not to be a heretic. I may have many
failings, but by the grace of God I will labour that I be
not a presumptuous sinner; and if thou wouldest not be
in a presumptuous sin, take heed thou makest not light
of less infirmities. When David's heart smote him for
reaping the skirt of Saul, he stopped and made a happy
retreat, his tender conscience giving him a privy check
for reaping his skirt, would not suffer him to cut his
throat, and take away his life, which was better than rai-
ment; but at another time, when his conscience was more
heavy-eyed, and did not do this friendly office to him,
but let him shoot his amorous glances after Bathsheba,
without giving him any alarm of his danger, the good man,
like one whose senses are gone, and head dizzy at the
first trip upon a steep hill, could not recover himself, but
tumbled from one sin to another, till at last he fell into
the deep pit of murder. When the river is frozen, a man
will venture to walk and run where he durst not set his
foot if the ice were but melted or broke. O when the
heart of a godly man himself is so hardened that he can
stand on an infirmity though never so little, and his con-
science not crack under him, how far may he go? I trem-
ble to think what sin he may fall into.

SECT. V.

Fifthly, Get above the love and fear of the world. The
Christian's sincerity is not eclipsed without the interposi-
tion of the earth betwixt God and his soul.

First, The love of the world: this is a fit root for hypo-
ocrisy to grow upon; if the heart be violently set on any
thing the world hath, and it comes to vote peremptorily
for having it, I must be worth so much a year, have such
honour, and the creature begins, with Ahab, to be sick
with longing after them; then the man is in great danger
to take the first ill counsel that Satan or the flesh gives
him for the attaining his ends, though prejudicial to his
uprightness. Hunters mind not the way they go in, over hedge and ditch they leap, so they may have the hare.

It is a wonder, I confess, that any saint should have so strong a scent after the creature that hath the savour of Christ's ointments poured into his bosom. One would think the sweet perfume, which comes so hot from those beds of spices, the promises, should spoil the Christian's hunting game after the creature, and one scent should hinder the taking in the other; the purer sweetmesses that breathe from Christ and Heaven in them should so fill the Christian's senses, that the other enjoyments, being of a more gross and earthly savour, could find no pleasing scent in his nostrils; which indeed is most true and certain, so long as the Christian hath his spiritual senses open and in exercise: but, alas! as upon some cold in the body, the head is stopped, and the senses bound up from doing their office; so, through the Christian's negligence, a spiritual distemper is easily got, whereby those senses (graces I mean) which should judge of things, are sadly obstructed; and now when the Christian is not in temper for enjoying these purer sweetmesses, the devil hath a fair advantage of starting some creature-enjoyment, and presenting it before the Christian, which the flesh soon scents, and carries the poor Christian after it, till grace comes a little to its temper, and then he gives over the chase with shame and sorrow.

Secondly, Get above the fear of the world. The fear of man brings a snare. A coward will run into any hole (though never so dishonourable) so he may save himself from what he fears, and when the holiest are under the power of this temptation, they too are like other men. Abraham in a pang of fear dissembles with Abimelech; yea Peter, when not his life but his reputation seemed to be in a little danger, did not walk uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel; he did not foot it right, as became so holy a man to do, but took one step forward, and another back again, as if he had not liked his way; now he will eat with the Gentiles, and anon he withdraws. Now, what made him dissemble, and his feet thus double in his going? nothing but a qualm of fear that came over
his heart, as you may see, Gal. ii. 12. compared with
ver. 14. "fearing them which were of the circumcision,"
he dissembled, and drew others into a party with him.

S E C T. VI.

Sixthly, and lastly. Keep a strict eye over thy own
heart in thy daily walking; hypocrisy is a weed with
which the best soil is so tainted that it needs daily care
and dressing to keep it under. He that rides on a stum-
bler, had need have his eye on his way, and hand on his
bridle; such is thy heart, Christian, yea it oft stumbles in
the fairest way, when thou least searest it; look to it
therefore, and keep a strict rein over it, "above all
keeping, keep thy heart." Prov. iv. 23. The servant
keeps his way when he travels in his master's company,
but when sent of an errand alone then he hath his va-
garies; many a wry step may be prevented, and extra-
vagancies in thy daily walking, didst thou walk in com-
pany with thyself, I mean observe thyself and way. In
this sense, most in the world are besides themselves,
strangers to their own walking as much as to their own
faces; every one that lives with them knows them better
than themselves, which is a horrible shame. And let not
so vain an opinion find place with thee, that, because
sincere, thou needest not keep so strict an eye over thy
heart; as if thy heart which is gracious could not play
false with God and thee too; doth not Solomon brand
him on the forehead for a fool, "that trusts his own heart?"
if thou art, as thou sayest, sincere, I cannot believe self-
love should so far prevail with thee. They are the ignorant
and profane, whose hearts are stark naught, that cry them
up for good; but it is one part of the goodness of a
heart, made truly good by grace, to see more into and
complain more of its own naughtiness. Bring thy heart
therefore often upon the review, and take its accounts
solemnly; he takes the way to make his servant a thief
that doth not ask him now and then what money he hath
in his hand. I read indeed of some in good Jehoida's
days that were trusted with the money for the repair of
the Temple, with whom they did not so much as reckon
Having your loans

how they laid it out; "for they dealt faithfully," 2 Kings xii. 15. but thou hadst not best to do so with thy heart, lest it set thee in debt with God and thy own conscience more than thou wilt get wiped out in haste. Many talents God puts into thy hand, health, liberty, sabbaths, ordinances, communion of saints, and the like, for the repair of thy spiritual temple, the work of grace in thee: ask now thy soul, how every one of these are laid out; may be thou wilt find some of this money spent, and the work never a whit the more forward. It stands thee in hand to look to it, for God will have an account, though thou art so favourable to thy deceitful heart to call for none.

CHAP. XV.

COUNSEL AND COMFORT TO THOSE WHO ARE SINCERE BUT DROOPING DOUBTING SOULS; WHO NEITHER ARE CONDEMNED ABSOLUTELY IN THEIR CONSCiences FOR HYPOCRITES, NOR FULLY ABSOLVED FROM THE SUSPICION OF IT IN THEIR OWN THOUGHTS.

WE have done with the second sort of persons; those who upon search find their consciences bearing witness for their uprightness.

There is a third sort remains yet to be spoken to, and they are doubting souls, who are indeed sincere, but dare not be persuaded to think so well of themselves. They come from the trial which they were desired to put themselves upon, and bring in an ignora

mum, we know not whether we be sincere or no. Now to these I would give these few words of counsel, and the Lord give his blessing with them.

SECT. I.

Take heed Satan doth not draw you to conclude you are hypocrites, because you are without the present
evidence of your sincerity. To say so were to offend against the generation of God's dear children, many of whom must (if this were a true inference from such premises) pass the same sentence upon themselves; for such precious souls there are, from whose eyes the truth of their grace and sincerity of their hearts is at this day hid, and yet are not without either. The Patriarchs had their money all day bound up in their sacks as they travelled, though they did not know this till they came to their inns and opened them: thus there is a treasure of sincerity hid in many a soul, but the time to open the sack and let the soul know its riches is not come. Many, that are now in Heaven, have shot the gulf, and are safely landed, who were sadly tossed with fears all along their voyage about the truth of grace in them. Faith unfeigned puts a soul into the ark Christ; but it doth not hinder but such a one may be sea-sick in the ship: it is Christ's work, not grace's, to evidence itself to our eye so demonstratively as to enable us to own it. Besides an organ duly disposed, there is required a light to irradiate the medium; so, besides truth of grace, it is necessary that the Spirit bring another light, for want of which the soul is be-nighted in its thoughts, and must cry for another, and he no other than the Holy Spirit, to lead him into the light. This is the great messenger which alone is able "to shew a man his uprightness;" but as the eye may be a seeing eye in the dark when it doth not see any thing, so there may be truth of grace, where there is not present sense of that truth; yea the creature may be passionately hunting from ordinance to ordinance to get that sincerity which it already hath: as sometimes you may have seen one seek very earnestly all about the house for his hat, when at the same time he hath it on his head. Well, lay down this, as a real truth, in thy soul: I may be upright, though at present I am not able to see it clearly; this, though it will not bring in a full comfort, yet it may be some support till that come, as a shore to thy weak house, though it doth not mend it, yet it will underprop and keep it standing till the master-workman comes, the Holy Spirit, who with one kind word to thy soul is able to set thee right in thy own thoughts, and make thee
stand strong on the promise, the only true basis and foundation of solid comfort. Be not more cruel to thy soul, O Christian, than thou wouldst to thy friend’s, shall I say thy enemy’s, body. Should one, thou didst not much love, lie sick in thy house, yea so sick that if you should ask him whether he be alive he could not tell you (his senses and speech being both at present gone) would you presently lay him out, and coffin him up for the grave, because you cannot have it from his own mouth that he is alive? Surely not. O how unreasonable and bloody then is Satan, who would presently have thee put thyself into the pit-hole of despair, because thy grace is not so strong as to speak for itself at present?

SECT. II.

Let me send thee back upon a melius inquirendum; look once again more narrowly, whether Satan, that Joab, hath not the great hand in these questions and scruples started in thy bosom about thy sincerity, merely as his last design upon thee, that he may amuse and distract thee with false fears, when thou wilt not be flattered with false hopes? The time was thou wert really worse, and then by his means thou thoughtest thyself better than thou wert; and now, since thou hast changed thy way, disowned thy former confidence, been acquainted with Christ, and got some savour of his holy ways in thy spirit, so as to make thee strongly breathe after them, thou art affrighted with many apparitions of fears in thy sad thoughts, if not charging thee for a hypocrite yet calling in question the truth of thy heart. It is worth, I say, the enquiring whether it be not the same hand again, the devil, though knocking at another door; no player hath so many different dresses to come upon the stage in, as the devil hath forms of temptation; and this is a suit which he very ordinarily hath been known to wear. If it were thy case only, thou mightest have more suspicion lest these fears should be the just rebukes of thy own false heart; but when thou findest many of thy fellow-brethren (whose sincerity thou darest not doubt, though thou savest not so much charity for thyself) their
complaints so meet with thine that no key, though made on purpose, can more fit all the wards of a lock than their condition doth thine: this I say may well make thee set about another search to find whether he be not come forth as a lying spirit, to abuse thy tender spirit with such news, as he knows worse cannot come to thy ears, that thou dost not love Jesus Christ as thou pretendest, and deceivest but thyself to think otherwise. Thus this foul spirit (like a brazen-faced whore that lays her child at an honest person's door) doth impudently charge many with that which they are little guilty of; knowing that so much will likely stick of this bold accusation to the poor Christian's spirit, as shall keep the door open to let in another temptation which he much desires to convey into his bosom by the favour and under the shadow of this, and it is ordinarily this, to scare the Christian from duty and knock off the wheels of his chariot, which used so often to carry him into the presence of God in his ordinances, merely upon a suspicion that he is not sincere in them; and better stay at home without hearing, or joining with God's people in any other duty, than go up and show the naughtiness of thy heart, saith the Devil. Had the Serpent a smoother skin and a fairer tale when he made Eve put forth her hand to the forbidden fruit, than he comes with in this temptation, to persuade thee, poor Christian, not to touch or taste of that fruit which God hath commanded to be eaten—ordinances, I mean, to be enjoyed by thee? Yet, Christian, thou hast reason, if I mistake not, to bless God, if he suffer thy enemy so far to open his mind, by which thou mayest have some light to discover the wickedness of his design in the other temptation of questioning thy sincerity. Dost thou not now perceive, poor soul, what made the loud cry of thy hypocrisy in thy fears? the Devil did not like to see thee so busy with ordinances, nor thy acquaintance to grow so fast with God in them; and he knew no way but this to knock thee off. Bite at his other baits thou wouldst not: sin, though never so well cooked and garnished, is not a dish for thy tooth he sees; and therefore he must either affright thee from these, by troubling thy imagination with fears of thy hypocrisy in them, or else he may throw his
Having your loins
cap at thee, and give thee up for one got out of his reach. Dost thou think, poor soul, that if thy heart were so false and hypocritical in thy duties, that he would make all this bustle about them? He doth not use to misplace his batteries thus, to mount them where there is no enemy to offend him; thy hypocritical prayers and hearing would hurt him no more than if none at all. Neither doth he use to be so kind as to tell hypocrites of the falseness of their hearts: this is the chain with which he hath them by the foot, and it is his great care to hide it from them, lest the rattling of it in their conscience awake them to some endeavour to knock it off, and so they make an escape out of his prison. Be therefore of good comfort, poor soul; if thy conscience brings not Scripture-proof to condemn thee for a hypocrite, fear not the Devil’s charge; he shall not be on the bench when thou comest to be tried for thy life, nor his testimony of any value at that day: why then should his tongue be any slander to thee now?

SECT. III.

Neglect no means for the getting thy truth of heart and sincerity evidenced to thee; it is to be had. This is the “white stone with the new name in it, which no man knoweth but he that receives it,” promised Rev. ii. 17. And I hope thou dost not think this to be such an ens rationis, an imaginary thing, as the philosopher’s stone is, which none could ever say to this day that he had it in his hand. Holy Paul had this white stone sparkling in his conscience more gloriously than all the precious stones in Aaron’s breast-plate, 2 Cor. i. 12. “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.” And Job sure was not without it, when he durst with such a confidence appeal to the thoughts that God himself had of him, even then when God was ransacking and searching every corner of his heart by his heavy hand: “Thou knowest that I am not wicked;” Job x. 7. mark, he doth not deny he had sin in him, that you have again and again confessed by him; but he was not “wicked,” that is, a rotten-hearted
girt about with truth.

hypocrite. This he will stand to, that God himself will not say so of him; though (for his trial) the Lord gives way to have him searched, to stop the devil's mouth, and shame him who was not afraid to lay suspicion of this spiritual felony to his charge.

Object. But may be thou wilt say, These were saints of the highest form, and though they might come to see their sincerity, and have this "white stone" in their bosoms, yet such jewels cannot be expected to be worn by ordinary Christians.

Answ. For answer to this, consider that the weakest Christian in God's family hath the same witness in him that they had: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him." 1 John v. 10. Mark, it is indefinite, every one that believeth, not this eminent Christian or that, but every one. "The witness," the same Christ and Spirit, dwell in thy heart that do in the highest saint on earth; the same blood thou hast to sprinkle, and the same water to wash thee; these can, and will (when the Lord please) testify as much for thy grace and sincerity as it doth for theirs. Only, as witnesses that are in a court stay till the judge call them forth, then, and not till then, do they give their testimony; so do these, and God may and doth use his liberty when he will do this; as on the contrary, every wicked impenitent sinner carries a witness in his own bosom that will condemn him, but this doth not always speak and presently make report of the sad news it hath to tell the sinner; that is, when God calls a court, and keeps his private session in the sinner's soul, which is at his pleasure to appoint the time: only means must not be neglected, of which I shall propose a few.

1. Reach forth, Christian (for such I must call thee, whether thou wilt own the name or no) to further degrees of grace. The more the child grows up the more it comes to its right complexion, and so doth grace. There is so much slavish fear, selfishness, with other imperfections at present (like so much scurf) on the face of this newborn babe of grace, that they hide its true favour, which by degrees will wear off as it grows up; yea, the spiritual reason of a Christian ripens as the whole body of
Having your loins

grace grows, whereby he is more capable, by reflecting on his own actions, to judge of the objections Satan makes against his sincerity; so that, if you would not be always tossed to and fro with your own fluctuating thoughts whether you are sincere or no, be not always children in grace, but grow up to higher stature, and thou wilt grow above many of thy fears; for by the same light that thou findest the growth of thy grace, thou mayest see the truth of it also. Though it be hard in the crepusculum, or first break of day, to know whether it be day-light or night-light that shines; yet when you see the light evidently grow and unfold itself, you by that know it to be day. Paint doth not grow on the face fairer than it was, nor do the arms of a child in a picture get strength by standing there months and years; does thy love, hope, humility, godly sorrow, grow more and more, poor soul, and yet question what it is, whether true grace or not? This is as marvellous a thing, that thou shouldest not know what thy grace is, and whence, as it was that the Jews should not know who Christ was, when he had made a man born blind see so clearly. John ix.

2. Readily embrace any call, that God sends thee by his providence, for giving a proof and experiment of thy sincerity. There are some few advantages that God gives, which if embraced and improved, a man may come to know more of his own heart, and the grace of God therein, than in all his life besides. Now these advantages do lie wrapped up in these seasons wherein God more eminently calls us forth to deny ourselves for his sake. Be but ready to entertain, and faithful to obey, that heavenly call, and thou wilt know much of thy heart; partly, because grace in such acts comes forth with such glory, that (as the sun when it shines in a clear day) it exposeth itself more visibly to the eye of the creature, as also because God chooseth such seasons as these for to give his testimony to the truth of his children's grace in, when they are most eminently exercising of it this way. When does the master speak kindly to his servant, and commend him, but when he takes him most diligent in it? then he saith, "well done, good and faithful servant." May be some time or other God is calling thee to such
an act of self-denial, wherein, if thou wilt answer God's
call, thou must trample upon some dear enjoyment or
other, as credit, estate, may be a sweet child, a dear
wife, yea may be thou canst not do the work God calls
thee to, but with hazard to them all, these and more too.
Well, friend, be not sick to think of thy great straight,
or disquieted at the sight of this providence that now
stands at thy door; didst thou know what errand it comes
about, thou wouldst invite it in, and make it as welcome
as Abraham did the three angels, whom he feasted in his
tent so freely. I will tell thee what God sends it for;
and that is, to bring thee to a sight of thy sincerity, and
acquaint thee with that grace of God in thee, whose face
thou hast so long desired to see. This providence brings
thee a chariot (to allude to Joseph's waggons sent for
old Jacob) wherein thou mayest be carried to see that
grace alive, whose funeral thou hast so long kept in thy
mournful soul; and does not thy spirit revive at the
thought of any means whereby thou mayest obtain this?
Abraham was called to offer up his son, and went about
it in earnest; such a piece of self-denial God could not
let pass without some mark of honour, and what is it he
gives him, but his testimony to his uprightness? "Lay not
thy hand upon the lad, for now I know thou fearest me,
seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son, from
me." Gen. xx. 12. Why? God knew this before; yes:
but he speaks it that Abraham may hear, and take it
from God's mouth that he was sincere. May be thou art
called to deny thy own education and principles sucked
in by it, thy own company, cross the judgment of those
thou highly esteemest, yea thy own wisdom and reason,
to entertain a truth or take up a practice merely upon
the account of the Word; which if thou canst do, and
that without affectation of singularity, or an humour of
pride, blowing thee that way, is an act of deep self-denial,
and goes most cross to the most ingenuous natures, who
are afraid of drawing eyes after them, by leaving their
company to walk in a path alone, yea very loth to op-
pose their judgments to others, more for number and
parts than their own; in a word, who love peace so
dearly, that they can be willing to pay any thing but a
sin to purchase it; in these it must needs be great self-denial, and therefore such have the greater ground to expect God’s evidencing their sincerity to them. He did it to Nathaniel, who had all these bars to keep him from coming to Christ, and believing on him; yet he did both, and Christ welcomes him with a high and loud testimony to his uprightness: “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.” John i. 47. May be again, the thing God would have thee deny thyself in is thy wrath and revenge, which to give thee a fair occasion to do with the greater demonstration of thy sincerity, he puts thy enemy into thy power, and lays him bound, as it were, under thy hand; yea so orders it in his providence, that thou mayest have thy will on him with little noise, or if it be known, yet the notorious wrongs he hath done thee, and some circumstances in the providence that hath brought him into thy hand, concur to give thee an advantage of putting so handsome a colour upon the business, as shall apologise for thee in the thoughts of those that hear of it, making them especially who look not narrowly into the matter, rather observe the justice of God on thy enemy’s judgment befallen him, than thy injustice and sin, who wert the instrument to execute it. Now, when the way lies smooth and fair for thee to walk in and thy own corruption calls thee forth, yea useth God’s name in the matter, to make thee more confident, saying to thee, as they to David: “Behold the day is come wherein God hath delivered thy enemy into thy hand, that thou mayest do to him as seemeth good in thine eyes.” 1 Sam. xxiv. now, if thou canst withstand the temptation, and instead of avenging thyself upon the person, thy enemy, revenge thyself on thy revenge (thy greater enemy of the two), by paying good into thy adversary’s bosom for the evil he hath done thee; and when thou hast done this, canst escape another enemy in thy return (I mean pride), so as to come out of the field an humble conqueror, and consecrate the memorial of this victory, not to thy own but praise of God’s name, (as Goliath’s sword, which was not kept by David at his own home to shew what he had done, but in the tabernacle, behind the ephod, as a memorial of what God had done by it in
David's hand. 1 Sam. xxi. 2. thou hast done that which speaks thee sincere, yea high graduate in this grace; and God will sooner or later let thee know so. David's fame sounds not louder for his victories got in the open field, over his slain enemies, than it doth for that he got in the cave, though an obscure hole, over his own revenge, in sparing the life of Saul (in which you have the case in hand every way fitted). By the renown of his bloody battles he got "a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth," 2 Sam. vii. 9. but by this noble act of his self-denial, he got a name, great like unto the name of those that are famed for their holiness in the Scripture; and rather than David shall not have the commendation of this piece of self-denial, God will send it to him in the mouth of his very enemy, who cannot hold, though by it he proclaims his own shame and wickedness, but he must justify him as a holy righteous man: "And he (that is Saul) saith unto David, thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." 1 Sam. xxiv. 17.

3. Continue thou to wait upon God in all the ways of his ordinances, every one in their season; whenever thou comest to get the comfortable sight of thy sincerity, it is the Spirit of God that must befriend thee in it, or else, like Hagar, thou mayest sit by the well and not find it; thou mayest go round thy field again and again, but find not the treasure hid in it. It is the Spirit of God by which "we know the things that are freely given us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12. Now the Spirit sits in the ordinances, as a minister of state in his office, whither we must resort if we will have the truth of our graces, that are our evidences for Heaven, sealed to our consciences; thither go therefore, yea there wait, for thou knowest not, as the wise man saith of sowing seed, Eccles. xi. 6. whether thy waiting on this or that, now or then, shall prosper and be successful to thee for this end. It is enough to confirm, yea quiet and comfort thee in thy attendance, that thou art at the right door, and though thou knockest long and hearest no news of his coming, yet thou canst not stay so long, like Eglon's servants, Judg. iii. 25. that thou needest be ashamed. They indeed waited on a
dead man, and might have stood long enough before he
had heard them, but thou on a living God, that hears
every knock thou givest at Heaven-gate with thy prayers
and tears, yea a loving God, that all this while he acts,
the part of a stranger, like Joseph to his brethren, yet is
so big with mercy, that he will at last fall on thy neck
and ease his heart, by owning of thee and his grace in
thee. Lift up thy head then, poor drooping soul, and go
with expectation of the thing; but remember thou settest
not God the time: the sun riseth at his own hour, what-
ever time we set it. And when God shall meet thee in
an ordinance, as sometimes no doubt, Christian, thou
findest a heavenly light irradiating and influence quick-
ening thy soul while hearing the Word, or may be on thy
knees wrestling with God, this is a sweet advantage and
season thou shouldst improve for the satisfying thy soul:
as when the sun breaks out, then we run to the dial to
know how the day goes, or when, as we are sitting in the
dark, one brings a candle into the room, then we beatir
ourselves to look for the thing we miss, and soon find
what we in vain groped for in the dark; so mayest thou
poor soul, as many of thy dear brethren and sisters be-
fore thee have done, know more of thy spiritual state in
a few moments at such a time, than in many a day when
God withdraws. Carefully therefore watch for such sea-
sons and improve them; but if God will hide thy treasure
from thy sight, comfort thyself with this, God knows thy
uprightness though wrapped up from thine own eye: say
as David, "when my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
then thou knewest my path." Psalm cxlii. 2. And God
will do with thee, not by the false accusations thou
bringest in against thyself, as it is to be feared some have
suffered at men's hands, but by the testimony which his
all-seeing eye can give to thy grace.
girt about with truth. 177

CHAP. XVI.

WHEREIN THE SECOND REASON OF THE METAPHOR IS OPENED; WHY SINCERITY IS SET OUT BY THE SOLDIER'S BELT, VIZ. FROM THE ESTABLISHING AND STRENGTHENING NATURE OF THIS GRACE; PARTICULARLY, OF A PRESERVING STRENGTH IT HATH; WITH SOME SPECIAL SEASONS WHEREIN THE HYPOCRITE FALLS OFF.

HAVING dispatched the first reason, why sincerity is compared to the soldier's girdle or belt, and discoursed of this grace under that notion; we proceed to the second ground or reason of the metaphor, taken from the other use of the soldier's girdle, which is to strengthen his loins, and fasten his armour (over which it goes) close to him, whereby he is more able to march, and strong to fight. Girding in Scripture-phrase imports strength, Psal. xviii. 39. "thou hast girded me with strength unto battle." Job xii. 21. "he weakeneth the strength of the mighty;" in the Hebrew it is, he looseth their girdle, to which use of the girdle sincerity doth bear a fit analogy. It is a grace that establisheth and strengthens the Christian in his whole course; as on the contrary, hypocrisy weakens and unsettles the heart: "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." As it is in bodies, so in souls. Earthly bodies, because mixed, are corruptible; whereas the heavenly bodies, being simple and unmixed, they are not subject to corruption; so much a soul hath of Heaven's purity and incorruptibleness as it hath of sincerity. "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," with incorruption, Ephes. vi. 24. The strength of every grace lies in the sincerity of it; so that without any more ado, the point which offers itself to our consideration from this second notion of the girdle, is this,

Note. That sincerity doth not only cover all our other

VOL. II. Z
Having your loins

infirmities, but is excellent, yea necessary, to establish the soul in, and strengthen it for its whole Christian warfare. "The integrity of the upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." 

Prov. xi. 3. The hypocrite falls shamefully, and comes to naught with all his shifts and stratagems to save himself; whereas sincerity carries that soul safe that dares follow its conduct above all dangers, though in the midst of them. But to open the point; there is a threefold strength sincerity brings with it, which the false hypocritical heart wants. 1. A preserving strength. 2. A recovering strength. 3. A comforting strength.

First, Sincerity hath a preserving strength, to keep the soul from the desfilements of sin. When temptation comes on furiously, and chargeth the soul home, a false heart is put to the run, it cannot possibly stand. We are told of Israel's hypocrisy, Psalm lxxvii. 3. they were a generation that "set not their heart aright," and what follows? "whose spirit was not steadfast with God;" stones that are not set right on the foundation cannot stand strong or long: you may see more of this bitter fruit growing on the hypocrite's branches in the same Psalm, ver. 56, 57. "They turned back, and dealt unfaithfully; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow;" when the bow is unbent, the rift it hath may be undiscovered, but go to use it by drawing the arrow to the head, and it flies in pieces: thus doth a false heart when put to the trial. As the ape, in the fable, dressed like a man, when nuts are thrown before her, cannot then dissemble her nature any longer, but shews herself an ape indeed: a false heart betrays itself before it is aware, when a fair occasion is presented for its lust; whereas sincerity keeps the soul pure in the face of temptation. "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely;" Prov. x. 9. that is, he treats strong on the ground, like one whose feet are sound, though stones lie in his way, he goes over them safely; "but he that perverteth his way shall be known," like one that hath some corn or other ail about his feet, though in green smooth way he may make a shift to go, yet when he meets with hobbling stony way, he presently comes down and falters. Now that this preserving strength,
which sincerity girds the soul with, may better appear, it will be requisite to instance in some of those seasons wherein sincerity keeps the soul from the power of temptation; as on the contrary, when hypocrisy cowardly and tamely yields the soul up into its hands.

First, A false heart usually starts aside, and yields to sin, when it can hide itself in a crowd, and have store of company, under which it may shroud itself. The hypocrite sets his watch, not by the sun (the Word I mean) but by the town-clock; what most do, that he will be easily persuaded to do, vox populi is his vox Dei; therefore you seldom have him swim against the tide of corrupt times. Light things are carried by the stream, and light spirits by the multitude; but the sincere Christian is massy and weighty, he will sooner sink to the bottom, and yield to the fury of a multitude by suffering from them, than float after their example in sinning with them. The hypocrite hath no inward principle to move him, and therefore, like the dead fish, must drive with the current; but sincerity being a principle of divine life, directs the soul to its way, and improves it to walk in it, without the help of company to lean on, yea against any opposition it meets. Joshua spake what was in his heart, when ten out of twelve that were sent with him, perceiving on which side the wind lay, accommodated themselves to the humour of the people. *Numb.* xiv. 7. The false prophet's pleasing words, with which they clawed Ahab's proud humour, could by no means be brought to fit good Micaiah's mouth, though he should make himself very ridiculous by chusing to stand alone rather than fall in with so goodly a company, four hundred prophets, who were all agreed of their verdict.

Secondly, A false heart yields when sin comes with a bribe in its hand; none but Christ, and such as know the truth, as it in Jesus, can scorn the devil's offer, *omnia hae, dabo,* all these will I give thee. The hypocrite, let him be got pinnacle-high in his profession, yet will make haste down to his prey, if it lies fair before him; one that carries not his reward in his bosom, that counts it not portion enough to have God and enjoy him, may be bought and sold by any huckster, to betray his soul, God,
and all. The hypocrite, when he seems most devout, waits but for a better market, and then he will play the merchant with his profession; there is no more difference betwixt an hypocrite and an apostate, than betwixt a green apple and a ripe one, come awhile hence, and you will see him fall rotten ripe from his profession. Judas, a close hypocrite, how soon an open traitor? And as fruit ripens sooner or later, as the heat of the year proves, so doth hypocrisy, as the temptation is strong or weak; some hypocrites go longer before they are discovered than others, because they meet not with such powerful temptations to draw out their corruptions. It is observed, that the fruits of the earth ripen more in a week, when the sun is in conjunction with the dog-star, than in a month before: when the hypocrite hath a door opened, by which he may enter into possession of that worldly prize he hath been projecting to obtain, now his lust within and occasion without are in conjunction, and his day hastens wherein he will fall: the hook is baited, and he cannot but nibble at it. Now sincerity preserves the soul in this hour of temptation. David prays that God would "not gather his soul with sinners, whose right hand is full of bribes;" Psalms xxvi. 9. such as for advantage, would be bribed to sin, to which wicked gang he opposed himself, ver. 11. "but as for me I will walk in my integrity," where he tells us what kept him from being corrupted and enticed as they were from God: it was his integrity; a soul walking in it sincerity will take bribes neither from men nor sin itself, and therefore he saith, ver. 12. "his foot stood in an even place," or as some read it, my foot standeth in righteousness.

Thirdly, The hypocrite yields to the temptation, when he may sin without being controled by man, which falls out in a double case. First, when he may embrace his lust in a secret corner, where the eye of man is not privy to it. Secondly, when the greatness of his place and power lifts him above the stroke of justice from man's hand; in both these he discovers his baseness, but sincerity preserves the soul in both.

First, See how the hypocrite behaves himself, when
he thinks he is safe from man's sight. Ananias and Sapphira's care was to blind man's eye, by laying some of their estates at the apostles' feet; and having made sure of this, as they thought, by drawing this curtain of their seeming zeal between it and them, they pocket up the rest without trembling at or thinking of God's revenging eye looking on them all the while, and boldly, when they have done this, present themselves to Peter as if they were as good saints as any in the company. The hypocrite stands more on the saving of his credit in this world, than the saving of his soul in the other; and therefore when he can ensure that, he will not stick to venture the putting of the other to the hazard: which shews he is either a flat atheist, and doth not believe there is another world to save or damn his soul in; or on purpose stands aloof off the thoughts of it, knowing it is such a melancholy subject, and inconsistent with the way he is in, that he dare not suffer his own conscience to tell him what it thinks of it; and so it comes to pass, that it hath no power to awe and sway him, because it cannot be heard to speak for itself. Now sincerity preserves the soul in this case; it was not enough that Joseph's master was abroad, so long as his God was present: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. mark, not against his master, but against God; sincerity makes faithful to man, but for more than man's sake. Joseph served his master with eye-service; he had God in his eye, when Potiphar had not him in his: happy are those masters that have any will serve them with this eyeservice of sincerity.

Secondly, The hypocrite, if he cannot get out of man's sight, yet may he but stand out of the reach of his arm and power, it is as well for his turn, and doth often discover him. How unworthily and cruelly dealt Laban with Jacob, cheating him in his wife, oppressing him in his wages, by changing it ten times? alas! he knew Jacob was a poor shiftless creature in a strange place, unable to contest with him, a great man in his country. Some princes, who before they have come to their power and greatness, have seemed humble and courteous, kind and merciful, just and upright, as soon as they have leaped
Having your loins

into the saddle, got the reins of government into their hand, and begun to know what their power was, have even rid their subjects off their legs with oppression and cruelty, without any mercy to their estates, liberties, and lives; such instances the history of the world doth sadly abound with. Even Nero himself, that played the part of a devil at last, began so, that in the Roman hopes, he was hugged for a state saint; set but hypocrisy upon the stage of power and greatness, and it will not be long before its mask falls off. The prophet meant thus much, when he made only this reply to Hazael's seeming abhorrence of what he had foretold concerning him: "the Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." 2 Kings viii. 13. as if he had said, Hazael, thou never yet didst sit in a king's chair, and knowest not what a discovery that will make of thy deceitful heart. Mark from whence Rehoboam's revolt from God is dated: "it came to pass when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord." 2 Chron. xii. 1. Policy bade him conceal his intentions, while he had settled himself in his throne, lest he should have hazarded his crown; but that set on sure, and his party made strong, now all breaks out: like a false captain, who victuals his castle, and furniseth it with all kind of provision and ammunition, and then, and not till then, declares himself a traitor, when he thinks he is able to defend his treason. But here also sincerity preserves the gracious soul: two famous instances we have for this, one in Joseph who had his unnatural brethren, that would once have taken away his life, yea who did that which might have proved worse, for all that they knew, barbarously sell him as a slave into a strange land, these he had strangely brought into his hands, while he was in all his honour and power in Egypt; and now, when he might have paid them in their own coin without any fear or control from man, behold this holy man is lifted above all thoughts of revenge, he pays their cruelty in his own tears, not in their blood; he weeps over them for joy to see them, that once had no joy till they had rid their hands of him; yea when their own guilt made them afraid of his presence, measuring him by their own revengeful
hearts, how soon doth he deliver them from all fears of any evil intended by him against them? yea he will not allow them to darken the joy which that day had with them brought to him, so much as by expressing their own grief before him, for their old cruelty to him; so perfect a conquest had he got of all revenge. Gen. xlv. 5.

And what preserved him in this hour of great temptation? he told them, "This do and live, for I fear God;" Gen. xlii. 18. as if he had said, Though you be here my prisoners, at my will and mercy for all that you can do to resist, yet I have that which binds my hands and heart too from doing or thinking you evil: I fear God; this was his preservative, he sincerely feared God. The other instance is Nehemiah, governor of that colony of Jews which, under the favour of the Persian princes, were again planting their native country: by his place he had an advantage of oppressing his brethren, if he durst have been so wicked; and from those that had before him been honoured with that office, he had examples of such as could not only swallow the common allowance of the governor, without rising in their consciences, which shewed a digestion strong enough, considering the peeled state of the Jews at that time, but could when themselves had sucked the milk, let their cruel servants suck the blood of this poor people also by illegal exactions; so that Nehemiah coming after such oppressors, if he had taken his allowance, and but eased them of the other burdens which they groaned under, no doubt he might have past for merciful in their thoughts; but he durst not go so far. A man may possibly be an oppressor in exacting his own. Nehemiah knew they were not in case to pay, and therefore he durst not require it. But as one who comes after a bad husbandman that hath driven his land, and sucked out the heart of it, casts it up fallow for a time till it recovers its lost strength, so did Nehemiah spare this oppressed people; and what, I pray, was it preserved him from doing as the rest had done? see Nehem. v. 15. "But I did not so, because of the fear of the Lord." The man was honest, his heart touched with a sincere fear of God, and this kept him right.
CHAP. XVII.

OF A RECOVERING STRENGTH THAT SINCERITY HATH,
AND WHENCE.

SECONDLY, Sincerity hath a recovering strength with it; when it doth not privilege from falling, yet it helps up again: whereas the hypocrite lies where he falls, and perisheth where he lies, who therefore is said, "to fall into mischief," Prov. xxiv. 16. The sincere soul falls, as a traveller may do, by stumbling at some stone in his path, but gets up, and goes on his way with more care and speed; the other falls, as a man from the top of a mast, that is ingulphed, past all recovering, in the devouring sea. He falls as Haman did before Mordecai; when he begins, he stays not, but falls till he can fall no lower. This we see in Saul, whose heart was never right; when once his naughty heart discovered itself, he tumbled down the hill apace, and stopped not, but from one sin went to a worse; and in a few years you see how far he was got from his first stage, where he first took his leave of God. He that should have told Saul, when he betrayed his distrust and unbelief in not staying the full time for Samuel's coming, which was the first wry step taken notice of in his apostacy, that he, who now was so hot for the worship of God, that he could not stay for the prophet's coming, would ere long quite give it over, yea fall from enquiring of the Lord, to ask counsel of the devil, by seeking to a witch; and from seeking counsel of the devil, should, at the last and worst act of his bloody tragedy, with his own hands throw himself desperately into the devil's mouth by self-murder, surely he would have staggered at it more than Hazael did at the plain character Elisha gave of him to his face. And truly all the account we can give of it is, that his heart was naught at first; which Samuel upon that occasion hinted to him, 1 Sam. xiii. when he told him, "the Lord had sought him a man after his own heart;" David he meant, who afterward fell into a sin greater as to the matter of the
fact, than that for which Saul was rejected of God, and yet having but an habitual sincerity, as the root of the matter in him, happily recovered out of it; for want of which, hypocritical Saul miscarried finally: so true is that proverb, that frost and fraud have dirty ends. Now there is a double reason for this recovering strength of sincerity: one taken from the nature of sincerity itself, the other from the promise by God settled on the soul where sincerity is found.

First, From the nature of sincerity itself. Sincerity is to the soul as the soul is to the body: it is a spark of divine life kindled in the bosom of the creature by the Spirit of God. It is "the seed of God remaining in the saint." John iii. 9. Now as the seed cast into the womb of the earth, and quickened there by the influence of Heaven upon it, doth put forth its head fresh and green in the spring, after many a cold nip it hath had from the winter; so doth sincere grace after temptations and falls, when God looks out upon it with the beams of his exciting grace. But the hypocrite, wanting this inward principle of life, doth not so; he is a Christian by art, not by a new nature, dressed up like a puppet, in the fashion and outward shape of a man, that moves by the wires which the workman fastens to it, and not informed by a soul of its own; and therefore as such an image, when worn by time, or broken by violence, can do nothing to renew itself, but crumbles away by piece-meal, till it comes at last to nothing; so doth the hypocrite waste in his profession without a vital principle to oppose his ruin that is coming upon him. There is a great difference between the wool on the sheep's back, which shorn will grow again, and the wool of the sheep's-skin on a wolf's back; clip that, and you shall see no more grow in its room. The sincere Christian is the sheep, the hypocrite is the wolf clad in the sheep's skin; the application of it is obvious.

Secondly, The sincere soul is under a promise, and promises are restorative: "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;" in Hebrew, restoring the soul. Psal. xix. 7. It fetcheth back the soul to life, as a strong cordial one
Having your loins in a fainting fit, which virtue is proper to the promissory part of the Word, and therefore so to be taken in this place. Now the sincere soul is the only right heir of the promises. Many sweet promises are laid in for the assuring succour and auxiliary aid to bring them off all their dangers and temptations: "whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved." 

Prov. xxviii. 18. Now mark the opposition: "but he that is perverse shall fall at once;" that is, suddenly, irrecoverably. "God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers;" Job viii. 20. he will not take them by the hand, that is, to help them up when they fall; nay the hypocrite is not only destitute of a promise for his help, but lies also under a curse from God. Great pains we find him take to rear his house, and when he hath done, "leans on it, but it shall not stand; he holds it fast, but it shall not endure," Job viii. 15. "A little that the righteous hath is better than the riches of many wicked." Psalm xxxvii. 16. but why? see the reason, ver. 17, 18. "for the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholdeth the righteous." The righteous man in that Psalm is the upright, by the wicked is meant the hypocrite. A little true grace mixed with much corruption in the sincere Christian is better than the hypocrite's riches, great faith, zeal, and devotion, he brags so of. The former hath the blessing of the promise to recover it when decaying; these the curse of God threatening to blast them, when in their greatest pomp and glory. The hypocrite's doom is to grow worse and worse. 2 Tim. ii. 13. Those very ordinances, which are effectual through the blessing of the promise to recover the sincere soul, being cursed to the hypocrite, give him his bane and ruin. The Word which opens the eyes of the one, puts out the eyes of the other, as we find in the hypocritical Jews, to whom the word was sent to "make them blind," Isaiah vi. 9, 10. It melts and breaks the sincere soul, as in Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 19; but meeting with a naughty false heart, it hardens exceedingly, as appeared in the same Jews, Jerem. xiii. 20. Before the sermon they speak fair: "whatever God saith, they will do;" but when sermon is done, they are further off than
ever from complying with the command of God. The hypocrite hears for the worse, prays for the worse, fasts for the worse: every ordinance is a wide door to let Satan in more fully to possess him, as Judas found the sop.

CHAP. XVIII.

OF A SUPPORTING AND COMFORTING PROPERTY SINCERITY HATH, SHEWN IN SEVERAL PARTICULAR INSTANCES.

THIRDLY, Sincerity hath a supporting, comforting virtue; it lifts the head above water, and makes the Christian float atop of the waves of all troubles with a holy presence and gallantry of spirit. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness;" *Psal.* cxii. 4. not only light after darkness, when the night is past, but in darkness also: "out of the eater comes meat, and out of the strong, sweetness." Those afflictions which feed on, yea eat out the hypocrite’s heart, the sincere soul can feed on them, suck sweetness from them, yea hath such a digestion, that he can turn them into high nourishment both to his grace and comfort. A naughty heart is merry only while his carnal cheer is before him, *Hosea* ii. 11. God tells Israel, he will take away her feasts, and all her mirth shall cease; her joy is taken away with the cloth: sincerity makes the Christian sing, when he hath nothing to his supper. David was in none of the best case when in the cave, yet we never find him merrier; his heart makes sweeter music than ever his harp did: "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise." *Psal.* lvii. 7. The hypocrite’s joy, like the strings of musical instruments, crack in wet weather; but sincerity keeps the soul in tune in all weather. They are unsound bodies that sympathize with the season, cheerily in fair, but ill and full of aches in foul; so the unsound heart, a few pinching providences set him.
Having your loins

going, kill him as a sharp winter doth weak bodies; whereas the sincere soul never is more hale, never more comfortable; afflictions do him but this courtesy to call in his affections, which in the summer of prosperity were possibly too much diffused and scattered among creature-delights, and unite them more entirely and closely upon Christ, into whose bosom it goes as directly when storms come, as the bee to its hive; and he must needs be comfortable, that hath so soft a pillow to lay his head on as Christ's lap. Sincerity keeps the soul's mouth open, to receive the sweet consolations that drop from the Word and Spirit; indeed all the promises are directed to such; but hypocrisy is like the quinsey in the throat of the sick man; he burns within, and can get nothing down to quench the fire which his sins have kindled in his soul. Conscience tells him, when sweet promises are offered, These are not for me, I have dealt falsely with God and man; it is the sincere soul God invites, but I am a rotten-hearted hypocrite: and how much short comes such a poor wretch of Dives's misery in Hell, I pray? Dives burns, and hath not a drop to quench his tongue; the hypocrite in affliction he burns too, and hath indeed not a drop, but a river, a fountain full of water, yea of blood, presented to him, but he cannot drink it down, he cannot make any use of it for his good; his teeth are set so close, no key can open them; his hypocrisy stares him in the face, it lies like a mastiff at his door, and will suffer no comfort to come near him. And which is worst, he that hath no bread, or he that hath and cannot eat it? None so witty and cunning as the hypocrite in prosperity, to ward off the reproofs, to shift from the counsels, of the Word; and in affliction, when conscience awakes, none so skilful to dispute against the comforts of the Word. Now he is God's close prisoner, no comfort can come at him; if God speak terror, who can speak peace? "Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them;" Lam. iii. 65. sorrow of heart is the hypocrite's curse from God in affliction, and what God lays on sticks close. The word for sorrow in the Hebrew signifies a shield that fenceth and covers over, and doth (saith one upon this place) denote that disease physicians call cardia }
which so oppresseth the heart, that it is covered *sicut sculo*, as with a shield or lid over it, and keeps all relief from the heart: such is the sorrow of the hypocrite in affliction, when once his conscience awakes, and God fills him with the amazing thoughts of his own sins, and God's wrath pursuing him for them. But I shall descend to instance in a few particular kinds of afflictions, and shew what comfort attends sincerity in them all.

**SECT. I.**

First, Sincerity supports and comforts the soul under reproaches from men. These are no petty trials: they are reckoned among the saints' martyrdoms, *Heb*. xi. 36. called there, "cruel mockings;" yea not unworthy to be recorded among the sufferings of Christ: the matchless patience and magnanimity of his spirit appeared not only in enduring the cross, but in "despising the shame," which the foul tongues of his bloody enemies loaded him unmercifully with. Man's aspiring mind can least brook shame; credit and applause is the great idol of men that stand at the upper end of the world for parts or place; give but this, and what will not men do or suffer? One wiser than the rest could see this proud humour in Diogenes, that endured to stand naked, embracing a heap of snow, while he had spectators about him to admire his patience (as they thought it), and therefore was asked, whether he would do thus, if he had none to see him. The hypocrite is the greatest credit-monger in the world, it is all he lives on almost, what the breath of men's praise sends him in; when that fails, his heart faints, but when it turns to scorn and reproaches, then he dies, and needs must; because he has no credit with God, while he is scorned by man: whereas sincerity bears up the soul against the wind of man's vain breath, because it hath conscience, and God himself, to be his arbitrator, to whom he dare appeal from man's bar. O how sweetly do a good conscience, and the Spirit of God witnessing with it, feast the Christian at such a time; and no matter for the hail of man's reproaches that rattle without, while the Christian is so merry within doors. David is
a pregnant instance of this, Psal. xli. 11. "By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me." How, David! does not thy enemy triumph over thee? I pray see the condition he at present was in: he had fallen into a great sin, and the hand of God was on him in a disease, chastising him for it, as appears, ver. 4. his enemies from this take advantage to speak him all to naught; ver. 5. "Mine enemies speak evil of me;" no doubt charging him for an hypocrite; when they come to visit him, it is but to gather some matter of reproach, which they presently blas abroad, ver. 6. yea they are not ashamed to say, ver. 8. that an evil disease, or as it is in the Hebrew, a thing of Belial (that is his sin) cleaveth to him. Now God hath met with him, now he lieth, he shall rise no more; yea his familiar friend, in whom he trusted, serves him as ill as the worst of his enemies, ver. 9. Was ever poor man lower? and yet can he say his enemy triumphs not over him? his meaning therefore we must take thus: that, notwithstanding all these reproaches cast upon him, yet his spirit did not yield, this was above them all; God kept that up, and gave him such inward comfort, as wiped off their scorn as fast as they threw it on; their reproaches fell, as sometimes we see snow, melting as fast as they fell; none lay upon his spirit to load and trouble it. And how came David by this holy magnanimity of spirit, these inward comforts? ver. 12. he tells us, "as for me, thou upholdest me in my integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever." As if he had said, Thou dostest not by me, O Lord, as mine enemies do; they pick out my worst, and revile me for it; if there be but one sore place, one sinful part in my life, like flies, they light there; but thou overlookest my sinful slips and failings, pardoning them, and takest notice of my uprightness, which amidst all my infirmities thou upholdest, and so settest me before thy face, communicating thy love and favour to me, notwithstanding the sins that are found mingled with my course of obedience. This kept up the holy man's spirit, and makes him end the Psalm joyfully, ver. 13. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting." We live, Christians, in re-
proaching times; he that is so over-dainty of his name that he cannot bear to see some dirt, and that good store too, cast upon his back by reviling tongues, must seek a path to travel in by himself to Heaven; but, for thy comfort, Christian, sincerity, though it cannot privilege thee from travellers' fare, and keep thee from being dashed with calumnies, yet it will do thee this kind office, that the dirt which lights on thy coat shall not soak into thy soul to damp thy joy and chill thy inward comfort. Reproaches without may be comfortably endured, yea triumphantly worn as a crown, if they meet not with a reproaching conscience within. Yea sincerity will do more than this comes to: it will not only comfort thee under the persecution of the tongue but hand also; not only quench the fire, which from thence is spit on thy face, by tongues set on fire by Hell; but it will comfort thee in the very mouth of fire itself, if God shall suffer thee by persecutors to be cast into it. Sincerity makes thee indeed fearful to sin: O thou darest not to touch one of these coals; but it will make thee bold to burn, and even hug joyfully the flames of martyrdom when called to them. So little afraid was that sincere servant of Christ, an Italian martyr, Mr. Fox records, among many other undaunted champions of the truth, that when the magistrate of the place where he was to be burned and the officers of the bishop that condemned him were in a hot contest, wrangling which of them should pay for the wood that should make the fire for his burning; he pleasantly sent to desire them they would not fall out upon that occasion, for he would take off the burden from them both, and be at the cost himself. Blessed soul! he made not so much ado of spending his blood and sacrificing his life, as they about a few pence wickedly to procure the same.

Sect. II.

Secondly, Sincerity girds the soul with comforting strength, when conflicting with affliction from the hand of God. Many are the sorts of afflictions with which God exerciseth his sincere servants; to name a few.
Having your loins

First, when the Lord toucheth his outward man by sickness, or his inward man by spiritual conflicts; sincerity is a comfortable companion in both. The hypocrite above all fears falling into God’s hands, and well he may, for he is able to do him most hurt: therefore no sooner God takes hold of his collar, either of these ways, but his joy gives up the ghost; he, like some murderer (whose doom is writ plainly in the law) gives himself for a dead man when once he is clapt up in prison. This made Job such a wonderling to his wife, because he held up his holy course, when battered so sadly by the afflicting hand of God with renewed afflictions: “Dost thou yet hold thy integrity?” what! nothing but blows come from God’s hand, and yet continue to bless him? This was strange to her, but not to him, who could call her “foolish woman” for her pains, but not charge God foolishly for all he smacked so under his hand. Sincerity enables the Christian to do two things in this case, which the hypocrite cannot—to speak good of God, and to expect good from God; and the soul cannot be uncomfortable, though head and heart ache together, which is able to do these.

First, Sincerity enables the Christian to think and speak well of God. A false-hearted hypocrite, his countenance falls, and his heart rises, yea swells with venom against God: though he dare not always let it drivel out of his mouth, yet he has bloody thoughts against him in his heart. “Hast thou found me, O my enemy?” saith the wretch; he loves not God, and therefore a good thought of God cannot dwell in his soul; all that God has done for him, though never so bountifully, is forgotten and embittered with the overflowing of his gall at the present dealings of God to him; he frets and fumes, you shall hear him sooner curse God than charge himself; but the sincere soul nourisheth most sweet and amiable apprehensions of God, which bind him to the peace, that he dare not think or speak unbeseeing the glory or goodness of God, as we see in David, Psalm xxxix. 9. “I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou, Lord, didst it.” This holy man had a breach made both in his body and spirit at this time, he was
sick and sad, yet he remembers from whose hand the blow came: "Thou, Lord, didst it;" thou whom I love dearly, and so can take it kindly; thou whom I have offended, and so take it patiently: yea, thou who mightest have cast me into a bed of flames, instead of my bed of sickness, and therefore I accept thy correction thankfully. Thus he catches the blow, without retorting it back upon God by any quarrelling discontented language.

Secondly, Sincerity enables the soul to expect good from God when his hand presseth hardest on body or soul. Psalm xxxviii. Never was David in a worse case for body and soul; it would break a flinty heart to read the sad moans that this throbbing soul makes, in the anguish of his flesh, and bitter agony of his spirit; one would have thought they had been the pangs of a soul going away in despair; yet even in this great storm we find him casting out his sheet-anchor of hope, and that takes sure hold of God for his mercy, ver. 15. "In thee, O Lord, do I hope; thou wilt hear, O Lord my God." This expectation of good from God corrects and qualifies the bitterness that is upon his palate from his present sorrow; so Psalm xl. 17. "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me." My state at present is sad enough; but my comfort is, I am not cast out of his mind: I know his thoughts are at work to do me good. Holy Job proves that he is not a hypocrite (as his friends uncharitably charged him) by this confidence he had in God in the depth of all his afflictions: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. I will maintain my ways before him, he also shall be my salvation; for a hypocrite shall not come before him." Job xiii. 15, 16. As if he had said, If I were not sincere, I durst not appeal thus to God, and comfortably believe, while God is killing of me, that he would yet save me, "for a hypocrite shall not come before him;" that is, he dare not thus trust himself in God's hands, and acquiesce in his promise when his neck is on the block and God's knife at his throat; no, if he could he would never come in his sight, his conscience tells him God knows him too well to in-
tend him any good; and therefore when God begins to
lay his hand on him (except his conscience be dedolent
and seared, which is the curse that God now and then
brands the gross hypocrite with) he presently hath the
scent of hell-fire in his soul, in a fearful expectation
thereof, and looks on these present afflictions, though
but a cloud of a hand-breadth, as those which will spread
further and further till the shades of that everlasting
night overtake and encompass him in Hell's utter dark-
ness.

S E C T. III.

Thirdly, Sincerity comforts the Christian when he
wants success visibly to crown his endeavours in his
place and calling: a great affliction no doubt to a gra-
cious soul. As when a minister of the gospel spends
his strength, and swails out his life to a gainsaying peo-
ple, that sit like stocks and stones under his ministry, no
more moved than the seats they sit on and the pillars they
lean to: ignorant and profane he found them, and such
he sees is he like to leave them, after twenty years, may
be almost twice told, spent amongst them. This must
needs be a heart-aching trial to one that God hath given
a compassionate heart towards souls. It costs the mo-
ther no small pains to bring forth a living child; but
what are the bitter throes of one that travails with a dead
child? Such is the travail of a poor minister with a dead-
hearted people, yet the portion of none of the meanest
of God's messengers; indeed God sets his most eminent
servants about the hardest work.

Now sincerity lightens this affliction, and sends in that
which may cheer the soul under it. Paul saw he should
not carry all to heaven with him he preached unto; to
many the gospel was "a savour of death unto death." The
sweet perfume of the gospel proved a deadly scent
to hasten and heighten their damnation; this could not
but be sad to so tender a physician, to see his patients
die under his hands; yet he thanks God, that makes
him triumph in Christ. 2 Cor. ii. 14. But how can he
do this? Poor souls drop to Hell from under his pulpit
hearing him, and he triumph! this is as strange as to see
the father follow his child's mournful hearse, not weeping, but singing and dancing. Mark, and the wonder will cease; he doth not triumph that they perish, but that he is not guilty of their blood; not that they are damned, but that he sincerely endeavoured their salvation. ver. 17. "for we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ." Had Paul dropped some wild gourd of error into his doctrine, or mingled some ingredient of his own with what Christ the great physician had ordered, he would have had little cause to triumph; but preaching pure gospel, and that purely, with a sincere heart, he might triumph in Christ that made him faithful, and shall triumph over them when he meets them again at the great day at the bar of Christ, where to their face he shall witness against them, and vote with Christ for their eternal destruction. Methinks I hear all the faithful ministers of Christ giving an account to him on whose errand they were sent, in the language of Jeremiah's prayer, Jer. xvii. 16. "Lord, we have not desired this woeful day, thou knowest," which now hath taken hold of these wretched souls, and which we warned them of. That which came out of our lips (in our preaching to them) was right before thee, the life of their souls was dear and precious to us, we could have sacrificed our temporal lives to save the eternal life of their souls; but nothing we could say or do would stay them; to Hell they would go, over all the prayers, tears, and entreaties out of thy Word, which stood in their way. This will make the sincere ministers of Christ lift up their heads with joy, and such forlorn wretches hang down their heads with shame to look Christ or them in the face, though now they can brazen it out with an impudent forehead. So for Parents and Masters, sincerity in your relations will comfort you, though you see not your seed come up which you have sown upon them in your godly examples, holy instructions, and seasonable corrections. David was one that "walked in his house with a perfect heart," Psalm ci. 2. careful in the nurture of his children, as appears in his pious counsel to Solomon, 2 Chron. xxviii. 9. (though not with-
Having your loins out failings), but many of his children were none of the best: one incestuous, another embroiing his hands in his brother's blood, a third catching at his crown traitorously while his father was alive; which made this holy man sadly foresee how the squares would go when he was dead and gone; yet in this great disorder of his family, how comfortable do we find him on his dying-bed: "Though my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Surely he had done his duty sincerely; this was his evidence for his interest in the covenant, and the covenant was all his desire and salvation.

In a word, in times of public calamity, when the flood of God's wrath comes rolling in upon a nation, like waves irresistibly at the wide breach which the high crying sins of the times make, and the few righteous that are found upon the place labour to stand in the gap, by their prayers begging the life of the nation, but God will not hear (for so it sometimes falls out, though they were like Noah, Job, and Daniel, greatly beloved of God, that no bail will be taken for a nation under arrest of God's judgments); even then sincerity will be a sweet support while we share with others in the common calamity. Jeremiah bestirred himself zealously for God in testifying against the sins of the times, and for the people faithfully and earnestly with God by prayer; but he could neither convert them by his preaching, nor divert the wrath of God by his praying. The Jews bade him hold his peace, and prophecy no more against them; God stops his mouth also, and bids him pray no more for them. Now in this dismal state of things, what easeth his sorrowful heart, swoln with grief for their sins, and judgments hastening upon them, like an eagle to her prey? Truly nothing can, but the remembrance of his sincerity to God and man in those debauched times: "Remember that I stood up before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them." Jer. xviii. 20. As if he had said, O Lord, though I cannot prevail with this rebellious generation to repent of their sins, or with thy majesty, to repent of thy wrath gone out by an ir-
reversible decree against them, yet remember that I have been faithful in my place, both to thee and them; whereas, on the contrary, horror and amazement of spirit is the portion, in such times of public calamity, of hypocrites, as we see in Pashur, Jer. xx. who was a man that bare great sway at court in Jeremiah's time, a bitter enemy to him and the message he brought from God to the Jews, labouring to soothe up the king and princes with vain hopes of golden days coming, point blank against the Word of the Lord in the mouth of Jeremiah; and what becomes of him when the storm falls on that unhappy people? Jeremiah tells him his doom, ver. 4. that God will make him a Mugor Missabib, a terror to himself; he should not only share in the common calamity, but have a brand of God's especial wrath set upon him above others.

S E C T. IV.

Fourthly, Sincerity girds the Christian with strength of comfort, when deprived of those opportunities which sometime God had intrusted him with for serving of him: an affliction (considered in itself) so grievous to a gracious soul, that he knows none he fears more; he could chuse any, might be his own carver, before it; to be poor, disgraced, persecuted, any thing, rather than be laid aside as a broken instrument, unserviceable to his God. Indeed, he values his life, and all the comforts of it, by the opportunities they afford for the glorifying God. David stops the mouth of his soul, which began to whisper some discontented language, with this, that he should yet praise God. Psalm xlili. "Why art thou disquieted, O my soul? I shall yet praise him." All is well with David, and no cause of disquiet in his soul, whatever besides goes cross to him, may he but praise God, and have opportunity of glorifying him. Joseph, when God had so strangely raised him pinnacle-high, as I may say, to honour in a strange land, he doth not bless himself in his preferment, carnally to think how great a man he is, but interprets the whole series of providence, bringing him at last to that place, wherein he stood compeer to a mighty king, to be no other than giving him an
opportunity of being eminently serviceable to God in the preservation of his church, which was at that time contained in his father's family: "God hath sent me hither (saith he) before you, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance." Gen. xlv. 7. This holy man made his place give place to the work he was called to do in it for God, counting the honour of his honour to lie in the opportunity he had by it of serving God and his church. It must therefore needs be a sad affliction to a saint, when such opportunities are taken from him that at any time he hath enjoyed. But sincerity can make good work of this also, if God will have it so. It is sad to the Christian to be laid aside, but it is comfortable to him to remember that when he was not he did not melt his talents away in sloth, or waste them away in riot, but was faithful in improving them for God; he counts it his affliction, that God employs him not as he hath done, but he is not sorry that God can do his work without him; yea it is a sweet comfort to him, as he lies at the grave's mouth, to think that the glory of God shall not go down to the grave with him; though he dies, yet God lives to take care of his own work, and it is not the cracking of one string, or all, that can mar the music of God's providence, who can perform his pleasure without using any creature for his instrument. In a word, it is sad to him to be taken from any work wherein he might more eminently glorify God; yet this again comforts him that God counts that done which the Christian sincerely desires to do. David's goodwill in desiring to build the temple, was as much in God's account as if he had done it; many shall be at the last day rewarded by Christ, for clothing and feeding the poor, who when on earth had neither clothes nor bread to give; yet having had a heart to give, shall be reckoned amongst the greatest benefactors to the poor. This appears from Matt. xxv. 34, where Christ is represented speaking not to some few saints that had great estates to bestow on charitable uses, but to all his saints, poor as well as rich: "Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom
girt about with truth. 199

prepared for you, &c. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat," &c. Mark, not ye that were rich, but ye, that is, all, such as had bread, you gave that out; you that had not bread or money to give (when you could not draw out your purse), you yet drew out your souls to the hungry. Hear this, O ye precious souls that God hath made sincere, and take comfort. May be you stand low in the world, your calling is mean, your estate next to nothing, which makes you little regarded by your neighbours that over-top you. Canst thou say, though thou art but a servant to some poor cobler, that thou desirest to walk in the truth of thy heart, approving thyself to God in thy whole course? this bird will sing as sweet a note in thy breast, as if thou wert the greatest monarch in the world. That which brings comfort to the greatest saint in a time of distress is the same which comforts the meanest in the family, and that is the love and favour of God, interest in Christ, and the precious promises, which "in him are yea and amen." Now sincerity is the best evidence for our title to those. It will not be so much insisted on whether much or little has been done by us, as whether that much or little were in sincerity. "Well done, good and faithful servant," not, Well done, thou hast done great things, ruled states and kingdoms, been a famous preacher in thy time, &c. but thou hast been faithful; and that thou mayest be that standest in the obscurest corner of the world. Good Hezekiah knew this, and therefore on his sick-bed he doth not tell God of his great services he had done, though none had done more, but only desires God to take notice of the truth and sincerity of his heart: "Remember that I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight." Isaiah xxxviii. 3.
CHAP. XIX.

A BRIEF APPLICATORY IMPROVEMENT OF THE POINT,
BOTH IN GENERAL AND PARTICULAR BRANCHES.

IT remains that the point be applied in its several branches, which were three: sincerity hath a preserving strength, a restoring strength, and a comforting strength. But for quick dispatch, we shall do it under two heads, clapping the two former into one.

Use 1. Therefore hath sincerity a strengthening virtue, whereby it either preserves the soul from falling into sin, or helps the Christian fallen, up again.

First, This affords thee, Christian, a further discovery of thy heart, whether sincere or not; put it here upon the trial. Dost thou find a power imparted to thee, whereby thou art enabled to repel a temptation to sin, when thou hast no weapon left thee to defend thee against it but the command forbidding it, or some arrow taken out of the quiver of the gospel, such as the love of Christ to thee, thy love to him, and the like? May be the temptation is laid so cunningly, that thou mayest sin and save thy credit too, having a back-door opened to let thee in to it secretly. Thou shalt hazard nothing apparently of thy temporal concernment, yea rather greatly advantage it, if thou wilt hearken to the motion: only God stands up to oppose it, his Spirit tells thee it is against his glory, inconsistent with the duty thou owest and love thou professest to him. Now, speak what thou thinkest of sinning, the case thus stated; canst thou yet stand it out valiantly, and tell Satan, sin is no match for thee, till thou canst have God’s consent, and reconcile sinning against him, and loving of him together? If so, bless God that hath given thee a sincere heart, and also for opening such a window as this in thy soul, through which thou mayest see that grace to be there, which seen, is the best evidence that God can give thee for thy interest in him and life everlasting with him.
Wert thou a hypocrite, thou couldst no more resist a sin so offered, than powder, fire, or chaff, the wind.

Again, When thou art run down by the violence of temptation, what is the behaviour of thy soul in this case? Dost thou so rally thy routed forces, and again make head against thy enemy, so much the more eagerly because foiled so shamefully? Or art thou content to sit down quietly by thy loss, and chuse rather to be a tame slave to thy lust, than to be at any further trouble to continue the war? The false heart indeed is soon cowed, and quickly yields subjection to the conqueror; but the sincere Christian gets heart, even when he loseth ground; uprightness makes the soul rebound higher in holy purposes against sin, by its very falls into sin. "Once have I spoken (he means foolishly, sinfully) but I will not answer; yea twice, but I will proceed no further." Job xl. 5. This made holy David beg of God to be "spared a little, that he might" have time to "recover his strength before he went hence;" loth he was to go beaten out of the field; might he but live to recover his losses by repentance of, and some victory over those sins that had weakened and worsted him, then death should be welcome; like that brave captain, who, wounded in fight, desired some to hold him up, that he might but see the enemy run before he died, and he should close his eyes in peace. Deal therefore impartially with thy own soul, which way do thy falls and failings work? If they wear off the edge from thy conscience, that it is not so keen and sharp in its reproofs for sin; if they bribe thy affections, that thou beginnest to comply with those sins with which formerly thy contest was, and likest pretty well their acquaintance, thy heart is not right; but if still thy heart meditates a revenge on thy sin that hath overpowered thee, and it lies on thy spirit (like undigested meat on a sick stomach) thou canst have no ease and content to thy troubled soul till thou hast cleared thyself of it, as to the reigning power of it, truly then thou discoverest a sincere heart.

Use 2. This shews of what importance it is to labour for sincerity: without it we can neither stand against, nor rise when we fall into temptation; whatever thou beggest
of God, forget not a sincere heart. David saw need of more of this grace than he had: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew in me a right spirit," Psal. li. 10. and happy was it for him he had so much as to make him desire more of it? What folly is it to build a house with beams on fire: the hypocrite's building must needs come to naught, there is a fire unquenched, the power of hypocrisy unmortified, that will consume all his goodly profession; he carries into the field a heart that will deliver him up into his enemy's hands. And he is sure to be overcome to whom his own side is not true.

Use 3. Bless God, O sincere Christian, for this grace; it is a blessing invaluable, crowns and diadems are not to be compared with it. In this thou hast "a heart after God's own heart;" a heart to his liking; yea a heart to his likeness. Nothing makes thee more like God in the simplicity and purity of his nature, than sincerity. Truth is that God glories in; he is a God of truth. When Haman was bid to say what should be done to the man that the king delighted to honour, he, thinking the king meant no other than himself, would fly as high as his ambition could carry him; and what doth he chuse but to be clothed with the king's own apparel royal? When God gives thee sincerity, he clothes thy soul with that which he wears himself: "who clothes himself with truth and righteousness as a garment." By this thou art made a conqueror greater than ever Alexander was; he overcame a world of men, but thou a world of lusts and devils. Did one bless God at the sight of a toad, that God made him a man and not a toad? how much more thankful oughtest thou to be, who hath made thee, that wert a hypocrite by nature, which is far worse, an upright Christian? It is a notable saying of Lactantius, Si nemo est, quin emori malit, quanm converti in aliquam Bestiae figuram, quamvis hominis mentem sit habiturus, quanto miserius est in hominis figurâ animo esse efferto? If a man would chuse death, rather than to have the face and shape of a beast, though he might withal keep the soul of man, how much more miserable is it under the shape of a man to carry the heart of a beast? Yet such a one is the hypocrite, yea worse; he doth not only under the shape
of a man, but in the disguise of a saint, carry a beastly filthy heart within him.

Use 4. Let this encourage thee who art sincere against the fears of final apostacy. Though sincerity doth not privilege thee from falling, yet thy covenant-state which thou art in, if sincere, secures thee from final apostacy. Because thy stock of grace in hand is small, thou questionest thy persevering; can these weak legs, thinkest thou, bring me to my journey's end, these few pence in my purse, little grace in my heart, bear my charges all the way to Heaven, through so many expences of trials and temptations? Truly no, if thou wert to receive no more than thou hast at present. The bread thou hast in the cupboard will not maintain thee all thy life; but, soul, thou hast a covenant will help thee to more when that grows low; hath not God taught thee to pray for "thy daily bread," and dost thou not find that the blessing of God, in thy calling diligently followed, supplies thee from day to day? And hast thou not the same bond to sue for thy spiritual daily bread? Hast thou not a Father in Heaven that knows what thou needest for thy soul as well as body? Hast thou not a dear brother, yea husband, that is gone to Heaven, where plenty of all grace is to be had, and that on purpose on his children's errand, that he might keep their soul's graces and comforts alive in this necessitous world? All power is in his hands; he may go to the heap, and send what he please for your succour, and can you starve while he hath fullness of grace by him that hath undertaken to provide for you? Luke x. 35. The two pence which the Samaritan left, were not enough to pay for cure and board of the wounded man; therefore he passeth his word "for all that he should need besides:" Christ doth not only give a little grace in hand, but his bond for more to sincere souls, even as much as will bring them to Heaven: "grace and glory he will give, and no good thing will he with-hold from them that walk uprightly." Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

Use 5. Take heed of resting on or glorying in thy sincerity. It is true it will enable thee to resist temptations, and recover out, when in temptation; but who enables that? where grows the root that feeds thy grace?
Not in thy own ground, but in Heaven; it is God alone that holds thee and it in life; he that gave it is at cost to keep it. “The Lord is thy strength, let him be thy song.” What can the axe, though sharp, do without the workman? shall the axe say I have cut down, or the chisel I have carved? Is it not the skill and art of the workman rather? When able to resist temptation, say, “The Lord was on my side, or else I had fallen;” set up an Ebenezer, and write on it, “Hitherto the Lord hath helped me.”

Though God promiseth in the Psalm just now cited to give grace and glory to the upright, yet he will not give the glory of his grace to uprightness. In 2 Sam. xxii. 24, we have David asserting his uprightness, and how he was preserved by it: “I was also upright before him, and have kept me from mine iniquity.” Verse 25. he declares the fruit of his uprightness, how God bare testimony to it, by rewarding him for it, and giving him victory over his enemies: “Therefore the Lord hath recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his eye-sight.” Now, lest he should set up himself, or applaud his own uprightness to the prejudice of God’s grace, he sweetly corrects and bounds these passages, ver. 33. “God is my strength and power, and he maketh my way perfect.” As if the holy man had said, “I pray mistake me not; I do not ascribe the victory over my enemies within me or without to myself and my uprightness; no, God did all, he is my strength and power, yea it is he that makes my way perfect; if I be sincere more than others in my way, I must thank him for it, for he makes my way perfect. He found me at first as crooked a piece, and walking in as crooked ways, as any other; but he made me and my way perfect and straight. Had God pleased, he could have made Saul as perfect as David; had God left David, he would have been as crooked and false-hearted as Saul.

The last branch of the point was, sincerity hath a comforting strength in all sorts of affliction. The applicatory improvement of which shall be only this.

Use. Let it teach us, not to fear affliction, but hypo-
crisy. Believe it, friends, affliction is a harmless thing to a sincere soul, it cannot be so great as to make it inconsistent with his joy and comfort; a gracious soul in the most sharp affliction can spare his tears and pity, to bestow them on the hypocrite when in all his pomp and glory; he hath that in his bosom that gives him more comfortable apprehensions of his own affliction than standers-by have, or can have of them; which made once a holy man, when the pangs of death were on him, to ask a servant of his, weeping by his bed-side for him, what she meant by her fears; saying, Never fear that my heavenly Father will do me any hurt. Indeed affliction is not joyous to the flesh, which hath made some of God's dear children awhile to shrink; but after they have been acquainted with the work, and the comforts which God bestows on his poor prisoners through the grate, they have learnt another tune, like the bird that at first putting into the cage flutters, and shews her dislike of her retrain, but afterwards comes to sing more sweetly than when at liberty to fly where she pleased. Be not therefore so thoughtful about affliction, but careful against hypocrisy; if the bed of affliction proves hard and uneasy to thee, it is thyself that brings with thee what makes it so. Approve thyself to God, and trust him who hath promised to be his saint's bed-maker in affliction, to make it soft and easy for thee. O what a cutting word will it be in a dying hour, when thou art crying, Lord, Lord, mercy on a poor creature! to hear the Lord say, I know thee not; it is not the voice of a sincere soul, but a hypocrite that howls on his bed of sorrow? What then wilt thou do when fallen into the hands of God, with whom thou hast but jugged in thy profession, and never sincerely didst love? If that speech was so confounding to the Patriarchs, “I am Joseph, whom you sold,” that they could not endure his presence, knowing their own guilt; how intolerable will it be to hear from God's own mouth such language in a time of distress. I am God whom you have mocked, abused, and sold away for the enjoyment of your lusts; and do you now come to me? Have I any thing for you but a Hell to torment you in to all eternity.
VERSE 14.

And having on the breast-plate of righteousness.

THESE words present us with a second piece of armour, commended to, and charged upon all Christ's soldiers: "a breast-plate," and the metal it is to be made of, "righteousness." Concerning which, a double enquiry would be made. First, What righteousness is here intended. Secondly, Why compared to this piece of the soldier's armour, the "breast-plate."

CHAP. I.

CONTAINS THE EXPLICATION OF THE WORDS.

FIRST, What is the "righteousness" here meant? The scripture speaks of a two-fold "righteousness," the one legal, the other evangelical.

First, A "legal righteousness," that which God required of man in the covenant of works: "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the Law, that the man which doth those things shall live." Rom. x. 5. Three things concur to make up this law-righteousness.

First, An obedience absolutely perfect to the law of God, that is perfect extensive in regard of the object; intensive, in regard of the subject: the whole law must be kept with the whole heart, the least defect either of part or degree in the obedience spoils all.

Secondly, This perfect obedience to the law of God must be personally performed by him that is thus righteous: "The man that doth these things shall live." In that covenant God had but man's single bond for performance (no surety engaged with him), so that God having none else to come upon for the default, it was
necessary, except God will lose his debt, to exact it personally on every man.

Thirdly, This perfect personal obedience must be perpetual. This law allows no after-gain; if the law be once broken, though but in one wry thought, there is no place for repentance in that covenant, though it were attended with a life afterward never so exact and spotless. After-obedience, which is but due, cannot make amends for former disobedience; he doth not satisfy the law for killing a man once, that doth so no more. How desperate were our condition, if we could not be listed in Christ's muster-roll till we were provided of such a breast-plate as this is? Adam indeed had such a righteousness made to his hand; his heart and the law were in unison, it answered it as face answers face in a glass; it was as natural to him to be righteous, as now it is to his posterity to be unrighteous. God was the engraver of his own image upon man, which consisted in righteousness and holiness, and he who made all so perfect that, upon a review of the whole creation, he neither added nor altered any thing, but saw all very good, was not less curious in the master-piece of all his work: "he made man perfect." But Adam sinned, and defiled our nature, and now our nature defiles us; so that never since could Adam's plate, righteousness I mean, fit the breast of any mere man. If God would save all the world for one such righteous man, as once he offered to do Sodom for ten, he could not be found. The apostle divides all the world into Jew and Gentile, Rom. iii. 9. he is not afraid to lay them all in the dirt, they are all under sin: "there is none righteous, no, not one." Not the braggist philosopher among the Gentiles, nor the precisetest Pharisee among the Jews; we may go yet further, not the holiest saint that ever lived, can stand righteous before that bar. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant (saith David), for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Psal. cxxii. 2. God hath nailed that door up, that none can for ever enter by a law-righteousness into life and happiness. This way to Heaven is like the northern passage to the Indies, whoever attempts it is sure to be frozen up before he gets half-way thither.
The second righteousness, which the Scripture speaks of, is an "evangelical righteousness." Now this also is a two-fold righteousness imputed or imparted: the imputed righteousness is that which is wrought by Christ for the believer; the imparted, that which is wrought by Christ in the believer. The first of these, the imputed righteousness, is the righteousness of our justification, that by which the believer stands just and righteous before God, and is called by way of distinction from the latter, "the righteousness of God." Rom. iii. 21. Rom. x. 3. Not, as if the other righteousness were not of God also; but,

First, Because this is not only wrought by Christ, but also performed in Christ, who is God; and not inherent in us, though for us; so that the benefit of it redounds by faith to us, as if we had wrought it; hence Christ is called "the Lord our righteousness."

Secondly, Because this is the righteousness, and not the other, which God hath ordained to be the meritorious cause of the justification of our persons, and also acceptance of our inherent righteousness imparted by him to us. Now this righteousness belongs to the fourth piece of armour, the "shield of faith," indeed we find it bearing its name from that grace, Rom. iv. 11. where it is called "the righteousness of faith," because apprehended and applied by faith unto the soul; the righteousness therefore which is here compared to the "breast-plate," is the latter of the two, and that is the righteousness of our sanctification, which I called a righteousness imparted, or a righteousness wrought by Christ in the believer. Now this take thus described.

It is a supernatural principle of a new life, planted in the heart of every child of God by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby they endeavour to approve themselves to God and man, in performing what the Word of God requires to be performed to both. Briefly let us unfold what is rolled up in this description.

First, Here is the efficient, or workman, "the Holy Spirit," hence it is, the several parts of holiness are called, "fruits of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22. if the Spirit be not at the root, no such fruit can be seen on the branches as
holiness; sensual, and not having the Spirit, are inseparably coupled, Jude xix. Man by his fall hath a double loss: God's love to him, his likeness to God. Christ restores both to his children; the first by his righteousness imputed to them, the second by his Spirit re-impacting the lost image of God to them which consists in righteousness and true holiness. Who but a man can impart his own nature, and beget a child like himself? and who but the Spirit of God can make a creature like God, by making him partaker of the divine nature?

Secondly, Here is the work produced: a supernatural principle of a new life.

1. By a principle of life, I mean an inward disposition and quality, sweetly, powerfully, and constantly inclining it to that which is holy; so that the Christian, though passive in the production, is afterward active, and co-working with the Spirit in all actions of holiness, not as a lifeless instrument is in the hand of a musician, but as a living child in the hand of a father; therefore they are said to be "led by the Spirit." Rom. viii.

2. It is a principle of new life. The Spirit's work was not to chafe and recover what was swooning, but to work a life, de novo, in a soul quite dead: "you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses." The devil comes as orator to persuade by argument when he tempts; the Spirit as a creator when he converts. The devil draws forth and enkindles what he finds raked up in the heart before; but the Holy Spirit puts into the soul what he finds not there, called in Scripture "the seed of God." 1 John iii. 9. "Christ formed in you," Gal. iv. 19. "the new creature," Gal. vi. 15. "the law put by God into the inner man," Jerem. xxxi. 33. which Paul calls "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 2.

3. It is a supernatural principle, by which we distinguish it from Adam's righteousness and holiness, which was co-natural to him, as now sin is to us, and had he stood, would have been propagated to us, as naturally as now his sin is. Holiness was as natural to Adam's soul, as health was to his body; they both resulting ex principiis rectè constitutis, from principles pure and right disposed.

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Thirdly, Here is the soil or subject in which the Spirit plants this principle of holiness: the child of God; "because ye are sons he hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts," Gal. iv. 6. not a child in all his family that is unlike his father, "as is the heavenly, so are they that are heavenly," and none but children have this stamp of true holiness on them. As the apostle, Rom. viii. 9. concludes, we have not the Spirit if we be in the flesh, (that is in an unholy sinful state) so he concludes, we are not his children, if we have not his Spirit thus transforming and sanctifying us. There is indeed a holiness and sanctification, taken in a large sense, which may be found in such as are not children: so all the children of believers are holy, 1 Cor. vii. who are not all children of God; yea false professors also gain the name of being sanctified, Heb. x. 29. because they pretend to be so; but that which the Scripture calls righteousness and true holiness, is a sculpture the Spirit engraves on none but the children of God. The Spirit sanctifies none but whom Christ prays his Father to sanctify, and they are his peculiar number given of God to him. John xvii.

Fourthly, Here is the efficacy of this principle, planted by the Spirit in the heart of a child of God, whereby he endeavours. As the heart, which is the principle of natural life in the body, from the infusion of natural life, is ever beating and working; so the principle of new life in the soul ever endeavouring. The new creature is not still-born; true holiness is not a dull habit, that sleeps away the time doing nothing. The woman cured by Christ, "rose up presently and ministered unto them," Matt. viii. No sooner this principle is planted in the heart, but the man riseth up to wait on God, and act for God, with all his might and main; the seed, which the sanctifying Spirit cast into the soul, is not lost on the soil, but quickly shews it is alive by the fruit it bears.

Fifthly, Here is the imperfect nature of this principle: as it shews its reality by endeavouring, so its imperfection, that it enables but to an endeavour, not a full performance. Evangelical holiness rather makes the creature willing than able to give full obedience. The saint's heart leaps when his legs do but creep in the way
of God’s commandments. Mary asked where they had laid Christ, meaning (it seems) to carry him away on her shoulders, which she was not able to do; her affections were stronger than her back. That principle of holiness which is in the saint makes him lift at that duty which he can little more than stir. Paul, a saint of the first magnitude, gives us his own character, with other eminent servants of Christ, rather from the sincerity of their will and endeavour, than perfection of their work: "pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly;” Heb. xiii. 8. he doth not say in all things we do live honestly, as if no step were taken awry by them. No: he durst not say so for a world; but thus much he dares assert for himself and brethren, that they were willing in all things to do what was holy and righteous; where willing is not a weak listless desire, but a will exerted in a vigorous endeavour, it weighs as much in an impartial ear, as that of the same Paul, Acts xxiv. 16. “herein do I exercise myself;” he was so willing as to use his best care and labour in the ways of holiness; and having this testimony in his own breast, he is not afraid to lay claim to a good conscience, though he doth not fully attain to that he desires: "we trust we have a good conscience, willing," &c. he means in the favourable interpretation of the Gospel, for the law allows no such good conscience.

Sixthly, Here is the uniformity of this principle in its actings to God and man; true holiness doth not divide what God joins together. "God spake all these words," Exod. xx. first table and second also. Now a truly sanctified heart dares not skip or blot one word God hath writ, but desires to be a faithful executor to perform the whole will of God.

Seventhly, Here is the order of its acting. As to God and man; so first to God and then to man; yea to God in his righteousness, and charity to man. "First gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." 2 Cor. viii. 5. God is first served, and man in obedience to the will of God.

Eighthly, Here is the rule it goes by: what the Word of God requires. Apocryphal holiness is no true holi-
And having on the breast; we cannot write in religion a right line without a rule, or by a false one; and all are false rules besides the Word. “To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isaiah viii. 20.

The second thing to be enquired is: Why righteousness and holiness are compared to the breast-plate? And that is for a two-fold use that the soldier makes of and benefit he receives from this piece of armour.

First, The breast-plate preserves the most principal part of the body, and that is the breast, where the very vitals of man are closely couched together, and where a shot or stab is more deadly than in other parts that are remote from the fountain of life. A man may outlive many wounds received in the arms or legs, but a stab in the heart or other vital parts is the certain messenger of death approaching. Thus righteousness and holiness preserve the principal part of a Christian, his soul and conscience; we live or die spiritually, yea eternally, as we look to our souls and consciences. It is not a wound in estate, credit, or any other worldly enjoyment, that kills us in this sense. These touch not, hazard not the Christian’s life any more than the shaving of the beard or paring of the nails do the man’s. Spiritual vitals are seated in the soul and conscience; it must be a spiritual dagger that stabs these, and that only is sin, which is said “to hunt for the precious life,” Prov. vi. 26. This is the dart that strikes the young man through the liver, who hasteth to his lust as “the bird to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.” Prov. vii. Now righteousness and holiness defend the conscience from all wounds and harms from sin, which is the weapon Satan useth to give the conscience its deadly stab with.

Secondly, The breast-plate, by defending this principal part, emboldens the soldier, and makes him fearless of danger, and that is as necessary in sight as the other. It is almost all one for an army to be killed or cowed; a dead soldier, slain upon the place, will do in a manner as much good as a dead-hearted soldier that is dismayed with fear, his heart is killed while he is alive; and a naked breast exposeth the unarmed soldier to a trem-
bling heart; whereas one otherwise cowardly, having his breast well defended with a plate of proof, will the more boldly venture upon the pikes. Thus righteousness, by defending the conscience, fills the creature with courage in the face of death and danger; whereas guilt, which is the nakedness of the soul, puts the stoutest sinner into a shaking fit of fear. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion." Prov. xxviii. 1. They say sheep are scared with the clatter of their own feet as they run, so is the sinner with the din of his guilt. No sooner Adam saw his plate off, and himself to be naked, but he is afraid at God's voice, as if he had never been acquainted with him. Never can we recover truly our courage, till we recover our holiness: "If our heart condemn us not, then have we boldness with God." 1 John iii. 21.

CHAP. II.

A SHORT POINT FROM THE CONNECTION OF THIS PIECE OF ARMOUR WITH THE FIRST: RIGHTEOUSNESS WITH TRUTH.

The words thus opened, the observations are now easy to be drawn from them; but the copulative "and," with which this piece of armour is so closely buckled to the former, bids us make a little stand, to take notice how lovingly truth and holiness are here conjoined, like the sister-curtains of the tabernacle, so called in the Hebrew, Exod. xxvi. 3. and it is pity any should unclaspe them which God hath so fitted to each other. Let that then be the note from hence.

Note. That truth and holiness must go together.

First, Take truth for truth of doctrine. An orthodox judgment with an unholy heart and ungodly life, is as uncomely as a man's head would be on a beast's shoulders. That man hath little cause to brag that what he holds is
truth, if what he doth be wicked. Poor wretch, if thou art a slave to the devil, it matters not to what part thy chain be fastened, whether head or foot; he holds thee as sure to him by thy foot in thy practice, as he would by thy head, if heretical and blasphemous; yea thou art worse on it in some respects than they who are like themselves all over. Thy wickedness is greater, because committed in the face of truth. Many, the mistake of their erroneous judgments betray them unto the unholiness of their practice; their wicked lives are the conclusion which follows necessarily upon the premises of their errors; but thy judgment lights thee another way (except thou meanest further to accumulate thy sin by fathering thy unholiness on truth itself). They only miss their way to Heaven in the dark, or are misled by a false light of an erroneous judgment, which possibly, rectified, would bring them back into the path of holiness; but thou sinnest by the broad light of truth, and goest on boldly to Hell at noon-day, like the devil himself, who knows truth from error well enough, but hates to be ruled by it. Should a minstrel sing to a sweet tune with her voice, and play to another with her hand that is harsh and displeasing, such music would more grate the judicious ear, than if she had sung to what she played? Thus to sing to truth with our judgment, and play wickedness with our heart and hand in our life, is more abhorrent to God and all good men than when the judgment is erroneous as well as the life ungodly. Nahash had not enraged David so much, if he had come with an army of twenty thousand men into the field against him, as he did by abusing his ambassadors so basely: the open hostility which many express by their ungodly lives, does not so much provoke God, as the base usage they give to his truth, which he sends to treat with them, yea in them. This kindles the fire of his wrath into a flame to purpose, when he sees men put scorn upon his truth, by walking contrary to the light of it, and imprisoning it from having any command over them in their lives, and yet own it to be the truth of God.

Secondly, Take it for truth of heart; and so truth and holiness must go together. In vain do men pretend to
sincerity, if they be unholy in their lives. God owns no
unholy sincerity; the terms do clash one with another.
Sincerity teacheth the soul to point at the right end of all
its actions, the glory of God; now it is not enough to
set the right end before us, but to walk in the right way
to it; we shall never come at God's glory out of God's
way; holiness and righteousness is the sincere man's path
set by God as a causeway on which he is to walk, both
to the glorifying of God and the being glorified by God.
Now he that thinks to find a shorter cut, and a nearer
way to obtain this end, than this way, he takes but pains
to undo himself. As he finds a new way of glorifying
God, which God hath not chalked, so he must find a
new Heaven which God hath not prepared, or else he
must go without one to reward him for his pains. O
friends! look to find this stamp of righteousness and
holiness on your sincerity. The proverb saith, Hell is
full of good wishes, of such who now, when it is too late,
wish they had acted their part otherwise when on earth
than they did. And do you not think there are there
more than a good store of good meanings also? Such
who pretended, when on earth, they meant well, and
their hearts were honest, however it happened that their
lives were otherwise. What a strange delusion is this! If
one should say, though all the water the bucket brings
up be naught and stinking, yet that which is in the well
is all sweet, who would believe him? Thy heart upright,
and thy meanings good, when all that proceeds from thy
heart in thy life is wicked, how can it be? who will be-
lieve thee? Surely thou dost not thyself.
CHAP. III.

WHEREIN THE GRAND POINT FROM THE WORDS IS LAID DOWN, THAT THE CHRISTIAN'S ESPECIAL CARE SHOULD BE TO KEEP ON HIS BREAST-PLATE, i.e. MAINTAIN THE POWER OF HOLINESS IN HIS CONVERSATION; WITH THE FIRST REASON OF THE POINT TAKEN FROM GOD'S DESIGN AS TO THIS.

It is now time, having measured the ground, to lay the bottom stone, on which the structure from these words is to be reared. I thought to have drawn out several points as distinct foundations to build our discourse upon; but shall now rather chuse to unite all in a single point, as one main building, though I make a few more rooms therein, to entertain what else should have been handled severally. The point is this.

Doct. That he who means to be a Christian indeed must endeavour to maintain the power of holiness and righteousness in his life and conversation. This is to have the breast-plate of righteousness, and to have it on also. He is a holy righteous man that hath a work of grace and holiness in his heart, as he a living man that hath a principle of life in him; but he maintains the power of holiness that exerts this vigorously in his daily walking, as he the power of natural life in whom the principle of life, seated in the heart, empowers every member to do its particular office in the body strenuously. Thus walked the primitive Christians (in whose veins, saith Jerome, the blood of Christ was yet warm) their great care was to keep on this breast-plate of righteousness close and entire, that it neither might loosen by negligence, nor be broken by presumptuous sinning; the character then a saint was known by from other men was his holy walking. Luke i. 16. There it is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." This was also holy Paul's
every-day exercise, "to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and man." Acts xxiv. Never did any more curiously watch the health of their body, than he attended to the health of his soul, that no unholiness or unrighteousness (which is the only bane of it) might distemper and defile it. And truly we who come after such holy ones in the same profession do bind ourselves to our good behaviour, that we will walk holily and righteously as they did. The point carries its evidence on its forehead, and needs rather pressing than proving; and therefore I may be pardoned if the demonstrations of the point be handled as well as motives to as reasons for the duty, which will spare work in the application. Reasons of the point shall be taken from several heads.

First, in regard of God, whose great design is to have his people a holy people. This is enough to oblige, yea to provoke, every Christian to promote what God hath so strongly set upon his heart to effect. He deserves to be cashiered that endeavours not to pursue what his general declares to be his design: and he to have his name blotted out of Christ’s muster-roll, whose heart stands not on tiptoes ready to march yea run on his design. It is an honourable epitaph which Paul sets on the memory of David long before deceased, that he “in his own generation served the will of God;” Acts xiii. 36. he made it the business of his life to carry on God’s designs. And all gracious hearts, touched with the same loadstone of God’s love, stand to the same point. All the private ends of a sincere soul are swallowed up in this, that he may do the will of God in his generation. This he heartily prays for, “Thy will be done;” this is his study, to find what is the “good and acceptable will of God;” which is the very cause why he loves the Bible above all the books of the world beside, because in none but that can he find what is the mind and will of God concerning him. Now I shall endeavour to shew that this is the great design of God, to have his people holy: it runs like a silver thread through all God’s other designs.
And having on the

SECT. I.

First, it appears in his very decrees, which, so far as they are printed and exposed to our view in the Scripture, we may safely look into. What was God driving at in his electing some out of the lump of mankind? Was it only their impunity he desired; that, while others were left to swim in torment and misery, they should only be exempted from that infelicity? No sure; the Apostle will tell us more: "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy." Ephes. i. 4. Mark, not because he foresaw that they would be of themselves holy, but that they should be holy; this was that God resolved he would make them to be. As if some curious workman, seeing a forest growing upon his own ground, of trees (all alike, not one better than another) should mark some above all the rest, and set them apart in his thoughts, as resolving to make some rare pieces of workmanship of them: thus God chose some out of the lump of mankind, whom he set apart for this purpose, to carve his own image upon them, which consists in righteousness and true holiness; a piece of such rare workmanship which, when God hath finished, and shall shew it to men and angels, will appear to exceed the fabric of heaven and earth itself.

SECT. II.

Secondly, it was his design in sending his Son into the world. It could be no small occasion that brought him hither. God wants not servants to go on his ordinary errands. The glorious angels, who behold his face continually, are ready to fly wherever he sends them. But here God had a work to do of such importance, that he would put trust not in his servants but his Son alone to accomplish. Now what God's design was in this great work will appear by knowing what Christ's was, for they were (both Father and Son) agreed what should be done before he came upon the stage of action. See therefore the very bottom of Christ's heart in this his great undertaking opened, Titus ii. 14. "He gave himself for us,
breast-plate of righteousness.

that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Had man kept his primitive righteousness, Christ's pain and pains had been spared. It was man's lost holiness he came to recover. It had not been an enterprize becoming the greatness and holiness of such a one as the Son of God to engage for less than this. Both God and man, between whom Christ comes to negotiate, call for holiness—God's glory, man's happiness; neither of which can be attained except holiness be restored to man. Not God's glory, who as he is glorious in the holiness of his own nature and works, so is he glorified by the holiness of his people's hearts and lives; were it possible (which is the height of all blasphemy but to think) that the holiness of God could be separated from any of his attributes or works, God himself would cease to be glorious; his sovereignty would degenerate into tyranny, his wisdom into craft, his justice into cruelty, &c. Now the glory of all God's attributes and works resulting from his holiness in them all, it follows that then we glorify God when we give him the glory of his holiness; and who but a holy creature will or can do that? While man stands under the power of sin, how can he give God the glory of that which his own sinful nature makes him defy and hate God for? Had Christ's design therefore been to procure man a pardon, and not restore his lost holiness, he had been but a minister of sins, and instead of bringing glory to God, he had set sin in the throne, and only obtained a liberty for the creature to dishonour God without control. Again, man's happiness could not have been obtained without a recovery of his lost holiness. Man's happiness stands in his likeness to God, and fruition of God: he must have the first before he can enjoy the latter; he must be like God, before God can take any liking in him; and God must take full content in man before he admits him to the enjoyment of himself, which that he may do, Christ undertakes to make his people holy as God is holy. You see now what was the great design that the heart of Christ was so full with, to make us a holy people. Well therefore may the Apostle bring in that
heavy charge against all unholy professors, which he doth with tears, *Phil.* iii. 18. "That they are enemies of the cross of Christ." Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; the loose unholy walker goes about to destroy the work of Christ. The Lord Jesus lays down his heart-blood to redeem souls out of the hand of sin and Satan, that they may be free to serve God without fear in holiness; and the loose Christian (if I may call him so) "denies the Lord that bought him," and delivers up himself basely unto his old bondage, from which Christ had ransomed him with so great a sum. Whose heart doth not tremble at such horrid ingratitude?

**SECT. III.**

Thirdly, it is God's great design in the regenerating work of the Spirit on the hearts of his people, to make them righteous, and fit them to walk holily before him, *Ezek.* xxxvi. 26, 27, where God promiseth "a new heart, and to put his spirit into them;" and why will he do this? that he may cause them to "walk in his statutes, keep his judgments, and do them." An old heart would have served well enough to have done the devil's drudgery with; but God, intending them for more high and noble employment, to lift up their head out of sin's prison, and prefer them to his own service, therefore he throws away their gaol clothes, and beautifies them with the graces of his Spirit, that their hearts may suit their work. When God ordered the Temple to be built with such curious care and costly materials, he declared that he intended it for holy use; that was not so glorious as the spiritual temple of a regenerate heart is, which is the workmanship of God himself, *Eph.* ii. 10. and for what intent reared by him? if we read on, we may see: "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath foreordained that we should walk in them." This accent the unrighteousness and unholiness of a saint with a circumflex; it lays a deeper aggravation, I mean, upon his sin than others, because committed against such a work of the Spirit as none have in the world besides. A sin acted in the Temple was greater than if the same
had been by a Jew committed in his private dwelling, because the temple was a consecrated place: the saint is a consecrated person, and by acts of unrighteousness he profanes God's temple; the sin of another is theft, because he robs God of the glory due to him, but the sin of a saint is sacrilege, because he robs God of that which is devoted to him in an especial manner. Better not to repent at all, than to repent of our repentance; not to vow and dedicate ourselves to him, and after this to enquire how we may evade and repeal this act: such a one tells the world he finds some iniquity in God, that alters his opinion and practice formerly taken up by him. In a word, the saint is not only by the Spirit consecrated to God, but by the Spirit endued with a new life from God: "you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," Ephes. ii. 1. a noble principle of high extraction, given you on a high design, that you should live up to that principle in righteousness and holiness. When God breathed a rational soul into man, he intended not that he should live with the beasts, and as the beasts; nor that thou shouldest have thy conversation as a mere carnal man doth, but that "as thou hast received Christ, so thou shouldest walk in him," Col. ii. 6. The apostle blames the Corinthians for living below themselves, and like the poor spirited men of the world, in their corrupt passions: "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" 1 Cor. iii. 3. When thou, Christian, actest unholy, thou sinnest at a high rate indeed; others sin against the light of God in their consciences, there is the furthest they can go; but thou sinnest against the life of God in thy very heart. The more unnatural any act is, the more horrid. It is unnatural for a man to be cruel to his own flesh; for a woman to go about to kill the child in her womb. O how your ears tingle at such a flagitious act; what then art thou going to do, when by thy unholy walking thou art killing the babe of grace in thy soul? Is Herod marked for a bloody man, that would have butchered Christ newly born in the world, and canst thou without horror attempt the murdering of Christ newly formed in thy heart?
Fourthly, It is the great design God drives at in his Word and ordinances, to make his people holy and righteous. The Word of God is both seed to beget, and food to nourish holiness begotten in the heart; every part of it contributes to this design abundantly. The preceptive part affords a perfect rule of holiness for the saint to walk by, not accommodated to the humours of any, as men's laws are, who make their laws as tailors their garments, to fit the crooked bodies they are for, so they the crooked mind of men. The commands of God gratify the lusts of none; they are suited to the holy nature of God, not the unholy hearts of men. The promises present us with admirable encouragements to draw and allure us on in the way of holiness; all of them so warily laid, that an unholy heart cannot, without violence to his conscience, lay claim to any one of them: God having set that flaming sword, conscience, in the sinner's bosom, to keep him off from touching or tasting the fruit of this tree of life; and if any profane heart be so bold, while he is walking in the ways of unrighteousness, to finger any of the treasure that is locked up in the promises, it doth not long stay in their hands, but God sooner or later makes them throw it away as Judas his thirty pieces, their consciences telling them they are not the right owners; false comforts from the promises, like riches (which Solomon speaks of) "make themselves wings and fly away" from the unholy wretch, when he thinks he is most sure of them. Again, the threatenings, the minatory part of the Word, this runs like a devouring gulph on either side of the narrow path of holiness and righteousness, ready to swallow up every soul that walks not therein: "for the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. i. 18. To the promissory and minatory is annexed the exemplary part of the word, as cases to confirm our faith concerning the truth and certainty of both. The promises are backed with the example of holy men and women, who have beaten the path of
holiness for us, and through faith and patience in their holy course, have at last obtained the comfort of the promises in Heaven’s bliss, to the unspeakable encouragement of all that are ascending the hill after them. To the threatenings are annexed many sad examples of unholy souls, who have undone themselves, and damned their own souls in unholy ways, whose carcasses are as it were thrown upon the shore of the Word, and exposed to our view in reading and hearing of it, that we may be kept from being ingulphed in those sins that were their perdition: “these were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.” 1 Cor. x. 6. Thus we see how the whole contents of the Scripture befriends holiness, and speaks what the design of God therein is, which yet to carry on the more strongly, God hath appointed many holy ordinances to quicken the Word upon our hearts. Indeed all of them are but the Word in several forms: hearing, prayer, sacraments, meditation, holy conference, the Word is the subject matter of them all; only as a wise physician doth prepare the same drug several ways, sometimes to be taken one way, sometimes another, to make it more effectual, and refresh his patient with variety: so the Lord, consulting our weakness, doth by his Word, administering it to us now in this and anon in that ordinance for our greater delight and profit, aiming still at the same end in all, even the promoting of holiness in the hearts and lives of his people; what are they all but as veins and arteries, by which Christ conveys the life-blood and spirits of holiness into every member of his mystical body? The church is the garden, Christ the fountain, every ordinance has a pipe from him, to water all the beds in this garden; and why, but to make them more abundant in the fruits of righteousness?

SECT. V.

Fifthly, It is his design in all his providences. “All things (that is all providences especially) work together for good to them that love God.” Rom. viii. 28. And how do they work for their good, but by making them more
good and more holy? Proviences are good and evil to us, as they find or make us better or worse; nothing is good to him that is evil. As God makes use of all the seasons of the year for the harvest, the frost and cold of the winter as well as the heat of the summer, so doth he of fair and foul, pleasing and unpleasing proviences, for promoting holiness: winter proviences kill the weeds of lusts, and summer proviences ripen and mellow the fruits of righteousness; when he afflicts, it is for our profit, to make us partakers of his holiness. *Heb.* xii. 10. Afflictions Bernard compares to the tezel, which, though it be sharp and scratching, is to make the cloth more pure and fine. God would not rub so hard if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures. God loves purity so well, that he had rather see a hole than a spot in his child’s garments; when he deals more gently in his proviences, and lets his people sit under the sunny bank of comforts and enjoyments, fencing them from the cold blasts of affliction, it is to draw forth the sap of grace, and hasten their growth in holiness. Paul understood this, when he besought the saints at Rome, “by the mercies of God, to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,” *Rom.* xii. 1. implying that mercies came from God to us on this very errand; God might reasonably expect such a return. The husbandman, when he lays his compost on his ground, looks to receive it at harvest again in the fuller crop: and so doth God by mercies; therefore he doth so vehemently complain of Israel’s ingratitude, “she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver, which they prepared for Baal.” *Hosea* ii. 8. God took it ill, and well he might, that they should entertain Baal at his cost; if God sends in any cheer to us, he would have us know, that it is for his own entertain-ment, he means to come and sup upon his own charge. And what dish is it that pleaseth God’s palate? Surely he that would not have his people eat of any unclean thing, will not himself. They are the pleasant fruits of holiness and righteousness, which Christ comes into his garden to feed on: “I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh and my
spice, I have eaten my honey with my honeycomb, I have drunk my wine with my milk.” Cant. v. 1.

CHAP. IV.

THE SECOND REASON WHY THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD WEAR THIS BREAST-PLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND MAINTAIN THE POWER OF HOLINESS SO CAREFULLY, TAKEN FROM SATAN’S GREAT DESIGN AGAINST IT.

SECONDLY, In regard of Satan, whose design is as much against the saint’s holiness, as God is for it. He hath ever a nay to God’s yea; if God be for holiness, he must needs be against it; and what should be our chief care to defend, but that which Satan’s thoughts and plots are most laid to assault and storm? There is no creature the devil delights so to lodge and dwell in as man: when he enters into other creatures, it is but on a design against man; as when he entered the serpent, it was to deceive Eve; the swine, Matth. viii. 32. he possessed them on a design to dispossess the Gergesenes of the Gospel; but might he chuse his own lodging, none pleaseth him but man, and why? because man only is capable by his rational soul of sin and unrighteousness. And as he prefers man to quarter in above all inferior creatures, so he had rather possess the souls of men than their bodies; none but the best room in the house will serve this unclean spirit to vomit his blasphemies and spit out his malice in against God, and why? but because the soul is the proper seat of holiness and sin. This one gives as the reason why amongst all the ways that Satan plagued Job, he did not chuse to make a forcible entry into his body, and possess him corporeally, for certainly he might, that being short of taking away his life (the only thing reserved by God out of his commission), and being in his power, sure it was not to spare Job that trouble: no pity dwells in a devil’s heart; but
the very reason seems to be, what an ancient hath noted, the devil waited for higher preferment; he hoped to possess his soul, which he longed for a thousand times more; he had rather hear Job himself blaspheme God, while he was *compos mentis*, his own man, than himself in Job to belch out blasphemies against God, which would have been the devil's own sin, and not Job's. Thus you see, it is holiness and righteousness his spite is at; no gain comes to the devil's purse, no victory he counts got, except he can make the Christian lose his holiness. He can allow a man to have any thing, or be any thing, rather than be truly powerfully holy. It is not your riches and worldly enjoyments he grudges so much as your holiness. Job, for ought we know, might have enjoyed his flocks and herds, his children and servants, without any disturbance from Hell, if the devil had not seen him to be a godly man, one fearing God, and eschewing evil. This angered the wicked spirit; now he tries a fall with Job, that if possible he may unsaint him, and despoil him of his breast-plate of righteousness. His plundering of his estate, butchering his children, carbonading, as I may say, his body with sores and boils, which were as so many deep slashes in his flesh, was but like some thieves' cruel usage of men whom they would rob, on a design to make them confess and deliver up their treasure; would but Job have thrown the devil his purse, his integrity, I mean, and let Satan carry away his good conscience, Satan would soon have unbound him, and not have cared if he had his estate and children again. The wolf tears the fleece, that he may come to raven on the flesh, and suck the blood of the sheep: the life-blood of holiness is that which this hellish murderer longs to suck out of the Christian's heart. It is not a form of godliness, or goodly shews of righteousness, the devil maligns, but the power; not the name, but the new nature itself brings this fell lion out of his den. Satan can live very peaceable as a quiet neighbour by the door of such as will content themselves with an empty name of profession; this alters not his property, nor toucheth his copyhold. Judas's profession (he knew) did not put him a step out of his way to Hell; the devil can shew a
man a way to damnation through duties and ordinances of God's worship. That covetous traitorous heart which Judas carried with him to hear Christ's sermon, and preach his own, held him fast enough to the devil; and therefore he gives him line enough, liberty enough to keep his credit awhile with his fellow apostles; he cares not though others think him a disciple of Christ, so he knows him to be his own slave.

In a word, it is not a superstitious holiness which offends him; how can it, when he is the institutor of it himself? and that on a subtle design to undermine the true genuine holiness in the hearts of men; and by this time the church of Christ hath found how deep a contrivance it is. This in all ages hath been to the power of holiness what the ivy is to the oak; the wanton embraces of this mock holiness about religion hath killed the heart of scriptural holiness wherever it hath prevailed; it is to the true holiness, as the concubine is to the true wife, who is sure to draw the husband's love from her. This brat the devil hath long put out to nurse to the Romish church, which hath taken a great deal of pains to bring it up for him; and no wonder when she is so well paid for its maintenance, it having brought her in so much worldly treasure and riches. No, it is holiness in its naked simplicity, as it is founded upon Scripture-bottom, and guided by Scripture-rule, that he is a sworn enemy against. Indeed this is the flag which the soul hangs out, and by which it gives defiance to the devil; no wonder if he strives to shoot it down. Now and not till now the creature really declares himself a friend to God, and an enemy to the kingdom of darkness; and here is the ground of that quarrel, which will never cease so long as he continues an unclean spirit, and they be the holy ones of God: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12. Mark, first, what it is that makes the devil and his instruments take arms, and breathe slaughter against Christians, it is their godliness; many specious pretences persecutors have to disguise their malice, but the Spirit of God, that looks through all their hypocritical mufflers, is privy to the cabinet-counsels of their hearts, and those instruc-
tions which they have from the devil, that worketh so mightily in them; he tells us he that will live godly shall be persecuted; downright godliness is the butt they level their arrows at. Again, observe the kind of godliness at which their blood rises, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus. There are more sorts of holiness and godliness in the world than one; but all may have fair quarter at the devil's hands, except this godliness in Christ Jesus. The devil hath an implacable malice against Christ; he hates, as I may so say, every letter of his name; that godliness which is learnt of him, and derived from him, he opposeth to death. Christian blood is sweet to his tooth, but the blood of the Christian's godliness is far sweeter. He had rather, if he could, kill that than them, rather draw the Christian from his godliness, than butcher him for it; yet that he may not stand out, he will play at small game, and express his cruelty upon their bodies, but it is when he cannot come at their souls: "they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain." *Heb.* xi. 37. That which these bloody men principally desired was to draw them into sin, and make apostates of them; and therefore they tempted them before they slew them. The devil accounts that the complete victory when he can despoil them of their armour, and bribe them from their steadfastness in their holy profession. "Let her be defiled, and let her eye look up to Zion." *Micah.* iv. 7. he had rather see saints defiled with unrighteousness and sin, than defiled with their blood and gore. Persecution, he hath learned, doth but mow the church, which afterward comes up the thicker for it; it is unholliness that ruins it. Persecutors do but plough God's field for him, while he is sowing it with the blood that they let out; but profaneness, that roots it up, and lays all waste, consciences and churches also.
breast-plate of righteousness.

CHAP. V.

THE THIRD REASON, TAKEN FROM THE EXCELLENCY OF
RIGHTeousness AND HOLINESS.

THIRDLY, In regard of holiness itself; the incomparable excellency whereof commands us to pursue it, and endeavour after it with our utmost care and strength.

First, It is an excellency peculiar to the rational creature. Inferior creatures have a goodness proper to them, but intellectual beings are only capable of an inward holiness. God saw every creature he made to be good, only angels and man to be holy; and if we part with holiness that is our crown, we become worse than the beasts themselves; yea it is holiness and righteousness that makes one man differ from another in God's account. We go by a false rate, when we value men by their external advantages. All stand on a level as to God, till holiness be superadded. Princes, in whom is seated the sovereign power, claim as their prerogative to set the just value on all coin, what every piece shall go for, this a penny, and that a pound; much more surely doth it belong to God to rate his creatures; and he tells us, "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." Prov. xii. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is little worth." Prov. x. 20. The Spirit of God compares the righteous to silver and gold, the most precious of metals, which above all other metals are of such account that only money made of silver and gold is current in all countries: holiness will go in both words; but external excellencies, such as worldly riches, honours, &c. like leather and brass money, are of no esteem but in this beggarly lower world.

Secondly, It is holiness that is, though not our plea, yet our evidence for Heaven: "without holiness none shall see God." Heaven is a city where righteousness dwells; though God suffers the earth to bear for a while unholy men (which it doth not without sweating under their weight, and groaning to be rid of this load), yet sure he will never pester Heaven with such a crew. Before
Enoch was translated to Heaven he walked holily with God on earth, which made God desire his company so soon. O friends! do we like an empty profession, such a religion as will leave us short of Heaven? or can we reasonably expect a dispensation above others, that we should commence glorified creatures in Heaven, without keeping our acts, and performing the exercises of godliness, which God hath laid upon those that will stand candidates for that place? Certainly what God had writ in his Word as to this shall stand. He will not make a blot in his decrees for any; which he would did he alter the method of salvation in the least. Either we must therefore renounce our hopes of coming thither, or resolve to walk in the path of holiness that will lead us thither. That is vain breath which sets not the sails of our affections going, and our feet travelling thither, where we would be at last.

Thirdly, It is holiness, and that maintained in its power, that capacitates us for communion with God in this life, Communion with God is so desirable, that many pretend to it that know not what it means; like some that brag of their acquaintance with such a great man, who may be never saw his face, or were admitted into his company; the Spirit of God gives the lie to that man who saith he hath any acquaintance with God, while he keeps his acquaintance with any unrighteousness: "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie." 1 John i. 6. The Apostle is willing to pass for a loud liar himself, if he walks in darkness, and pretends to have fellowship with God. How can they walk together that are not agreed? communion is founded on union, and union upon likeness. And how like are God and the devil, holiness and unrighteousness, one to the other? There is a vast difference between conversing with ordnances, and having communion with God. A man may have great acquaintance with ordinances, and be a great stranger to God at the same time: every one that goes to court, and hangs about the palace, doth not speak with the prince; and what sorry things are ordinances without this communion with God? Ordinances are as it were the Exchange, where holy souls trade with God by
his Spirit for heavenly treasures, from which they come filled and enriched with grace and comfort. Now what does the unholy wretch? truly like some idle persons that come and walk among merchants on the Exchange, but have no business there, or commerce whereby they get any advantage. An unholy heart hath no dealings with God; he takes no notice of God; may be, to be sure, God takes no such notice of him as to communicate himself graciously to him. Nay, suppose a person habitually holy, but under the power of some temptation for the present, whereby he defiles himself, he is in this case unfit to have any friendly communion with God. "A righteous man falling down before the wicked, is (saith Solomon) as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring."

Prov. xxv. 26. much more is he so when he falls down before the wicked one, and yields to his temptation; now his spirit is foul and muddied; and if we will not use the water of a spring, though in itself pure and wholesome, when it is troubled, or drink of that vessel that runs thick, but stay while it be settled and comes clear; can we wonder if God refuseth to taste of those duties which a godly person performs, before the stream be cleared, by the renewing of his repentance for his sin?

Fourthly, Holiness in the power of it is necessary to the true peace and repose of the soul. I do not say our peace is bottomed on the righteousness of our nature, or holiness of our lives, yet it is ever attended with these: "no peace to the wicked, saith my God." We may as soon make the sea always still, as an unholy heart truly quiet. From whence come the intestine wars in men's bosoms, that set them at variance with themselves, but from their own lusts? these break the peace, and keep the man in a continual tempest. As the spirit of holiness comes into the heart, and the sceptre of Christ, which is a sceptre of righteousness, bears sway in the life, so the storm abates more and more, till it be quite down, which will not be while we are short of Heaven; there only is perfect rest, because perfect holiness. Whence those frights and fears, which make them a Maj or M is sabib, terror round about, they wake and sleep with the scent of Hell-fire about them continually? O it is their
unholy course and unrighteous ways that walks in their thoughts, as John's ghost in Herod's. This makes men discontented in every condition; they neither can relish the sweetness of their enjoyments, nor bear the bitter taste of their afflictions. I know there are ways to stultify the conscience, and bind up for a time the senses of an unholy heart, that it shall not feel its own misery; but the virtue of this opium is soon spent, and then the wretch is upon the rack again, and his horror returns upon him with a greater paroxysm; an example whereof I have heard. A notorious drunkard, who used, when told of his ungodly life, to shake off all the threatenings of the Word, that his friends would have fastened on his conscience, as easily as Paul did the viper from his hand, bearing himself upon a presumptuous hope of the mercy of God in Christ; it pleased God to lay him some while after on his back by sickness, which for a time scared his old companions, brethren with him in iniquity, from visiting him; but hearing he was cheerfully and pleasant in his sickness, ventured to see him, whom they found very confident of the mercy of God, whereby their hands were much strengthened in their old ways; but, before he died, this tune was changed to purpose, his vain hopes vanished, his guilty conscience awakened, and the poor wretch, roasted in the scorching flames of his former ungodly practices, now ready to die, cries out despairingly, "O sirs, I had prepared a plaister, and thought all was well, but now it will stick no longer;" his guilty conscience rubbed it off as fast as he clapped it on. And truly, friends, you will find the blood of Christ himself will not cleave to a soul that is in league with any way of sin and unrighteousness; God will pluck such from the horns of this altar that fly to it, but not from their unrighteousness, and slay them in sight of this sanctuary they boldly trust to. You know the message Solomon sent to Adonijah: "If thou showest thyself a worthy man, not a hair of thy head shall fall; but if wickedness shall be found in thee, thou shalt surely die." In vain do men think to shroud themselves under Christ's wing from the hue and cry of their accusing conscience, while wickedness finds a sanctuary in them. Christ never was
intended by God to secure men in their unrighteousness, but to save them from it.

Fifthly, Holiness has a mighty influence upon others. When this appears with power in the lives of Christians, it works mightily upon the spirits of men; this stops the mouths of the ungodly, who are ready to reproach religion, and throw the dirt of professors' sins on the face of profession itself. They say frogs will cease croaking when a light is brought near unto them. The light of a holy conversation hangs as it were a padlock on profane lips, yea it forceth them to acknowledge God in them: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." Matt. v. 16. yea more, this would not only stop their mouths, but be a means to open their very hearts to the embracing of Christ and his grace. One reason why such shoals of souls came into the net of the Gospel in primitive times, was because then the divinity of the Gospel doctrine appeared in the divinity and holiness of Christians' lives. Justin Martyr, when converted, professed "that the holiness which shined in Christians' lives and patience, that triumphed over their enemies' cruelty at their deaths, made him conclude the doctrine of the Gospel was truth."

Yea, Julian himself, as vile a wretch as he was, could say that the Christian religion came to be propagated so much propter Christianorum erga omnes beneficia, because Christians were a people that did good to all, and hurt to no one. I am sure we find by woeful experience, that in these debauched times, wherein religion is so bespattered with frequent scandals, yea a common looseness of professors, it is hard to get any that are out to come under the net of the Gospel. Some beasts there are that if they have once blown upon a pasture, others will hardly eat of that grass for some while after: truly I have had some such sad thoughts as these concerning our unhappy times, that till the ill savour, which the pride, contentions, errors, and looseness of professors now-a-days, have left upon the truths and ordinances of Christ be worn off, there is little hope of any great comings-in of new converts. The minister cannot be always preaching; two or three hours may be in a week...
he spends among his people in the pulpit, holding the
glass of the Gospel before their faces; but the lives of
professors these preach all the week long; if they were
but holy and exemplary, they would be as a repetition
of the preacher's sermon to their families and neighbours
among whom they converse, and keep the sound of his
doctrine continually ringing in their ears. This would
give Christians an admirable advantage in doing good
to their carnal neighbours, by counsel and reproof, which
now is seldom done; and when done, it proves to little
purpose, because not backed with their own exemplary
walking. It behoves him (saith Tertullian) that would
counsel or reprove another to guard his speech, authori-
tate proprie conversationis, ne dicta factis deficientibus
erubescent, with the authority of his own conversation,
lest wanting that, what he says puts himself to the blush.
We do not love one that hath a stinking breath should
come very near us; and truly we count one comes
very near us that reproves us: such therefore had need
have a sweet-scented life. Reproofs are good physic, but
they have an unpleasing farewell; it is hard for men not to
vomit them up on the face of him that gives them; nowno-
thing more powerful to keep a reproof from thus coming
up, than the holiness of the person that reproves. "Let
the righteous smite me (saith David) it shall be a kind-
ness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent
oil, which shall not break my head." Psalm cxli. 5. See
how well it is taken from such a hand, from the authority
that holiness carries with it. None but a vile wretch
will smite a righteous man with reproach, for smiting him
with a reproof, if softly laid on, and like oil, fomented
and wrought into him (as it should) with compassion
and love to his soul. Thus we see how influential the
power of holiness would be unto the wicked; neither
would it be less upon our brethren and fellow Christians.
When one Christian sees holiness sparkle in the life of
another he converses with he shall find his own grace
spring within him, as the babe in Elizabeth at the salu-
tation of Mary. Truly one eminently holy is enough to
put life into a whole society; on the contrary, the error or
looseness of one professor endangers the whole company
that are acquainted with him. Therefore we have so strict a charge: "follow peace and holiness, looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Heb. xii. 14, 15. It is spoken to professors: the heathens' drunkenness, uncleanness, unrighteous walking did not so much endanger them; but when a root of bitterness springs up among professors themselves, this hazards the defiling of many. A scab on the wolf's back is not so dangerous to the sheep, because they will not easily be drawn among such company; but when it gets into the flock, among professors that feed together, pray, bear, and walk in fellowship together, now is the fear it will spread. A loose erroeous professor doth the devil more service in this kind than a whole troop of such as pretend to no religion: the devil gets no credit by them. There are many errors and sinful practices which have long lain upon his hands, and he could not put them off, till he found this way to employ some professors as his brokers to commend them to others, and disperse them for him: and if such do not ensnare and defile others by their unholy walking, to be sure they grieve their hearts, and put them to shame in the world. O how Christians hang down their heads upon the scandal of any of their company; as all the patriarchs were troubled, when the cup was found in one of their sacks. And it is no small matter to make sad the hearts of God's people. In a word, he that keeps not up in some measure the power of a holy life, renders himself useless and unprofitable. Wouldst thou pray for others? a heathen could bid a man hold his peace, and not let the gods know he was in the ship when a storm was on them. Wouldst thou speak a word of comfort to any mournful soul? O how unsavoury are comforts dropping from such a mouth. Wouldst thou counsel another? thy friend will think thou dost but jest, whatever thou sayest in commendation of holiness; he will not believe that thou thyself dost think it good, for then thou wouldst take that thyself which thou commendest to another.

Sixthly, Holiness and righteousness, they are the pillars of kingdoms and nations; who are they that keep
the house from falling on a people's head, but the righteous in a nation? Ten righteous men (could they have been found in Sodom) had blown over the storm of fire and brimstone that in a few hours entombed them in their own ashes; yea the destroying angel's hands were tied up as it were, while but one righteous Lot was among them: "Haste thee, I can do nothing till thou art come thither." Gen. xix. 22. Rehoboam and his kingdom for three years were strengthened, and might have been three and twenty, if he had not by his unrighteousness pulled it down upon himself and people; for his unhappiness is dated from the very time of his departure from God. 2 Chron. xi. 16. Josiah, when he came to the crown, found the kingdom of Judah tumbling apace to ruin; yet, because his heart was set for God, and prepared to walk before him, God took his bail, as I may so say, for that wretched people, even when they were under an arrest from God, and almost at the prison-door, so that their safety was, in a manner, bound up in his life; for soon after his decease all went to rack among them. It was an heroic speech of Luther, who foresaw a black cloud of God's judgments coming over the head of Germany, but told some of his friends, that he would do his best to keep it from falling in his days; yea he believed it should not; and, said he, "when I am gone, let them that come after me look to it." This poor nation of England hath, for many generations in a succession, had a number of precious righteous ones, who have, through God's grace, walked close with God, and been kept in a great degree unspotted from the defilements of the ungodly times they lived in. These were the Atlases of their several ages; these have oft found favour of God, to beg the life of this nation, when its neck hath been on the very block. But they are gone, or wearing away apace, and a new generation coming in their room. Unhappy would the day be called when you were born, if you should be the men and women that, by degenerating from the power of holiness, should cut the banks, which was their chief care to keep up, and so let in a desolating judgment to overflow the land. That heir we count unworthy of his birth and patrimony, who, by his
debauched courses, prodigally makes away that estate, which by the care and providence of his ancestors was through many descents at last transmitted to him; but, together with the honour of the family, unhappily ends in him. If ever any age was like to do thus by the place of their nativity, this present, wherein our sad lot is cast to live, is it. How low is the power of holiness sunk among us, to what it was but in the last generation? Religion, alas! runs low and dreggy among professors, God he knows, that will not long suffer it. If Egypt knows a deearth is coming by the low ebbing of Nilus, surely we may see a judgment to be coming by the low fall of the power of godliness. There are great complaints of what men have lost in these hurling times: some bemoan their lost places and estates, others the lost lives of their friends in the wars; but professors may claim justly the first place of all the mourners of the times, to lament their lost love to the truths of Christ, worship of Christ, servants of Christ, yea that universal decay which appears in their holy walking before God and man. This is sad indeed; but that which adds a fearful aggravation to this is, that we degenerate and grow loose at a time when we are under the highest engagements for holiness that ever people were. We are a people redeemed from many deaths and dangers; and when better might God expect us to be a righteous nation? It is an ill time for a person to fall a stealing and pilfering again, as soon as the rope is off his neck, and he let safely come down that ladder from which he was even now like to be turned off. Surely it added to righteous Noah's sin, to be drunk as soon almost as he was set on shore, when a little before he had seen a whole world sinking before his eyes, and he, the privileged person, left by God to plant the world again with a godly seed. O sirs, the earth hath hardly yet drunk in the rivers of blood that have been shed in our land. The cities and towns have hardly got out of their ruins, which the miseries of war laid them in. The moans of the fatherless and husbandless, whom the sword bereaved of these their dearest relations, are not yet silenced by their own death; yea, can our own frights and scares, which we were amazed with, when we saw
the nation, like a candle lighted at both ends, on a flame, and every day the fire coming nearer and nearer to ourselves, be so soon forgotten? Now, that at such a time as this, a nation, and that the professing part of it, should grow looser, more proud, covetous, contentious, wanton in their principles, and careless in their lives; this must be for a lamentation. We have little cause to boast of our peace and plenty, when the result of our deliverance is to deliver us up to commit such abominations; this is as if one whose quartain ague is gone, but leaving him deep in a dropsy, should brag his ague hath left him, little thinking that when it went it left him a worse guest in its place. An unhappy change, God knows it is, to have war, pestilence, and famine removed, and to be left swoln up with pride, error, and libertinism. Again, we are a people who have made more pretensions to righteousness and holiness than our forefathers ever did. What else meant the many prayers to God, and petitions to man for reformation? what interpretation could a charitable heart make of our putting ourselves under the bond of a covenant, to endeavour for personal reformation, and then national, but that we meant in earnest to be a more righteous nation than ever before? This made such a loud report in foreign parts, that our neighbour churches were set a wondering to think what these glorious beginnings might ripen to; so that now, having put forth these leaves, and told both God and man by them what fruit was to be looked for from us, our present state must needs be nigh unto cursing for disappointing the just expectations of both. Nothing can save the life of this our nation, or lengthen out its tranquillity, in mercy to it, but the recovery of the much decayed power of holiness. This, as a spring of new blood to a weak body, would (though almost dying) revive it, and procure many happy days, yea more happy days to come over its head than yet it hath seen; but, alas! as we are degenerating from bad to worse, we do but die lingeringly, every day we fetch our breath shorter and shorter; if the sword should but be drawn again among us, we have hardly strength to hold out another fit.
CHAP. VI.

CONTAINS THE FIRST INSTANCE WHEREIN THE CHRISTIAN IS TO EXPRESS THE POWER OF HOLINESS, AND THAT IS IN HIS BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS SIN, BRANCHED INTO SEVERAL PARTICULARS.

THE second particular, into which the point was branched, comes now to be taken into hand; and that was to instance in some particulars wherein every Christian is to express the power of a holy and righteous life. Now this I shall do under several heads.

First, Christian, be sure thou maintaineest the power of holiness in thy contest with sin, which thou art to express in these particulars following.

First, Thou must not only refuse to commit broad sins, but shun the appearance of sin also; this is to walk in the power of holiness. The dove doth not only fly from the hawk, but will not smell so much as of a single feather that falls from the hawk. It should be enough to scare the holy soul from any enterprize if it be but malè coloratum. We are commanded "to hate the garment spotted with the flesh." Jude xxiii. A cleanly person will not only refuse to wallow in the dunghill—he is a beast indeed—but is careful also that he doth not get so much as a spot on his clothes as he is eating his meat. The Christian's care should be to keep, as his conscience pure, so his name pure, which is done by avoiding all appearance of evil. Bernard's three questions are worth the asking ourselves in any enterprize: *An liceat? an deceat? an expediat?* Is it lawful? may I do it, and not sin? Is it becoming me a Christian? may I do it, and not wrong my profession? That work which would suit a mean man would it become a prince? Should such a one as I flee? said Nehemiah nobly. Neh. vi. 11. Lastly, Is it expedient, may I do it, and not offend my weak brother? There are some things we must deny ourselves of for others' sake; though a man could sit his horse, and run
And having on the

him full speed without danger to himself, yet he should do very ill to come scouring through a town, where children are in the way, that may be, before he is aware, rid over by him, and spoiled. Thus some things thou mayest do, and without sin to thee, if there were no weak Christians in thy way to ride over, and so bruise their tender consciences, and grieve their spirits. But, alas! this is too narrow a path for many flaunting professors to walk in now-a-days; they must have more room and scope for their loose hearts, or else they and their profession must part. Liberty is the Diana of our times. O what apologies are made for some suspicious practices? long hair, gaudy garish apparel, spotted faces, naked breasts; these have been called to the bar in former times, and censured by sober and solid Christians, a thing at least suspicious, and of no good report; but now they have hit on a more favourable jury that find them not guilty; yea many are so fond of them, that they think Christian liberty is wronged in their censure; professors are so far from a holy jealousy, that should make them watch their hearts, lest they go too far, that they stretch their consciences to come up to the full length of their tether; as if he were the brave Christian that could come nearest the pit of sin, and not fall in; as in the Olympian games, he bore the garland away that could drive his chariot nearest the mark, and not knock on it. If this were so, Paul mistook when he bade Christians "abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thes. v. 22. he should rather have said by these men's divinity abstain not from the appearance, only take heed of what is in itself grossly evil; but he that can venture on the appearance of evil, under pretence of liberty may, for ought I know, commit that which is more grossly evil, under some appearance of good: it is not hard, if a man will be at the cost, to put a good colour on a rotten stuff and practice also.

Secondly, Thou must not only endeavour against all sin, but that on noble principles; here lies the power of holiness. Many forbear to sin upon such an unworthy account that God will not thank them for it another day. As it is in actions of piety and charity, God makes
breast-plate of righteousness.

no account of them, except he be interested in them; when we fast or pray, God asks, "do you fast and pray to me, even to me?" Zech. vii. 5. When we give alms, "a cup of cold water" for his sake, given in "the name of a disciple," Matt. ii. 42. is more valued by him than a cup of gold for private and low ends; so in sin, God looks that his authority should conclude and his love constrain us to renounce it. Before the commandments (as princes before their proclamations prefix their arms and royal names) God sets his glorious name: "God spake all these words, and said," &c. Exod. xx. and why this but that we should sanctify his name in all we do? A master may well think himself despised by that servant that still goes on when he bids him leave off such a work, but has done presently at the entreaty of another. O how many are there that go on to sin, for all that God says to the contrary; but when their credit bids, for shame of the world, to give over such a practice, they can knock off presently; when their profit speaks, it is heard and obeyed. O sirs, take heed of this: God expects his servants should not only do what he commands, but this at his command, and his only. And as in abstaining from evil, so in mourning for sins committed by us; if we will be Christians indeed, we must take in, yea prefer God's concernments before our own. Indeed it were to be wished, that some were so kind to their own souls, as to mourn for themselves, when they have sinned; that they would cry out, with Lamech, "I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt." Gen. iv. 23. Many have such brawny consciences they do not so much as complain they have hurt themselves by their sins; but little of the power of holiness appears in all this: there may be a great cry in the conscience, I am damned, I have undone myself, and the dishonour that is cast upon God by him not laid to heart. You remember what Joab said to David, taking on heavily for Absalom's death: "I perceive (said he) if Absalom had been alive, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well." 2 Sam. xix. 6. Thus we might say to such selfish mourners: We perceive, that if thou couldst but save the life of thy soul from eternal death and damna-
tion, though the glory of God miscarried, thou couledest be pleased well enough. But know, that a gracious soul's mourning runs in another channel: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," is holy David's moan. There is a great difference between a servant that works for another, and one that is his own man, as we say; the latter puts all his losses upon his own head: so much, saith he, I have lost by such a ship, so much by such a bargain; but the servant that trades with his master's stock, he when any loss comes, puts it to his master's account, so much I have lost of my master's goods. O Christian, think of this, thou art but a servant, all the stock thou tradest with is not thine, but thy God's; and therefore when thou fallest into any sin, bewail it as a wrong to him; so much, alas! I have dishonoured my God, his talents I have wasted, his name I have wounded, his Spirit I have grieved.

Thirdly, He must not only abstain from acting a sin, but also labour to mortify it. A wound may be hid, when it is not healed; covered, and yet not cured. Some men are like unskilful physicians, who rather drive in the disease than drive out the cause of the disease. Corruption, thus left in the bosom, like lime unslaked, or an humour unpurged, is sure at one time or other to take fire and break out, though now it lies peaceably, as powder in the barrel, and makes no noise. I have read that the opening of a chest where some clothes were laid up, not very well aired and cleared from the infection that had been in the house, was the cause of a great plague in Venice, after they had lain many years there without doing any hurt. I am sure we see, for want of true mortification, many, after they have walked so long unblameably as to gain the reputation of being saints in the opinion of others, upon some occasion, like the opening of the chest, have fallen sadly into abominable practices, and therefore it behoves us not to satisfy ourselves with anything less than a work of mortification, and that followed on from day to day. "I protest," saith Paul, "by my rejoicing in Christ, I die daily," here was a man walked in the power of holiness. Sin is like the beast, Rev. xiii. 3. which seemed at one time as if it would pre-
ently die of its wounds, and by and by it was strangely healed so as to recover again; many a saint, for want of keeping a straight rein, and that constantly, over some corruption, which they have thought they had got the mastery of, have been thrown out of the saddle, and by it dragged dangerously into temptation, unable to resist the fury of lust, when it has got head, till they have broken their bones with some sad fall into sin. If thou wouldest, Christian, shew the power of holiness, never give over mortifying-work, no not when thy corruptions play least in thy sight. He that is inclined to a disease, gout, stone, or the like, must not only take physic when he hath a fit actually upon him, but ever and anon should be taking something good against it; so should the Christian, not only when he finds his corruption stirring, but every day, keep his soul in a course of spiritual physic, against the growing of it; this is holiness in its power. Many professors do with their souls in this respect as deceitful surgeons with their patients, lay on a healing plaister one day, and a contrary the next day, that sets the cure back more than the other set it forward; take heed of this, except thou meanest not only to bring the power of holiness into danger, but the very life and truth of it into question, in thy soul.

Fourthly, He must not only endeavour to mortify corruption, but to grow and advance in the contrary grace. Every sin hath its opposite grace, as every poison hath its antidote; he that will walk in the power of holiness, must not only labour to avoid sin, but to get possession of the contrary grace. We read of a house that "stood empty," Matth. xii. 44. "the unclean spirit went out," but the Holy Spirit came not in. That is, when a man is a mere negative Christian, he ceaseth to do evil in some ways he hath formerly walked in, but he learns not to do good. This is to lose Heaven with short shooting; God will not ask us what we were not, but what we were. Not to swear and curse will not serve our turn; but thou wilt be asked, didst thou bless and sanctify God's name? It will not suffice thou didst not persecute Christ, but didst thou receive him? Thou didst not hate his saints, but didst thou love them? Thou didst not
drink and swill, but wert thou filled with the Spirit? He is the skilful physician, who at the same time that he evacuates the disease, doth also comfort and strengthen nature; and he the true Christian, that doth not content himself with a bare laying aside evil customs and practices, but labours to walk in the exercise of the contrary graces. Art thou discomposed with impatience, haunted with a discontented spirit, under any affliction? Think it not enough to silence thy heart from quarrelling with God; but leave not till thou canst bring it sweetly to rely on God. Holy David drove it thus far, he did not only chide his soul for being disquieted, but he charges it to trust in God, Psalm xlii. 5. Hast thou any grudgings in thy heart against thy brother? Think it not enough to quench these sparks of Hell-fire, but labour to kindle a heavenly fire of love to him, so as to set thee praying heartily for him. I have known one, that when he had some envious unkind thoughts stirring in him against any one, as who so holy as may not find such vermin sometimes creeping about him, he would not stay long from the throne of grace, where that he might enter the stronger protest against them, would most earnestly pray for the encrease of those good things in them which he before had seemed to grudge, and so revenged himself of those envious lustings which at any time rose in his heart against others.

Fifthly, He must have a public spirit against the sins of others. A good subject doth not only labour to live quietly under his prince's government himself, but is ready to serve his prince against those that will not. True holiness, as true charity, begins at home, but it doth not confine itself within its own doors; it hath a zeal against sin abroad. He that is of a neutral spirit, and, Gallio like, cares not what dishonour God hath from others, calls in question the zeal he expresseth against sin in his own bosom. When David would know the temper of his own heart, the furthest discovery by all his search that he could make of the sincerity of it, is his zeal against the sins of others: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect ha-
breast-plate of righteousness.

tred, I count them mine enemies." *Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22.* Having done this, he entreats God himself to ransack his heart: "Search me, and try me, O God, if there be any wicked way found in me," &c. *ver. 23.* as if he had said, Lord, my line will not reach to fathom my heart any further, and therefore if it be possible that yet any evil way may shroud itself under this, tell me, and lead me into the way everlasting.

Sixthly, The Christian, when he shews most zeal against sin, and hath greatest victory over it, even then must he renounce all fiduciary glorying in this. The excellency of Gospel holiness consists in self-denial: "Though I were perfect (saith Job) yet would I not know my soul," *Job ix. 21,* that is, I would not be conceited and proud of my innocence. When a man is lifted up with any excellency he hath, we say he knows it; he hath excellent parts, but he knows it; that is, he reflects too much on himself, and sees his own face too often in the glass of his own perfections. They who climb lofty mountains find it safest the higher they ascend the more to bow and stoop with their bodies; and so does the Spirit of Christ teach the saints, as they get higher in their victories over corruption, to bow lowest in self-denial, *Jude 21.* the saints are bid there "to keep themselves in the love of God," and then to wait, and "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life." And *Hosea x. 12.* "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy." We sow on earth, we reap in Heaven. The seed we are to sow is righteousness and holiness, which when we have done with greatest care and cost, we must not expect our reward from the hand of our righteousness, but God's mercy.
And having on the

CHAP. VII.

A SECOND INSTANCE WHEREIN THE POWER OF HOLINESS IS TO APPEAR IN THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE; i.e. IN THE DUTIES OF GOD'S WORSHIP.

SECONDLY, The Christian must exert the power of holiness in the duties of God's worship. The same light that shews us a God, convinceth he is to be worshipped, and not only so, but that he will be worshipped in a holy manner also. God was very choice in all that belonged to his worship under the Law. If he hath a Tabernacle, the place of worship, it must be made of the choicest materials; the workmen employed to make it must be rarely gifted for the purpose; the sacrifices to be offered up the best in every kind, the males of the flock, the best of the beasts, the fat of the inward, not the offals; the persons that attend upon the Lord, and minister unto him, they must be peculiarly holy. What is the Gospel of all this? but that God is very curious in his worship; if in any action of our lives we be more holy than others, sure it is to be when we have to do with God immediately. Now this holiness in duties of worship should appear in these particulars.

First, In making conscience of one duty as well as another; the Christian must encompass all within his religious walk. It is dangerous to perform one duty that we may dispense with ourselves in the neglect of another. Partiality is hateful to God, especially in the duties of religion, which have all a divine stamp upon them. There is no ordinance of God's appointment which he doth not bless to his people, and we must not reject what God owns; yea God communicates himself with great variety to his saints, now in this, anon in that, on purpose to keep up the esteem of all in our hearts. The spouse seeks her beloved in secret duty at home, and finds him not; then she goes to the public, and meets "him whom her soul loves." Can. iii. 4. Daniel no doubt
had often visited the throne of grace, and been a long trader in that duty, but God reserved the fuller manifestation of his love, and opening some secrets to him, till he did to ordinary prayer join extraordinary fasting and prayer; then the commandment came forth, and a messenger from Heaven dispatched to acquaint him with God's mind and heart, Dan. ix. 3. compared with ver. 23. There is no duty but the saints find at one time or another the Spirit of God breathing sweetly in and filling their souls from it, with more than ordinary refreshing. Sometimes the child sucks its milk from this breast, sometimes from that. David, in meditation, while he was musing, finds a heavenly heat kindling in his bosom, till at last the fire breaks out, Psalm xxxix. 3. To the Esmach, in reading of the Word, is sent Philip to join to his chariot, Acts viii. 27, 28. To the Apostles, Christ makes known himself in breaking of bread, Luke xxiv. 35. The Disciples, walking to Emmaus, and conferring together, presently have Christ fall in with them, who helps them to untie those knots which they were posed with, Luke xxiv. 35. Cornelius, at duty in his house, has a vision from Heaven, to direct him in the way he should walk, Acts x. 3. Take heed, Christian, therefore thou neglectest not any one duty; how knowest thou but that is the door at which Christ stands waiting to enter into thy soul? The Spirit is free; do not bind him to this or that duty, but wait on him in all. It is not wisdom to let any water run beside thy mill which may be useful to set thy soul agog heaven-ward. May be, Christian, thou findest little in those duties thou performest; they are empty breasts to thy soul. It is worth thy enquiry whether there be not some other thou neglectest. Thou hearest the Word with little profit may be; I pray tell me, dost thou not neglect sacraments? I am sure too many do, and that upon weak grounds, God knows. And wilt thou have God meet thee in one ordinance, who dost not meet him in another? or if thou frequentest all public ordinances, is not God a great stranger to thee at home, in thy house and closet? what communion dost thou hold with him in private duties? Here is a hole wide enough to lose all thou gettest in public, if not
timely mended. Samuel would not sit down to the feast with Jesse and his sons, till David, though the youngest son, was fetched, who was the only son that was wanting, 1 Sam. xvi. 11. If thou wouldest have God's company in any ordinance, thou must wait on him in all, he will not have any willingly neglected. O fetch back that duty which thou hast sent away; though least in thy eye, yet it may be it is that God means to crown with his choicest blessing to thy soul.

Secondly, In a close and vigorous pursuance of those ends for which God hath appointed them. Now there is a double end which God chiefly aims at in the duties of his worship. First, God intends that by them we should do our homage to him as our sovereign Lord. Secondly, he intends them to be as means through which he may let out himself into the bosoms of his children, and communicate the choicest of his blessings to them. Now here the power of holiness puts forth itself, when the Christian attends narrowly to reach these ends in every duty he performs.

First, God appoints them for this end, that we may do our homage to him as our sovereign Lord. Were there not a worship paid to God, how should we declare and make it appear that we hold our life and being on him? One of the first things that God taught Adam, and Adam his children, was divine worship. Now if we will do this holily, we must make it our chief care so to perform every duty, that by it we may "sanctify his name" in it, and give him the glory due unto it. A subject may offer a present after such a ridiculous fashion to his prince, that he may count himself rather scorned than honoured by him. The soldiers bowed the knee to Christ, but they mocked him, Matth. xxvii. 29, and so does God reckon many do by him, even while they worship him. By the carriage and behaviour of ourselves in religious duties we speak what our thoughts are of God himself. He that performs them with a holy awe upon his spirit, and comes to them filled with faith and fear, with joy and trembling, he declares plainly that he believes God to be a great God and a good God, a glorious majesty and a gracious; but he that is slighty and slovenly in them, tells God himself
to his face, that he hath mean and low thoughts of him. The misbehaviour of a person in religious duties ariseth from his misapprehensions of God whom he worships. What is engraven on the seal you shall surely see printed on the wax: and what thoughts the heart hath of God are stamped on the duties the man performs. Abel shewed himself to be a holy man, and Cain appeared a wicked wretch, in their sacrifice; and how? but in this, that Abel aimed at that end which God intends in his worship, the sanctifying his name, which Cain minded not at all; as may appear by comparing Abel's sacrifice with his, in two particulars.

First, Abel is very choice in the matter of his sacrifice; not any of the flock that comes first to hand, but the firstlings; neither did he offer the lean of them to God, and save the fat for himself, but gives God the best of the best: but of Cain's offering, no such care is recorded to be taken by him; it is only said, that "he brought of the fruit of the ground, an offering unto the Lord," Gen. iv. 3, 4. but not a word that it was the first fruit, or best fruit.

Again, Abel did not put God off with a beast or two for a sacrifice, but with them gives his heart also. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," Heb. xi. 4. he gave God the inward worship of his soul; and this was it that God took so kindly at his hands, for which he obtained a testimony from God himself that he was righteous; whereas Cain thought it enough, if not too much, to give him a little of the fruit of the ground; had the wretch but considered who God was, and what his end in requiring an offering at his hands, he could not have thought rationally that a handful or two of corn was that which he prized, or looked at any further than to be a sign of that inward and spiritual worship which he expected to come along with the outward ceremony. But he shewed what base and unworthy thoughts he had of God, and accordingly he dealt with him. O Christians, remember when you engage in any duty of religion that you go to do your homage to God, who will be worshipped like himself. "Cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male;
and sacrifice unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." This made David so curious about the Temple, which he had in his heart to build, "because the palace was not for man, but the Lord God," 1 Chron. xxix. 1. therefore, verse 2. he saith, "he prepared with all his might for the house of his God."

Thus should the gracious soul say, when going to any duty of religion, It is not man, but the Lord God, I am going to minister unto, and therefore I must be serious and solemn, holy and humble, &c.

The second end God hath appointed divine ordinances and religious duties for, is to be a means whereby he may let out himself to his people, and communicate the choicest of his blessings into their bosoms. "There (saith the Psalmist, speaking of the mountain of Zion, where the temple stood, the place of God's worship) commanded he the blessing, even life for evermore," Psalms cxxxiii. 3. that is, he hath appointed the blessing of life spiritual, grace and comfort, which at last swell into life eternal, to issue and stream thence. The saints ever drew their water out of these wells. "Their souls shall live that seek the Lord," Psalms lxix. 32. and their souls must needs die that seek not God here. The husbandman may as well expect a crop where he never ploughed and sowed, and the tradesman to grow rich, who never opens his shop doors to let customers in, as he to thrive in grace or comfort that converseth not with the duties of religion. The great things God doth for his people are got in communion with him. Now here appears the power of holiness, when a soul makes this his business, which he follows close and attends to, in duties of religion, to receive some spiritual advantage from God by them; as a scholar, knowing he is sent to the University to get learning, gives up himself to pursue this, and neglects other things; it is not riches or pleasures he looks after, but learning. Thus the gracious soul bestirs him, and flies from one duty to another, as the bee from flower to flower, to store itself with more and more grace; it is not credit and reputation to be thought a great saint, but to be indeed such, that he takes all this pains for. The
breast-plate of righteousness.

Christian is compared to a merchant man that trades for rich pearls: he is to go to ordinances, as the merchant that sails from port to port, not to see places, but to take in his lading, some here, some there. A Christian should be as much ashamed to return empty from his traffic with ordinances, as the merchant to come home without his lading. But, alas! how little is this looked after by many that pass for great professors, who are like some idle persons that come to the market, not to buy provision, and carry home what they want, but to gaze and look upon what is there to be sold to no purpose. O my brethren, take heed of this. Idleness is bad anywhere, but worst in the market-place, where so many are at work before thy eyes, whose care for their souls both adds to thy sin, and will another day to thy shame. Dost thou not see others grow rich in grace and comfort, by their trading with those ordinances, from which thou comest away poor and beggarly? and canst thou see it without blushing? if thou hadst but a heart to propound the same end to thy soul, when thou comest, thou mightest speed as well as they. God allows a free trade to all that do value Christ and his grace according to their preciousness. "Ho, every one that is athirst, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat, yea, come buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Isaiah lv. 1. The Spirit of God seems in the judgment of some to allude to a custom in maritime towns, when a ship comes with commodities to be sold; they use to cry them about the town. Ho, all that would have such and such commodities, let them come to the water-side, where they are to be had at such a price. Thus Christ calls every one that sees his need of Christ, and his graces, to the ordinances, where those same to be amply bad of all that come to them, for this very end.
And having on the

CHAP. VIII.

A THIRD INSTANCE WHEREIN THE POWER OF HOLINESS MUST APPEAR, AND THAT IS IN THE CHRISTIAN'S WORLDLY EMPLOYMENTS.

THIRDLY, The Christian must express the power of holiness in his particular calling and worldly employments, that therein he is conversant with. Holiness must be writ upon those as well as on his religious duties. He that observes the law of building is as exact in making a kitchen as in making a parlour; so by the law of Christianity, we must be as exact in our worldly business as in duties of worship. "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation." 1 Pet. i. 15. We must not leave our religion, as some do their bibles, at church. As in man, the highest faculty (which is reason) guides man's lowest actions, even those which are common to beasts (such as eating, drinking, and sleeping); man doth (that is, should, if he will deserve his own name) exercise these acts as reason directs, he should shew himself in them a rational creature; so grace, that is the highest principle in a Christian, is to steer and guide him in those actions that are common to man as man. The Christian is not to buy and sell as a mere man, but as a Christian man. Religion is not like that statesman's gown, which when he went to recreate himself, he would throw off, and say, "There lie, lord treasurer, awhile;" no, wherever the Christian is, whatever he is doing, he must keep his religion on, I mean do it holily. He must not do that in which he cannot shew himself a Christian. Now the power of holiness puts forth itself in our particular callings these ways; but take them conjunctive, the beauty of holiness appears in the symmetry of all the parts together.

First, when the Christian is diligent in his particular calling. When God calls us to be Christians, he calls us indeed out of the world as to our affections, but not out of the world as to employment. It is true when
Elisha was called he left his plough, and the Apostles their nets, but not as they were called to be saints, but because they were called to office in the church, though some in our days could find in their hearts to send the officers of the church to the plough again; but upon how little reason let themselves judge who find one trade (if it be well followed, and managed with a full stock) enough to find them work all the week; and sure the minister, that has to do with, yea provide for, more souls than they bodies, may find his head and heart as full of work in his calling, from one end of the year to the other, as any of them all;—but I am speaking to the private Christian. Thou canst not be holy, if thou art not diligent in a particular calling. The law of man counts him a vagrant that hath not a particular abiding place; and the Word of God counts him a disorderly person that hath not a particular calling, wherein to move and act for God's glory and the good of others. "We hear there are some which walk disorderly among you, working not all." 2 Thess. iii. 11. God would have his people profitable, like the sheep, which doth the very ground good it feeds on. Every one should be the better for a Christian. When Onesimus was converted, he became profitable to Paul and Philemon also: to Paul as a Christian, to Philemon as a servant; grace made him of a runaway a diligent servant. Phil. i. 1. An idle professor is a scandalous professor: an idle man does none good, and himself most hurt.

Secondly, when he is not only diligent, but for conscience sake. There are many free enough of their pains in their particular callings, they need no spur; but what sets them on work? Is it conscience, because God commands it? Oh no! then they would be diligent in their general calling also; they would pray as hard as they work; they then would knock off as well as fall on at God's command; if conscience were the key that opened their shop on the week-day, it would shut it on the Lord's-day. When we see a man, like the hawk, fly after the world's prey, and will not come to God's lure, though conscience bids in his name come off, and wait on thy God in this duty in thy family, that in thy closet,
but still goes on in his worldly chase, he shows plainly enough whose errand he goes on, not of conscience's, but of his fast's. But if thou wilt walk in the power of holiness, thou must be diligent in thy calling on a religious account: that which makes thee "servant in prayer," must make thee "not slothful in business." Thou must say, This is the place God hath set me in, I am but his servant in my own shop; and here I must serve him as I would have my apprentice or child serve me, yea, much more, for they are not mine so much as I am his.

Thirdly, when he expects the success of his labour from God; and accordingly, if he speeds, gives his humble thanks to God. Indeed they go together: he that doth not the one, will not the other. The worldling, that goes not through his closet, by prayer, into his shop in the morning, when he enters upon his business, no wonder if he returns not at night by his closet in thankfulness to God; he began without God, it were strange if he should end in him. The spider that spins her web out of her own bowels, dwells in it when she hath done; and men that carry on their enterprises by their own wit and care, entitle themselves to what they think they have done; they will sooner sacrifice (as they to their net and drag, Job viii. Hab. i. 16) to their own wisdom and industry, than to God. Such a wretch I have lately heard of in our days, who being by a neighbour excited to thank God for a rich crop of corn he had standing on his ground, atheistically replied, "Thank God! nay, rather thank my dung-cart."—the speech of a dunghill spirit, more filthy than the muck in his cart. But if thou wilt be a Christian, thou must acknowledge "God in all thy ways, not leaning to thy own understanding;" and this will direct thee to him, when success crowns thy labours, to crown God with the praise.

Jacob laboured as diligently, and took as much pains for the estate he had at last, as another, yet laying the foundation of all in prayer, and expecting the blessing from heaven, Gen. xxviii. 20, he describes all that fair estate he at last was possessed of to the mercy and faith of God, whom he had in his poor state (when with
his pilgrim staff he was travelling to Padan-aram) engaged by a solemn vow to provide for him. Gen. xxvii. 10.

Fourthly, when the Christian is content with the portioque (little or much) that God upon his endeavours allots him; not content because he cannot have it otherwise. Necessity was the Heathen's schoolmaster to teach contentment, but faith must be the Christian's, whereby he acquiesces in the dispositions of God's providence with a sweet complacency as in the will of God concerning him. Here is godliness in triumph, when the Christian can carve contentment out of God's providence, whatever the dish is that it sets before him; if he gathers little, he lacks not, but is satisfied with his short meal; if he gathers much, he hath nothing over. I mean not more than his grace can well digest and turn to good nourishment; nothing over that turns to bad humours of pride and wantonness. This was the pitch Paul attained unto, Phil. iv. 12, “He knew how to abound, and how to want.” Take contentation from godliness, and you take one of the best jewels away she wears in her bosom. “Godliness with contentment is great gain;” not godliness with an estate, but godliness with contentment.” 1 Tim. vi. 16.

Fifthly, When the Christian's particular calling doth not encroach upon his general. Truly this requires a strong guard. The world is of an encroaching nature, hard it is to converse with it and not come into bondage to it. As Hagar (when Abraham shewed her some respect more than ordinary) began to contest with, yea, crow over her mistress, so will our worldly employments jostle with our heavenly, if we keep not a strict hand over them. Now the power of holiness appears here in two things: first, when the Christian suffers not his worldly business to eat upon his time for communion with God, but keeps it inviolable from the sacrilegious hands of the world. The Christian may observe that, if he will listen to it, he shall never think of setting about any religious duty but some excuse or other to put it off will present itself to his thoughts: this thing must be just now done, that friend spoken with, or customer waited for; so that (as the wise man saith)
he that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." Eccles. xi. 4. so he that will regard what his own sloth, worldly interest, and fleshly part suggests, shall never pray, meditate, or hold communion with God in any other religious duty. O it is sad when the master must ask the man leave when to eat and when not; when the Christian must take his orders from the world when to wait on God and when not; whereas religion should give law to that. Then holiness is in its power (as Sampson in his strength) when it can snap asunder these excuses that would keep him from his God, as easily as he did his cords of flax: when the Christian can make his way into the presence of God, through the throng of worldly incumbrances: "Behold (saith David) I have in my trouble prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver," &c. 1 Chron. xxii. 14. He had ways enough to have disposed of his treasures, if he would have been discouraged from the work. He might have had a fair apology from the wars he was all his reign involved in, (which were continually draining his Exchequer) to have spared this cost. But as Rome shewed her puissance in sending succours to Spain when Hannibal was at her gates, so David would shew his zeal for God and his house by laying aside such vast sums for the building of the Temple in the midst of the troubles and expences of his kingdom. He is the Christian indeed that lays aside a good portion of time daily, in the midst of all his worldly occasions, for communion with God; whoever he compounds with and pays short, he dares not make bold with God to serve him by halves. He shall have his time devoted to him, though others are put off with the less; like that devout man, who when his time for his devotions came, what company soever he was with, would take his leave of them with this fair excuse, he had a friend that staid to speak with him (he meant his God). Secondly, when his worldly employments do not turn the edge of his affections, and leave a bluntness upon his spirit, as to holding communion with God; here is holiness in the power: as the husband, when he
bath been abroad all day in this company and that, yet none of these makes him love his wife and children the less; when he comes home at night, he brings his affections to them as entire as when he went out; yea he is glad he is got from all others to them again. This is a sweet frame of spirit indeed; but, alas! how hard to keep it. Canst thou say, O Christian, after thou hast past a day amidst thy worldly profits, and been entertained with the delight and pleasures which thy full estate affords thee, that thou bringest thy whole heart to thy God with thee, when at night thou returnest into his presence to wait on him? Thou canst say more than many can that have some good in them. O it is hard to converse with the world all day, and shake it off at night, so as to be free to enjoy privacy with God. The world does by the Christian as the little child by the mother: if it cannot keep the mother from going out, then it will cry after her to go with her; if the world cannot keep us from going to religious duties, then it will cry to be taken along with us, and much ado to part it and the affections.

Fourthly, The Christian must express the power of holiness in his carriage and behaviour to others; and they are either within doors, or without.

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CHAP. IX.

OF EXPRESSING THE POWER OF HOLINESS, IN AND TO OUR FAMILY RELATIONS.

FIRST, To his family relations. Much, though not all, of the power of godliness lies within doors, to those that God hath there related us unto. It is in vain to talk of holiness, if we can bring no letters-testimonial from our holy walking with our relations. O it is sad, when they that have reason to know us best (by their daily converse with us) do speak least for our godliness. Few so impudent as to come naked into the streets; if men have any thing to cover their naughtiness, they will put it on
when they come abroad. But what art thou within doors? what care and conscience to discharge thy duty to thy near relations? He is a bad husband, that hath money to spend among company abroad, but none to lay in provisions to keep his family at home. And can he be a good Christian that spends all his religion abroad, and leaves none for his nearest relations at home; that is a great zealot among strangers, and little or nothing of God comes from him in his family? Yea it were well if some that gain the reputation for Christians abroad, did not fall short of others, that pretend not to profession, in those moral duties, which they should perform to their relations. There are some who are great strangers to profession, who yet are loving and kind in their way to their wives; what kind of professors then are they, who are dogged and currish to the wife of their bosoms? who by their tyrannical lording it over them, imbitter their spirits, and make them "cover the Lord's altar with tears and weeping?" There are wives to be found that are not clamorous, peevish, and sroward to their husbands, who yet are far from a work of true grace in their hearts; do they then walk as becomes holiness, who trouble the whole house with their violent passions? There are servants who, from the authority of a natural conscience, are kept from railing and reviling language, when reproved by their masters; and shall not grace keep pace with nature? Holy David knew very well how near this part of the saint's duty lies to the very heart of godliness; and therefore when he makes his solemn vow, to walk holly before God, he instanceth in this, as one stage whereon he might eminently discover the graciousness of his spirit: "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." *Psal.* ci. 2. But to instance in a few particulars wherein the power of holiness is to appear as to family relations.

First, In the choice of our relations, such I mean as are eligible. Some are not in our choice: the child cannot chuse what father he will have, nor the father what child. But where God allows a liberty, he expects a care.

First, Art thou godly, and wantest a service? O take
heed thou showest thy holiness in the family thou choosest, and the governors thou puttest thyself under. Enquire more whether it be a healthful air for thy soul within doors than for thy body without. The very senseless creatures groan to serve the ungodly world, and (if capable of chusing) would count it their liberty to serve the "sons of God." Rom. viii. 21. And wilt thou voluntarily, when thou mayest prevent it, run thyself under the government of such as are ungodly, who art thyself a child of God? It is hard to serve two masters, though much alike in disposition; but impossible to serve those two, a holy God and a wicked ungodly man or woman, so as long to please them both. But, if thou art under the roof of such a one, forget not thy duty to them, though they forget their duty to God; possibly thy faithfulness to them may bring them to enquire after thy God, for thy sake, as Nebuchadnezzar did for Daniel's. No doubt wicked men would take up religion and the ways of God more seriously into their consideration, if there were a more heavenly lustre and beauty upon Christians lives in their several relations to invite them thereunto: sometimes a book is read the sooner for the fairness of the characters, which would have been not much looked in, if the print had been naught. O how oft do we hear that the thoughts of religion are thrown away with scorn by wicked masters, when their professing servants are taken false, appear proud and undutiful, slothful or negligent? what then follows but, Is this your religion? God keep me from such a religion as this. O commend the ways of God to thy carnal and ungodly master or mistress by a clear unblotted conversation in thy place. But withal let me tell thee, if, doing thy utmost in thy place to promote religion in the family, thou seest that the soil is so cold that there is no visible hope of planting for God, it is time, high time, to think of transplanting thyself; for it is to be feared, the place which is so bad to plant in, will not cannot be very good for thee to grow and thrive in.

Art thou a godly master? When thou takest a servant into thy house, chuse for God as well as thyself. Remember there is work for God to be done by thy ser-
vant, as well as thyself; and shall he be fit for thy turn, that is not for his? Thou desirest the work should prosper thy servant takes in hand, dost not? and what ground hast thou from the promise to hope that the work should prosper in his hand that sins all the while he is doing of it? "The ploughing of the wicked is sin." Prov. xxii. 4. A godly servant is a greater blessing than we think on. He can work, and set God on work also, for his master's good: "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master." Gen. xxiv. 12. And sure he did his master as much service by his prayer, as by his prudence, in that journey. If you were but to plant an orchard, you would get the best fruit trees, and not cumber your ground with crabs. There's more loss in a graceless servant in the house, than a fruitless tree in the orchard. Holy David observed while he was at Saul's court the mischief of having wicked and ungodly servants (for with such was that unhappy king so compassed, that David compares his court to the profane and barbarous Heathens, among whom there was scarce more wickedness to be found: "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar," Psalm cxx. 6. that is, among those who were as prodigiously wicked as any there). And no doubt but this made this gracious man in his banishment, before he came to the crown (having seen the evil of a disordered house), to resolve what he will do, when God should make him the head of such a royal family: "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight." Ps. cii. 7. He instanceth in those sins, not as if he would spend all his zeal against these, but because he had observed them principally to abound in Saul's court, by which he had suffered so much, as you may perceive by Ps. cxx. 2, 3.

Art thou godly? shew thyself so in the choice of husband or wife. I am sure, if some, and those godly also, could bring no other testimonial for their godliness than the care they have taken in this particular, it might justly be called into question both by themselves and others. There is no one thing that gracious persons, even those recorded in Scripture as well as others, have shewn their
breast-plate of righteousness.

weakness, yea given offence and scandal, more in, than in this particular. "The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair." Gen. vi. 2. One would have thought the sons of God should have looked for grace in the heart, rather than beauty in the face; but we see even they sometimes turn in at the fairest sign, without much enquiring what grace is to be found dwelling within. But, Christian, let not the miscarriage of any in this particular, how holy soever otherwise, make thee less careful in thy choice. God did not leave their practice on record for thee to follow, but shun. He is but a slovenly Christian that will swallow all the saints do, without paring their actions. Is it not enough that the wicked break their necks over the sins of saints, but wilt thou run upon them also to break thy shins? Point not at this man, and that godly woman, saying, They can marry into such a profane family, and lie by the side of a drunkard, swearer, &c. Look to the rule, O Christian, if thou wilt keep the power of holiness. That is clear as a sun-beam writ in the Scripture: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" 2 Cor. vi. 14. and where he gives the widow leave to marry again, he still remembers to bound this liberty: "to whom she will, only in the Lord." 1 Cor. vii. 39. Mark that, in the Lord, that is, in the church; all without the faith are without God in the world. The Lord's kindred and family is in the church; you marry out of the Lord, when you marry out of the Lord's kindred; or, in the Lord, that is, in the fear of the Lord, with his leave and liking. The parent's consent is fit to be had, we all yield, and is not thy heavenly Father's? and will he ever give his consent that thou shouldest bestow thyself on a beast, a rat, an earthworm? Holy men have paid dear for such matches; what a woeful plague was Delilah to Sampson? and Michal none of the greatest comforts to David; had he not better have married the poorest damsel in Israel, if godly, though no more with her but the clothes on her back, than such a fleeting companion, that mocked him for his zeal to his God?

Secondly, In labouring to interest God in our relations.
The Christian cannot indeed propagate grace to his child, nor jointure his wife in his holiness, as he may in his lands; yet he must do his utmost to entitle God to them. Why did God command Abraham that all his house should be circumcised? surely he would have him go as far as he could, to draw them into affinity with and relation to God. Near relations call for dear affections. Grace doth not teach us to love them less than we did, but to love them better. It turns our love into a spiritual channel, and makes us chiefly desire their eternal good; what singular thing else is in the Christian's love above others? Do not the Heathens lay up estates for their children here? are not they careful for their servants' backs and bellies, as well as others? yes, sure; but your care must exceed theirs. I remember Augustine speaking how highly some commended his father's cost and care to educate him, even above his estate, makes this sad complaint, *cum interea non salgeret Pater, qualis cresserem tibi, dummodo esset desertus, vel potius desertus a culturâ tua Deus!* Whereas (saith he) my father's drift in all was not to train me up for thee; his project was that I might be eloquent, an orator, not a Christian. O my brethren, if God be worth your acquaintance, is he not worth theirs also that are so near and dear to you? One house now holds you, would you not have one Heaven receive you? can you think, without trembling, that those who live together in one family, should, when the house is broken up by death, go one to Hell, another to Heaven? surely you are like to have little joy from them on earth who you fear shall not meet you in Heaven. By Lycurgus's law, the father that gave no learning to his child when young, was to lose that succour which was due from his child to him in his old age. The righteousness of that law though I dare not assert, yet this I may say, what he unjustly commanded, God doth most righteously suffer; that those who do not teach their children their duty to God, lose the honour and reverence which should be paid them by their children, and so of other relations also.

Thirdly, Take heed thy relations be not a snare to thee, or thou to them. There are such sad families to
be found, who do nothing else but lead one another into temptation, by drawing forth each the other's corruption, from one end of the year to the other; what can we call such families, but so many Hells above ground? A man may live with as much safety to his body in a pest-house, as he can there to his soul. And truly the godly are not so far out of danger, but that the devil may make use of their passions to roil and defile one another. I am sure he is very ambitious to do them a mischief this way, and too often prevails. Abraham's fear laid the snare for Sarah his wife, who was easily persuaded to dissemble for him she loved so dearly, Gen. xii. 13. And Rebekah's vehement affection to Jacob, together with the reverence both her place and grace commanded in Jacob's heart, made him of a plain man become the subtle man, to deceive his father and brother; which, though it was too broad a sin for him at first proposal to swallow, as appears: "I shall seem to him to be a deceiver, and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing;" Gen. xxvii. 12. Yet with a little art using by his mother, we see the passage was widened, and down it went for all his first straining at it; and yet both godly persons. Look therefore to thyself, that thou dost not bring sin upon thy relations; it would be a heavy affliction to thee, to see thy wife, child, or servant sick of the plague, which thou brought home to them, or bleeding by a wound which thou unawares gavest them; alas! better thus, than be infected with sin, wounded with guilt, by thy means. And be as careful to antidote thy soul against receiving infection from them as breathing it on them. Thy love is great to thy wife, O let it not make the apple of temptation the more fair or desirable, when offered to thee by her hand. Thou lovest thyself, yea thy God, too little, if her so much as to sin for her sake. Thou art a dutiful wife, but obey in the Lord; take heed of turning the tables of the commandments, by setting the seventh before the first. Be sure to save God's stake, before thou payest thy obedience to thy husband; say to thy soul, Can I keep God's command in obeying my husband's? In paying of debts, those should be first discharged, which are due by the most, and those the great-
est obligations. And to whom thou art more deeply bound, God or thy husband, is easy to resolve: thus in all other relations. Go as far with thy relations as thou canst travel in God's company, and no further; as thou wouldest not leave thy holiness and righteousness behind thee, the loss of which is too great that thou shouldest expect they can recompense unto thee.

Fourthly, Then holiness is in its power, as to our relations, when the Christian is careful to improve the graces of his relations, and get what good from them he can while they are with him. May be thou hast a holy father, a gracious husband or wife; let it be but a servant in the family that is godly; there is good to be got by his gracious conversation; speeches and holiness, like ointment, will betray itself wherever it stays awhile. O Christian, if any such holy person be with thee in the family, observe what such a one in his speeches, duties of worship, behaviour under affliction, receipt of mercies, returns of sabbaths and ordinances, and such like, affords for thy instruction, quickening and promoting in the ways of holiness. The prophet bade the widow bring all the vessels she had or could borrow, to catch what should fall from the pot of oil, that she had in the house, and therewith pay her debts, 2 Kings iv. 3. Truly I think it were good counsel to some that complain, or may justly if they do not, how poor and beggarly they are in grace, to make an improvement of that holy oil of grace which drops from the lips and lives of their godly relations; set your memories, consciences, hearts, and affections, as vessels to receive all the expressions of holiness that come from them; thy memory let that keep and retain the instructions, reproofs, comforts, drawn by them out of the Word; thy conscience, that applies these to thy own soul, till from thence they distil into thy affections, and thou becomest in love more and more with holiness thy own self, from their recommendation of it to thee. It is a sad thing to consider what a different use a naughty heart makes of the gifts and graces of the godly with whom they live, as they sparkle forth, to what a humble sincere one doth. A naughty heart does but envy and malign such a one the more, and instead of getting
breast-plate of righteousness.

good, is made worse; whereas the sincere soul labours to treasure up all for his good. When Joseph told his prophetic dream to his brethren, their envy, which before lay smothering in their breasts, took fire presently, and awhile after flamed forth into that unnatural cruelty practised upon him by them: there was all the use they made of it; but of good Jacob it is said, by way of opposition to them, "his brethren envied him, but his father observed the saying:" Gen. xxxvii. 11. he laid it up for future use, as that which had something of God in it. Thus, Christian, do thou by the holy breathing of the Spirit in those thou livest with.

Note the remarkable passages of their gracious conversations, as thou wouldest do the notions of some excellent book, which is not thine own, but lent thee for a time to peruse: indeed upon these terms, and no surer, do we enjoy our gracious friends and relations. They are but lent us for awhile; and improve them or not improve them, they will be called for ere long; and will it be for thy comfort to part with them, before thou hast had a heart to get good by them? It was a solemn speech of that reverend holy man of God, Mr. Bolton, to his children, when on his death-bed: I charge you, O my children, not to meet me at the great day before Christ's tribunal in a Christless, graceless condition. God keeps an exact account of the means he affords us for our salvation, and the lives of his holy servants are not of the lowest rank; you shall observe that God is very curious in Scripture to record the time how long his faithful servants lived on earth, and sure, among other reasons, he would have us know, that he means to reckon with those that lived with them, for every year, yea day and hour; they had them among them. They shall know they had a prophet, a father, husband, that were godly, and that they had them so long; and God will know of them what use they made of them.
SECONDLY, thy righteousness to others must not stay within doors, but walk out in the streets, and visit thy neighbours round. Thy behaviour to and conversation with them must be holy and righteous. In Scripture, righteousness, and living righteously, do oft import the whole duty of the Christian to his neighbour; and so stands distinguished from piety, which hath God for its immediate object, and sobriety or temperance, which immediately respects ourselves. See them all together, Titus ii. 12. where the “grace of God that bringeth salvation” is said to “teach us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”- He that would be the death of all these three, needs do no more but stab one of them, no matter which; the life of holiness will run out at any one door, here or there, wherever the wound is given. It is true indeed there is a moral righteousness, which leaves us short of true holiness, but no true holiness that leaves us short of moral righteousness. Though the sensitive soul be found in a beast without the rational, yet the rational soul is not found in man without the sensitive: grace and evangelical holiness, being the higher principle, includes and comprehends the other within itself. This is the dignity and honour due to Christianity, and the principle it lays down in the Gospel (the enemies of it being judges) that though some who profess it are none of the best, yet they learn not their unrighteousness of it. Most true it is what one saith, No Christian can be bad, except he be a hypocrite. Either therefore renounce thy baptism, or abominate the thoughts of all unrighteousness. To be sure thou mightest escape better, if thou wouldest let the world know thou didst claim no kindred with Christ before thou practisest such wickedness. Some are unresolved where to find Aristides, Socrates, Cato, and
breast-plate of righteousness.

some few other Heathens eminent for their moral righteousness, whether in Heaven or Hell; but were there ever any that doubted what would become of the unrighteous Christian in the other world? Hell gapes for these above all others: "Know you not (saith the Apostle) that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" 1 Cor. vi. 9. as if he had said, Sure you have not so far lost the use of your reason, to think that there is any room for such cattle as these in Heaven. And if not the unrighteous, what crevice of hope is left for their salvation whose unrighteousness hath a thousand times more malignity in it than any others in the world is capable of? The Heathen shall for their unrighteousness be indicted and condemned as rebels to the Law: so shall the unrighteous Christian also, and that more deeply; but the charge which is incomparably heaviest, and will lay weight upon him far above the other, is that which the Gospel brings in: that by his unrighteousness he hath been an "enemy to the cross of Christ." Phil. iii. 18. Indeed, if a man had a mind to shew his despiteto the height against Christ and his cross, the Devil himself could not help him to express it more fully than to clothe himself with a gaudy profession of the Gospel, and, with this wrap about him, to roll himself in the kennel of sordid base practices of unrighteousness. O how it makes the profane world blaspheme the name of Christ, and abhor the very profession of him, when they see any of this filth upon the face of their conversation who take the name of saints to themselves more than others do. What! shall that tongue lie to man, that even now prayed so earnestly to God? those eyes be sent on lust's or envy's errand, that a few moments past thou tookest off the Bible from reading those sacred oracles? those hands in thy neighbour's pocket, to rob him of his estate, which were not long ago stretched forth so devoutly to Heaven? those legs carry thee to-day into thy shop or market to cheat and cozen, which yesterday thou wentest with to worship God in public?

In a word, dost thou think to commute with God, so as by a greater semblance of outward zeal to God in
the first table to obtain a dispensation in point of righteousness to man in the second? Will thy pretended love to God excuse the malice and rancour which thy heart swells with against thy neighbour? thy devotion to God excuse thee from paying thy debts to man? God forbid thou shouldest think so; but if thou dost, Peter's counsel to Simon Magus is mine to thee: "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." Acts viii. 22. In the name of God, I charge every one that wears Christ's livery, to make conscience of this piece of righteousness, as you would not bring upon your heads the vengeance of God for all those blasphemies which the nakedness of some professors in this particular, yea base practices of some hypocrites, have given occasion to be belched out by the ungodly world against Christ and the good ways of holiness. Now the power of holiness (as to this particular) will be preserved when these two things are looked to.

First, when our care is uniform, and equally distributed to endeavour the performing of one duty we owe to our neighbour as well as another. For we must know there is a righteousness that (as one saith) runs through every precept, as it were the veins of every law in the second table; and calls for obedience due to parents natural, civil, ecclesiastical, in the fifth command; our care to preserve our neighbour's life in the sixth, chastity in the seventh, estate in the eighth, good name in the ninth, and our desires in their due bounds, against coveting what is our neighbour's in the tenth. Now as health in the body is preserved by keeping the passages of life open, for the spirits freely to move from one part to another (which once obstructed from doing their office in any part, the health of the body is presently in danger) so here the spirit and life of holiness is preserved in the Christian, by a holy care and endeavour to keep the heart free and ready to pass from doing one duty he owes his neighbour to another, according to the several walks that are in every command for him to move in.

Secoundly, as our care must be uniform, so the motive and spring within that sets us at work, and makes all
these wheels move, must be evangelical. The command is a road in which both Heathen, Jew, and Christian may be found travelling. How now shall we know the Christian from the other, when Heathen and Jew also walk along with him in the same duty: seem as dutiful children, obedient wives, loyal subjects, loving neighbours, as the Christian himself? Truly if it be not in the motive from which and end to which he acts, nothing else can do it. Look therefore well to this, or else thou art out of thy way, while thou seemest to be in thy road. It is very ordinary for men to wrong Christ, when they do their neighbour right; and this is done when Christ is not interested in the action, and love to him doth not move us thereunto: without this thou mayest go for an honest Heathen, but canst not be a good Christian. Suppose a servant were entrusted by his master to go and pay such a man a sum of money, which he doth, yet not out of any dutiful respect to the command or love to the person of his master, but for shame of being taken for a thief. In this case the man should have his due, but the master a great deal of wrong. Such wrong all mere civil persons do the Lord Jesus: they are very exact and righteous in their dealings with their neighbours, but very injurious at the same time to Christ, because they do not this upon his account. This makes love to our neighbour evangelical, and, as Christ calls it, "a new commandment," John xiii. when our love to our brother takes fire from his love to us. We cannot in a Gospel sense be said to do the duty of any commandment, except we first love Christ, and then for his sake do it: "If ye love me, keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. where observe, that as God prefixed his name before the decalogue, so Christ for the same reason doth his before the Christian's obedience to any of them, that so they may keep them, both as his commandments, and out of love to him, who hath brought us out of a worse house of bondage than Egypt was to Israel.
CHAP. XI.

CONTAINS NINE OR TEN DIRECTIONS, TOWARDS THE HELPING THOSE THAT DESIRE TO MAINTAIN THE POWER OF A HOLY RIGHTEOUS CONVERSATION.

The third thing propounded in handling the point calls now for our dispatch; and that is to lay down some directions by way of counsel and help to all those that desire to maintain the power of holiness and righteousness in their daily walking.

SECT. I.

First, Be sure thou gettest a good foundation laid, on which may be reared the beautiful structure of a holy righteous conversation; and that can be no less than the change of thy heart, by the powerful work of God's sanctifying Spirit in thee. Thou must be righteous and holy, before thou canst live righteously and holily. If the ship hath not its right make at first, be not equally poised according to the law of that art, it will never sail trim; and if the heart be not moulded anew by the workmanship of the Spirit, and fashioned according to the law of the new creature, "in which old things pass away, and all things become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. the creature will never walk holily; it is solid grace in the vessel of the heart that feeds profession in the lamp, holiness in the life, Matth. xxv. 4. Now this thorough change of thy heart is especially to be looked at in these two things.

First, That there be a change made in thy judgment of and disposition of heart to sin: Thou hast formerly had such a notion of sin as hath made it desirable; thou hast looked upon it, as Eve did on the forbidden fruit, thou hast thought it pleasant to the eye, good for food, and worth thy choice to be desired of thee. If thou continuest of the same mind, thy teeth will be watering, and heart continually hankering after it; thou mayest possibly be kept from expressing and venting the inward
thought of thy heart for awhile; but as two lovers, kept
asunder by their friends, will one time or other make an
escape to each other, so long as their affection is the
same it was, so wilt thou to thy lust; and therefore never
rest till thou canst say, thou dost as heartily loathe and
hate sin as ever thou lovedst it before.
Secondly, Look that there be such a change in thy
judgment and heart, as makes thee take an inward com-
placency and delight in Christ and his holy commands.
Then there is little fear of thy degenerating, when thou
art tied to him and his service by the heart-strings of
love and complacency. The devil finds it no hard work
to part him and his duty that never joyed nor took true
content in doing of it. He whose calling doth not like
him, nor fit his genius, as we say, will never excel in it.
A scholar learns more in a week, when he comes to relish
learning, and is pleased with its sweet taste, than he
did in a month, when he went to school to please his
master whom he feared, not himself. Observe any per-
son in the thing wherein he takes high content, and he
is more careful and curious about that than any other :
if his heart be on his garden, O how neatly it is kept!
it shall lie, as we say, in print; all the rare roots and
slips, that can be got for love and money, shall be sought
for. Is it beauty that one delights in? how curious and
nice is such a one in dressing herself? she hardly knows
when she is fine enough. Truly thus it is here: a soul
that truly loves Christ, delights in holiness, all his
strength is laid out upon them; may he but excel in this
one thing, be more holy, more heavenly, he will give
others leave to run before him in any thing else.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Be sure to keep thy eye on the right rule
thou art to walk by. Every calling hath a rule to go
by, peculiar to itself, which requires some study to get
an insight into, without which a man will but bungle in
his work. No calling hath such a sure rule, and perfect
law to go by, as the Christian's; therefore in earthly pro-
fessions, and worldly callings, men vary in their way
And having on the

and method, though of the same trade, because there is no such perfect rule but another may superadd to it. But the Christian hath one standing rule, the Word of God, "able to make the man of God perfect;" now, he that would excel in the power of holiness, must study this. The physician he consults with his Galen; the lawyer with his Lyttleton; and the philosopher with his Aristotle, the master of the arts. How much more should the Christian with the Word, so as to be determined by that, and drawn by that, more than by a whole team of arguments from men? "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth," saith Paul, 2 Cor. xiii. 8. O Christian! when credit votes this way, friends and relations that way; when profit bid thee do this, and pleasure that, say as Jehoshaphat concerning Micaiah, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that I may enquire of him?" 1 Kings xxii. 7. Is there not the Word of God, that I may be concluded by it, rather than by any of these lying prophets? Now there are three ways that men go contrary to this direction, all of them destructive to the power of holiness: some walk by no rule; some by a false rule; and a third by the true rule, but partially. The first is the Antinomian and libertine; the second is the superstitious zealot; the third is the hypocrite. Beware of all these, except thou meanest to lay the knife to the throat of holiness.

First, Take heed thou dost not take away the rule God sets before thee, with the Antinomian and libertine, who say the Law is not a rule to the Christian. These must needs make crooked lines in their lives, that live by rote, and not by rule. I had thought Christ had baptized the Law and Gospelized it, both by preaching it as a rule of holiness in his sermons, Matt. v. 27. and by walking in his life by the rule of it, 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22. That principle therefore may be indicted for a murderer of a righteous and holy life which takes away the rule by which it should be led. This is a subtle way indeed of Satan to surprise the poor creature; if he make the Christian traveller weary of his guide, and once send him away, then it will not be long before he will wander out of Heaven's way, and fall into Hell's road. The Apostle
tells us of a generation of men, who "while they promise them liberty, are themselves the servants of corruption," 2 Pet. ii. 19. Truly these methinks look like the men who slip off the yoke of the command, under a pretence of liberty, that soon have a worse yoke on in its room, even the yoke of sin.

Secondly, Take heed thou walkest not by a false rule. There is but one true rule, the Word of God, and therefore we may soon know which is false. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah viii. 20. Pretend not to more strictness than the Word will vouch; this is to be over-righteous indeed, Eccles. vii. 16. Excess makes a monster as well as defect; not only he that hath but one hand, but he that hath three, is one. There is a curse scored up for him that adds to, as well as for him that "takes from the words of this book," Rev. xxii. 18. The devil hath had of old a design to undermine scriptural holiness, by crying up an apocryphal holiness. He knows too well that as the pot by seething over puts out the fire, and so comes in a while not to seeth at all; thus, by making men's zeal to boil over into a false pretended holiness, he is sure to quench all true holiness, and bring them at last to have no zeal, but prove cold atheists. The Pharisee he must add to the commands of God the traditions of men; the Papist, his true son and heir, hath his unwritten verities, holy orders, and rules for a more austere life than ever came into God's heart to require; and of late the Quakers have borrowed many of their shreds from them both, with which they are very busy to patch up a ridiculous kind of religion, which a man cannot possibly take up till he hath first foregone his own understanding, and renounced all subjection to the Word of God. O beware of a will-holiness and a will-worship; it is a heavy charge God puts in against Israel, "Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples." Hosea viii. 14. This may seem strange, forget God, and yet so devout as to build temples? yes, she built them without a warrant from God; God counts himself forgot, when we forget his Word, and keep not close to that. It is laid at
And having on the

Jeroboam's door as a great sin "that he offered upon the altar which he had made at Bethel, in the month which he had devised in his heart," 1 King xii. 33. he took counsel of his own heart, not of God, when and where to offer. A holiness which is the device of our heart, is not the holiness after God's heart; the curse that falls upon such bold men is, that while they seek to establish a holiness of their own, they submit not to the true holiness God requires in his Word. God justly gives them over to real unholiness, for pretending to a further holiness than they should: witness those sinks and common sewers of all abominations, religious houses, I mean, as they are called by the Papists, which being the institutions of men, for want of the salt of a divine warrant to keep them sweet, have run into filthiness and corruption. God will not endure his creature should be a self-mover; it is a greater sin to do what we are not commanded than not to do what we are commanded by God, as it is in a subject to presume to make laws of his own head, than not to obey the law his prince enacts; by setting up a holiness of our own, we take God's mint out of his hand, to whom alone it belongs to stamp what is holy and what not.

Thirdly, Use not the true rule partially: to be partial in practising is as bad as to be partial in handling of the law; this made the priests contemptible, Mal. ii. 9. and so will that the professor to God and man. Square the whole frame of thy life by rule, or all is to no purpose: "divers measures are an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xx. 10. He is the honest man in his dealings with men that hath but one measure (and that according to law) which he useth in his trade: and he is the holy man that useth but one rule for all his actions, and that no other than the Word of God. O how fulsome was the Jews' hypocrisy to God's stomach, that durst not go into the judgment-hall, for fear of rendering themselves unclean, John xviii. but made no scruple of bruising their hands in Christ's blood; and the Pharisees, who observed the rule of the law strictly in tything "annis and cummin," but dispensed with themselves in the weightier matters of the law. O beware of this, as thou loveth thy
soul's life. You would not thank that customer, who comes into your shop and buys a pennyworth of you, but steals from you what is worth a pound; or him that is very punctual in paying a small debt he owes, only that he may get deeper into your book, and at last cheat you of a greater sum. This is horrid wickedness, to comply with the Word in little matters, on a design that you may more covertly wrong God in greater.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Propound a right end to thyself in thy righteous holy walking: and here be sure thou standest clear of a legal end; do not think by thy righteousness to purchase any thing at God's hand. Heaven stands not upon sale to any: "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. What God sold to Christ he gives to us. Christ was the purchaser, believers are but heirs to what he hath bought, and must claim nothing but in his right. By claiming any thing of God for our righteousness, we shut ourselves out from having any benefit of his. We cannot be in two places at the same time; if we be found leaning on our own house, we cannot also be found in Christ; Paul knew this, and therefore renounceth the one that he may be entitled to the other, Phil. iii. 8, 9. It is Satan's policy to crack the breast-plate of thy own righteousness, by beating it out further than the metal will bear; indeed, by trusting in it, thou destroyest the very nature of it, thy righteousness becomes unrighteousness, and thy holiness degenerates into wickedness. What greater impiety than pride? such a pride as rants it over Christ, and alters the method which God himself hath set for saving souls? O soul! if thou wouldest be holy, learn to be humble. They are clasped together: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah vi. 8. and how he that trusts in his own holiness should be said to walk humbly, it cannot enter into our heart to conceive. God sets not thee to earn Heaven by thy holiness, but thereby to shew thy love and thankfulness to Christ that hath earned it for thee. Hence the great argument
Christ useth to provoke his disciples to holiness is love: "if ye love me, keep my commandments," John xiv. As if he had said, You know what I came into the world, and am now going out of the world for, both upon your service, for whom I lay down my life, and take it up again, that I may live in Heaven, to intercede for you; if these, and the blessed fruits you reap from these, be valued by you, love me, and if ye love me, testify it in keeping my commandments. That is Gospel holiness which is bred and fed by this love, when all the Christian doth is by him offered up as a thanksgiving-sacrifice to Christ, that loved us to death. Thus the spouse to Christ, Cant. vii. 12. "I will give thee my loves;" what she means by her loves she expresseth, verse 13. "All manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved." In ver. 18 she had professed her faith on Christ, and drunk deep of his love, and now to rebound his love in thankfulness, she bestirs herself to entertain him with the pleasant fruits of his own graces, as gathered from a holy conversation, which she doth not lay up to feed her pride and self-confidence with, but reserves them for her beloved, that he may have the entire praise of them.

S E C T. IV.

Fourthly, Often look on the perfect pattern which Christ in his own example hath given thee for a holy life. Our hand will be as the copy is we write after; if we set low examples before us, it cannot be expected we should rise high ourselves; and indeed the holiest saint on earth is too low to be our pattern, because perfection in holiness must be aimed at by the weakest Christian, 2 Cor. vii. 1. and that is not to be found in the best of saints in this lower world. Moses, the meekest man on earth, at a time his spirit is ruffled; and Peter, the foreman of the Apostles, doth not always foot it right according to the Gospel, Gal. ii. 14. and he that would follow him then is sure to go out of his way. The good soldier follows his file-leader, not when he runs away, but when he marches after his captain orderly: "Be ye followers of me, as I am also of Christ." 1 Cor. xi. 1. The
comment must be followed no further than it agrees with
the text. The master doth not only rule the scholar's
book for him, but writes him a copy with his own hand:
Christ's command is our rule, his life our copy; if thou
wilt walk holy, thou must not only endeavour to do
what Christ commands, but as Christ himself did it; thou
must labour to shape every letter in thy copy, action in
thy life, in a holy imitation of Christ. By holiness we
are the very "image of Christ," Rom. viii. 29. We repre-
sent Christ, and hold him forth to all that see us. Now
two things go to make a thing the image of another:
first, likeness; secondly, derivation; it must not only
be like it, but this likeness must be deduced and derived
from it; snow and milk both white alike, yet we cannot
say that they are the image of one another, because that
likeness they have is not derived either from other. But
the picture which is drawn every line by the face of a
man, this may properly be called the image of that man
after whose likeness it is made. Thus true holiness is
that which is derived from Christ, when the soul sets
Christ in his Word, and Christ in his example, before
him, as one would the person whose picture he intends
to draw, and labours to draw every line in his life by
these. O this is a sweet way indeed to maintain the
power of holiness, when thou art tempted to any va-
nity; set Christ before thy eye in his holy walking; ask
thy soul, Am I in this speech, action, company I consort
with, like Christ? did he, or would he, if again to live
on earth, do as I do? would not he be more choice of his
words than I am? did ever such a vain speech drop from
his lips? would he delight in such company as I do? spend
his time upon such trifles and impertinencies as I do?
would he bestow so much cost in pampering of his body,
and swallow down his throat at one meal what would
feed many poor creatures ready to starve for want?
would he be in every fashion that comes up, though nev-
er so ridiculous and offensive? should cards and dice
ever have been found in his hands to drive time away?
And shall I indulge myself in any thing that would
make me unlike Christ? God forbid. We think it enough
if we can quote such a good man or great professor to
countenance our practice, and so are led into temptation;
but, Christian, if thy conscience tells thee Christ likes not such doings, away with them, though thou couldst produce the example of the most eminent saint in the country to favour them. Thou knowest some possibly of great name for profession that have cast off duties in their families; but did not Christ shew an especial care of the Apostles which lived under him, and were of his family; often praying with them, repeating to them, and further opening what he preached in public, keeping the passover with them, as his household, according to the law of that ordinance? Exod. xvi. Thou seest some turn their back of the public assemblies, under a pretence of sinful mixtures there that would defile them: did our Lord Jesus do thus? was not he in the Temple and in the synagogues, holding communion with them in the service of God, which was for the substance there preserved, though not without some corruptions crept in among them? O Christian, study Christ’s life more, and thou wilt soon learn to mend thy own. Summa Religionis est imitari, quem colis. It is the very sum and top of religion, to be as like the God we worship as may be.

S E C T. V.

Fifthly, Walk dependingly with God. The vine is fruitful so long as it hath a pole or wall to run upon, but without such a help it would soon be trod under foot, and come to nothing. It is not in man to direct his own way. Multa bona facit Deus in homine, que non facit homo, nulla vero facit homo, que non facit Deus ut faciat. Augustinus. There are many good things that God doth in man, which man has no hand in; but there is no good and holy action that man does, but God does enable him to do it. As was said of that Grecian captain, Parmenio did many exploits without Alexander, but Alexander nothing without Parmenio. If thou wilt therefore maintain holiness in its power, “acknowledge God in all thy ways, and lean not to thy own understanding.” Prov. iii. 5, 6. He is ready to help them that engage him, but counts himself charged with the care of none but such as depend on him. The Christian’s way to heaven is something like that in our nation (called the Washes) where the sands, by reason of the seas daily
overflowing, do so alter, that the traveller who passed them safely a month ago, cannot without great danger venture again, except he hath his guide with him; where then he found firm land, possibly a little after coming he may meet with a devouring quicksand. Truly thus the Christian, who gets over a duty at one time with some facility, his way plain and smooth before him, at another time may find a temptation in the same duty enough to set him, if he had not help from heaven to carry him safe out of the danger. O Christian, it is not safe for thee to venture one step without thy stay, thy hand of faith leaning on thy beloved's arm: trust to thy own legs and thou fallest; use thy legs, but trust to his arm, and thou art safe.

SECT VI.

Sixthly, Look to thy company, who they are thou consortest with; flee unholy company, as baneful to the power of godliness. Be but as careful for thy soul as thou wouldest for thy body; durst thou drink in the same cup, or sit in the same chair, with one that hath an infectious disease? And is not sin as catching a disease as the plague itself? Darest thou come where such ill scents are to be taken, as may soon infect thy soul? Of all trades it would not do well to have the collier and fuller live together; what one cleanseth the other will smut. Thou canst not be long among unholy ones but thou wilt hazard the defiling of thy soul, which the Holy Spirit hath made pure; and he did not wash thee clean, to run where thou shouldest be made foul. To be sure thou shalt have no help from them to advance thy holiness; and truly we should not chuse that society where we may not hope to make them, or be made ourselves better by them. It is observable what the Spirit of God notes concerning Abraham, Heb. xi. 9. "He sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise." He is not said to dwell with the natives of that land, "but with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise" with him. Abraham did not seek acquaintance with the Heathen; no: he was willing
to continue a stranger to them; but he lived with those that were of his own family and God's family also. Christians are a company of themselves, Acts. iv. 23. "being let go, they went to their own company;" who should believers join, themselves to but believers? As Paul said, "have you not a wise man among you, but you must go to law before unbelievers?" so may I say to thee, Christian: Is there never a saint in all the town that thou canst be acquainted with, sit and discourse with, but you must join with the profane and ungodly amongst whom you live? No wonder thy holiness thrives no better, when thou breathed in wicked company: that is like the east wind, under which nothing grows and prospers.

SECT. VII.

Seventhly, Get some Christian friend (whom thou mayest trust above others) to be a faithful monitor. O that man hath a great help for the maintaining the power of godliness that has an open-hearted friend, that dare speak his heart to him. A stander-by sees more sometimes by a man than the actor can do by himself, and is more fit to judge of his actions than he of his own; sometimes self-love blinds us in our own cause, that we see not ourselves so bad as we are, and sometimes we are over suspicious of the worst by ourselves, which makes us appear to ourselves worse than we are. Now that thou mayest not deprive thyself of so great help from thy friend, be sure to keep thy heart ready with meekness to receive, yea with thankfulness embrace, a reproof from his mouth. Those that cannot bear plain dealing hurt themselves most, for by this they seldom hear the truth. He that hath not love enough to give a reproof seasonably to his brother, nor humility enough to bear a reproof from him, is not worthy to be called a Christian; by the first he shews himself a "hater of his brother," Lev. xix. 17. by the second, he proves himself a scorners, Prov. ix. Holy David professed he would take it as a kindness for the righteous to smite him, yea, as kindly as if he broke a box of precious oil upon his head, which was amongst the Jews a high ex-
pression of love, Psalm cxli. 5. And he made his word good. He did not (as the Papists do by their holy water) commend it highly, but turn away his face when it comes to be sprinkled on him; no: Abigail and Nathan who reproofed him, one for his bloody intentions against Nabal and his family, the other for his bloody fact upon Uriah, both sped well in their errand. The first prevented the fact intended, by her seasonable reproof; the second recovered him out of that dismal sin of murder, wherein he had lain some months without coming so far to himself as to repent of it, for ought that we read; and which is observable, they did not only prevail in the business, but inured themselves by this their faithfulness to his soul so unto him, that he takes her to be his wife, and him to be of his most privy council to his dying day. 1 Kings i. 27, 32. Truly it is one great reason why the falls of professors are so frequent in our days, and their recoveries so rare or late, because few in these unloving times are to be found so faithful as to do this Christian office of reproof to their brethren; they will sooner go and tattle of it to others to their disgrace, than speak of it to themselves for their recovery. Indeed, by telling others we obstruct our way from telling the person himself with any hope of doing him good. It will be hard to make him believe thou comest to heal his soul who hast already wounded his name.

S E C T. VIII.

Eighthly, Be often seriously thinking how holily and righteously you will in a dying hour wish you had lived. They who now think it matters not much what language drivels from them, what company they walk in, what they busy their time about, how they comport with God in his worship, and with man in their dealings, but live at large, and care not much which end goes foremost; yea, wonder at the niceness and zeal of others, as if there were no pace would carry them to heaven but the gallop; when once death comes so near as to be known by its own grim face, and not to report of others, when these poor creatures see they must in earnest into another world, without any delay, and their naked souls
must return to "God that gave them," 'to hear what interpretation he will put upon the course and tenor of their walking, and accordingly to pass an irrevocable sentence of life or death upon them; now their thoughts will begin to change, and take up other notions of a righteous and holy life than ever they had before. It is observed among the Papists, that many cardinals and other great ones, who would think their cowl and religious habit ill became them in their health, yet are very ambitious when they die to be buried in them, as commonly they are. Though this be a foppery in itself, yet it helps us to a notion considerable: they who live wickedly and loosely yet like a religious habit very well when to go into another world. As that young gallant said to his swaggering companion (after they had visited Ambrose lying on his dying bed, and saw how comfortably he lay, triumphing over death now approaching) O that I might live with thee, and die with Ambrose. Vain wish! wouldest thou, O man, not reap what thou sowest, and find what thou layest up with thy own hands? dost thou sow cockle, and wouldest reap wheat? dost thou fill thy chest with dirt, and expect to find gold, when thou openest it? cheat and gull thyself thou mayest, but thou canst not mock God, who will pay thee in the same coin at thy death which thou treasurest up in thy life. There are few so horribly wicked, but the thoughts of death awes them; they dare not fall upon their wicked practices till they have got some distance from the thoughts of this. Christian, walk in the company of it every day, by serious meditation, and tell me at the week's end whether it doth not keep worse company from thee.

SECT. IX.

Ninthly, Improve the covenant of grace, for thy assistance in thy holy course. Moses himself had his holiness not from the Law but Gospel. Those heroic acts, for which he is recorded as one so eminently holy, they all are attributed to his faith. Heb. xi. 24, 25. "By faith Moses did this," and by faith that, to shew from whence he had his strength. Now the better to improve the covenant of grace for this purpose, consider these three particulars.
breast-plate of righteousness.

First, That God in the covenant of grace hath promised to furnish and enable his children for a holy life: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Ezek. xxxvi. 27. This is a way that God hath by himself. The mother can take her child by the hand to lead it, but not put strength into his feeble joints to make him go. The prince can give his captain a commission to fight, but not courage to fight. There is a power goes with the promise; hence it is they are called "exceeding great and precious promises," because given for this very end, that by these we might "be made partakers of the divine nature." 2 Pet. i. 3. and therefore we are not only pressed to holiness from the command, but especially from the promise: "having therefore these promises (he means to help and encourage us), let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. vii. 1. O it is good travelling in his company that promiseth to pay our charges all the way; good working for him that promiseth "to work all our work for us." Phil. ii. 12, 13.

Secondly, God hath laid up in Christ a rich and full treasure of grace to supply thy wants continually: "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Col. i. 19. Fulness, all fulness, all fulness dwelling; not the fulness of a land-flood up and down, not the fulness of a vessel, to serve his own turn only, but of a fountain that lends its streams to others without straitening or lessening its own store. Indeed it is a fulness purposely ministerial, as the sun hath not its light for itself, but for the lower world, because it is the great minister and servant to hold forth light to the world. Thus Christ is the sun of righteousness, diffusing his grace into the bosoms of his people. "Grace," is said to be "poured into his lips," to let us know he hath it, not to keep to himself, but to impart: "that of his fulness we may receive grace for grace."

Thirdly, Every child of God hath not only a right to this fulness in Christ, but an inward principle, which is faith, whereby he is by the instinct of the new creature taught to suck and draw grace from Christ, as the child doth nourishment in the womb, by the navel-string, from
And having on the

the mother; and therefore, poor soul, if thou wouldest be more holy, believe more, suck more from Christ. Holy David, Psalm cxvi. affected with the thoughts of God's gracious providence, in delivering him out of his deeper distress, takes up, as the best messenger he could send his thanks to Heaven by, a strong resolution for a holy life, ver. 9. "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living;" he would spend his days now in God's service; but, lest we should think he was rash and self-confident, he adds, verse 10. "I believed, therefore have I spoken." First, he acted his faith on God for strength, and then he promiseth what he will do. Indeed the Christian is a very beggarly creature considered in himself, he is not ashamed to confess it, what he promiseth to expend in an holy duty is upon the credit of his Saviour's purse, who he humbly believes will bear him out in it with assisting grace.

SECT. X.

Tenthly, Fortify thyself against those discouragements by which Satan, if possible, will divert thee from thy purpose, and make thee lay aside this breast-plate of righteousness and holiness as cumbersome, yea prejudicial to thy carnal interests. Now the better to arm thee against his assaults of this kind, I shall instance two or three great objections, whereby he scares many from this holy walking, and also lend a little help to wrest these weapons out of thy enemy's hand, by preparing an answer to them against he comes.

CHAP. XII.

WHEREIN THE FIRST POLICY OR STRATAGEM OF SATAN IS DEFEATED, WHICH HE USETH TO MAKE THE CHRISTIAN THROW AWAY HIS BREAST-PLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AS THAT WHICH HINDERS THE PLEASURE OF HIS LIFE.

ASSAULT 1. First, Satan labours to picture a holy righteous life with such an austere sour face, that the
creature may be out of love with it. O, saith he, if you mean to be thus precise and holy, then bid adieu to all joy; you at once deprive yourselves of all those pleasures which others pass their days so merrily in the embraces of, that are not so straight-laced in their consciences.

How true a charge this is, that Satan lays upon the ways of holiness, we shall now see: and truly he that desires to see the true face of holiness in its native hue and colour, should do well not to trust Satan, or his own carnal heart, to draw its picture. I shall deal with this objection, first, by way of concession. There are some pleasures, if they may be so called, that are inconsistent with the power of holiness; whoever will take up a purpose to live righteously, he must shake hands with them, and they are of two sorts.

S E C T. I.

First, All such pleasures as are in themselves sinful, godliuiness will allow no such in thy embraces. And art thou not greatly hurt, dost think, to be denied that which would be thy bane to drink? would any think the father cruel that should charge his child not to dare so much as taste of any ratsbane? Truly I hope you that have past under the renewing work of the Spirit can call sin by another name than pleasure. I am sure saints in former times have not counted themselves tied up, but saved from such pleasures. The bondage lies in serving them, and the liberty in being saved from them. Tit. iii. 2. The Apostle bemoans the time when himself and other saints were foolish, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures; and he reckons it among the prime benefits they received by the grace of the Gospel, to be delivered from that vassalage, ver. 5. "But according to his mercy he saved us, (how? not by pardoning them only, but) by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." However the devil makes poor creatures expect pleasure in sin, and promiseth them great matters of this kind, yet he goes against his conscience, and his own present sense also; he doth
not find sin so pleasant a morsel to his own taste that he should need to commend it upon this account to others. Sin's pleasure is like the pleasure which a place in the West-Indies affords those that dwell in it; there grows in it most rare luscious fruit, but these dainties are so sauced with the intolerably scorching heat of the sun by day, and the multitude of a sort of creatures stinging them by night, that they can neither well eat by day, nor sleep by night to digest their sweet-meats; which made the Spaniards call the place, "comforts in Hell;" and truly what are the pleasures of sin, but such comforts in Hell? There is some carnal pleasure they have, which delights a rank sensual palate; but they are served in with the fiery wrath of God, and stinging of a guilty restless conscience; and the fears of the other, with the anguish of the other, are able sure to melt and waste away that little joy and pleasure they bring to the sense.

Secondly, There are pleasures which are not in their own nature sinful; such are creature-comforts and delights; the sin lies as to these, not in the using, but in the abusing of them, which is done two ways. First, When a due measure is not kept in the use of them; he cannot live holily and righteously in this present world, that lives not soberly also. Godliness will allow thee to taste of these pleasures as sauce, but not feed on them as meat. The rich men's charge, James v. 5. runs thus, "ye have lived in pleasure on earth;" they lived in pleasures as if they had lived for them, and could not live without them; when once this wine of creature-contents fumes up to the brain, intoxicates the man's judgment, that he begins to dote of them, and cannot think of parting with them to enjoy better, but cries loathe to depart; as those Jews in Babylon who, beginning to thrive in that soil, were very willing to stay there, and lay their bones in Babylon, for all Jerusalem, which they were called to return unto; then truly they are pernicious to the power of holiness. Though a master doth not grudge his servant his meat and drink, yet he will not like it, if when he is to go abroad, his servant be laid up drunk, and disabled from waiting on him by his intemperance; and a drunken man is as fit
to attend on his master, and do his business for him, as a Christian overcharged with the pleasures of the creature is to serve his God in any duty of godliness.

Secondly, They are sinful when not rightly timed; fruit eat out of its season is nought. We read of "a time to embrace, and a time to forbear;" Eccles. iii. 5. there are some seasons that the power of holiness calls off, and will not allow what is lawful at another time. As first, on the Lord's day, now all carnal creature-pleasures are out of season. God calls us then to higher delights, he expects we should lay the other aside, and not put our palates out of taste with those lower pleasures, that we may the better relish his heavenly dainties: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thy own ways, nor finding thy own pleasure, nor speaking thy own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord." Isaiah lvi. 13. Mark, we can neither taste the sweetness of communion with God, nor pay the honour due to God in sanctifying his day, except we deny ourselves in our carnal delights. If a king should at some certain times of the year invite some of his poor subjects to sit and feast with him at his own royal table, they should exceedingly dishonour their prince, and wrong themselves, to bring their ordinary mean fare with them to court. Do glorified saints in Heaven call for any of their carnal delights, or miss them, while they are taken up in Heaven praising God, and feeding on the joys that flow from the full-eyed vision of God? And doth not God make account he gives you to enjoy Heaven in a figure, when he admits you to the service of his holy day? Secondly, in days of solemn fasting and prayer, we are then to afflict our souls, and creature pleasures will fit that work no better than a silver lace would do a mourning suit. Thirdly, in times of public calamity in the church abroad, especially at home, and this a gracious heart cannot but count reasonable that he should deny himself, or at least tie up himself to a very short allowance in his creature-delights, when Christ in his church lies bleeding; sympathy is a
debt we owe to our fellow saints, Christ mystical. And truly the cords of others' afflictions will be little felt through our soft downy beds, if we indulge ourselves (I mean) to a full enjoyment of our ease and carnal delights. What child that is merry and pleasant in his own house, and hath a father or mother lying at the same time in great misery, at the point of death (but unknown to him), will not when the doleful news at last comes to him, change his note, yea mourn that he did not know it sooner, and had not rather have been weeping for and with his dear relations in the house of mourning, than passing away his time pleasantly at home? Hitherto I have answered by concession, confessing what pleasures the power of a holy and righteous life denies and forbids, and I hope they appear to be no other than such as may, without any loss to the believer's joy, be fairly dismissed.

SECT. II.

Answ. 2. Now in the second place I come to answer by way of negation: though a holy righteous life denies the Christian the pleasures aforementioned, yet it doth not deprive him of any true pleasure the creature affords; yea, so far from this, that none doth or can enjoy the sweetness of the creature like the gracious soul that walks in the power of holiness, as will appear in these two particulars.

First, the gracious person hath a more curious palate, that fits him to taste a further sweetness in, and so draw more pleasure from any creature-enjoyment than an unholy person can do. The fly finds no honey in the same flower from whence the bee goes laden away; nor can an unholy heart taste that sweetness which the saint doth in a creature: he hath indeed a natural fleshly palate, whereby he relisheth the gross carnal pleasure the creature affords, and that he makes his whole meal on; but a gracious heart tastes something more. All Israel drank of the rock, and that rock was Christ; 1 Cor. x. 4. but did all that tasted the water's natural sweetness, taste Christ in it? No, alas! they
were but a few holy souls that had a spiritual palate to do this. Samson's father and mother ate of the honey out of the lion's carcase, as well as Samson, and may be liked the taste of it for honey as well as Samson; yet he took more pleasure sure than they, he tasted the sweetness of God's providence in it, that had delivered him from that very lion that now affords him this honey. 

Judg. xiv.

Secondly, The Christian has more true pleasure from the creature than the wicked, as it comes more refined to him than to the other. The unholy wretch sucks dregs and all, dregs of sin and dregs of wrath; whereas the Christian's cup is not thus spiced. First, dregs of sin: the more he hath of the creature's delights given him the more he sins with them. O it is sad to think what work they make in his naughty heart; they are but fuel for his lusts to kindle upon; away they run with their enjoyments, as the profligate with his bags, or like hogs in shaking time, no sight is to be had of them, or thought of their return, as long as they can get any thing abroad among the delights of the world. None so prodigiously wicked as those that are fed high with carnal pleasures; they are to the ungodly as the dung and odour is to the swine, which grow fat by lying in it: so their hearts grow gross and fat, their consciences more stupid and senseless in sin, by them; whereas the comforts and delights that God gives in to a holy soul by the creature, turn to spiritual nourishment to his graces, and draw these forth into exercise, as they do the others' lust. Secondly, dregs of wrath: the Israelites had little pleasure from their dainties, when the wrath of God fell upon them before they could get them down their throats. Psal. lxxviii. 30. The sinner's feast is no sooner served in but divine justice is preparing to send up a reckoning after it; and the fearful expectation of this cannot but spoil the taste of the other. But the gracious soul is entertained upon free-cost; no amazing thoughts need discompose his spirit, so as to break his draught, or make him spoil any of the comfort of his present enjoyment from the fear of an approaching danger. All is well, the coast is clear; he may say, with David, "I will lay me.
down in peace, and sleep, for thou Lord makest me dwell in safety.” Psal. iv. last verse. God will not, all beside cannot, break his rest; as the unicorn heals the waters by dipping his horn in them, that all the beasts may drink without danger, so Christ hath healed creature-enjoyments, that there is no death now in the saint’s cup.

SECT. III.

**Ans. 3.** Thirdly, I answer by way of affirmation. The power of holiness is so far from depriving a man of the joy and pleasure of his life, that there are incomparable delights and pleasures peculiar to the holy life, which the gracious soul finds in the ways of righteousness, enjoys by itself, and no stranger intermeddles with. They lie inward indeed, and therefore the world speaks so wildly and ignorantly concerning them; they will not believe they have such pleasures till they see them, and they shall never see them till they believe them. The Roman soldiers, when they entered the Temple, and went into the holy of holies, seeing there no image, as they used to have in their own idolatrous temples, gave out in a jeer that the Jews worshipped the clouds. Truly thus, because the pleasures of righteousness and holiness are not so gross as to come under the cognizance of the world’s carnal senses (as their brutish ones do), therefore they laugh at the saints, as if their joy were but the child of fancy, and that they do but embrace the clouds instead of Juno herself, and a fantastic pleasure for the true. But let such know, that they carry in their own bosom what will help them to think the pleasures of a holy life more real than thus: the horror (I mean) which the guilt of their unholy and unrighteous lives does sometimes fill their amazed consciences with, though there be no whip on their back, and pain in their flesh, tells them that the peace which results from a good conscience may as well fill the soul with sweet joy when no carnal delights contribute to the same. There are three things considered in the nature of a holy righteous life that are enough to demonstrate it to be the only pleasant life. It is a life from God; it is a life with God; it is the very life of God.
First, It is a life from God, and therefore must needs be pleasant and joyous. Whatever God makes is good and pleasant in its kind. Now life is one of the choicest of God's works, insomuch that the poorest silliest gnat or fly in this respect exceeds the sun in its meridian glory. To every life God hath appointed a pleasure suitable to its kind; the beasts have a pleasure suitable to the life of beasts, and man much more to his. Now every creature, we know, enjoys the pleasure of its life best when it is in its right temper: if a beast be sick, it droops and groans, and so does man also; no dainties, sports, or music, please a man that is ill in his health. Now holiness is the due temper of the soul, as health is of the body, and therefore a holy life must needs be a pleasant life. Adam, no doubt, in Paradise, before sin spoiled his temper, lived a pleasant life. When the creature is made holy, then he begins to return to his primitive temper, and with it to his primitive joy and pleasure. O sirs, men fall out with their outward conditions, and are discontented at their rank and place in the world, but the fault lies more inward; the shoe is strait, and good enough, but the foot is crooked that wears it. All would do well, if thou wert well, and thou wilt never be well, till thou art righteous and holy.

Secondly, It is a life with God. A gracious soul walks in God's presence, and keeps communion with him. If you would meet a saint, you know his haunt, what company he keeps. "That ye may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." 1 John, i. 3. See the ingenuousness of a holy soul, Truly our fellowship is with God; we tell you no lie. An unholy heart dares not be thus free (I warrant you) and tell what company his soul walks with from day to day. We see there is no danger of going among holy men, they will bring you acquainted with no ill company; they will carry you to God, where their great resort lies. And tell me now, must not that man live a pleasant life that walks with God? Let it be but a man you ride with in a journey, one that loves you well, and is able to entertain you with good and cheerful discourse; doth not the delight you take in his com-
pany strangely yet sweetly beguile you of the tediousness of the way? O what joy then must God bring with him to that soul he walks with? "Blessed is the people (saith the Psalmist) that know that joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day." The sound of the trumpet, which called them to their religious assemblies, is called there the joyful sound, because in his worship God did especially manifest himself to his people. The heaven of heavens is to be where the Lord is; surely then that which the saint hath of God's presence here is enough to make the Christian's life joyous. O Christians, is it not sweet to walk with God, to God; to walk with God here below, by his assisting comforting presence, to God manifesting himself in all his glory above in Heaven? O all you that are for pleasant prospects in your walks, and out of your windows, see here one that the world cannot match: the prospect that a gracious soul hath, walking in the paths of righteousness; he may see God walking with him, as a friend with his friend, and manifesting himself to him. Psal. 1. last verse; yea, he hath not only the sweetness of God's present company with him, but he hath the godly prospect of heaven before him, whither God is leading him, and in this way of holiness will certainly bring him at last. Whereas the unholy wretch, walking in the company of his lusts, though they sweeten his mouth with a little frothy pleasure at present (that soon is melted off his tongue, and the taste forgot) yet they shew him the region of darkness before him, whither they will bring him, and where they will leave him, to repent of his dear-bought pleasures in torments easeless and endless.

Thirdly, It is the life of God himself. Read the expression, Ephes. iv. 18. "alienated from the life of God," that is, the life of godliness. A holy life is the life of God; but how? not only as God is the author of it, so he is of the beast's life; thus the wicked are not alienated from the life of God, for they have a natural life which God gave them. But the expression carries more in it, and that is this. The life of God is as much as a life like the life which God himself lives. He is a living God, and his
life is a holy life; holiness is the life of his life. Now, I pray friends, do you not think God himself lives a life of pleasure? and what is the pleasure of his life but holiness? He takes pleasure in the graces of his saints, 

Psal. cxlix. 4. how much more in his own essential holiness, from whence those beams, which shine so beautifully to his eye in his children, were at first shot? Thou, (whosoever thou art) hast an art above God himself, if thou canst fetch any true pleasure out of unholiness and unrighteousness; and let me tell thee also, it is not the lowest of blasphemies for thee to charge the way of righteousness and holiness to be an enemy to true pleasure; for in that thou chargest God himself to want true joy and pleasure; who has no pleasure, if holiness will not yield it. But away with such putrid stuff as this is. The devils and damned souls themselves, that hate God with the most perfect hatred of any other, yet they dare not say, they cannot say so. They know God to be glorious and happy, yea glorious in holiness; and the creature's bliss and glory to consist in a participation of that holiness, which makes God himself so blessed and glorious. This, Christian, is the utmost that can be said of thy happiness, either here, or in Heaven hereafter. That makes thee glorious which makes God glorious; thy joy and pleasure is of the same kind with the pleasure God delights himself in: "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." Psal. xxxvi. 8. Mark that phrase, the river of thy pleasures. God hath his pleasures, and God gives his saints to drink of his pleasures. This is the sweet accent of the saints' pleasures. When a prince bids his servants carry such a man down into the cellar, and let him drink of their beer or wine, this is a kindness from so great a personage to be valued highly; but for the prince to set him at his own table, and let him drink of his own wine, this I hope is far more. When God gives a man estate, corn and wine and oil, the comforts of the creature, he entertains the man but in the common cellar; such as have none but carnal enjoyments they do but sit with the servants, and in some sensual pleasures they are but fellow-commoners with the beasts. But when he bestows his grace,
And having on the

beautifies a soul with holiness, now he prefers the creature: the highest it is capable of; he never sends this rich clothing to any but he means to set such by him, at his own table with him, in Heaven's glory.

CHAP. XIII.

WHEREIN IS DEFEATED SATAN'S SECOND WILE, BY WHICH HE WOULD CHEAT THE CHRISTIAN OF HIS BREAST-PLATE, PRESENTING IT AS PREJUDICIAL TO HIS WORLDLY PROFITS.

ASSAULT. Secondly, If thou dost not stumble at this stone, the devil hath another at hand to throw in thy way. He is not so unskilful a Fowler as to go with one single shot into the field; and therefore expect him, as soon as he hath discharged one, and missed thee, to let fly at thee with a second; and tell thee, this holy life and righteous walking thou hadst best never meddle with it, except thou meanest to undo thyself and all that depend on thee. Look upon the rich (will he say) and great men in the world, how dost think these heaped together such vast estates, and raised their families to such dignity and grandeur in their places? Was it by their righteousness and holiness? alas! if they had been so strait-laced in their consciences as thou must be (if thouliesthyselfuntotherulesofaholylife)theyhadnevercometo so good a market for this world as they have done; and if thou wilt thrive with them, thou must do as they have done, throw off this breast-plate of righteousness quite, or unbuckle it, that it may hang loose enough to turn aside when any advantage is offered, or else you may shut up your shop-windows, and give over your trade, for all you are like to get at the year's end.

Answ. To defend thee, Christian, against this assault, take these few considerations, from which it will not be hard to draw an answer that will stop the mouth of this objection.

First, Consider it is not necessary that thou shouldest
be rich; but it is necessary thou shouldest be holy, if thou meanest to be happy. You may travel to Heaven with never a penny in your purse, but not without holiness in your heart and life also. And wisdom bids thee first attend to that which is of greatest necessity.

Secondly, Heaven is worth the having, though thou goest poor and ragged, yea naked, thither. There are some in the world that will accept God's offer thankfully, may they be admitted into that glorious city, though God doth not bribe them, and toll them along thither with great estates here. And therefore for shame resolve to be holy at all peradventures. Do not stand indented with God for that which, if you were actually possessed of and loved him, you would leave, and throw at your heels with scorn, rather than part with him.

Thirdly, A little of the world will give thee content, if holiness be kept in its power; as few cloaths will serve a hale strong man: and better is the warmth that comes from blood and spirits within than a load of cloths without. Better, I trow, the content which godliness gives the Christian in his poverty, than the content (if there be such a thing in the world) which the rich man hath from his wealth. Godliness with content is great gain. The holy person is the only contented man in the world. Paul tells us, "he had learnt in whatsoever state he was to be content;" Phil. iv. 11. but if you ask him who was his master, that taught him this hard lesson, he will tell you he had it not by sitting at Gamaliel's feet, but Christ's, ver. 13. "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." What the philosopher said in a brag, that the holy soul in truth and soberness can say through Christ, when he is lowest and poorest, that his heart and his condition are matches. We would count him a happy man, stilo mundi, that can live of himself without trading or borrowing; or that, when he would buy or purchase, hath ready cash for the purpose in his coffers; when he would indulge his fanciful appetite with varieties, hath all within his own pale, what rarities the several elements can afford, and needs not send abroad to this market and that for provision. Godliness is so rich a continent that it is able to maintain
the Christian of its own growth, as I may say, and out
of its own store, with all that his gracious heart can de-
sire, without begging at the creature's door, and hazard-
ing unworthily his holiness to attain.

Fourthly, Consider what a dear bargain they have
who part with or pawn their breast-plate of righteous-
ness for the world's riches; which will appear, first, in
the sin; secondly, in the heavy curse that treads upon
the heels of that sin.

First, It is a great sin. The devil sure would tempt
Christ to no small sin; we find him, Luke iv., laying this
golden bait before him, when he shewed him all the
kingdoms of the world, and promised them all unto him,
if he would fall down and worship him. What was the
foul Spirit's design in this demand, but to draw Christ to
acknowledge him the lord of the world, and by wor-
shipping him to declare that he expected the good
things of this world, not from God, but him. Now truly
every one that by unrighteousness seeks the world's pelf,
he goes to the devil for it, and doth worship him (in
effect). He had as good speak out, and say he ac-
knowledges not God, but the Devil, to be Lord of the world,
and to have the disposing of it; for he doth what God
interprets so. Now how much better is it to have po-
verty from God than riches from the Devil? Here is a
daring sin with a witness; at one clap to take away God's
sovereignty, and bestow it upon the devil, to do what he
please with the world.

Secondly, It is a foolish sin. "They that will be rich
(that is, by right or wrong) fall into temptation and a
snare, and into many foolish lusts." 1 Tim. vi. 9. What
greater folly than to play the thief to acquire that which
is a man's own already? If thou art a saint, all is thine
the world hath. "Godliness hath the promise of the
life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim.
iv. 8. If riches be good for thee, thou shalt have it, for
that is the tenor of temporal promises; and if it be not
thought good by God (who is best able to judge) to pay
the promise in specie, in kind, then another promise
comes in for thy relief, which assures thee thou shalt
have money-worth. Heb. xiii. 5. "Let your conversation
be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." If God hath given thee riches, but calls thee to part with it for his name's sake, then he gives thee his bond, upon which thou mayest recover thy loss, with a hundred-fold advantage in this life, besides "eternal life in the world to come." Matth. xix. 29. And he is a fool, with witness, that parts with God's promises for any security the devil can give him.

Thirdly, Unrighteous gain will appear to be a dear bargain, from the heavy curse that cleaves unto it. "The curse of God is in the house of the wicked;" Prov. iii. 33. but "in the house of the righteous there is much treasure." Prov. xv. 6. You may come to the righteous man, and find (possibly) no money in his house, but you are sure to find a treasure; whereas there is no treasure in the wicked man's house, when much gold and silver is to be found, because the curse of God eats up all his gains. God's fork follows the wicked's rake: it is most righteous for him to scatter what such gather by unrighteousness. They are said therefore to "consult shame to their house; for the stone out of the wall shall cry, and the beam out of the house shall answer it." Hab. ii. 10. O who, that prizeth the comfort of his life, would, though for tons of gold, live in a house thus haunted? where the cry of his unrighteousness follows him into every room he goes, and he doth, as it were, hear the stones and beams of his house groaning under the weight of his sin that laid them there; yea, so hateful is this sin to the righteous Lord, that not only they who purse up the gain thus got are cursed by him, but also the instruments such use to advance their unrighteous projects. The poor servant that, to curry favour with his master, advanceth his estate by fraud and unrighteousness, God threatens to pay him his wages. Zephan. i. 9. "I will punish those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit." This is spoke either of servants standing at the door to hook in customers they may cheat, or else of great men's officers that came with absolute power into men's houses to take from them what they pleased; these, though their masters
pocketed up the gain, shall be punished; their masters, as the great devourers, and they as their sharks to seek and provide prey for them.

CHAP. XIV.

WHEREIN IS DEFEATED THE THIRD STRATAGEM SATAN USETH TO DISARM THE CHRISTIAN OF HIS BREAST-PLATE, AND THAT IS BY SCARING HIM WITH THE CONTRADICTION, OPPOSITION, AND FEUD, IT BRINGS FROM THE WORLD.

ASSAULT 3. There is yet a third stumbling-block, which Satan useth to lay in the way of a soul setting forth in this path of righteousness; and that is the contradiction which such a one is sure to meet with from the world. O, saith Satan, this is the ready way to bring thee under the lash of every tongue, to lose the love of thy neighbours, and contract the scorn, yea hatred, of all thou livest among; and dost thou not desire to live friendly and peaceably with thy neighbours? canst thou bear to be hooted at, as Lot was among the Sodomites, and Noah amidst the old world, that were all of another way? This holiness breeds ill blood wherever it comes; own that, and you bring the world's fists about thy ears presently.

Answ. Truly though this be a sorry weak objection in itself, yet where it meets with a soft temper, and disposition tendered with a facility of nature, one in whom love and peaceful inclinations are predominant, it carries weight enough to amount to a dangerous temptation. No doubt Aaron stumbled at this stone in the business of the golden calf. He did not please himself surely in the thing; but it was an act of mere complaisance to the people: as appears by his apology to Moses. "Let not the anger of my lord wax hot, thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief." Exod. xxxiii. 22.
breast-plates of righteousness.

As if he had said, I did not know what they would have done to me upon my denial; what I did was to pacify them, and prevent more trouble from them. There is need we see to be armed against this temptation, which that thou mayest be, seriously weigh these two particulars.

First, Thy God, Christian, whom thou servest, commands the tongues, hands, yea hearts of all men. He can when he pleases, without the least abating in thy holy course, give thee to find favour in the eyes of those thou most fearest: "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Prov. xvi. 7. Laban in a fury pursues Jacob, but God meets him in the way, and gives him his lesson how he should carry himself to the good man, Gen. xxxi. 24. and ver. 29. he doth ingenuously confess to Jacob what turned the wind into a warmer corner, and made him so calm with him, that set out so full of rage, ver. 29. "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt, but the God of your father met me yesternight," &c. Thank him for nothing; he had power to hurt Jacob, but God would not let him. Mordecai, one would have thought, took the readiest way to incur the king's wrath, by denying Haman that reverence which all were by royal command to pay him; Est. iii. 2. but the holy man's conscience would not suffer his knee to bow; and yet we see, when that proud favourite had done his worst to be revenged on him, he was forced himself to inherit the gallows intended for Mordecai, and leave Mordecai to succeed him in his prince's favour. Thus God, who hath a key to king's breasts, on a sudden locked Ahasuerus's heart against that cursed Amalekite, and opened it to let this holy man into his room. O who would be afraid to be conscientious, when God can and doth so admirably provide for his people's safety, while they keep close to him.

Secondly, Suppose thy holy walking stirs up the wrath of ungodly ones against thee; know there may be more mercy in their hatred than in their love. Commonly the saints get good by the wrath of the wicked against them; not so oft by their favour and friendship; their displeasure wakes their care, and makes them more
accurate. Thus David prayed God to "make his way plain for him, because of his observing enemies;" whereas their friendship too oft lays it asleep, and proves a snare to draw them into some sinful compliance with them. Jehoshaphat was wound in too far by his correspondence with Ahab; so hard is it to keep in with God and wicked men also. Luther professed he would not have Erasmus's honour for a world; indeed the friendship he had with and respect he had from the great ones of the world made him mealy-mouthed in the cause of God. The Moabites could not give Israel the fall at arm's length, but when they closed in alliances with the children of Israel then they were too hard for them; not their curses, but their embraces did them the hurt. Again, we can never lose the love or incur the wrath of men upon better and more advantageous terms, than for keeping our breast-plate of righteousness close to us. First, when we lose for this any love from men we gain God's blessing instead of it. "Blessed are ye when all men speak evil of you falsely, for my name's sake." Matt. v. 11. God's blessing is a good roof over our head, to defend us from the storm of man's wrath. O it is sad when a Christian opens the mouths of the wicked by some unholy action to speak evil of him; no promise will open then its door to hide thee from the storm of their railing tongues; man reviles, and God frowns; little welcome such a one has, when he returns home to look into his own conscience, or converse with his God. But when it is for thy holiness they hate thee, God is bound by promise to pay thee love for their hatred, blessing for their cursing; and truly that courtier has little cause to complain, that for a little disrespect from others, that cannot hurt him, is advanced higher in his prince's favour. Secondly, while thy holy walking loseth thee some love from the world, it gains thee the more reverence and honour. They that will not love thee because thou art holy, cannot chuse but fear and reverence thee at the same time, for what they hate thee. Let a saint comply with the wicked, and remit a little of his holiness to correspond with them, he loses by the hand, as to his interest, I mean, in them; for by gaining a
little false love he loses that true honour which inwardly their consciences paid to his holiness. A Christian, walking in the power of holiness, is like Samson in his strength, the wicked fear him; but when he shews an impotent spirit by any indecency in his course to his holy profession, then presently he is taken prisoner by them, and falls under both the lash of their tongue and scorn of their hearts. They can now dance about such a one, and make him their may-game, whose holiness even now kept them in awe. It is not poverty, or the baseness of thy outward state in the world, will render thee contemnible, so long as thou keepest thy breast-plate of righteousness on. There sits majesty in the brow of holiness, though clad in rags. Righteous David commands reverence from wicked Saul. The king himself does this homage to his poor exiled subject: "he wept, and said to David, Thou art more righteous than I." 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. Aye, this is as it should be, when carnal men are forced to acknowledge that they are outshot by the holy lives of Christians. O Christians, do some singular thing, what the best of your merely civil neighbours cannot do, and you sit sure in the throne of their consciences, even when they throw you out of their hearts and affections; so long as the magicians did something like the miracles Moses wrought, they thought themselves as good men as he; but when they were nonplussed in the plague of lice, and could not with all their art produce the like; they acknowledged the "finger of God to be in it." Exod. viii. 16. Do no more than carnal men do, and you stand but level with themselves in their opinions of you, yea they think themselves better than you, because they equal you who pretend to holiness more than they. It is expected that every one in the calling he professeth should more than a little exceed another that is not of that calling, which if he do not, he becomes contemptible.
CHAP. XV.

CONTAINS TWO USES OF THE POINT.

WE come to the application, in which we shall be the shorter, having sprinkled something of this nature all along as we handled the doctrinal part.

SECT. I.

Use 1. First, For information in two particulars.

First, Are we thus to endeavour the maintaining of the power of holiness? Then sure there is such a thing as righteousness and unrighteousness, holiness and sin that opposeth it; yet there is a generation of men that make these things to be mere fancies, as if all the existence they had were in the melancholy imaginations of some poor-spirited timorous men, who dream of these things, and then are scared with the bugbears that their own foolish thoughts represent to them. Hence some among us have dared to make it their boast and glorying that they have at last got from under the bondage of that tyrant conscience; they can now do that which we call swearing, lying, yea what not, without being bearded and checked by an imperious conscience; yea that there is no sin to any but him that thinks so. These are worse fools than he the Psalmist speaks of, Psalm xiv. 1. He doth but say in his heart, “There is no God;” but these tell the world what fools they are, and cannot hide their shame. I do not mention these so much to confute them; that were to as little purpose as to go prove there is a sun shining in a clear day, because a mad frantic man denies it; but rather to affect your hearts with the abomination of the times, ye holy ones of God! O how deep asleep were men, that the enemy could come and sow such tares as these amongst us! Perhaps they thought such poisonous seed would not grow in our soil, that hath had so much labour and cost bestowed on it by Christ’s husbandmen; that such strong delusions would never go down with any that had been used to so pure a gospel-diet; but, alas! we see by woeful expe-
breast-plate of righteousness.

rience, that as a plague, when it gets into a city that stands in the purest air, oft rages more than in another place, so when a spirit of delusion falls upon a people that have enjoyed most of the gospel, it grows most pro-
digious. It makes me even tremble to think what a place of nettles England, that hath so long continued, without wrong to any other church Christ hath in the world, one of his fairest, fruitfullest garden-plots, may at last become; when I see what weeds have sprung up in our days. I have heard that reverend and holy Master Greenham should say, he feared rather atheism than popery would be England's ruin. Had he lived in our dismal days, he would have had his fears much increased. Were there ever more atheists, made and making in Eng-
land, since it was acquainted with the Gospel, than in the compass of a dozen years last past? I have reason to think there were not. When men shall fall so far from profession of the Gospel, and be so blinded that they cannot know light from darkness, righteousness from un-
righteousness, are they not gone far in atheism? This is not natural blindness, for the Heathen could tell when they did good and evil, and see holiness from sin, without Scripture light to shew them, Rom. ii. 14, 15. No: this blindness is a plague of God fallen on them, for re-
belling against the light when they could see it. And if this plague should grow more common, which God for-
bid, woe then to England.

Secondly, If we be to maintain the power of holiness, then, surely, it is possible. God would not command what he doth not enable his own peculiar people to do; only here you must remember carefully the distinction promised in the opening of the text, between a legal righteousness and an evangelical righteousness. The latter of which is so far from being unattainable, that there is not a sincere Christian in the world but is truly holy in this sense; that is, he doth truly desire, conscien-
tiously endeavour, with some success of his endeavour, through divine grace assisting, to walk according to the rule of God's Word. I confess all Christ's scholars are not of the same form; all his children are not of the same stature and strength; some foot it more nimbly in the
ways of holiness than others; yet not a saint but is en-
dued with a principle of life that sets him at work for
God, and to desire to do more than he is able. As the
seed, though little in itself, yet hath in it virtually the
bigness and height of a grown tree, towards which it
is putting forth with more and more strength of nature
as it grows; so, in the very first principle of grace planted
at conversion, there is perfection of grace contained in a
sense; that is a disposition putting the creature forth in
desires and endeavours after that perfection to which
God hath appointed him in Christ Jesus. And therefore,
Christian, whenever such thoughts of the impossibility
of obtaining this holiness here on earth are suggested to
thee, reject them as sent in from Satan, and that on a de-
sign to feed thy own distrustful humour, which he knows
they will suit too well, as the news of giants and high
walls, that the spies brought to the unbelieving Israelites,
did them; and all to weaken thy endeavours after holi-
ness, which he knows will surely prove him a liar. Do
but strongly resolve to be conscientious in thy endeavours,
with an eye upon the promise of help, and the work will
go on, thou needest not fear it. "For the Lord God is
a sun and a shield, he will give grace and glory, and no
good thing will be withheld from them that walk up-
rightly." Psalms lxxxiv. 11. Mark that, grace and glory,
that is, grace unto glory; he will still be adding more
grace to that thou hast, till thy grace on earth com-
menceth glory in Heaven.

SECT. II.

Use 2. Secondly, For reproof of several sorts of per-
sons.

First, All those who content themselves with their
unholy state wherein they are; such is the state of every
one by nature. These, alas! are so far from maintaining the
power of holiness, that they are under the power of their
lusts; they give law to them, and cut out all their work
for them, which they bestow all their time to make up.
And is not that a sad life, sirs, which is spent about such
filthy beastly work as sin and unrighteousness is? Well
may the "bond of iniquity and the gall of bitterness" be
breast-plate of righteousness.

joined together." Acts viii. 23. The Apostle is thought to allude to Deut. xxix. 18. where all sin and unrighteousness is called, "a root that beareth gall and wormwood." He that plants sin and unholiness, and then thinks to gather any other than bitter fruit for all his labour, pretends to a knowledge beyond God himself, who tells that the natural fruit, which grows from this root, is gall and wormwood. Who would look for musk in a dog's kennel? that thou mayest sooner find there, than any true sweetness and comfort in unholiness. The devil may possibly for a time sophisticate with his cookery and art this bitter morsel, so that thou shalt not have the natural taste of it upon thy palate; but, as Abner said to Joab, "knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?" 2 Sam. ii. 26. In Hell all the sugar will be melted wherein this bitter pill was wrapt; then, if not before, thou wilt have the true relish of that which goes down now so sweetly. O how many are there now in Hell cursing their feast and feast-maker too? Do you think it gives any ease to the damned to think what they had for their money? I mean what pleasures, profits, and carnal enjoyments they once had on earth, for which they now pay those unspeakable tortments that are upon them, and shall continue for ever without any hope or help? No: it increaseth their pain beyond all our conceit, that they should sell their precious souls so cheap, in a manner for a song, and lose Heaven and blessedness, because they would not be holy, which now they learn too late was itself (however they once thought otherwise) a great part of that blessedness, and now torments them to consider they put it from them under the notion of a burden and a bondage. But, alas! alas! how few thoughts do unholy wretches spend with themselves, in considering what is doing in another world? They see sinners die daily in the prosecution of their lust, but do no more think what is become of them (that they are in Hell burning and roaring for their sin) than the fish in the river do think what is become of their fellows that were twitched up by their gills from them even now with the angler's hook, and cast into the seething pot or frying-pan alive: no, as those silly creatures are ready still to
nibble and bite at the same hook that struck their fellows, even so are men and women forward to catch at those baits still of sinful pleasures, and wages of unrighteousness, by which so many millions of souls before them have been hooked into Hell and damnation.

Secondly, Those who are as unholy as others, naked to God's eye, and Satan's malice, but, to save their credit in the world, wear something like a breast-plate, a counterfeit holiness, which does them this service for the present, they are thought to be what they are not. Verily they have their reward, and a poor one it is. For the Lord's sake, consider what you do, and tremble at it; you do the devil, God's great enemy, double service, and God double disservice. As he that comes into the field, and brings deceitful arms with him; he draws his prince's expectation towards him, as one that would do some exploit for him, but means nothing so; yea he hinders some other, that would be faithful to his prince in that place where he, a traitor, now stands; such a one may do his prince more mischief than many who cowardly stay at home, or rebelliously run over to the enemy's side, and tell him plainly what they mean to do. O friends, be serious; if you will trade for holiness, let it be for true holiness, as it is phrased, "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;" Ephes. iv. 24. wherein two phrases are observable: it is called the new man after God, that is, according to the likeness of God; such a sculpture on the soul or image, as is drawn after God, as the picture after the face of the man. Again, true holiness, or holiness of truth; either respecting the Word, which is the rule of holiness, and then it means a Scripture holiness, not pharisaical and traditional; or else it respects the heart, which is the seat of truth or falsehood; true holiness in this sense is holiness and righteousness in the heart, there must be truth of holiness in the inner parts; many a man's beauty of holiness is but like the beauty of his body, skin-deep, all on the outside. Rip the most beautiful body, and that which was so fair without, will be found within, when opened, to have little besides blood, filth, and stench; so this counterfeit holiness, when unbowell'd,
breast-plate of righteousness.

and inside exposed to view, will appear to have hid within it nothing but abundance of spiritual impurities and abominations. "God," saith Paul, to the high priest, "shall smite thee, thou whitened wall." Acts xxiii. 3. Thus say I to thee, O hypocrite, God shall so smite thee, thou whitened wall, or rather painted sepulchre, that thy paint without in thy profession doth not now more dazzle the eyes of others into admiration of thy sanctity, than thy rottenness within, which then shall appear without, will make thee abhorred and loathed of all that see thee.

Thirdly, Those who are so far from being holy themselves, that they mock and jeer others for being so. This breast-plate of righteousness is of so base an account with them, that they who wear it in their daily conversation do make themselves no less ridiculous to them than if they came forth in a fool's-coat, or were clad in a dress contrived on purpose to move laughter. When some wretches would set a saint most at naught, and represent him as an object of greatest scorn, what is the language he wraps him up in, but There goes a holy brother, one of the pure ones? His very holiness is that which he thinks to disgrace him with: this shews a heart extremely wicked. There is a further degree of wickedness appears in mocking holiness in another than harbouring unholiness in a man's own bosom. That man hath a great antipathy indeed against a dish of meat, who not only himself refusest to eat of it, but cannot bear the sight of it on another's plate without vomiting: O how desperately wicked is that man, with whom the very scent and sight of holiness at such a distance works so strange an effect as to make him cast up the gall and bitterness of his spirit against it? The Spirit of God bestows the chair upon this sort of sinners, and sets them above all their brethren in iniquity, as most deserving the place: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful," Psalm i. 1. The scorrner here is set as chairman at the council-table of sinners. Some read the word for scornful, rhetorical mockers. There is indeed a devilish wit, that some shew in their
mocks at holiness; they take a kind of pride in polishing those darts which they shoot against the saints. The Septuagint read it, the "chair of pestilent ones." Indeed as the plague is the most mortal among diseases, so is a spirit of scorning among sins: as few recover out of this sin as any whatever besides. The Scripture speaks of this sort of sinners as almost free among the dead; as little hope of doing them good for their souls as of those for their bodies who cannot keep the physic administered to them, but presently cast it up before it hath any operation on them; and therefore we are even bid to save our physic, and not so much as bestow a reproof on them, lest we have it cast on our faces: "reprove not a scorners, lest he hate thee." Prov. ix. 7. All we can do is to write, "Lord, have mercy on them," upon their door: I mean, rather pray for them, than speak to them. There hath of old been this sort of sinners mingled amongst the godly. A mocking Ishmael, in Abraham's family, Gen. xxi. 9. And observable it is, what interpretation the Spirit of God makes of his scornful carriage towards his brother: "as then, he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit; even so it is now." Gal. iv. 29. Pray mark, first, what was the ground of the quarrel: it was this, his brother was "born after the Spirit," and this he, being born after the flesh, hated. Secondly, observe how the Spirit of God phraseth this his scornful carriage to his brother, it is called persecuting him.

To aggravatethe evil of a scornful spirit, and a mocking tongue, which stands for so little a sin in the world's account-book, who count none persecutors but those that draw blood for religion, God would have the jeerer and scoffer know among what sort of men he shall be ranked and tried at Christ's bar, no less sinners than persecutors. But this I conceive is not all: this mocking of holiness is called persecuting; because there is the seed of bloody persecution in it. They who are so free of their tongue to jeer, and shew their teeth in fleering at holiness, would fasten their teeth also on it, if they had power to use their cheek-bone. Lastly, observe this was not barely the cross disposition of Ishmael's personal, peevish, and froward
temper, so to abuse his brother, but it is laid as the charge of all wicked men: as he did persecute his brother, because after the Spirit, "even so it is now;" this mocking spirit runs in the blood; the whole litter are alike; and if any seem more ingenuous and favourable to the holy ones of God, we must fetch the reason from some other head than their sinful natures. God rides some of them with a curb bit, who though they open not their hearts to Christ savingly, yet truth is got so far into them by a powerful conviction, that it makes conscience say to them, concerning their holy neighbours, what Pilate's wife by message said to her husband of Christ: "Have thou nothing to do with these just men, for I have suffered much concerning them." Matt. xxvii. 19. But though there were ever mockers of holiness among the saints, because there were ever wicked to be their neighbours, yet the Spirit of God prophecieth of a sort of mockers to come upon the stage in the last days, that should differ from the ordinary scoffers that the people of God have been exercised with; and still the last is the worst. You know those who mock and jeer at holiness used to be men and women that pretend nothing to religion themselves, such as walk in an open defiance to God, and wallow in all manner of wickedness; but the Spirit of God tells us of a new gang, that shall mock at holiness under a colour of holiness; they shall be as horribly wicked, some of them, as the worst of the former sort were, but wicked in a mystery: "but, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you, there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts." Jude ver. 17, 18. But mark, lest we should expect them at the wrong door, and so mistake, thinking they should arise as formerly from among the common swearers, drunkards, and other notorious sinners among us, he in the next words gives you as clear a character of them as if they carried their name on their forehead, ver. 19. "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit." Learned master Perkins reads the words, thus, "These be sect-makers, fleshly," not having
the Spirit. Sect-makers! those that separate themselves! Do not our hearts tremble to see the mockers' arrows shot out at this window? These are they who pretend more to purity of worship than others, and profess they separate on conscience's account, because they cannot suffer themselves so much as to touch them that are unclean by joining with them in holy ordinances; and they mockers? they fleshly? Truly if the Spirit of God had not told us this, we should have gone last into their tent, as Laban did into Rachel's, as least suspecting that any mocker of holiness could stay there; yea God forbid that we should lay it in general as the charge of all who have separated from communion in the public, many of whom, my conscience tells me, are lovers of holiness, and led, though out of their way, by the tenderness of their consciences, which, when God hath better enlightened, will bring them as fast back to their brethren as now it carrieth them from them. And truly I think it might give a great lift to the making of them think of a return, if they would but in their sad and serious thoughts consider how far many of those who went out from us with them are gone; even to mock at the holiness of those from whom once they parted, because they were not holy enough for their company. God, the searcher of hearts, knows I speak this with a sad heart; so that were they to come and join with us again in some ordinances, such scandal hath been given by them, that they who durst not join with us ought not as they are to be admitted by us. How many of those have you heard of that began with a separation from our assemblies, who mock at sabbaths, cast off family duties, indeed all prayer in secret by themselves, yea drink in those cursed opinions that make them speak scornfully of Christ the son of God himself, and the great truths of the Gospel, which are the foundation of all true holiness? so that now none are so great an object of their scorn as those who walk most close to the holy rule of the Gospel. Well, sirs, of what sort soever you are, whether atheistical mockers at holiness, or such as mock at true holiness in the disguise of a false one, take heed what you do, it is as much as your life is worth: "be
not deceived, God will not be mocked,” nor suffer his grace to be mocked in his saints. You know how dearly that scoff did cost them, though but children, that spake it to the prophet: “go up thou bald-head, go up thou bald-head,” 2 Kings ii. 23. where they did not only revile him with that nickname of bald-head, but made a mock and jeer of Elijah’s rapture into Heaven, as if they had said, You would make us believe your master is gone up to Heaven; why do not you go up after him, that we may be rid of both your companies at once? And we need not wonder that these children should rise to such a height of wickedness so soon, if you observe the place where they lived at, Bethel, which was most infamous for idolatry, and one of the two cities where Jeroboam did set up his calves, 1 Kings xii. 28. so that this seems but the natural language which they learnt, no doubt, from their idolatrous parents. God met with Michal also for despising her husband, merely upon a religious account, because he shewed a holy zeal for God, which her proud spirit, as many others since have done, thought it too mean and base for a king to do. Well, what’s her punishment? “Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death.” The service of God was too low for a king in her thoughts, therefore shall none come out of her womb to sit on the throne, or wear a crown. It is great wickedness to mock at the calamity of another. “He that mocks the poor, reproacheth his Maker.” Prov. xvii. 5. yea to laugh at and triumph over a saint’s sin is a heavy sin; so did some sons of Belial, when David fell into that sad temptation of adultery and murder, and they are indicted for blaspheming God upon that account; what then is it to mock one for his holiness? Sin carries some cause of shame, and gives naughty hearts an occasion to reproach him they see besmeared with that which is so inglorious and unbecoming, especially a saint. But holiness, this is honourable, and stamps dignity on the person that hath it. It is not only the nobility of the creature, but the honour of the most high God himself: so runs his title of honour; “who is like thee, glorious in holiness?” Exod. xv. 11. so that none can mock that but upon the
same account he must mock God infinitely more, because there is infinitely more of that holiness which he jeers at in the creature to be found in God than all the creatures, men and angels, in both worlds have among them. If you would contrive a way how to cast the greatest dishonour upon God possible, you could not hit on the like to this. The Romans, when they would put contempt upon any, and degrade them of their nobility, they commanded that their statues and portraiture, which were set up in their city or temples to their memory, should all be broken down. Every saint is a lively image of God, and the more holy the more like God; when thou therefore puttest scorn on them, and that for their holiness, now thou touchest God's honour nearly indeed; will nothing less content thee, but thou must deface that image of his which he hath erected with so much cost in his saints, on purpose that they might be a praise to him in the earth? Was it such horrible wickedness in those heathens "to cast fire into the sanctuary, and to break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers?" Psal. lxxiv. 6, 7. of which the church makes her moan, ver. 10. "O God how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?" What then is thy devilish malice, whose rage is spent, not on wood and stones, but the carved work of his Spirit, the grace and holiness of his living temples.

CHAP. XVI.

AN EXHORTATION TO THE SAINTS IN THREE BRANCHES.

Use 3. Thirdly, It may be for exhortation to the saints in several particulars. I shall only name three, because I have directed myself in the whole discourse chiefly to them.

First, Bless God, that hath furnished thee with this breast-plate; canst thou do less, when thou seest such multitudes on every hand slain before thy face by the
destroyer of souls, for want of this piece to defend their naked breasts against his murdering shot. Had God made thee rich and great in the world, but not holy, he had but given thee stock to trade with for Hell. These would have made a greater booty for Satan, and only procured in the end a deeper damnation. When an enemy comes before a city that hath no walls nor arms to defend it, truly the richer it is the worse it fares; when Satan comes to a man that hath much of the world about him, but nothing of God in his soul to defend him, O what miserable work doth he make with such? He takes what he pleaseth, and doth what he will, purse and all the poor wretch hath is at his command: let a lust ask ever so unreasonably, he hath not a heart to deny it; though he knows what the gratifying of it will cost him in another world, yet he will damn his soul rather than displease his lust. Herod throws half his kingdom at the foot of a wanton wench, if she will ask it; and because that was thought too little by her, he will sacrifice his whole kingdom to his lust, for so much the blood of John the Baptist may be judged to have cost him in this life, being (so wakeful was divine providence) shortly after turned out of his throne, besides what he pays in the other. But when God made thee a holy man or woman, then he gave thee gates and bars to thy city; thou art now able, through his grace, to stand on thy defence, and with the continual succours heaven sends thee to withstand all his power. Thou wert once indeed a tame slave to him, but now he is a servant to thee; that day thou becamest holy, God did set thy foot on the serpent's head; thy lusts were once his strong holds with which he kept thee in awe, and out of which he did come and do thee so much hurt; but now these are out of his hand. O what joy is there in a town when the castle that commanded it is taken from the enemy! Now, poor soul, Satan is dislodged and un kennelled; never more shall he play Rex in thy soul, as he hath done; in a word, when thou wert made a holy righteous person, then did God begin heaven in thy soul, that day thou wert born again, an heir to heaven was born. And if such acclamations be at the birth of a young prince,
heir to some petty territories, hast not thou more cause that then hadst heaven’s glory settled on thee in reversion? especially if thou considerest where all thy inheritance lay a little before that thou couldst lay claim to. Paul joins both together to make his doxology full: “giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” 1 Col. xii. 18. O blessed change! to step out of the devil’s dark dungeon, where thou wert kept in chains of sin and unrighteousness, prisoner for Hell, into the kingdom of Christ’s grace, where thou hast the gold chain of holiness and righteousness put about thy neck, as heir-apparent to Heaven: “such honour have all his saints.”

Secondly, Look thou keepest thy breast-plate on, Christian. Need we bid the soldier be careful of his armour? when he goes into the field, can he easily forget to take that with him, or be persuaded to leave it behind him? Yet some have done so, and paid dear for their boldness. Better thou endure the weight of thy plate, though a little cumbersome to the flesh, than receive a wound in thy breast for want of it: let this piece fall off, and thou canst keep none of the other on. If thou allowest thyself in any unholiness, thy sincerity will presently be called into question in thy conscience. I confess we find that Peter, a little after his sad fall in denying his master, had the testimony of his uprightness: “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” John xx. 17. After Christ had thrice put it to the question, he could confidently vouch his sincerity; but we must know, first, that sin was not a deliberate sin; the poor man was surprised on a sudden; and, secondly, there had intervened his bitter sorrow between his sin and this his profession; and the renewing of his repentance so speedily conduced much to the clearing of his sincerity to his conscience. But David found it harder work, who sinned more deliberately, and lay longer soaking in his guilt, as you may perceive, Psal. li. 10. where he pleads so earnestly that God would “renew a right spirit in him.”
breast-plate of righteousness. 315

Again, the Gospel shoe will not come on thy foot so long as swelled with any sinful humour (I mean any unrighteous or unholy practice), till assuaged and purged out by repentance. Consider the Gospel in its preparation. Art thou in a fit case to suffer cheerfully for God, or patiently from God, as thou art? No more than a soldier in a disease, sick in bed, is to take a hard march; unholiness tenders the soul as much as sickness doth the body, and indisposes it to endure any hardship. "O spare me a little, that I may recover strength before I go hence and be no more." Psal. xxxix. 13. David was not yet recovered out of that sin which had brought him exceeding low, as you may perceive, ver. 10, 11. And the good man cannot think of dying with any willingness till his heart be in a holy frame; and for the "peace of the Gospel," serenity of conscience and inward joy, alas! all unholiness is to it as poison is to the spirits, which drinks them up; throw a stone into a brook, and, though clear before, it presently is disturbed and muddy. "He will speak peace unto his people, but let them not turn again to folly." Psal. lxxxv. 8. Mark here what an item he gives, "but let them not turn;" as if he had said, Upon their peril be it; if they turn from holy walking to folly, I will turn from speaking peace to speak terror.

Again, by thy negligence in thy holy walking thou endangerest thy faith, which is kept in a good conscience, as the jewel in the cabinet. Faith is an eye; all sin and unholiness casts a mist before this eye. A holy life to faith is as a clear air and medium to the eye. We can see furthest in a clear day; thus faith sees furthest into the promise, when it looks through a holy well-ordered conversation. Faith is a shield, and when does the soldier drop that out of his hand, but when dangerously wounded? and if faith fail, what will become of hope, which hangs upon faith and draws all her nourishment from her, as the sucking child doth from the nurse? If faith cannot see a pardon in the promise, then hope cannot look for salvation; if faith cannot lay claim to sonship, then hope will not wait for the inheritance. Faith tells the soul it hath "peace with God," then the soul
"rejoiceth in the hope of glory," - Rom. v. And now, Christian, what hast thou yet left for thy help? wilt thou betake thyself to the sword of the Spirit? alas! how canst thou wield it, when by thy unholy walking thou hast lamed thy hand of faith that should hold it? This sword hath two edges: with one it heals, the other it wounds; with one it saves, with the other it damns. O it is a dreadful weapon when it strikes with its wounding damning side; and for the other side, thou hast nothing to do with it, while in any way of unholliness. Not a kind word in the whole Bible spoken to one sinning. Now, poor creature, think and think again, is there any sin worth hazarding all this confusion and mischief, which, if thou art resolved to have it, will inevitably befall thy soul? 

Thirdly, Be humble when thou art most holy; which way soever pride works (as thou shalt find it like the wind, sometimes at one door, sometimes at another) resist it. Nothing more baneful to thy holiness; it turns righteousness into hemlock, holiness into sin. Never art thou less holy than when puffed up with the conceit of it. When we see a man blown up and swelled with the dropsy, we can tell his blood is naught and waterish, without opening a vein for the trial: the more pride puffs thee, the less pure blood of holiness thou hast running in the veins of thy soul. "Behold his soul which is lifted up, is not upright." Hab. ii. 4. See an ecce, like a sign, is set up at the proud man’s door, that all passengers may know a naughty man dwells there. As thou wouldest not therefore not only enfeeble the power of holiness, but also call in question the truth of thy holiness, take heed of pride. Sometimes possibly thou wilt be ready to despise others, and bid them in thy thoughts stand off, as not so holy as thyself; this smells of the Pharisee, beware of it. It is the nature of holiness to depress ourselves, and to give our brethren the advantage in measuring their gifts or graces with our own. "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves." Phil. ii. 3. At another time possibly thou mayest find a spice of the justiciaries disease hanging about thee, thy heart leaning on thy righteousness, and
breast-plate of righteousness.

lifting up thyself into confidence of it, so as to expect thy acceptation with and salvation from God for that. O take heed of this, as thou lovest thy life. I may say to thee, as Constantine did to Acetius the Novatian: "Set then up thy ladder, and go to heaven by thyself;" for never any went this way thither; and dost thou think to be the only man that shall appear in Heaven purchaser of his own happiness? go first, poor creature, and measure the length of thy ladder by the extent of the holy law, and if thou findest it but one round short of that, thou mayest certainly conclude it will leave thee short of Heaven. If therefore thou hast beheld (to allude to that in Job xxxi. 27.) thy righteousness when it hath shined, and thy holiness walking in its brightness, and thy heart thereby hath been enticed secretly, or thy mouth hath kissed thy hand, know this is a great wickedness, and in this thou hast denied the God above. Thou hast given the highest part of divine worship unto a creature, the created son of thy inherent holiness, which God hath appointed should be given alone to the uncreated Sun of righteousness, the Lord Jesus, the "Lord our righteousness." Renounce thy plea (as now thou hast laid it) for life and salvation, or else give thy cause as lost. Now, the more effectually to keep down any insurrection of pride from the conceit of thy holiness, be pleased to take often these soul-humbling considerations into thy serious thoughts.

First, Think frequently of the infinite holiness of God. When men stand high, their heads do not grow dizzy till they look down; when men look down upon those that are worse than themselves, or less holy than themselves, then their heads turn round; looking up would cure this disease. The most holy men, when once they have fixed their eyes awhile upon God's holiness, and then looked upon themselves, they have been quite out of love with themselves, and could see nothing but unholiness in themselves. After the vision the prophet had of God sitting on his throne, and his heavenly ministers of state, the seraphims, about him, covering their faces, and crying, "Holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts;" how was this gracious man presently smitten with the sense of his
own vileness; they did not more cry up God as holy, than he did cry out upon himself as "unclean." *Isa.* vi. 4, 5. So Job, "Now my eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself," *chap.* xlii. 5, 6. Never did the good man more loathe himself for the putrid sores of his ulcerous body, when on the dunghill he sat and scraped himself, than now he did for the impurities of his soul. We see ourselves in a dark room, and we think we are fine and clean; but would we compass ourselves with the beams of God's glorious majesty and holiness, then the rays of the sun would not discover more atoms in the air than the holiness of God would convince of sin to be in us. But it is the trick of pride not to come where it may be outshined; it had rather go where it shall be adored, than where it is sure to be put to shame.

Secondly, Often meditate on the holiness of man's innocent state. It is true now, if a believer, thou hast a principle of holiness planted in thee; but, alas! what is that at present to what thy nature once had? They who saw the second temple, and remembered not the first which Solomon built, they thought it no doubt a glorious fabric; but others, whose, eyes had seen the stately work and goodly buildings of the other, could not but rejoice with tears in their eyes. "Many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid, wept with a loud voice." *Ezra* iii. 12. O it revived the sad thoughts of the sacking of that glorious structure; and so may these little beginnings upon a new foundation of a new covenant, remind thee with sorrow to think of the ruins that man in all his glory fell into by Satan's policy. It is true, in Heaven thou shalt have the odds of Adam in Paradise; but thou shalt have many a weary step before thou gettest up that hill. When a man that hath had some thousands a year, hath now but a few pounds per annum allowed him, and the rest sequestered from him for thirty or forty years, it is sad, though comfortable also, to think it shall at last return (and may be with a great overplus); but at present he is put to many straits, and fain to make a hard shift to rub through, so as to live any thing
like his noble descent and family. Thus it is joyous to
the saint to think of Heaven, when all his means shall
come into his hands; but truly his imperfect grace, and
the many expences he is at (from affections at God's
hands, temptations at Satan's mutinies, and intestine
broils from remaining lusts within doors) do put him
into many sad straits, that the poor soul is fain oft to
snap short in his comfort, yea much ado he hath to keep
shop-windows open with the little stock he hath; hence
the Christian's getting to Heaven is set out as a business
of so much difficulty: "If the righteous scarcely be
saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"
1 Pet. iv. 18. The wise virgins had no oil to spare; the
Christian shall hold out, and that is even all. Think of
this, and let thy plumes fall.

Thirdly, Often meditate on thy own personal mis-
carriages, especially in thy unregenerate state. This
kept Paul so humble; how often does his unregenerate
wicked conversation rise, though not in his conscience
to darken his comfort, yet in his mind to qualify the
thoughts of his gifts and grace, 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10. where
he speaks how he "laboured more than them all;"
O how he way-lays his pride, that possibly might follow
such his glorying too close at the heels, and therefore,
before he dares speak a word of his present holiness, he
bolts the door upon pride, and first falls upon the story
of that black part of his life. O how he batters his pride,
and speaks himself all to naught; no enemy could have
drawn his picture with a blacker coal, verse 7. he calls
himself one, "born out of time," verse 9. "for I am the
least of the apostles, not meet to be called an apostle,
because I persecuted the Church of God;" and now,
having sufficiently besmeared and doused himself in the
puddle of his former sins, how humbly doth the holy
man speak of his transcendant graces, verse 10. "By
the grace of God, I am that I am; and I laboured more
abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God."
O this is the way of killing this weed of pride, to break
up our hearts and turn the inside outward, I mean hum-
bble and abase ourselves for our former abominations.
Pride will not easily thrive in a soil where this plough
often walks. Pride is a worm that bites and gnaws out the heart of grace. Now you know they are bitter things that must break the bag of worms that are gathered in the stomach; all sweet things nourish them; they are bitter that scatter and kill them. O Christian, take some quantity of this aloe's often, and with God's blessing thou shalt find ease of that which, if a Christian, thou art troubled with. And do not think that this worm breeds only in children, weak Christians and young novices; I confess it is the most ordinary disease of that age, but aged and stronger Christians are not out of danger. Old David had this worm of pride crawling out of his mouth when he bade Joab number the people; and dost not thou too oft take thyself in numbering the duties and good works thou hast done, and the sufferings thou hast endured for thy God, with some secret self-applauding thoughts that tickle thee from them?

VERSE 15.

And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.

THIS verse presents us with the third piece of armour in the Christian's panoply: a spiritual shoe, fitted to his foot, and to be worn by him, so long as he keeps the field against sin and Satan. "And your feet shod," &c. We shall cast the words into distinct questions or enquiries, from the resolution of which will result the several points to be insisted on.

First, What is meant by the "Gospel?"

Secondly, What by "peace," and why attributed to the Gospel?

Thirdly, What the feet here mentioned import, and what grace is intended by the "preparation of the Gospel of peace," which here is compared to the shoe, and fitted for these feet?

Quest. 1. What is meant by the Gospel?
The Gospel of peace.

Answer. Gospel, according to the notation of the original, word signifies any good news, or joyful message; so Jer. xx. 15. “Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born to thee, to make him glad.” But usually in Scripture it is restrained, by way of excellency, to signify the doctrine of Christ, and salvation by him to poor sinners: “I bring you glad tidings (said the angel to the shepherds) of great joy.” Luke ii. 10. and, verse 11. he addeth, “unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Thus it is taken in this place, and generally in the New Testament, and affords this note.

CHAP. I.

WHEREIN THE GLADSOME NEWS THAT THE GOSPEL BRINGS IS DECLARED FROM THE FIVE PARTICULARS REQUISITE TO FILL UP THE JOYFULNESS OF A MESSAGE; WITH A WORD TO STIR UP OUR BOWELS IN PITYING THOSE THAT NEVER HEARD ANY OF THIS NEWS.

NOTE. The revelation of Christ, and the grace of God through him, is without compare the best news and most joyful tidings that poor sinners can hear. It is such a message as no good news can come before it, nor any ill news follow. No good news can come before it; no, not from God himself to the creature; he cannot issue out any blessing to poor sinners till he hath shewn mercy to their souls in Christ. “God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us.” Psalm lxvii. 1.

First, God forgives, then he gives; till he be merciful to pardon our sins through Christ, he cannot bless or look kindly on us sinners, All our enjoyments are but blessings in bullion, till Gospel grace, pardoning mercy, stamp and make them current. God cannot so much as bear any good will to us, till Christ makes peace for us: “on earth peace, and good will to men.” Luke ii. 14. And what joy can a sinner take, though it were to hear of a
kingdom befallen to him, if he may not have it with God's good will?

Again, No ill news can come after the glad tidings of the Gospel, where believably embraced. God's mercy in Christ alters the very property of all evils to the believer. All plagues and judgments that can befall the creature in the world, when baptized in the stream of Gospel-grace, receive a new name, come on a new errand, and have a new taste on the believer's palate; as the same water, by running through some mine, gets a twang and a healing virtue which before it had not. "The inhabitant shall not say I am sick, the people that dwell therein shall be pardoned their iniquity." 

Isa. xxxiii. 24. Observe, he doth not say, They shall not be sick; Gospel-grace doth not exempt from afflictions; but "they shall not say I am sick." They shall be so ravished with the joy of God's pardoning mercy, that they shall not complain of being sick; this, or any other cross, is too thin a veil to darken the joy of the other good news. This is so joyful a message which the Gospel brings that God would not have Adam long without it, but opened a crevice to let some beams of this light (that is so pleasant to behold) into his soul, amazed with the terror of God's presence; without which, as he was turned out of Paradise, so had he been turned into Hell immediately, for such the world would have been to his guilty conscience. This is the news God used to tell his people of, on a design to comfort them and cheer them, when things went worst with them, and their affairs were at the lowest ebb. Isa. vii. 14. Micah v. 5. This is the great secret which God whispers by his Spirit in the ear of those only he embraces with his special distinguishing love, Luke x. 21. 1 Cor. ii. 12. so that it is made the sad sign of a soul marked out for Hell to have the "Gospel hid from it." 2 Cor. iv. 3. To wind up this in a few words, there meet all the properties of a joyful message in the glad tidings of the Gospel. Five ingredients are desirable in a message, yea must all conspire to fill up the joyfulness thereof into a redundancy.

First, It must be good; none rejoice to hear evil news: joy is the dilatation of the heart, whereby it goes forth to
meet and welcome in what it desires, and this must needs be some good. Ill news is sure to find the heart shut against it, and to come before it is welcome.

Secondly, It must be some great good, or else it affects little; affections are stirred according to the degrees of good or evil in the object presented: a thing we hear may be so inconsiderable, that it is no great odds how it goes; but if it be good, and that great also, of weighty importance, this causeth rejoicing proportionable. The greater the bell, the more strength is required to raise it: it must be a great good that raiseth great joy.

Thirdly, This great good must intimately concern them that hear it; my meaning is, they must have propriety in it, for though we can rejoice to hear of some great good befallen another, yet it affects most when it is emptied into our own bosom. A sick man doth not feel the joy of another's recovery with the same advantage as he would do his own.

Fourthly, It would much add to the joyfulness of the news, if this were inauditum or insperatum, unheard of, and unlooked for; when the tidings steal upon us by way of surprise. The further our own ignorance or despair have set us off all thoughts of so great enjoyment, the more joy it brings with it when we hear the news of it. The joy of a poor swineherd's son, who never dreamt of a crown, would be greater at the news of such a thing conferred on him than he whose birth invited him to look for it, yea promised it him as his inheritance; such a one's heart would stand but level to the place, and therefore could not be so ravished with it as another who lay so far below such a preferment.

Lastly, To fill up the joy of all these, it is most necessary that the news be true and certain, or else all the joy soon leaks out. What great joy would it afford to hear of a kingdom befallen to a man, and the next day or month to hear all crossed again and prove false? Now, in the glad tidings of the Gospel, all these do most happily meet together, to wind up the joy of the believing soul to the highest pin that the strings of his affections can possibly bear.

First, The news which the Gospel hath in its mouth to
tell us poor sinners is good. It speaks promises, and they are significations of some good intended by God for poor sinners. The Law that brings ill news to town; threatenings are the *lingua vernacula legis*, it can speak no other language to sinners but denunciations of evil to come upon them; but the Gospel smiles on poor sinners, and smooths the wrinkles that sit on the Law's brow, by proclaiming promises.

Secondly, The news the Gospel brings is as great as good. It was that the Angel said, *Luke* ii. 10. "I bring you tidings of great joy;" great joy it must needs be, because it is all joy. The Lord Christ brings such news in his Gospel as that he hath left nothing for any after him to add to it; if there be any good wanting in the tidings of the Gospel, we find it elsewhere than in God; for in the covenant of the Gospel he gives himself through Christ to the believing soul; surely the Apostle's argument will hold, "All things are your's, ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." *1 Cor.* iii. 22. The Gospel lays our pipes close to the fountain of goodness itself, and he sure must have all that is united to him that hath all. Can any good news come to the glorified saints which Heaven doth not afford them? In the Gospel we have news of that glory. "Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." *2 Tim.* i. 10. The sun in the firmament discovers only the lower world; *obsignat caelum, dum revelat terram*; O it hides Heaven from us, while it shews the earth to us; but the Gospel enlightens both at once. "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." *1 Tim.* iv. 8.

Thirdly, The Gospel doth not tell us news we are little concerned in; not what God has done for angels, but for us: "Unto you (saith the Angel) is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord." If charity made angels rejoice for our happiness, surely then the benefit which is paid into our nature by it gives a further pleasure to our joy at the hearing of it. It were strange that the messenger who only brings the news of some great empire to be devolved on a person should sing, and the prince to whom it falls should not be glad. And, as the Gospel's glad tidings
belong to man's nature, not to angels, so in particular to thee, poor soul, whoever thou art, that embracest Christ in the arms of thy faith. A prince is a common good to all his kingdom; every subject, though never so mean, hath a part in him, and so is Christ to all believers. The promises are so laid that, like a well-drawn picture, they look on all that look on them by an eye of faith. The Gospel's joy is thy joy that hast but faith to receive it.

Fourthly, The glad tidings of the Gospel were unheard of, unlooked for by the sons of men; such news it brings as never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive, till God unlocked the cabinet of his own good pleasure, and revealed the counsel of his will, wherein this mysterious price of love to fallen man lay hid far enough from the prying eye of the most quick-sighted angel in Heaven, much more from man himself, who could read in his own guilty conscience within, and spell from the covenant without, now broken by him, nothing but his certain doom and damnation. So that the first Gospel-sermon preached by God himself to Adam anticipated all thoughts of such a thing intended to him. O who can conceive, but one that hath really felt the terrors of an approaching Hell in his despairing soul, how joyous the tidings of Gospel-mercy are to a poor soul, dwelling amidst the black thoughts of despair and bordering on the very marshes of the region of utter darkness? History tells us of a nobleman of our nation, in Henry the Eighth's reign, to whom a pardon was sent a few hours before he should have been beheaded; which being not at all expected by him, did so transport him, that he died for joy. And if the vessel of our nature be so weakly hooped that the wine of such an inferior joy breaks it, how then could it possibly be able to bear the full joy of the Gospel-tidings, which doth as far exceed this as the mercy of God doth the mercy of a mortal man, and as the deliverance from an eternal death in Hell doth a deliverance from a temporary death, which is gone before the pain can well be felt?

Fifthly, and lastly, The glad tidings of the Gospel are certainly true. It is no flying report, cried up to day,
and contradicted to-morrow; not news that is in every one’s mouth, but none can tell whence it came and who the author of it; we have it from a good hand: God himself, “to whom it is impossible to lie,” from Heaven voucheth it. “This is my beloved Son, hear him.” Luke. xix. What were all those miracles which Christ wrought but ratifications of the truth of the Gospel? Those wretches that denied the truth of Christ’s doctrine were forced many times to acknowledge the divinity of his miracles; which is a pretty piece of nonsense, and declares the absurdity of their unbelief to all the world. The miracles were to the Gospel as seals are to a writing: they could not deny God to be in the miracles, and yet they could not see him in the doctrine; as if God would set his seal to an untruth. Here, Christians, is that which lifts up the joy of this good news the Gospel brings, that we may lay our lives upon the truth of it; it will never deceive any that lay the weight of their confidences on it. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” 1 Tim. i. 15. This bridge, which the Gospel lays over the gulf of God’s wrath, for poor sinners to pass from their sins into the favour of God here, and kingdom of God hereafter, is supported with no other arches than the wisdom, power, mercy, and faithfulness of God; so that the believing soul needs not fear, till it sees these bow or break. It is called the “everlasting Gospel,” Rev. xiv. 6. when Heaven and Earth go to wrack, not the least iota or tittle of any promise of the Gospel shall be buried in their ruins. “The Word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached to you.” 1 Pet. i. 25.

Use 1. Pity those that never heard a word of this good news; such there are in the world, whole nations, with whom the day is not yet broke, but a dismal night of ignorance and barbarism continues to be stretched over them; whose forlorn souls are under a continual massacre from the bloody butcher of Hell? An easy conquest (God knows) that foul fiend makes of them, who lays his cruel knife to their throats, and meets with no resistance; because he finds them fast asleep in ignorance, utterly destitute of that light which alone can discover a
way to escape the hands of this destroyer. What heart, that ever tasted the sweetness of Gospel-grace, trembles not at their deplored state? yea doth not stand astonished at the difference of God's dispensations to them and us? "Lord, why wilt thou manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?" God pardon the unmercifulness of our hearts, that we can weep no more over them. Truly we do not live so far from the Moors and Indians but we may, by not pitying of them, praying for them, and earnestly desiring their conversion, besmear ourselves with the guilt of their souls' blood, which is shed continually by the destroyer of mankind. O how seldom is their miserable condition the companion of our sorrowful thoughts? and their conversion the subject of our prayers and desires? There have been, alas! in the world more counsels how to ease them of their gold, than enrich them with the treasure of the Gospel; how to get their land, than how to save their souls. But the time is coming when winning souls will be found more honourable than conquering nations. Well, Christian, though thou canst not impart to them what God hath laid on thy trencher, yet, as thou sittest at the feast of the Gospel, think of those poor souls, and that compassionately, who starve to death for want of that bread with which thou art fed unto eternal life. There is an opinion, which some have lately taken up, that the Heathens may spell Christ out of the sun, moon, and stars; these may seem kinder than others have been to them; but I wish it doth not make them more cruel to them in the end: I mean by not praying so heartily for Gospel light to arise among them; as those must needs do, who believe them under a sad necessity of perishing without. When a garrison is judged pretty well stored with provision for its defence, it is an occasion that relief and succour comes the slower to it. And I wish Satan hath not such a design against those forlorn souls in this principle; if such a lesson were to be got by the stars, we should ere this have heard of some that had learned it. Indeed I find a star led the wise men to Christ; but they had a heavenly preacher to open the text to them, or else they would never have understood it.
A LAMENTATION FOR THE UNKIND WELCOME THAT GOSPEL NEWS FINDS IN THE WORLD; WITH TWO OR THREE SAD GROUNDS OF FEAR AS TO US IN THIS NATION, TAKEN FROM THE PRESENT ENTERTAINMENT THE GOSPEL HATH AMONG US, WITH A DOUBLE EXHORTATION TO THE SAINTS TO REJOICE IN THIS JOYOUS MESSAGE, AND CHIEFLY IN THIS.

SECT. I.

USE 2. A sad lamentation may be here taken up, that so good news should have such ill welcome as the Gospel commonly finds in the world. When the tidings were first told at Jerusalem of a Saviour being born, one would have thought, especially if we consider that the Scripture-reckoning for the birth of the Messiah was now out, and they big with expectation of his coming, that all hearts would have leaped within them for joy at the news, to see their hopes so happily delivered and accomplished; but behold the clean contrary. Christ's coming proves matter of trouble and distaste to them; they take the alarm at his birth, as if an enemy, a destroyer (not a Saviour) were landed on their coast, and as such Herod goes out against him, and make him flee the country. But possibly, though at present they stumble at the meanness of his birth and parentage, yet when the rays of his divinity shall shine through his miracles, then they will religiously worship him whom now they contemn; when he comes forth into his public ministry, opens his commission, and shews his authority, yea with his own blessed lips tells the joyful message he brings from his Father unto the sons of men, then surely they will dearly love his person, and thankfully embrace, yea greedily drink in, the glad tidings of salvation which he preacheth to them. No: they persist in their cursed unbelief, and obstinate rejecting of him, though the Scripture (which they seemed to adore) bears so full a testimony for Christ
that it accuseth them to their own consciences, yet they will have none of him. Christ tells them so much: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me; and ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life;" John v. 39, 40. Life they desired, yet will lose it rather than come to him for it. And is the world now amended? doth Christ in his Gospel meet with any kinder usage at the hands of most? The note that Christ sings is still the same: "Come unto me, that you may have life." The worst hurt Christ does poor souls that come unto him is to put them into a state of life and salvation; and yet where is the person that likes the offer? O it is other news that men generally listen after: this makes the Exchange, the market-place, so full, and the church so thin and empty. Most expect to hear their best news from the world; they look upon the news of the Gospel as foreign, and that which doth not so much concern them, at least at present; it is time enough to mind this when they are going into another world. Alas! the Gospel is not accommodated to their carnal desires; it tells them of no fields and vineyards that it hath to give; it invites them not with the gaieties of worldly honours and pleasures. Had Christ in his Gospel but gratified the cravings of men's lusts with a few promises for these things, though he had promised less for another world, the news would have gone down better with these sots, who had rather hear one prophesy of wine and strong drink than preach of Heaven itself. Truly they are but a very few, and those sufficiently jeered for their pains, that like the message of the Gospel so well as to receive it cordially into their hearts; if any one does but give entertainment to Christ and it be known, what an alarm does it give to all his carnal neighbours? who if they do not presently beset his house, as the Sodomites did Lot's, yet set some brand of scorn upon him; yea make account they have now reason enough to despise and hate him, how well soever they loved him before. O what will God do with this degenerate age we live in? O England, England, I fear some sad judgment or other bodes thee. If such glad tidings as the Gospel brings be rejected, sad news
cannot be far off; I cannot think of less than of a departing Gospel. God never made such a settlement of his Gospel among any people but he could remove it from them. He comes but upon liking, and will he stay where he is not welcome? Who will, that hath elsewhere to go? It is high time for the merchant to pack up and be gone, when few or none will buy; nay, when instead of buying, they will not suffer him to be quiet in his shop, but throw stones at him, and dirt on his richest commodities. Do we not see the names of Christ's faithful messengers bleeding at this day under the reproaches that fly so thick about their ears? Are not the most precious truths of the Gospel almost covered with the mire and dirt of errors and blasphemies, which men of corrupt minds (set on work by the Devil himself) have raked out of every filthy puddle and sink of old heretics, and thrown on the face of Christ and his Gospel! And where is the hand so kind as to wipe off that which they throw on, the heart so valiant for the truth that will stop these foul mouths from spitting their venom against Christ and his Gospel? If any thing be done of this kind, alas! it is so faintly that they gather heart by it; justice is so favourably sprinkled, like a few drops upon fire, that it rather encreaseth the flame of their rage against the truth than quencheth it. A prince calls not home his ambassador for every affront that is offered him in the streets; but when he is affronted and can have no redress for the wrong.

SECT. II.

Object. But some may say, Though it cannot be denied that the Gospel hath found very unkind entertainment by many among us, and especially of late years, since a spirit of error hath so sadly prevailed in the land; yet make us not worse than we are. There is, blessed be God, a remnant of gracious souls yet to be found to whom Christ is precious, who gladly embrace the message of the Gospel, and weep in secret for the contempt that is cast upon it by men of corrupt minds and profane hearts; and therefore we hope we are not in such imminent danger of losing the Gospel as your fears suggest.
The Gospel of peace.

Answ. If there were not such a sprinkling of saints among us, our case were indeed desperate, conclusum esset de nobis. The shades of that dismal night would quickly be upon us. These are they that have held the Gospel thus long among us. Christ had, as to his Gospel-presence, been gone ere this, had not these hung about his legs, and with their strong cries and prayers entreated his stay. But there are a few considerations as to these, which, seriously weighed, will not leave us without some tremblings of heart.

First, Consider what little proportion (as to the number I mean) do these that embrace the Gospel bear with those that continue to reject it; those that desire to keep Christ among us, and those that wish him gone, and would gladly be rid of him. Were it put to the vote, would not they carry it, by thousands of thousands, that care not whether we have a Gospel or not? And doth it not prophesy sadly when the odds is so great? In all the departures of God from a people, there were ever some holy ones mingled amongst the rout of sinners. Sardis had her "few names, which had not defiled their garments;" but yet the "candlestick was removed." All that they could get was a promise for themselves in particular: "They shall walk with me in white." Rev. iii. iv. but no protection for the Church. God can pull down the house, and provide well for his saints also that he finds there. A few voices are easily drowned in the outcry of a multitude; a few pints of wine are hardly tasted in a tun of water: and a little number of saints can do sometimes but little to the saving of a wretched people among whom they live. Possibly, as in a weak body where the disease hath got the mastery, nature putting forth its sumnum conatum, its utmost strength, may keep life awhile in the body for some days or weeks, but cannot long, without some help to evacuate the distemper; so a few saints, shut up in a degenerate age amongst an ungodly Christ-despising people, may awhile prorogue the judgment, and reprieve awhile the life of such a people; but if there be no change made upon them for the better, ruin must needs break in upon them.

Secondly, Consider of these few gracious ones found
amongst us that embrace the Gospel how many are new converts, such I mean as the Gospel hath of late days won to Christ? I am afraid you will find this little number of saints chiefly to consist of old disciples, such as were wrought upon many years since. Alas! the womb of the Gospel hath been in a great measure shut up of late as to the bringing forth of souls by a thorough solid work of conversion. Indeed if they may pass for converts that baptise themselves into a new way and form of worship, or that begin their religion with a tenet and an opinion, we have more than a good many to show of these; but, in this old age of England's withered profession, how great a rarity is a sincere convert! We cannot deny but God is graciously pleased to bring the pangs of the new birth now and then upon some poor souls in our assemblies (that his despised servants may have his seal to confirm their ministry, and stop those mouths which are so scornfully opened against it) yet, alas! it is but here and there one; and doth not this prophesy sadly to this nation? I am sure, when we see a tree that used to stand thick with fruit now bring forth but little, may be an apple on this bough, and another on that, we look upon it as a dying tree. Leah comforted herself from her fruitfulness, "that therefore her husband would love her, and cleave to her;" Gen. xxix. 34. may we not, on the contrary, fear that God will not love but leave a people when they grow barren under the means of grace? God threatens as much, Jer. vi. 8. "Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee;" and if God's soul departs then he is upon his remove as to his visible presence also; so indeed it follows: "lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited." O my brethren, those golden days of the Gospel are over when converts came flying as a cloud, as the doves to their windows in flocks. Now Gospel-news grows stale, few are taken with it. Though a kingdom hath much treasure and riches in it, yet if trade cease, no new bullion comes in, nor merchandise be imported, it spends upon its old stock, and must needs in time decay: our old store of saints (the treasure of their times) wears away apace; what will become of us, if no new ones come in their room? Alas! when our
burials are more than our births, we must needs be on the losing hand. There is a sad list of holy names taken away from us; but where are they which are born to God? If the good go, and those which are left continue bad, yea become worse and worse, we have reason to fear that God is clearing the ground, and making way for a judgment.

Thirdly, Consider the unhappy contentions and divisions that are found among the people of God, yet left upon the place; these prophesy Sadly, the Lord knows. Contentions ever portended ill. The remarkable departures of God (recorded in Scripture) from the church of the Jews, found them woefully divided and crumbled into parties. And the Asiatic churches no less. Christ sets up the light of the Gospel to walk and work by, not to fight and wrangle; and therefore it were no wonder at all, if he should put it out, and so end the dispute. If these storms, which have been of late years upon us (and are not yet off) had but made Christians, as they did the disciples, Mark vi. 48, ply their oar, and lovingly row all one way, it had been happy; we might then have expected Christ to come walking towards us in mercy and help us safe to land; but when we throw away the oar, and fall a scuffling in the ship, while the wind continues loud about us, truly we are more likely to drive Christ from us than invite him to us; we are in a more probable way of sinking than saving the ship and ourselves in it.

S E C T. III.

Use 3. A word of exhortation, and first to you who have not yet closed with the terms of the Gospel. Be persuaded to receive the message of the Gospel kindly believingly into your hearts. It is the best news you can send back to Heaven, as a gratulatatory return, for the glad tidings that the Gospel brings from thence. Thy embracing Christ preached to thee in the Gospel will be as welcome news to Heaven (I can tell thee) as the tidings of Christ and salvation through him can be to thee. "There is joy in Heaven at the conversion of a sinner." Heaven soon rings with this. The angels that
sang Christ into the world will not want a song when he is received into thy heart; for he came into the world for this end. Christ descended when he came into the world, but now he ascends: that was an act of his humiliation, this of his exaltation. The highest created throne that God can sit in is the soul of a believer; no wonder then that Christ calls all his friends to joy with him at a soul's return to him and reception of him. *Luke* xv. 9. What joy is now in Heaven upon this occasion we may collect from the joy it drew from Christ when on earth. It was some great good news that could wring a smile then from Christ, or tune his spirit into a joyful note, who was a man of sorrows, and indeed came into the world to be so; yet when his disciples (whom he had sent forth to preach the Gospel) returned with news of some victorious success in their labours, "in that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit; and said, I thank thee, O Father." *Luke* x. 21. Of all the hours of his life, that is the hour wherein Christ would express his joy; which (with the care of the Spirit to record this passage in the history of Christ's life) shews that Christ had an especial design in that expression of his joy at that time; and what could it be but to let us know how much his heart was set upon this work of saving souls? and that when he should be gone to Heaven, if we meant to send any joyful news to him thither, it should be of the prosperous and victorious success the Gospel hath over our hearts.

This, this, which could make him rejoice in the midst of all his sorrows here on earth, must needs be more joyous to him in Heaven now, where he hath no bitterness from his own sufferings (which are all healed, past, and gone) to mingle with the joy of this news; and if the kind reception of the Gospel be such joyful news to him, you may easily conceive how distasteful the rejecting of it is to him. As he rejoiced in Spirit to hear the Gospel prevailed, so he cannot but be angry when it meets with a repulse from the unbelieving world. *Luke* xiv. 21. we find the "master of the house (that is Christ) angry;" when his servants sent to invite the guests (that is, preach the Gospel) return with a denial from those that were bidden, for so their mannerly excuses were interpreted.
by Christ; yea so angry that he claps a fearful doom upon them: "not one of those invited shall taste of my supper." God can least bear any contempt cast upon his grace. The Jews, though they had many grievous calamities befal them for their idolatries and other sins, yet never any like that which the rejecting Christ brought upon them. Under those they relented, but under this they hardened. They would not come when the supper was on the table; and therefore the cloth is drawn, and they go supperless to bed, and die in their sins; while they shut the door of their hearts against Christ, this padlock, as I may so call it, of judiciary impenitence is fastened to it. Christ needs take no other revenge on a soul for its refusing him, to make it miserable to the height, than to condemn such a one to have its own desire; Christ thou wilt not, Christ therefore thou shalt not have. O unhappy soul, thou that hast offers of Christ, but diest without Christ! Thou goest with thy full lading to damnation; none sink so deep in Hell as those that fall into it with a stumble at Christ. That Gospel which brings now good news will, when thou shalt have a repetition-sermon of it at the great day, bring the heaviest tidings with it that ever thy ears heard.

S E C T. IV.

Secondly, To you who have entertained the message of the Gospel.

First, Rejoice at the news; glad tidings and sad hearts do not well together: when we see one heavy and sorrowful we ask him what ill news he hath heard. Christian, what ill news hath Christ brought from Heaven with him, that makes thee walk with thy folded arms and pensive countenance? Psal. cxxxii. 16. To see a wicked man merry and jocund, or a Christian sad and dumpish, is alike uncomely. "A feast is made for laughter," saith Solomon, Eccles. x. 19. I am sure God intended his people's joy in the feast of the Gospel; mourners were not to sit at God's table, Deut. xxvi. Truly the saint's heaviness reflects unkindly upon God himself; we do not commend his cheer, if it doth not cheer us. What saith the world? The Christian's life is
but a melancholy walk; sure, thinks the carnal wretch, it is a dry feast they sit at where so little wine of joy is drunk. And wilt thou confirm them in this their opinion, Christian? shall they have thy example to produce against Christ and his Word, which promise peace and joy to all that will come to this feast? O God forbid that thy conversation, wherein thou art to hold forth the Word of life, to live in the eyes of the world, and which ought to be as a comment or gloss upon the Word, to clear up the truth and reality of it to others, that this should so disagree from the text, as to make the gladsome tidings spoken of in it more disputed and questioned in the thoughts of the unbelieving world than before. It is an error I confess, and that a gross one, which the Papists teach, that we cannot know the Scriptures to be the Word of God but by the testimony of the church; yet it is none to say that a practical testimony from the saints’ lives hath great authority over the consciences of men, to convince them of the truth of the Gospel. Now they will believe it is good news indeed the Gospel brings, when they can read it in your cheerful lives; but when they observe Christians sad with this cup of salvation in their hands, truly they suspect the wine in it is not so good as the preachers commend it to them for. Should men see all that trade to the Indies come home poorer than they went, it would be hard to persuade others to venture thither, for all the golden mountains said to be there. O Christians, let the world see you are not losers in your joy since you have been acquainted with the Gospel; give not them cause to think by your uncomfortable walking that when they turn Christians they must bid all joy farewell, and resolve to spend their days in a house of mourning.

Secondly, Is the Gospel a message of glad tidings? do not then for shame, Christian, run on the world’s score by taking up any of its carnal joy. Thou needest not go out of God’s house to be merry; here’s joy enough in the glad tidings of the Gospel, more than thou canst spend, though thou shouldest live at a higher rate than thou dost or canst here on earth. Abraham would not take so much as a thread or shoe-latchet from the king
of Sodom, "lest he should say that he made Abraham rich," Gen. xiv. a Christian should deny himself of the world's joy and delights, lest they say, These Christians draw their joy out of our cistern. The channel is cut out by the Spirit of God in which he would have his saints' joy run: "If any be merry, let him sing psalms," let the subject of his mirth be spiritual; as on the other hand, "if he be sick, let him pray;" James v. 13. a spiritual vent is given to both affections of sorrow and joy. Aliter ludii ganeo, aliter princeps. A prince's recreation must not be like a Russian's; nor a Christian's joy like the carnal man's. If ever there was need to call upon Christians to feed the lamp of their joy with spiritual fuel, holy oil, that drops from a Gospel-pipe, now the time is, wherein professors do symbolize with the world in their outward bravery, junketings, fashions, pastimes, and are so kind to the flesh in allowing of, yea pleading so much for, a carnal liberty in these things, that shews too plainly the spiritual joy to be drawn out of these wells of salvation does not satisfy them; or else they would not make up their draught from this puddle-water, which was wont to be thirsted after only by those that had never drunk of Christ's cup. O what is the reason that those who would pass for Christians forsake this pure wine of Gospel joy, for the sophisticated stuff which this whore, the world, presents in her golden cup to them? Is it because the gladsome message of the Gospel is grown stale, and so its joy, which once sparkled in the preaching of it, as generous wine doth in the cup, and cheered the hearts of believers with strong consolations, hath now lost its spirit? or can that pure stream of spiritual joy, which hath run so long through the hearts and lives of the saints in so many generations, without mingling with the brackish water of the world's sensual pleasures, at last fall in with them, and be content to lose its own divine nature and sweetness in such a sink. O no! the Gospel is the same it was; the joy it brings as sweet and brisk, as spiritual and pure, as ever it was, and will be as long as God and Christ continue to be the same, out of whose bosom of love it first flowed, and is still fed. But the professors of this Gospel now are not the
same with those holy men and women of primitive times. The world grows old, and men's affections with it chill and cold; we have not our taste so lively, nor our spirits so chaste and pure, to relish the heavenly viands dished forth in the Gospel. The cheer is as good as ever, but the guests are worse; we are grown debauched in our judgments, and corrupt in our principles; no wonder then if carnal in our joys. Error is a whore; it takes away the heart from Christ and his spiritual joys. The head once distempered soon affects the heart, and by dropping the malignity of its principles upon it poisons it with carnal affections; and carnal affections cannot fare with any other than gross and carnal joys. Here, here is the root of the misery of our times. Hath not, think you, the devil played his game cunningly among us? who by his instruments, transforming themselves into the likeness of angels of light, first could raise so many credulous souls into a fond expectation of higher attainments in grace and comfort, from their new pretended light, than ever yet the saints were acquainted with, and at last to make them fall so low, be so reasonable, or rather unreasonable, as to accept such sensual pleasures and joys as this world can afford in full payment for all the glorious things he promised them? Well, sirs, this I hope will make some love the Gospel the more, and stick closer to it as long as they live. O Christians, bless God for the glad tidings of the Gospel; and never lend an ear to him that would be telling you other news, except you mean to part with truth to purchase a lie; yea let it make you careful to draw all your comfort and joy from the Gospel's breast. When a carnal heart would be merry, he doth not take the Bible down to read in that; he doth not go into the company of the promises, and walk in the meditation of them; it brings no joy to him to think of Christ or Heaven; no: he takes down a playbook may be, seeks some jovial company, goes to the Exchange or market, to hear what news he can meet with; every one as his haunt lies: but still it is from the world he expects his joy. And now where lies thy road, Christian? whither doth thy soul lead thee for thy joy? Dost not thou go to the Word, and read there what Christ has done for thee on earth, and is doing for thee in Hea-
ven? Is not the throne of grace the Exchange to which thou resorst for good news from that fair country, Heaven, where all thy estate lies, and thy best friends live? Art thou not listening what promise he will speak peace from to thy soul? If so, thou hast not thy name for nought: thou art a Christian indeed. Qui litteris addicti sumus, (saith Erasmus) animi lassitudinem à studiis gravioribus contractam, ab isdem studiis, sed amænioribus recreamus. True students that love their book indeed, when they have wearied their spirits with study, can recreate them again with study, by making a diversion from that which is severe and knotty to some more facile and pleasant subject. Thus the true Christian, when his spirits are worn and wasted in the severer exercises of Christianity, such as fasting and prayer, wherein he afflicts both body and soul for his sins, then can he recover them at the feast of God's love in Christ, where he sees his water turned into wine, and the tears that even now his sins covered his face with, all washed off with the blood of Christ; when his soul is struck into a fear and trembling with the consideration of the justice of God, and the terror of his threatenings and judgments for sin, then the meditation of the sweet promises of the Gospel recreate and revive him; so that in the same Word where he meets with his wound, he finds his healing; where he hath his sorrow, there also he receives his joy.

CHAP. III.

A FOURFOLD PEACE ATTRIBUTED TO THE GOSPEL, AND IN PARTICULAR PEACE OF RECONCILIATION, WHERE IT IS PROVED THERE IS A QUARREL BETWIXT GOD AND MAN, AS ALSO THAT THE GOSPEL CAN ONLY TAKE IT UP; AND WHY GOD THUS LAID THE METHOD OF MAN'S RECOVERY.

THE second enquiry follows: What peace is here meant that is attributed to the Gospel? Peace is a comprehen-
The Gospel of peace.

sive word. "We looked for peace (saith the prophet) but no good came." Jer. viii. 15. Peace brings and carries away again with it all good, as the sun doth light to and from the world; when Christ would to the utmost express how well he wished his disciples, he wraps up all the happiness which his large heart could wish them in this blessing of peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," John xiv. 27. Now take peace in its greatest latitude (if not spurious), and it will be found to grow upon this Gospel-root. So that we shall lay the conclusion in general terms.

Doct. True peace is the blessing of the Gospel, and only of the Gospel. This will appear in the several kinds of peace; which may be sorted into these four.

First, Peace with God, which we may call peace of reconciliation.

Secondly, Peace with ourselves, or peace of conscience.

Thirdly, Peace with one another, or peace of love and unity.

Fourthly, Peace with the other creatures, even the most hurtful, which may be called a peace of indemnity and service.

To begin, where all the other begin, with peace of reconciliation with God. For when man fell out with God, he fell out with himself and all the world besides; and he can never come to be at peace with these, till his peace be made with God, Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia. The point then is,

Doct. 1. That peace of reconciliation with God is the blessing of the Gospel. Three things are here to be done in prosecution of the point. First, I shall shew you that there is a quarrel between God and man. Secondly, that the Gospel, and only the Gospel, takes this up, and makes peace betwixt God and man. Thirdly, why God conveys this peace of reconciliation into the world in this way and by this method.

First, There is a quarrel depending betwixt God and the sons of men. Open acts of hostility done by one nation against another proclaim there is a war commenced. Now such acts of hostility pass betwixt God and man:
bullets fly thick to and fro on either hand. Man lets fly against God, though against his will he shoots short, whole vollies of sins and impieties. The best of saints acknowledge thus much of themselves, before converting grace took them off: "we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures." Titus iii. 3. Mark the last words, "serving lusts and pleasures." They were in pay to sin, willing to fight against God, and side with this his only enemy. Not a faculty of his soul or member of his body which is not in arms against him: "The carnal mind (saith the Apostle) is enmity against God." Rom. viii. 7. And if there be war in the mind, to be sure there can be no peace in the members (inferior faculties I mean of the soul) which are all commanded by it. Indeed we are by nature worst in our best part; the enmity against God is chiefly seated in the superior faculties of the soul. As in armies the common soldiery is wholly taken up with the booty and spoil they get by the war, without much minding one side or other; but the more principal officers, especially the prince or general, these go into the field full of enmity against them that oppose them: so the inferior faculties seek only satisfaction to their sensual appetite in the booty that sin affords, but the superior faculties of the mind, this comes forth more directly against God, and opposeth his sovereignty; yea if it could lay a plot effectual to take away the life of God himself there is enmity enough in the carnal mind to put it in execution. And as man is in arms against God, so is He against man: "He is angry with the wicked every day; he hath bent his bow and made it ready, he hath also prepared for him the instruments of death." Psal. vii. 11. God hath set up his royal standard in defiance of all the sons and daughters of apostate Adam, who from his own mouth are proclaimed rebels and traitors to his crown and dignity; and against such he hath taken the field, as with fire and sword to be avenged on them. Yea, he gives the world sufficient testimony of his incensed wrath, by that of it which is revealed from Heaven daily in the judgments executed upon sinners, and those many but of a span long, before they can shew what nature they
The Gospel of peace.

have by actual sin, yet crushed to death by God's righteous foot only for the viperous kind of which they come. At every door where sin sets its foot there the wrath of God meets us. Every faculty of soul and member of body are used as a weapon of unrighteousness against God; so every one hath its portion of wrath, even to the tip of the tongue. As man is sinful all over, so is he cursed all over. Inside and outside, soul and body, is wrote all with woes and curses so close and full, that there is not room for another to interline, or add to what God hath written.

In a word, so fiery is the Lord's wrath against sinful man, that all the creatures share with him in it: though God takes his aim at man, and levels his arrows primarily at his very heart, yet as they go they slant upon the creature. God's curse blasts the whole creation for man's sake; and so he pays him some of his misery from the hand of those creatures which were primitively ordained to minister to him in his happy estate, yea contribute some drops to the filling of his cup. As an enraged army makes spoil and havock of all their enemy's hand, destroys their provision, stops or poisons their waters, burns up their houses, and lets out their fury on all their hands come at: truly thus God plagues man in every creature; not one escapes his hand. The very bread we eat, water we drink, and air we breath in, are poisoned with the curse of God; of which they who live longest, die at last. And all these are no more to Hell than the few files of men in a forlorn to the whole body of an army; God doth but skirmish with sinners here by some small parties of his judgments, sent out to let them know they have an enemy alive that observes their motions, takes the alarm their sins give him, and can be too hard for them when he please; but it is in Hell where he falls on with his whole power. There sinners "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 9. And so much for the first, that there is a quarrel between God and man. The second follows.

Secondly, The Gospel takes this quarrel up, and only the Gospel; therefore called "Gospel of peace." This
The Gospel of peace. 343

will appear in two particulars. First, the Gospel presents us with the articles of peace, which God offers graciously to treat upon with the children of men; and this none but the Gospel doth. Secondly, the Gospel preached and published is the great instrument of God to effect this peace thus offered.

First, The Gospel presents us with the articles of peace, which God graciously offers to treat and conclude an inviolable peace upon with rebellious man. In it we have the whole method which God laid in his own thoughts from eternity of reconciling poor sinners to himself. The Gospel, what is it, but God's heart in print? The precious promises of the Gospel, what are they but Heaven's court-rolls, translated into the creature's language? in which are exposed to the view of our faith all the counsels and purposes of love and mercy which were concluded on by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the recovery of lost man by Jesus Christ, who was sent as Heaven's plenipotentiary to earth, fully empowered and enabled, not only by preaching to treat of a peace as desired on God's part, to be concluded between God and man, but, by the purchase of his death, to procure a peace, and by his Spirit to seal and ratify the same to all those who, believing the credential letters which God sent with him in the miracles wrought by him, and especially the testimony which the Scripture gives of him, do by a faith unseign receive him into their souls as their only Lord and Saviour. This is such a notion as is not to be learnt elsewhere. A deep silence we find concerning this in Aristotle and Tully; they cannot tell us how a poor sinner may be at peace with God. Nothing of this to be spelled from the covenant God made with Adam; that shuts the sinner up in a dark dungeon of despair; bids him look for nothing but what the wrath of a just God can measure out to him. Thus the guilty creature is surrounded on every side as with a deluge of wrath, no hope nor help to be heard of, till the Gospel, like the dove, brings the olive-branch of peace, and tells him the tide is turned, and that flood of wrath, which was poured on man for his sin is now fallen into another channel, even upon Christ, who was made a curse for us,
and hath not only drunk of the brook that lay in the way and hindered our passage to God, but hath drunk it off; so that where a sea was now appears dry land, a safe and fair causeway, called Heb. x. 20. a "living way," by which every truly repenting and believing sinner may pass without any danger from the justice of God, now appeased, into the love and favour of God: "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. 1. We are entirely beholden to the Gospel for the discovery of this secret, which the Apostle solemnly acknowledgeth, 2 Tim. i. 10. where Christ is said to "bring life and immortality to light by the Gospel." It lay hid in the womb of God's purpose, till the Gospel arose and let us into the knowledge of it, as the light of the sun reveals to the eye what was before, but what could not be seen without its light; and therefore it is not only called a living way, but "a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us," in the place beforementioned: so new, that the heart of man never was acquainted with one thought of it till the Gospel opens it, according to that of Isa. lxii. 16. "I will bring the blind by a way he knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known."

Secondly, The Gospel, published and preached, is the great instrument of God to effect his peace. Before peace be concluded betwixt God and the creature, both must be agreed; as God to pardon, so the sinner to accept and embrace peace upon God's own terms. But how shall this be done? The heart of man is so deeply rooted in its enmity against God, that it requires a strength to pluck up this equal with that which tears up mountains, and carries rocks from one place to another. The Gospel preached is the instrument which God useth for the effecting of it: "I am not ashamed (saith the Apostle) of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." Rom. i. 16. It is the chariot wherein the Spirit rides victoriously when he makes his entrance into the hearts of man; called therefore, "the ministration of the Spirit." 2 Cor. iii. 8. He fashions anew the heart, as he framed the world at first, with a word speaking. This is "the day of God's power, wherein he makes
The Gospel of peace.

his people willing." Power indeed to make those that had the seeds of war sown in their very natures against God, willing to be friends with him. Unheard-of power! as if the beating of a drum should carry such a charm along with its sound, to make those on the enemy's side upon the hearing of it to throw down their arms, and seek peace at his hand against whom they even now took the field with great rage and fury; such a secret power accompanies the Gospel. It strikes many times not only the sinner's sword out of his hand, while it is stretched out against God, but the enmity out of his heart, and brings the stoutest rebel upon his knee humbly to crave the benefit of the articles of peace published in the Gospel; it makes sinners so pliant and tractable to the call of God in the Gospel, that they on a sudden, upon the hearing of a Gospel-sermon, forget their old natural affections, which they have had to their beloved lusts, and leap out of their embraces with indignation, lest they should keep God and them at odds one moment longer. Now follows the third.

Quest. 3. Why doth God convey his peace of reconciliation by this channel unto the sons of men? or, in plainer terms, why doth God chuse to reconcile poor sinners to himself by Christ? for this is the peace which the Gospel proclaims, Coloss. i. 20. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself," and ver. 21, 22. "And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in his sight."

Answ. They are too bold with God who say that he could not find out another way; who can tell that, except God himself had told him so? Alas! how unmeet is the short line of our created understanding for such a daring attempt as to fathom the unsearchableness of God's omnipotent wisdom? to determine what God can, and what he cannot do? But we may say (and not forget to revere the majesty of Heaven) that the wisdom of God could not have laid the method of salvation more advantageous to the exalting of his own glorious name,

Vol. II. 2 X
The Gospel of peace.

and his poor creatures' happiness, than in this expedient of reconciling them to himself by Christ our great peacemaker. This transaction hath in it a happy temperament to solve all the difficulties on either hand, and for its mysterious contrivance exceeds the workmanship which God put forth in making this exterior world (though that in its kind perfect, and so glorious that the least creature tells its Maker to be a Deity, and puts the atheist to shame in his own conscience that he will not believe so) yet I say it exceeds this goodly frame of Heaven and Earth as far as the watch itself doth the case which covers it. Indeed, God intended by this way of reconciling poor sinners to himself to make work for angels and saints to admire the mystery of his wisdom, power, and love therein to everlasting. O when they shall all meet together in Heaven, and there have the whole counsel of God unfolded to them; when they shall behold what seas were dried up, and what rocks of creature-impossibilities dug through, by the omnipotent wisdom and love of God, before a sinner's peace could be obtained, and then behold the work (notwithstanding all this) to be effected and brought to a happy perfection, O how will they be swallowed up in adoring the abyss of his wisdom who laid the platform of all this according to the eternal counsel of his own will? Surely the sun doth not so much exceed the strength of our mortal eyes, as the glory of this will their understandings from ever fully comprehending it. This, this is the piece which God drew on purpose (for its rare workmanship) to beautify Heaven itself with. When Christ returned to Heaven, he carried none of this world's rarities with him; not its silver and gold, not crowns and diadems, which here men venture their lives, yea part with their souls so prodigally, for. Alas! what are these, and the whole pride and gallantry of this world, to Heaven? that which it glories most of suits Heaven no better than the beggar's dish and scraps do a prince's table, or the patched tattered coat of the one the wardrobe of the other. No: the Lord Christ came on a higher design than this, to earth; the enterprise he undertook to achieve was to negotiate, yea effect, a peace
betwixt God and his rebel creature man, that had by his revolt incurred his just wrath and vengeance. This was a work that became God himself so well to engage in that he thought none high and worthy enough to be trusted with the transacting of it beneath his only Son, who stood here but while he had brought his negotiation to a happy period; and then carried the joyful tidings of its being finished back with him to Heaven, which made his return infinitely welcome to his Father, and all the glorious inhabitants of Heaven his attendants.

CHAP. IV.

A MORE PARTICULAR ACCOUNT WHY GOD RECONCILED SINNERS TO HIMSELF BY CHRIST.

BUT I shall proceed to give some more particular answer to the question propounded.

SECT. I.

First, God lays this method of reconciling sinners to himself by Christ, that he might give the deepest testimony of his perfect hatred to sin in that very act wherein he expresseth the highest love and mercy to sinners. No act of mercy and love like that of pardoning sin. To receive a reconciled sinner into Heaven is not so great an advance as to take a rebel into a state of favour and reconciliation. The terms here are infinitely wider; there is reason to expect the one, none to look for the other. It is pure mercy to pardon; but truth, being pardoned, to save. Mic. vii. 19, 20. Well, when God puts forth this very act he will have the creature see his hatred to sin writ upon the face of that love he shews to the sinner. And truly this was but needful, if we consider how hard it is for our corrupt hearts to conceive of God's mercy without some dishonourable reflection upon his holiness. "I kept silence," (saith God) Psal. i. and what inference doth the wicked draw from thence?
"thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself," that is, thou thoughtest I liked sin as well as thyself. Now, if so plain and easy a text as God's forbearing mercy be wrested, and a false gloss so repugnant not only to the end of God therein, but to the holy nature of God; how much more subject is forgiving mercy (that is so far superlative to that, and infinitely more luscious to the sinner's palate) to be abused? Some men gaze so long on this pleasing object, that they are not willing to look off and see any other attribute in God. Now, in this way of reconciling himself to sinners by Christ, he hath given such an argument to convince sinners that he is an implacable hater of sin, as hath not its fellow. It is true every threat in the Bible tells us that sin finds no favour in God's heart; the guilty consciences of men, that hunt them home, and follow them into their own bosoms, continually yelling and crying damnation in their ears; the remarkable judgments, which now and then take hold of sinners in this world; and much more the furnace which is heating for them in another world, shew abundantly how hot and burning God's heart within him is in wrath against sin. But when we see him run upon his Son, and lay the envenomed knife of his wrath to his throat, yea thrust it into his very heart, and there let it stick (for all the supplications and prayers which in his bitter agonies he offered up to his Father with strong crying and tears) without the least sparing of him, till he had forced his life (in a throng of sad groans and sighs) out of his body, and therewith paid justice the full debt, which he had as man's surety undertook to discharge, this, this I say, doth give us a greater advantage to conceive of God's hatred to sin than if we could stand in a place to see what entertainment the damned find in Hell, and at once behold all the torments they endure. Alas! their backs are not broad enough to bear the whole weight of God's wrath at once, it being infinite and they finite; which if they could, we should not find them lying in that prison for non-payment; but behold one here, who had the whole curse of sin at once upon his back. Indeed their sufferings are infinite, extensive, because everlasting; but his were infinite, inten-
The Gospel of peace; 349

sive; he paid in one sum what they shall be ever paying, and yet never come to the last farthing. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him." Isa. liii. 5. "He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" ver. 6. or he hath made the iniquity of us all to meet in him; the whole curse met in him, as all streams do in the sea: a virtual collection of all the threatenings denounced against sin, and all laid on him. And now take but one step more, and consider in how near relation Christ stood in to God, as also the infinite and unspeakable love with which it was filled, and mutually endeared on each hand, and this at the very same time when he ascended the stage for this bloody tragedy to be acted on himself; and I think that you are at the highest stair the Word of God can lead you to ascend by into the meditation of this subject. Should you see a father that has but one only son, and can have no more, make out his mittimus to prison, come into court himself and sit judge upon his life, with his own lips pass sentence of death upon him, and order that it be executed with the most exquisite torments that may be, yea go to the place himself, and with his own eyes, and those not full of water as mourning for his death, but full of fire and fury, yea a countenance every way so set as might tell all that see it the man took pleasure in his child's death, ye would say, Surely he bitterly hates his son, or the sin his son hath committed. This you see in God the Father towards his Son; it was he more than men or devils that procured his death. Christ took notice of this, that the warrant for his death had his Father's hand and seal to it: "Shall I not drink of the cup my Father gives me?" yea he stands by and rejoiceth in it; his blood was the "wine that made glad the heart of God; it pleased the Lord to bruise him." Isa. liii. 10.

When God corrects a saint, he does it in a manner unwillingly; but when Christ suffers, it pleaseth him: and not this from want of love in his heart to Christ, nor that any disobedience in Christ had hardened his Father's heart against him, for he never displeased him; but from the hatred he had to sin, and zeal to exalt his mercy towards sinners, by satisfying his justice on his Son.
SECT. II.

Secondly, He effected our peace by Christ, that he might for ever hide pride from his saints’ eyes. Pride was the stone on which both angels and man stumbled and fell: in man’s recovery, therefore, he will roll that stone as far as may be out of the way; he will lay that knife aside with which man did himself the mischief. And that he may do this, he transacts the whole business by Christ for them. Man’s project was to cut off the entail of his obedience to God, and set up for himself, as a free and absolute prince, without holding upon his Maker; a strange plot! for, to effect this, he must first have thrown away that being which God gave him, and by a self-creation (if such a thing had been possible) have bestowed a new one upon himself; then indeed, and not till then, he might have had his will. But, alas! his pride to be what he could not, lost him what he had, and still might have enjoyed; yet how foolish soever it now appears and infeasible, that was the plot pride had sprung in man’s heart. Now God, to preserve his children from all future assaults and batteries of Hell at this door, chose such a way of reconciling and saving them, that when the prince of the world comes to tempt them to pride, he should find nothing in them to give the least countenance or colour to such a motion; so that of all sins, pride is such a one as we may wonder how it should grow, for it hath no other root to bear it up but what is found in man’s dreaming fancy and imagination. It grows, as sometimes we shall see a mushroom, or moss among stones, where little or no soil is for its root to take hold of. God, in this Gospel way of reconciling sinners by Christ, makes him fetch all from without doors. Wilt thou, poor soul, have peace with God? thou must not have it from thine own penance for thy sins. “The chastisement of our peace was upon him.” Isa. liii. 5. O know thou art not thy own peace-maker. That is Christ’s name, who did that work. “For he is our peace who hath made both one.” Ephes. ii. 14. Jew and Gentile one with God, and one with one another. Wouldest thou be righteous? then thou must not appear before
The Gospel of peace.

God in thy own clothes; it is another's righteousness, not thy own, that is provided for thee: "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness," Isa. xlv. 24. In a word, wouldest thou ever have a right in Heaven's glory? thy penny is not good silver to purchase it with, the price must not come out of thy purse, but Christ's heart; and therefore, as it is called the "purchased possession," in regard of Christ, because he obtained it for us with a great sum, not silver and gold, but his precious blood; so "an inheritance" in regard of us, because it descends upon us as freely as the father's estate on his child. Ephes. i. 14. And why all this, but that the lofty looks of man may be humbled, and the haughtiness of man should be bowed down, and the Lord alone exalted in the day of our salvation? The manna is expounded by Christ himself to be a type of him, John vi. 32. "The bread of God is he which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world." Now observe wherefore God chose that way of feeding them in the wilderness: "Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee." Deut. viii. 16. But wherein lay this great humbling of them? were they not shrewdly humbled, think you, to be fed with such a dainty dish, which had God for its cook, and is called angels' food for its delicacy? Psal. lxxviii. 25. such, that if they needed any repast, might well suit their table. I answer, It was not the meanness of the fare, but the manner of having it, which God intended should humble them. Man is proud, and loves to be his own provider, and not stand to another's allowance; the same feast set in by the charity and bounty of another will not go down so well with his high stomach as when it is provided at his own cost and charges: he had rather have the honour of keeping his own house, though mean, than to live higher upon the alms and allowance of another's charity; this made them wish themselves at their onions in their own gardens in Egypt, and flesh-pots there; which (though they were grosser diet) they liked better, because bought with their own penny.
SECT. III.

Thirdly, That it might be a peace with the greatest advantage possible; that God and man might meet again on better terms by this pacification than when Adam stood in all his primitive glory. God, no doubt, would not have let the beauty of his first workmanship be so defaced by sin, had he not meant to have reared a more magnificent structure out of its ruins. Now, God intending to print man's happiness in the second edition with a fairer character than at the first, employs Christ in the work, as the only fit instrument to accomplish so great a design; Christ himself tells him as much: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John x. 10. His coming was not to give those who were dead and damned bare peace, naked life, but "more abundantly" than ever man had them before the breach. It was Christ in the second temple who filled it with a glory superlative to the first: Christ in the second creation of man, that lifts his head above his first state in happiness. As Adam was a pattern to all his seed, what he was in his innocent state that should they all have been, if sin had not changed the scene, and turned the tables; so Christ is a pattern to all his seed of that glory which they shall be clothed with: 1 John iii. 2. "We are now the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know when he appears we shall be like him," that is, "our vile bodies like his glorious body," as the Apostle hath it; Phil. 3. and our souls also like his glorious soul. Now by how much our nature in Christ is more glorious than it was in Adam, by so much the state of a reconciled sinner surpasseth Adam's first condition. Some little discovery whereof take in two particulars. First, the reconciled sinner hath the advantage of Adam in his union to God. Secondly, in his communion with God.

First, In his union to God. And that,

First, As it is nearer. Secondly, as it is stronger. First, it is nearer; because God and man make one person in Christ. This is such a mystery as was not heard of by Adam in all his glory; he indeed was in league of love
and friendship with God, and that was the best flower in his crown; but he could lay no claim to such kindred and consanguinity as now, with reverence be it spoken, the reconciled soul can with God: this comes in by the marriage of the divine nature with the human, in the person of Christ, which personal union is the foundation of another, a mystical union betwixt Christ and the person of every believer; and this is so near an union, that as by the union of the divine nature and human there is one person, so also by this mystical union the saints and their head make one Christ: "for as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being members are one body; so also is Christ."

1 Cor. xii. 12. Ecclesia est Christus explicatus. The church is nothing but Christ displayed. Who can speak what an advance this is to the human nature in general, and to the persons of believers in particular? such a one, as leaves not only Adam but angels beneath a reconciled sinner in this respect. Adam at first was made but little lower than the angels, but by this pair of unions God hath set the reconciled soul more than a little above them both; for Christ by taking on him not the nature of angels (though the more ancient and noble house) but the seed of Abraham, made the elder serve the younger, even angels themselves minister to the meanest saint, as unto their master's heir. Heb. i. 14.

Secondly, As the union is nearer, so is it stronger; therefore stronger because nearer: the closer stones stand together the stronger the building. The union betwixt God and Adam in the first covenant was not so near but Adam might fall, and yet God's glory stand entire and unshaken; but the union now is so close and strong betwixt Christ and his saints, that Christ cannot be Christ without his members: "because I live (saith Christ) ye shall live also;" John xiv. 19. implying that their life was bound up in his, and it was as easy for him to be turned out of Heaven, as for them to be kept out. Eph. i. 23. The church is called there "Christ's body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." A body is not full if it hath not every member and joint, though never so little, and them in their fulness too. The saint's grace
The Gospel of Peace.

is Christ's glory, 2 Cor. viii. 23. and, though his essential glory as God receives no filling from his saints or their graces, yet consider him in his mediatiorship, as head of his church, so Christ's glory is daily filling, as the elect are called in daily, and as those that are called in grow up to their appointed stature. Christ hath not his fulness till the saints have their perfection and complement of grace in Heaven's glory.

Secondly, In his communion with God. The nearer (we use to say) the dearer. Communion results from union; if the union be nearer and stronger between a reconciled soul and God than Adam's was, his communion must needs be sweeter and fuller. Why else is the communion of husband and wife fuller than of friend and friend, but because the union is closer? God converseth with Adam as a friend with his friend and ally, but with the reconciled soul as a husband with his wife: "Thy Maker is thy husband," Isa. liv. 5.

There is a double sweetness peculiar to the reconciled sinner's communion with God.

First, There is in Christ a foundation laid for greater familiarity with God than Adam was at first capable of. He indeed was the Son of God, yet he was kept at a further distance, and treated with more state and majesty from God, than now the reconciled soul is; for though he was the Son of God by creation, yet the Son of God was not then the son of man by incarnation; and at this door comes in the believer's sweetest familiarity with God: the Christian cannot lift up now an eye of faith to God but he sees his own nature standing upon the throne by him, in the person of Christ. And if the sight of Joseph at Pharaoh's right hand, in court favour and honour, sent the patriarchs home with such joyful news to their aged father, what a ravishing message of joy must faith carry then to the soul of a reconciled sinner, when it comes in (after some vision of love in an ordinance) and saith, Cheer up, O my soul, I see Jesus Christ, thy near kinsman, at God's right hand in glory, to whom all power is given in Heaven and earth; fear not, he is so nigh in blood to thee that he cannot be unmindful of thee, except he should do what were unnatural in thyself, that is, "hide himself from his own flesh?" The lower a prince
The Gospel of peace.

stoops to the meanest of his subjects, the more familiar he makes himself to his subjects. It was a wonderful condescension in the great God, who can have no com-
peer, first to make man, and then strike so friendly a
league and covenant with him. This God doth now
with every reconciled soul, and that enriched with so
many astonishing circumstances of condescending grace,
as must needs speak the way of the believer's access to
God more familiar. God doth, in this second and new
alliance with his poor creature, descend his throne, ex-
change his majesty's robes of glory, for the rags of man's
frail flesh; he leaves his palace, to live for a time in his
creature's humble cottage, and there not only fami-
liarily converses with him, but (which is stranger) minis-
ters to him, yea which is more than all these, he surren-
ders himself up to endure all manner of indignities from
his sorry creature's hand. And when this his coarse en-
tertainment is done, back he posts to Heaven, not to
complain to his Father how he hath been abused here
below, and raise Heaven's power against those that had
so ill treated him, but to make ready Heaven's palace
for the reception of those who had thus abused him, and
now will but accept of his grace: and lest these, yet left
on earth, should fear his re-assumed royalty and majesty
in Heaven's glory would make some alteration with their
affairs in his heart, to give them therefore a constant
demonstration that he would be the same in the height
of his honour that he was in the depth of his abasement,
he goes back in the same clothes he had borrowed of their
nature, to wear them on the throne in all his glory, only
some princely cost betowed to put them into the fashion
of that heavenly kingdom, and make them suit with his
glorified state, giving them a pattern by this what their
own vile bodies, which are now so dishonourable, shall
be made another day. Now none of all those circum-
stances were found in God's first administration to Adam,
and therefore this the more familiar.

Secondly, There is the sweetness of pardoning mercy,
and the bleeding love of Christ, who by his death pur-
chased it for him, to be tasted in the reconciled soul's
communion with God. This lump of sugar Adam had
not in his cup. He knew what the love of a giving God meant, but was a stranger to the mercy of a forgiving God. The reconciled soul experiences both. The love of a father, more than ordinary kind, is a great comfort to a dutiful child, one that never displeased his father; but it carries no such wonder in it to our thoughts as the compassion and melting bowels of a father towards a rebellious child doth; and certainly the prodigal child, that is received again into his father's embraces, hath the advantage for loving his father more than his brother that never came under his father's displeasure. O this pardoning mercy, and the love of Christ that procured it, they are the most spacious and fruitful heads for a gracious soul to enlarge his sweetest meditations upon here on earth; but who can conceive what ravishing music glorified saints will make in running division on this sweet note? I am sure the song their harps are tuned to is the "song of the Lamb." Rev. xv. 2, 3. The saint's finished happiness in Heaven's glory is a composition of all the rare ingredients possible, so tempered by the wise hand of God that, as none could well be spared, so not the taste of any one shall be lost in another; but this of pardoning mercy, and the stupendous love and wisdom of God through Christ therein, shall, as I may so say, give a sweet relish to all, and be tasted above all the rest.

CHAP. V.

AN EXHORTATION TO EMBRACE THIS PEACE OF RECONCILIATION, OFFERED IN THE GOSPEL.

USE 1. Let it provoke every one to labour to get an interest in this peace of reconciliation with God, which the Gospel brings. Peace with God! sure it is worth the sinner's having; or else the angels were ill employed, when they welcomed the tidings thereof into the world at our Saviour's birth with such acclamations of joy: "glory to God, on earth peace," Luke ii. 14. yea Christ himself was deceived in his purchase; who, if a sinner's
peace with God be not of high price and value, hath little
to shew for the effusion of his heart-blood which he
thought well spent to gain this; but this we cannot be-
lieve. And yet to see how freely God offers peace and
pardon to the sons of men through Christ, and how coy,
yea sullen and cross, they are to the motion; one that
does not well know them both, God's infinite goodness
and wretched man's horrible baseness, might be ready
to think it some low-prized ware, which lay upon God's
hands; and this to be the cause why God is so earnest
to put it off, and man so loath to take it off his hands.
Ah! poor deluded wretches, who is the wicked coun-
seller that hardens your hearts from embracing your
own mercies? None sure but a devil can hate God and
you so much. And hath he sped so well in his own
quarrel against God, that he should be hearkened to by
thee, poor sinner? Can he give thee armour that will
quench God's bullets? how then is it that he is so un-
kind to himself as to let them lie burning in his own bo-
som to his unspeakable torment? Or will he lend thee
any pity, when thou hast by his advice undone thyself?
Alas! no more than the cruel wolf doth the silly sheep,
when he hath sucked her blood, and torn her in pieces.
Think and think again, poor sinner, what answer thou
meanest to send to Heaven, before God call his ambas-
sadors home, and the treaty break up never to be renewed
again. And, that thou mayest not want some seasonable
matter for thy musing thoughts to enlarge upon on this
subject, let me desire thee to treat with thy own heart
upon these four heads.

First, Consider what it is that stands before thee in offer.
Secondly, Who it is that offers it.
Thirdly, How he offers it.
Fourthly, What thou dost when thou refusest it.

SECT. I.

First, Consider what it is that is offered thee: peace
with God. A thing so indispensable thou canst not
have less, and so comprehensive thou needest have no
more than this, and what cometh with it, to make thee
truly fully happy. Of all the variety of enjoyments with
which it is possible thy table can be spread, this is a dish that can least be spared; take away peace, and that but of an inferior nature (outward peace) and the feast is spoiled, though it be on a prince's table. David's children had little stomach to their royal dinner when one of them was slain that sat at the board with them; and what taste can you have in all your junkets, while God is in array against you, many sinners slain before your eye by God's judgments, and the same sword that hath let out their blood at thy throat, while the meat is in thy mouth? Methinks your sweet morsels should stick in your throat, and hardly get down, while you muse on these things. O sinner! is not this as a toad swelling at the bottom of thy most sweetly-sugared cup—that the controversy yet depends betwixt God and thee; thy sins are unpardoned, and thou a dead damned creature, however thou frolickest it for the present in thy prison? Would you not wonder to see a man at his sport, hunting or hawking, and one should tell you this man is to be hanged to morrow? Truly God is more merciful to thee than thou canst promise thyself, if he stay the execution till another day. I confess when I meet a man whose life proclaims him an unreconciled sinner, and see him spruce up himself in his fine clothes, entertain himself with the joy of his children, estate, honour, or the like, in this life, it administers matter of admiration to me what such a one thinks of God or himself. Canst thou think it is long thou shalt sit at this fire of thorns thou hast kindled and not God for thee? Must it needs provoke a creditor to see his debtor live high and go brave, all at his cost, and all the while never think of getting out of his debt, or make his peace with him? much more doth it God, to see sinners spend upon his bounty, lead joyful jovial lives in the abundance of outward enjoyments he lends them, but take no thought of making peace with him in whose debt-book they are so deep in arrears. What folly had it been for the Jews, when Abashuerus had sealed the warrant for their destruction, to have gone and painted their houses, planted their fields, and let out their hearts in the enjoyment of their estates, without taking care in the first place of getting that bloody
decree reversed? A worse sort art thou, that doest all these, while thou carriest the sentence of death from God's mouth about thee in thy own conscience. Sir Thomas More, when in the Tower, would not so much as trim himself, saying there was a controversy betwixt the king and him for his head, and till that was at an happy end, he would be at no cost about it. Skim but off the froth of his wit, and you may make a solemn use of it. Certainly all the cost you bestow on yourselves to make your lives pleasurable and joyous to you is mere folly, till it be decided what will become of the suit betwixt God and you, not for your heads but souls, yea soul and body, whether for Heaven or Hell. O were it not thy wisest course to begin with making thy peace, and then thou mayest soon lead a happy life? We say he that gets out of debt grows rich. I am sure the reconciled soul cannot be poor. As soon as the peace is concluded, a free trade is opened betwixt God and the soul. If once pardoned, thou mayest then sail to any port that lies in God's dominions and be welcome; all the promises stand open with their rich treasure; take, poor soul, full lading in of all the precious things they afford, even as much as thy faith can bear, and none shall hinder thee. As a man may draw the wine of a whole vessel through one tap, so faith may draw the comfort of all the covenant out of this one promise of reconciliation. If reconciled, then the door is open to let thee into communion with God in all his ordinances: God and thou being agreed, may now walk together. Whereas before, thou couldest not look into God's presence but his heart rose against thee, as one at the sight of his enemy, ready to draw upon thee with his judgments. The smith (we say) and his penny both are black; so wert thou, with all thy duties and performances, while unreconciled in his eye; but now thy 'voice is sweet, and countenance comely.' All the attributes of God (thy ally) are thine; 'his horses and chariots thine,' as Jehoshaphat told Ahab. Whenever any enemy puts thee in fear, you know where to have a friend, that will take part with thee; all his providences, though like bees, they fly some this way and some that, yea one contrary to another, as thou
The Gospel of peace.

thinkest, impossible to trace them, yet they are all at work for thee; and thy soul is the hive wherein they will unlaide the sweet fruit of all their labour, though possibly it may be night, the evening of thy days, before thou findest it. In a word, if reconciled, thou standest next step to Heaven: "whom he justifies, them he glorifies;" Rom. viii. 30. thou art sure to be there as soon as death rends the veil of thy flesh, which is all that interposeth between thee and it.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Consider who it is that offers peace to thee—the great God; and it is hard to say which speaks the greatest wonder: for God to offer, or thee to deny what he offers. We marvel not to see the undutiful child on his knee, labouring to soften his father's heart with his tears, which he hath hardened against him with his rebellions; nor a condemned traitor prostrate at his prince's foot, begging for his life, now forfeited to the justice of the law; but, it is something strange to see the father become suppliant to his child; more for the traitor to open his dungeon door, and find his prince standing there, and that upon no other errand than to desire him to accept of a pardon. And yet self-love may be the great motive for this seeming self-denial. The parent doth but love himself, when he steps below his place to gain his child that carries so much of its parent's life about him; and such necessity of state there is sometimes that great princes are forced to stoop to the meanest yea worst of their subjects: a prince's safety may be so intimately concerned in a traitor's life, that he cannot cut off his head, without imminent danger to the crown that stands upon his own. But none of these straits forced God to take up thoughts of peace to his poor creature; no: they are the birth of free descending love; and now think again, sinner, before the great God hath a denial from thee. If a neighbour, the poorest in the town, and he one that hath done thee wrong, and not received it from thee, comes to thee and desires peace, shouldest thou reject the motion? would not thy conscience reproof thee to thy dying day? how

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then wilt thou endure to look God or conscience in the face, if thou refusest peace at God's hands, that doth not treat like men, when their sword is broke and they cannot fight, but when he hath absolute power over thy life, which is ever in his hands? yea a God that hath received the wrong, never did thee any, yea should have done thee none, if he had long before this hanged thee up in chains of darkness among the damned.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Consider how God offers thee peace?

First, He doth it sincerely; he covers not fraud under a treaty of peace. Among men there hath been horrible juggling in this case. The flag of peace is oft hung out at lip, only to draw them within the reach of their dagger, which is ready to smite them, as Joab did Abner, under the fifth rib. In all the civil wars of France, the poor Protestants found peace more costly to them than war; they beat the Papists in the field, when open enemies, but were betrayed by them in the chamber, when false friends. But for thy comfort know, it is a God of truth thou treatest with; never did he shed the blood of war in peace; or give a soul to the sword of his wrath, after quarter taken, and peace given: "if we confess, he is just and faithful to forgive;" his promises are not yea and nay, like the devil's, who lays them so that he may have the credit both ways. No: the very heart of God may be seen as through a crystal window in the promise: "they are all yea and amen in Christ." 2 Cor. i. 20.

Secondly, He offers peace affectionately; his heart is deeply engaged in the tenders of mercy to poor sinners, which will appear,

First, In his contriving a way for reconciling sinners to himself. What men strongly desire they stretch their wits to the utmost how to accomplish. "The liberal man deviseth liberal things." Isa. xxxii. 8. It shews the heart exceedingly large in charity, when a man shall sit down and study how he may find out ways for the exercise of his charity; whereas most men, alas! beat their brains how they may save their purses, and escape with giving as little as may be to the poor. O what a rare in-
vention hath God found out for shewing mercy! which hath so many mysterious passages in it that angels themselves are put hither to school, that, by studying this mystery of God's reconciling sinners to himself by Christ, they might "know the manifold wisdom of God." 

_Eph. iii. 10._

Secondly, By the early discovery he made of this to the sons of men. He would go among us; for no sooner had man broken the peace, and taken up rebellious arms against his Maker, but the Lord's heart relented towards him, and could not let the sun go down in his wrath against him, but must in the very same day that he sinned let him hear of a Saviour by preaching peace to him, "in the seed of the woman." _Gen. ii. 15._ Little did Adam think God had such a message in his mouth for him, when he first heard him coming towards him, and for fear ran his head into a bush, meditating a flight from him, if he had known whither to have gone. O that "Adam, where art thou?" sounded no doubt in his guilty ears like the voice of an avenging God calling him, a malefactor, to execution; but it proved the voice of a gracious God coming, not to meet man in his way returning to him, but to seek him out, who had lost all thoughts of him; that he might give some ease to his own gracious heart, now full of mercy to his poor creature, by disclosing to him the purposes of grace which he had there conceived towards him. Surely his heart was very full, or else this would not have burst out so soon.

Thirdly, The great ordinance of the Gospel-ministry, which God hath set up in the church, on purpose to treat with sinners upon a peace, speaks his deep affection to the work. _2 Cor. v._ One would have thought it had been enough to print his thoughts and purposes of mercy in the Scripture, though he had done no more. Princes, when they put out a statute or a law, expect all their subjects should enquire after it, and do not send one to every town, whose office shall be to give notice thereof, and persuade people to submit to it; yet this the great God doth; the ministers work from one end of the year to the other, what is it but to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God? and in this observe,
First, The persons he sends to preach. Not angels, foreigners to our nature; who, though they wish us well, yet are not so intimately concerned in man's fall, as to give them the advantage of preaching with those melting bowels that God would have them filled with who go on this his errand. No: he sends men, with whom we may converse familiarly, creatures of like passions, whose nature puts them under the same depravation, temptation, and condemnation with ourselves; who can, from the acquaintance they have with their own hearts, tell us the baseness of ours; from the fire of God's wrath, which hath scorched them for their sins, tell us the desert of ours, and danger we are in by reason of them; as also, from the sweet sense that the taste of God's love in Christ hath left on their souls, can commend the cheer and feast they invite us to, upon their own knowledge. Did not God, think you, desire good speed to his embassage, when he chose such to carry it?

Secondly, Observe the qualifications required in those he employs as ambassadors to offer peace to sinners; "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." 2 Tim. ii. 24. O how careful is God that nothing should be in the preacher to prejudice the sinner's judgment, or harden his heart against the offer of his grace? If the servant be proud and hasty, how shall they know the master is meek and patient? God would have them do nothing to make the breach wider, or hinder a happy close betwixt him and them. Indeed he that will take the bird, must not scare it. A froward peevish messenger is no friend to him that sends him. Sinners are not pelted into Christ with stones of hard provoking language; but wooed into Christ by heart-melting exhortations.

Thirdly, Look into the commission God gives his ambassadors, and still his heart appears in the business; whether you consider the largeness of it, on the one hand, or strictness of it on the other. First, the largeness of it: "Go and preach (saith Christ) the Gospel to every creature." Make no difference: rich or poor, great sinners or little, old sinners or young; offer peace to all
that will but repent and believe; bid as many come as will; here is room for all that come. Again, the strictness of it on the other hand. O what a solemn charge have they of delivering their message faithfully! Paul trembles at the thoughts of loitering: "Woe unto me if I preach not." What an argument doth Christ use (fetched from his very heart) to persuade Peter to be careful: "If thou lovest me, feed my sheep." As if he had said, Peter, thou now art in tears for thy cowardice in denying me; thou hast yet one way left, for all that unkindness, to demonstrate thy love to me, and that is by feeding my sheep: do this, and trouble not thyself for that. Christ shews more care of his sheep than of himself.

Fourthly, The joy God expresseth when poor sinners come into the offer of peace. Joy is the highest testimony that can be given to our complacency in any thing or person: love to joy is as fuel to the fire; if love lay little fuel of desires on the heart, then the flame of joy that comes thence will not be great. Now God's joy is great in pardoning poor sinners that come in; therefore his affection great in the offer thereof. It is made the very motive that prevails with God to pardon sinners, "because he delighteth in mercy." Micah vii. 18. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, for he delighteth in mercy." God doth all this, "because he delighteth in mercy." Ask why the fisher stands all night with his angle in the river; he will tell you because he delights in the sport. Well, you now know the reason why God stands so long waiting on sinners, months, years preaching to them; it is that he may be gracious in pardoning them, and in that act delight himself. Princes very often pardon traitors, to please others more than themselves, or else it would never be done; but God doth it chiefly to delight and glad his own merciful heart. Hence the business Christ came about (which was no other but to reconcile sinners to God) is called, the pleasure of the Lord. Isaiah liii. 10. The Lord takes such joy and pleasure in this, that whereas other fathers, whose love to their children sinks infinitely beneath any comparison with the love of
The Gospel of peace.

God to Christ, mourn at the death of their children (and most of all when violent and bloody) God he takes content in his Son's death, yea had the chief hand in procuring of it, and that with infinite complacency: "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." And what joy could God take in his Son's death, but as it made way for him and his poor creature that were fallen out, and at open war one against another, to fall in again by a happy accord? And now speak, O sinner, if God doth so affectionately desire to be reconciled with thee, doth it not much more behave thee to embrace the peace, than it doth him to offer it?

SECT. IV.

There is but one thing more I would desire thee, sinner, to consider, and then I leave thee to thy own choice. Consider what thou dost when thou refusest peace with God. Determinations of war or peace are the result of the most grave counsels and mature deliberation possible. Think and think again what thou dost before thou breakest off the treaty of peace; lest thou makest work for repentance, when it will be too late. But, lest thou shouldest not be so faithful to God and thy own soul as to give thy conscience liberty to speak freely in this matter, I shall do it for thee, and tell thee what thou dost when thou rejectest peace. Thou justifiest thy former hostilities against God, and declarest that thou wilt vouch what thou hast done, let God right himself as well as he can. He that refuseth a pardon, either denieth he hath done wrong, or, which is worse, stands to defend it; thou hast as good say, thou desirest not to be friends with God, but hast a mind to perpetuate the feud between God and thee; like Amilcar, who was such an enemy to Rome, that when he died, he made his son Hannibal heir to his hatred against them. Is it not enough thou hast fought so many battles on earth against thy Maker, but wilt thou keep the quarrel up in another world also, where there is no more possibility to put an end to it than to eternity itself? Thou throwest the greatest scorn upon God that it is possible for a creature to do; as if God's love and hatred were such inconsider-
able things that they need not, when cast into the scale
of thy thoughts, preponderate thee either way, the one
to move thy desire, or the other thy fear. In a word,
thou consentest to thy own damnation, and desperately
flingest thyself into the mouth of God's flaming wrath,
which gapes in the threatening upon thee. God is under
an oath to procure thy destruction, if thou diest in this
mind; which God forbid. Death is the trap-door which
will let thee down to Hell's dungeon, and when once
thou art there thou art where thou wilt have space
enough to weep over thy past folly; though here thou
hast neither mind nor leisure to make God thy friend.
The very thoughts of those offers of peace which once
thou hadst (but no heart to embrace them) will be like
so much salt and vinegar, with which thy accusing con-
science will be continually basting thee, as thou liest
roasting in Hell-fire, to make thy torment the more in-
tolerable. I know this language grates in the sinner's ears,
but not so ill as the gnashing of the sinner's own teeth
will in Hell. I have read of a foolish (I may say cruel)
law among the Lacedemonians, that none should tell his
neighbour any ill news befallen him; but every one
should be left in process of time to find it out themselves.
Many among us I think would be content, if there was
such a law, that might tie up ministers' mouths from
scaring them with their sins, and the miseries that attend
their unreconciled state: the most are more careful to
run from the discourse of their misery than to get out of
the danger of it; are more offended with the talk of Hell,
than troubled for that sinful state that shall bring them
thither. But, alas! when then shall we shew our love to
the souls of sinners, if not now? seeing that in Hell there
remains no more offices of love to be done for them. Hell
is a pest-house, that we may not write so much on the
doors of it as "Lord have mercy on them," that are in
it; may they who now pray for their salvation, and weep
over their condition, must then with Christ vote for their
damnation, and rejoice in it; though they be their own
fathers, husbands, and wives they see there. O now be-
think yourselves, before the heart of God and man be
hardened against you.
CHAP. VI.

FOUR DIRECTIONS BY WAY OF COUNSEL TO SINNERS, YET IN AN UNRECONCILED STATE, HOW THEY MAY BE AT PEACE WITH GOD.

QUEST. But how may a poor sinner be at peace with God?

SECT. I.

Answ. First, See and be sensible of the feud and enmity that at present stands betwixt God and thee.

First, As to the reality of the thing, that there is indeed a quarrel, with God hath against thee; wherever thou goest an angry God is at thy back, and his wrath, like a heavy cloud, hangs full of curses over thy head, ready every moment to empty them upon thy head. There is need of pressing this; for, though it is ordinary for men to confess themselves sinners, yet most are loth to disparage their state so far as to rank themselves among the enemies of God; no, they hope God and they are good friends for all this. Like thieves, they will confess some little matter, but they will have a care of letting fall any thing that may hazard their necks; sinner is a favourable word: who lives and sins not? that they will grant; but to be in a state of enmity, and under the wrath of God, this scares them too much, and brings too near the sight of the gallows, the seat of hell, which are due to that state; and therefore when pressed thus far; as the Jews desired Rabshakeh (when he scared them with the dreadful things that would befall them, if they stood out against the king his master) that he would not speak in the Jews' language in the hearing of the people, Isa. xxxvi. 11. (for fear of affrighting them) but in a foreign tongue; so sinners desire those that deal plainly with them they would not speak so broad in the hearing of their conscience, which they are afraid should know the worst. But, if thou lovest thy own soul, make a true representation of thy state to thyself. O what folly is it
The Gospel of peace.

for a man to lose his cause by concealing the badness of it?

Secondly, Labour to bring thyself under the sense of thy miserable condition as thou art. Hadst thou the empire of the world, and all nations creeping at thy foot, as once the beasts did to Adam, and a lease as long as Methuselah's life twice told to enjoy it in, without the interposition of one cloud all the while to darken the glory of this thy royalty; yet, supposing thee to be one to whom God is an enemy, I would choose to be the worm under thy foot, the toad in the ditch, sooner than thy miserable self in thy palace. One thought of thy approaching death and eternal misery in store for thee will let out all the joy of thy present happiness. This, this makes the great ones of the world, indeed all unreconciled sinners, high and low, to go to their graves, as bears down a hill, backwards; alas! if they should but look forward whither they are going, their hearts would soon be at their mouths, for want of this breast-plate, a comfortable persuasion of their peace made with God. Go therefore (as a poor malefactor condemned to die would do) shut thyself up from all thy old flattering companions, that would still lull thy miserable soul in a senseless security (the cradle which the devil rocks souls in to their utter destruction), let none of them come to thee; but send for those that dare be faithful to thee and, like Samuel, tell thee every word that God saith against thee, and conceal nothing; yea, read thy doom with thine own eyes in the Word, and take thy condemnation from God's own mouth, and not man's: "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God;" muse on it till it cleaves to thy soul, like a drawing plaster to a sore, and brings out the very core of thy pride and carnal confidence, which hardened thy heart from all sense of thy condition, by which time the anguish of thy own spirit (seeing the straits thou art brought into) will prompt thee to desire peace with God, and this is that which God waits to hear drop from thee, as much as Benhadad's servants did for a word from Ahab's mouth.
SECT. II.

Secondly, Look thou propoundest right ends in thy desire of reconciliation with God. Nothing more hateful to God or man than falsehood and treachery in treaties of peace; and yet some men can have words as smooth as butter in their mouths, and war is in their hearts at the same time. Psalm lv. 21. O take heed of any hollowness of heart in thy enquiry for peace; when found out, as it must needs be, except God's eye fails him, which is impossible, it will exceedingly harden the heart of God against thee. God never repented of any he pardoned or took up into the chariot of peace with him, because he was never deceived by any, as men are, who often make peace with those who prove at last false brethren, and give them cause to wish they had never known them. Joab kissed Amasa, but he took no heed to the sword in Joab's hand; God looks to the heart, and sees what is in its hand; be sure thou therefore stand clear in thy own thoughts as to the ends thou aimest at. It is lawful for thee to look to thy own safety; God will give thee leave to look to thyself; this thou mayest, and yet not neglect him: but never was any peace true or sure where only self-love made it; whether it be with God, or between man and man. Thou seest thou art undone if thou keepest thy old side, and therefore thou seekest peace with God, as the kings that served Hadarezer, when they saw he was smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel themselves. 2 Sam. x. 19. Well, this may be allowed thee to come over to God, because his is the surer side. Never any made peace with God, but this argument weighed much with them. If Jacob could have been safe at home, he had never fled to Laban: all are fired out of their holds before they yield to God. But take heed this be not all thou aimest at, or the chief thou aimest at; this thou mayest do, and hate God as much as ever: like those who are said to yield feignedly to David's victorious arms, because no help for it. A man taken in a storm may be forced under the penthouse of his greatest enemy for shelter, without any change of his heart, or better thoughts of him than before he was wont.
things, therefore, thou must look to have in thy eye, above thy own self-preservation.

First, The honour of God. Hence oft the saints' prayers are pressed with an argument from God, as well as themselves, and their own misery: "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." Psalm lxxix. 9. Certainly, if God could not be more glorified in our peace and reconciliation than in our death and damnation, it were a wicked thing to desire it. But God hath cleared this up to us that he is no loser by acts of mercy: in this lies the greatest revenue of his crown, or else he would not love "mercy, rather than sacrifice." God is free to chuse what suits his own heart best, and most conduceth to the exalting of his great name; and he delights more in the mercy shewn to one than in the blood of all the damned that are made a sacrifice to his justice. And indeed he had a higher end in their damnation than their suffering; and that was the enhancing of the glory of his mercy in his saved ones: this is the beautiful piece God takes delight in, and the other but the shadow to it. Then thou art in a fit disposition to pray for peace, and mayest go with encouragement, when thy heart is deeply affected with the honour that will accrue to God by it. It is an argument God will not deny. "This (said Abigail to David) shall be no grief to thee, nor offence of heart unto my Lord." 1 Sam. xxv. She meant he should never have cause to repent that he was kept from shedding blood. Thus mayest thou plead with God, and say, O Lord, when I shall with saints and angels be praising thy pardoning grace in Heaven, it will not grieve thee that thy mercy kept thee from shedding my blood, damning my soul in Hell. But now it is evident that many who seem to seek peace, and pursue it too very strongly, yet do not take overmuch care for God's honour in the thing, because they are earnest with God to pardon them in a way that were to him dishonourable. Pardoned they would be, though wholly ignorant of God and Christ: they would have God to be at peace with them, while they are enemies to him. Like a thief at the bar, he would have the judge spare his life, right or wrong,
legally or illegally, what cares he? Doth this wretch consider the honour of the judge? or that sinner who, so he be saved, cares not how unrighteous God is in the act of mercy? O deceive not yourselves, poor souls, God will not make war between his own attributes to make peace with you.

Secondly, You must desire to be reconciled to God, that you may have fellowship with God. Certainly a soul sensible what the loss of communion with God is, counts it hath not all her errand done when it hath naked peace given it. Should God say, Soul, I am friends with thee; I have ordered thou shalt never go to Hell; here is a discharge under my hand that thou shalt never be arrested for my debt more; but as for any fellowship with me or fruition of me, thou canst expect none; I have done with thee for ever being acquainted more with thee; certainly the soul would take little joy in her peace. Were the fire out as to positive torments, yet a Hell would be left in the dismal darkness which the soul would sit under for want of God's presence. Absalom knew no middle condition that could please him betwixt seeing the king his father's face, and being killed: "Let me see the king's face, and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me." 2 Sam. xiv. 32. If I be not worthy to enjoy my father's love and presence, neither do I desire to live. Whereas a naughty heart seeks reconciliation without any longing after fellowship with God; like the traitor, if the king will but pardon and save him from the gallows, he is ready to promise him never to trouble him at court; it is his own life, not the king's favour, be desires.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Throw down thy rebellious arms, and humbly submit to his mercy. God will not so much as treat with thee so long as thy sword is in thy hand. "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord," Isaiah i. 18. Mark when the parley begins: "put away the evil of your doings," ver. 16. Now come and treat with God about a peace.

First, God is a great God, and it doth not become his sovereignty to treat with his sorry creature on equal
terms, as a king doth with his fellow-prince, who, if he cannot have peace on his own terms, is able probably to revenge himself by force of arms, but as a mighty king with his rebel subject, whom he hath fast bound with chains in prison, and can at pleasure hang up for his treason. The great God will have thee know that. Let those not capitulate who can retire to their strength, and live without peace; but as for thee, poor sinner, thou dost not, I hope, think thou art in a capacity to meet God in the field, or to thrive by this trade of war against God. No: thy only way is to conquer him upon thy knee, to lay thy neck at his foot, and say, Lord I put my life in thy hands, thy true prisoner I will be, chusing rather to die by the hand of thy justice than to continue fighting against thy mercy. Now, poor soul, thou art got into the right path that leads to peace. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." James iv. 10. that soul shall not long be out of his arms, that is prostrate at his foot. But though the high and lofty One can stoop to take up a penitent sinner into the arms of his pardoning mercy, yet he will not debase his sovereignty to treat with a wretch that stands to his arms, and stoutly puts it out with him. There is one red letter in God's name: "he will by no means clear the guilty." Exod. xxxiv.

Secondly, The holy nature of God requires this. Sin is that which made the breach and caused God to take arms against his creature; how canst thou rationally think to make thy peace with him, and keep this in thy bosom? God is willing to be reconciled with thee; but wilt thou have him be at peace with thy sin also? Is it not enough to be justified from thy sin, but wouldst thou have God betray his own honour by justifying thee in thy sin? Did you ever hear a prince give a patent to another to cut his own throat? What security canst thou give to God of thy love to him, if thou wilt not renounce that which is the only thing that seeks his life? Peccatum est decidium. As long as the traitor is in favour within, God will not raise his siege, or hear of peace without. They cannot reign together; chuse which you will have of them; and be not so far deluded as to think it is enough
to send thy lust out of the way for a while, as princes use
to do their favourites in a popular commotion, to please
the people; and then call for them home, when the hub-
bub is over. No: God will not be thus dodged and
mocked. See how the promise runs, and this he will
stand to: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the
unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto
the Lord, and he will abundantly pardon.” Isa. lv.
7. See how cautious God is in the terms: no corner left
for the least sin to skulk and save its life in; he must
“forsake;” that implies,

First, A deliberate choice in the soul, he does it freely.
Some men’s sins forsake them: “the unclean spirit goes
out;” and is not driven out; occasions to sin cease, or
bodily ability to execute the commands of sin is want-
ing; here is no forsaking sin in all this; but to break
from it with a holy indignation and resolution when
temptation is most busy, and strength most active, now
(as David said, when his enemy compassed him as bees)
in the name of the Lord to repel and resist them, this is
to forsake. This is the encomium of Moses, he forsook
the court when he was grown up; not for age, as Bar-
zillai, but when his blood was warm in his veins. A man
doth not forsake his wife when he is detained from her
in prison; but when he puts her away, and gives her a bill
of divorce.

Secondly, To forsake sin is to leave it without any
thought reserved of returning to it again. Every time a
man takes a journey from home about business we do
not say he hath forsaken his house, because he meant
when he went out to come to it again. No: but when
we see a man leave his house, carry all his stuff away
with him, lock up his doors, and take up his abode in
another, never to dwell there more, here is a man hath
indeed forsaken his house. It were strange to find a
drunkard so constant in the exercise of that sin but
sometimes you may find him sober; and yet a drunkard
he is, as well as if he was then drunk. Every one hath
not forsaken his trade that we see now and then in their
holyday suit: then the man forsakes his sin, when he
throws it from him, and bolts the door upon it with a
purpose never to open more to it. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Hosea xiv. 8.

Again, Observe, before pardon can be sealed, he must forsake not this sin or that, but the whole way of sin. "Let the wicked forsake his way." A traveller may step from one path to another, and still go on the same way; leave a dirty, deep, rugged path for one more smooth and even; so many, finding some gross sins uneasy, and too toilsome to their awakened consciences, step into a more cleanly path of civility; but, alas! poor creatures, all they get is to go a little more easily and cleanly to Hell than their beastly neighbours. But he forsakes the way of sin that turns out of the whole road; in a word, thou must forsake the blindest path of all in sin's way, that which lies behind the hedge, as I may so say, in the thoughts of the heart: "and the unrighteous his thoughts;" or else thou knockest in vain at God's door for pardoning mercy; and therefore, poor soul, forsake all or none. Save one lust, and you lose one soul; if men mean to go to Hell, why are they so mannerly; this halving with sin is ridiculous. Art thou afraid of this sin, and not of a less, which hinders thy peace, and procures thy damnation as sure, only not with so much distraction to thy drowsy conscience at present? This is as ridiculous as it was with him, who, being to be hanged, desired that he might by no means go through such a street to the gallows, for fear of the plague that was there. What wilt thou get, poor sinner, if thou goest to Hell, though thou goest thither by thy ignorance, unbelief, spiritual pride, &c. yet led about so as to escape the plague of open profaneness? O sirs, consider but the equity, the honourableness of the terms that God offers peace upon; what lust is so sweet or profitable that is worth burning in Hell for? Darius, when he fled before Alexander, that he might run the faster out of danger, threw away his massy crown from his head, which hindered him; and is any lust so precious in thy eye that thou canst not leave it behind thee, rather than fall into the hands of God's justice? But so sottish is foolish man, that a wise Heathen could take notice of it: Eas sola emi putamus, pro quidae pecuniam solvimus; as
The Gospel of peace.

gratuita vocamus, pro quibus, nos-ipsos impendimus, &c.
Sen. Epist. 42. We think we only buy what we part with money for; and as for those things we pay ourselves, our souls, for, these we think we have for nothing; as if the man were not more worth than his money.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, Having been faithful to follow the preceding directions, thou now art in a fair way to effect thy much-desired enterprize; hie thee therefore as soon as may be to the throne of grace, and humbly present thy request to God, that he would be at peace with thee; yea carry with thee a faith that thou shalt find him more ready to embrace the motion than thou to make it; only take heed what thou makest thy plea to move God, and where thou placest thy confidence; not in thy repentance or reformation, this were to play the merchant with God, know he expects not a chapman to truck with him, but a humble supplicant to be suitor to him; nor his absolute mercy (as ignorant souls do) this is to take hold of the sword by the blade, and not by the hilt; such will find their death and damnation from that mercy which they might be saved by, if they did take hold of it, as God offers it them, and that is "through Christ," Isa. xxxvii. 5. "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." And where lies God's saving strength, but in Christ? he hath "laid strength upon this mighty one, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God." It is not God's absolute power or mercy will help thee, but his covenant, strength, and mercy; and this is in Christ. Take hold of Christ, and thou hast hold of God's arm; he cannot strike the soul that holds thereby. Indeed God's essential goodness is a powerful argument to persuade the poor soul to rely upon the promise in Christ for pardon, when he considers that God who promiseth peace to the believer is a God whose very nature is forgiving, and mercy itself; but had there been no promise to engage this mercy to poor sinners through Christ, this would have been but cold comfort to have believed God was good. He could have damned the whole stock of Adam, and not called
his essential goodness the least in question. It is no blot to the almightiness of his power that he doth not all he can. He could make more worlds (if he was so pleased) than he hath done; but we have no ground to believe he will, neither is he the less almighty because he does not; so he could have saved the fallen angels with the sons of lost man; he is not scanted in mercy for such a design, if he had thought it fit; but having past no promise for such a thing, the essential goodness of God affords the devils but little relief or hope that he will do it; and yet God continues good. And for ought I can find out of the Word, they among the sons of men, who, either through simple ignorance of the Gospel, or prejudice, which their proud reason hath taken up against the way it chalks out for making our peace with God, through Christ's satisfaction for us, do neglect Christ, or scornfully reject this his satisfaction, and be-take themselves to the absolute goodness and mercy of God, as the plea which they will make at Christ's bar for their pardon and salvation, shall find as little benefit from it as the devils themselves. Suppose, friends, a prince should freely make a law by which he will govern his people, and takes a solemn oath to keep close to it; could a malefactor that is condemned by this law to die expect any relief by appealing from the law to the mercy and goodness of the prince's nature? I confess some have sped and saved their lives by taking this course; but it hath been because either the prince was imprudent in making the law, or unfaithful in keeping his oath: nei-ther of which can without blasphemy be imputed to God infinitely wise and holy. He hath enacted a law, called the law of faith, for the saving poor sinners through Christ, and is under an oath to make it good, both in the salvation of every one that believes on Christ, and damnation on every one that doth not believe; and to make all sure, hath given Christ an oath to be faithful in his office, who was trusted as priest to procure redemption, and shall sit as judge to pronounce the sentence at the great day of absolution or condemnation. Take heed there-fore, poor sinner, that thou art not drawn from placing thy entire confidence on Christ the Son of God, both
The Gospel of peace. 377

God and man in one person, who laid down his life upon agreement with his Father, to make an atonement for the sin of the world; and now offers thee that blood, which then he shed, as a price to carry in the hand of thy faith to the Father for pardon and peace. No: though they should come and call thee from Christ to Christ, from a Christ without thee to a Christ within thee, as the Jesuits doth in the Quaker, into whom he is now got, as the friars of old were wont into their hollow images, that they might deliver their lying doctrines out of the mouths of their reputed saints, and thereby cozen the multitude without any suspicion of their knavery, just so do the Jesuits now-a-days deliver their Popish stuff out of the mouths of the Quakers: a design so much more dangerous as it is more cunning than the other. There is too much light shed abroad for that old puppet-play to take; but though men are too wise to lend an ear to a block or a stone, yet holiness in a living saint commands such reverence that the devil hath ever found, and will to the end of the world, that he may pass least suspected under this cloak. Well, when he comes to call thee from a Christ without thee to a Christ within thee, strip the doctrine out of its pleasing phrase, and in plain English he calls thee from trusting in the righteousness of Christ wrought by him for thee, and by faith to be made thine for thy justification before God, to an inherent work of grace or righteousness wrought by the Spirit of God in thee for thy sanctification and renovation, called sometimes "new creature," and "Christ within us." Now, hadst thou not made a goodly change, if thou hadst let go thy hold on Christ, who is thy righteousness, to rely on a creature, and that a weak one too, God knows, full of so many imperfections, that thy conscience, except injudicious and given over to believe a lie, can tell that it is but as a vein of gold embased with much more earth and dross, which shall never be quite purged till thou art put into the refining-pot of the grave. Look to thyself, Christian, here it is matter of life and death; prize Christ's grace within thee thou must; yea thou hast none in thee, if thou dost not value it above all the mountains of gold the world hath; but trust not
to this Christ, or grace of Christ, within thee, for life and
salvation; for now thou prizest the creature above God,
and settest Christ within thee to fight with Christ without
thee. The bride doth well highly to esteem her hus-
band's picture, which he hath given her, especially if very
like him, and most of all if drawn by his own hand; but
it were very ridiculous, if she should dote on that so far
as to slight her husband, and when she wants money,
clothes, or the like to go, not to her husband, but to the
picture he gave her for all. The saint's grace is called
Christ within him, because it is his picture, and makes
the saint so like Christ: this, for the resemblance it
bears to the holiness of Christ himself thy husband, who
with the finger of his own Spirit, drew it on thy soul, de-
serves highly to be valued; but what a dotage were it
for thee to turn thy back on the Lord Jesus Christ him-
self, to whom by faith thou art married, and when thou
wantest pardon and comfort, wouldst have Heaven and
happiness, to expect these not from Christ, but thy grace?
O will Christ thank thee for honouring his creature to the
dishonour of his person?

CHAP. VII.

AN EXHORTATION TO SUCH AS ARE AT PEACE WITH GOD,
IN SIX PARTICULARS.

USE 2. Secondly, A few words by way of improvement
to you whose peace is concluded with Christ.

First, Hast thou peace with God? Look thou makest
no peace with sin. This broke thy peace with God;
now let thy peace with God begin a war with that never
to have end. Thou canst not sure forget the inestimable
wrong and damage thou hast suffered by it; every mo-
ment's sweet enjoyment of God, whose bosom-love thou
hast now happily recovered, will help to keep the fire
of wrath and revenge burning in thy heart against that
cursed enemy, that both threw and kept thee so long
thence. God hath now won thy heart, I hope, by his
pardoning mercy, dearly to love him for his love to thee.
How then canst thou with patience see any lust come
braving forth from its trench, thy heart I mean, defying
thy God and his grace in thee? Paul's spirit was stirred
in him at Athens, to see God dishonoured by the super-
stition of others; and is not thine, to see him reproached
by the pride, unbelief, and other sins that do it from un-
der thy own soul's roof? Oh! Christian, meditate some
noble exploit against it. Now the more to steel thy heart,
and harden it against all relenting towards it, carry the
blood and wounds of thy Saviour into the field with thee,
in the hand of thy faith; the sight of these will certainly en-
rage thy heart against thy lusts, that stabbed and killed
him, more than the bloody garments of Caesar, held up by
Anthony, did the Roman citizens against his murderers.
O see how cruelly they used the Lord of glory, and where
they laid him in an ignominious grave, and that fastened
with a seal, stronger than that which man set to it (the
curse due to us sinners) never possible to have been broke
up by any less than his own almighty arm. And now,
Christian, shall these murderers, not of man but of God,
for it was the blood of God that was shed, escape that
vengeance which God would have done with thy hand
upon them; wherefore else doth he leave thee any life in
thy soul, but that thou shouldst have the opportunity of
shewing thy love to Christ, by running thy dagger of
mortification into their heart? Alexander got not more
honour by his great victories in the field than by his piety
to his dead father Philip, whose bloody death he avenged,
as soon as he came into the throne, slaying the murder-
ers upon his father's tomb. O shew thou, Christian,
thy piety to thy dear Saviour, by falling upon thy cursed
lusts, and that speedily; never rest till thou hast had
their blood, that shed his; till thou dost this, thou art
consenting to all the cruelty that was executed on him;
this, this is the honour which all the saints shall have,
and therefore the two-edged sword of the Spirit is put
into their hands, that they may execute the vengeance
written.

Secondly, Is God reconciled to thee? Be thou willing
to be reconciled to any that have wronged thee. Thy God expects it at thy hands. Thou hast reason to pardon thy brother for God's sake, who pardoned thee for his pure mercy's sake. Thou in pardoning dost no more than thou owest thy brother; but God pardoned thee when he did owe thee nothing but wrath. Thou needest not, I hope, think that thou dishonourest thyself in the act, though it be to the veriest beggar in the town: know thou dost it after thy betters. Thy God stooped lower when he reconciled himself to thee, yea sought it at thy hands, and no dishonour neither to the high and lofty One. Nay, by implacableness and revenge thou debaselst thyself the most thou canst likely do; for by these thou stoopest not only beneath thy Heaven-born nature, but human; it is the devil, and none but such as bear his image, that are implacable enemies; Hell-fire it is that is unquenchable. "The wisdom from above is easy to be entreated." Thou a Christian, and carry Hell-fire about thee! how can it be? When we see a child furious and revengeful, that comes of merciful parents, we use to say, we wonder of whom he got his currish, churlish disposition: his father and mother was not so. Who learns thee, O Christian, to be so revengeful and unmerciful? thou hast it not of thy heavenly Father, I am sure.

Thirdly, Is God at peace with thee? hath he pardoned thy sins? Never then distrust his providence for any thing thou wantest as to this life; two things, well weighed, would help thy faith in this particular. First, when he pardoned thy sins, he did more for thee than this comes to, and did he give the greater and will he grudge thee the less? Thou hast Christ in thy pardon bestowed on thee: "how shall he not with him also freely give thee all things?" Rom. viii. 32. When the father gives his child the whole orchard, it were folly to question whether he gives him this apple or that in it. "All things are your's, and you are Christ's." 1 Cor. iii. 22. The reconciled soul hath a right to all; the whole world is his; but as a father, though he settles a fair estate on his child, yet lets him hold no more in his own hand than he can well manage; so God gives believers a right to all the comforts of this life, but proportions so much out
to them, for their actual use, as his infinite wisdom sees meet; so that he that hath less than another in his present possession ought to impute it not to any want of love or care in God, but to the wisdom both of his love and care, that gives stock as we have grace to work it out; we pour the wine according as the cup is; that which but fills one would half be lost, if poured into a less. Secondly, consider how God gives these temporalis to those he denies peace and pardon to. Though within awhile they are to be tumbled into Hell, yet while on earth his providence reacheth unto them; and doth God feed these ravens, unclean birds? doth he cause his rain to drop fatness on their fields, and will he neglect thee thinkest thou, that art a believer? If the prince feeds the traitor in prison, surely the child in his house shall not starve. In a word, to allude to that, Luke xii. 28. if God in his providence so abounds to the ungodly, as we see he doth, if he clothes this grass, for to this the wicked may well be compared, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into Hell's burning oven, "how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Fourthly, Art thou at peace with God? O then shew no discontent at any cross or affliction that God visiteth thee with. If he hath visited thee first with his mercy, thou hast reason to bid him kindly welcome when he comes to visit thee with his rod. Thou hast sugar by thee now, to sweeten thy bitter cup. When the prophet Samuel came to Bethlehem, it is said, "the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? and he said, Peaceably." 1 Sam. xvi. 4. Thus when God comes with some heavy affliction to us, it may make us tremble till we know what it comes for, whether peaceably or no. Now, if thou art at peace with God, the fear is over; it cannot but come peaceably: thou mayest conclude it comes on mercy's errand. What condition canst thou, O pardoned soul, be in, that should part thee and the joy of thy peace with God? Is it the wrath of man thou fearest? Possibly thou hast many enemies, and those great ones, and their wrath as great as such can express. Let it be so; is God among them or no? doth God let out their wrath in his wrath against
The Gospel of peace.

thee? if not, thou exceedingly wrongest God, is overmuch troubled, and thyself also. Thou wrongest God by not sanctifying his name in thy heart, whose mercy, I hope, is able to secure thee from their wrath: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Thou needest not fear them, though an army of them about thee, no more than if they were so many whips of straw. And thou wrongest thyself also; how indeed can we wrong God and not ourselves? so long as thou art under the power of such a fear from man's wrath thou canst never have the taste of God's love in its true sweetness.

Again, Art thou sick, poor, and what not beside? May not God reasonably expect that reconciling mercy should stop thy mouth from whispering any word of discontent against him, and prevent all envious glances of thy eye at the prosperity of the wicked? Remember, man, that thou canst say one great word, which they cannot, in the midst of all their pomp and worldly glory: "Though I lie here, poor and sick, yet I am, through mercy, at peace with God." This, well thought on, would soon change both your notes: the joy of the prosperous sinner into bitter mourning, and thy sorrow, Christian, into joy. The Lady Elizabeth (afterwards England's gracious queen) hearing a simple milk-maid, sing merrily in the field, when she, poor princess (being then a sorrowful prisoner), had more mind to sigh than sing (though served at the same time in state as a princess), said that poor maid was happier than herself. And so would the sinner (how great and high soever in the world) think the poorest Christian with his rags and penury, a better man, and happier in his liberty and peace with God, than himself in all his grandeur and worldly gaieties, did he but consider that in the midst of all these he is a prisoner, not to man but God, out of whose hands there is no escaping.

Fifthly, Comfort thyself with this, that thou, who art at peace with God, now on earth, shalt feast with God ere long in Heaven. "And whom he justified, them he also glorified." Rom. viii. 30. And do not think this news too good or great to be true. Here is a word for it, you see. Heaven's number of glorified saints is made
up of justified sinners. Neither more nor less of the one
than of the other. Art thou justified by faith, by which
thou hast peace with God? then lose not thy privilege,
but rejoice with thy fellow saints "in the hope of the
glory of God." It is before thee; every day brings thee
nearer to it, and nothing can hinder thee of it at last;
not thy sins themselves, and I know thou searest them
most. He that paid thy great score at thy conversion,
will find mercy enough in his heart surely to pass by
thy dribbling debts, which thy own infirmity and Satan's
subtilty have run thee into. Thou wert an enemy, when
God thought of doing the first; but now thou art a friend,
and this will oblige him to do the second, that he may not
lose his disbursement in the first; yea, provision is made
by God in his method of our salvation for the one as
strongly as for the other. Christ died to make us of ene-
emies to God friends with him; and he lives now to bring
God and us (being thus made friends) to meet in one
Heaven together. Yea, the Apostle gives the advantage
to this of the two for our faith to triumph in: "For if
when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by
the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we
shall be saved by his life." Rom. v. 10. As if the Apos-
tle had said, Can you believe that God hath taken you
that were bloody enemies into a state of peace and fa-
vour with himself? Surely then you must needs find it
easier for your faith to argue from reconciliation to sal-
vation, than from hostility and enmity to pardon and
peace; could Christ procure the one by his death, when
he was weakest (as I may so say) and at the lowest des-
cent of his humiliation? How much more shall be in the
height of his court favour in Heaven (where he hath all
power given him, and in particular the keys of Hell and
death to open and shut as he pleaseth) Rev. i. 18. be
able to save those whom he hath reconciled?
Sixthly, Art thou at peace with God? Knowing the
goodness of God to thyself, do thou woo in some others
to embrace the same mercy. The house is not so full,
but "yet there is room." Luke xiv. 22. Hast thou none
thou lovest so well as to wish them thy happiness?
hapsy thou hast a carnal husband lying by thy side,
children of thy womb or loins, neighbours in whose company thou art every day almost, and all these in an unreconciled state; who, should they die as now they live, their precious souls are lost for ever, and yet themselves think no more of this misery coming on them than the silly sheep doth what the butcher is doing when he is whetting his knife to cut her throat. Well, the less merciful they are to their own souls, the more need there is thou shouldest shew thy compassion towards them. We take most care of those that are least capable of taking care for themselves. If thou hadst a friend sick in thy house, and of such a disease that he could not help himself, should he die rather than thou wouldest look after him? if a child condemned to die, though he did himself not mind the getting of a pardon, yet surely thou wouldest run and ride to obtain it, rather than see him end his days so shamefully. In a word, didst thou but know that thy next neighbour had an intention to kill himself, and for that end had locked himself up in a room, wouldest thou not bestir thee to break open the door rather than the man should thus miscarry? But, alas! where is the holy violence that is used to save poor souls? Parents, husbands, neighbours, they can see their relations going to hell before their eyes; and who saith to them, Why do you so? O for the Lord's sake, be more merciful to the souls of others. Thou hast found a feast, let not any that are near thee starve for want of knowing where it is to be had; go and invite all thou canst see to God's house: so did David, Psal. xxxiv. 8. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Thou needest not fear a chiding from God, for sending him more guests; he complains he hath no more: "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." John v. 40. He threatens those that keep sinners off from making their peace with him by flattering them with a false one: called a "strengthening the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life." Ezek. xiii. 22. O how acceptable a work then must it needs be to woo souls into Christ? The merchant is not angry for sending a customer into his warehouse, that will buy what he hath taken so much cost and travail to get that
he may sell; nor will the physician blame any for bringing a patient to him by whose cure he may let the world know his skill and art. And this is the great design Christ hath long had, and in particular prayed for: "that the world might believe that he was sent of God." John xvii. 21. What aims he at in the gathering in of souls by the grace of the Gospel, but "to take out a people (from the heap of sinners) for his name." Acts xv. 14. that is, cull out a number, in shewing mercy to whom he might exalt his own name gloriously.

CHAP. VIII.

THAT PEACE OF CONSCIENCE IS A BLESSING TO BE OBTAINED FROM THE GOSPEL AND ONLY THE GOSPEL, WITH A DOUBLE DEMONSTRATION THEREOF.

WE come now to the second kind of peace, and that is peace of consolation, or peace of conscience. By the former the poor sinner is reconciled to God; by this he becomes anima pacata sibi. A soul reconciled to itself. Since man fell out with God he could never be truly friends with his own conscience. This second peace is so necessary that he cannot taste the sweetness of the first, nor indeed of any other mercy, without it. This is to the soul what health is to the body; it sugars and sweetens all enjoyments. A suit, though of cloth of gold, sits not easy on a sick man's back: nothing joyous to a distressed conscience. Moses brought good news to the distressed Israelites in Egypt; but it is said, "they hearkened not to him for anguish of spirit." Exod. vi. 9. Hannah, she went up to the festival at Jerusalem with her husband, but it is said, "she wept and did not eat." 1 Sam. i. 7. Truly thus the wounded soul goes to the sermon, but doth not eat of the feast before it; hears many precious promises, but her ear is shut up from receiving the good news they bring. Tell one in trouble of conscience, Here's your dear husband, sweet children, will you not rejoice with them; alas! the throes such a one.
feels are so amazing, that he regards these things no more than Phineas's wife in her sore travail did the women that joyed her with the birth of a son. Set the most royal feast before such a soul that ever was on prince's table, and, poor heart, it had rather go into a corner and weep than sit and eat of those delicacies. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" yea who can cure? Some diseases are, for their incurableness, called ludibrium medicorum, the physician's shame and reproach. To be sure this spiritual trouble of an accusing conscience puts all the world to shame for their vain attempts. Many have attempted to conjure this evil spirit out of their own bosoms and others', but have found it at last to leap upon them, and prevail against them, as the evil spirit, Acts xix. 14. did by the sons of Sceva.

No: peace of conscience (I am now to shew) is the blessing of the Gospel and only of the Gospel: conscience knows Jesus, and the Gospel of Jesus; these, and none else, it will obey. Two particulars considered will demonstrate the truth of the point. First, if we consider what is the argument that pacifies and satisfies conscience. Secondly, what the power and strength that is required to apply this argument so close and home to the conscience as to quiet and fully satisfy it; both these will be found in the Gospel and only in the Gospel.

SECT. I.

First, Let us enquire what is the argument that is able to pacify conscience, when thoroughly awakened. Now to know this we must enquire what is the cause of all those convulsions of horror and terror with which the consciences of men are at any time so sadly rent and distorted. Now this is sin. Could this little word (but great plague) be quite blotted out of men's minds and hearts, the storm would be soon hushed, and the soul become a pacific sea, quiet and smooth, without the least wave of fear to wrinkle the face thereof. This is the Jonas, which raiseth the storm; the Achan that troubles the soul. Wherever this comes (as was observed of a great queen of France) a war is sure to follow. When Adam sinned, he dissolved another manner of jewel than
The Gospel of peace.

Cleopatra did; he drunk away this sweet peace of conscience in one unhappy draught, which was worth more to him than the world he lived in. No wonder that it rose in his conscience as soon as it was down his throat. "They saw that they were naked." Gen. iii. 7. Their consciences reproached them for cursed apostates. That therefore which brings peace to conscience must prostrate this Goliath, throw this troubler overboard, pluck this arrow out of the soul; or else the war will not end, the storm will not down, the wound will not close and heal which conscience labours under. Now the envenomed head of sin's arrow, that lies burning in the conscience, and by its continual throbbing there keeps the poor sinner out of quiet, yea sometimes in unsupportable torment and horror, is guilt; whereby the creature is alarmed up to judgment, and bound over to the punishment due to his sin; which being no less than the infinite wrath of the eternal living God must needs lay the poor creature into a dismal agony, from the fearful expectation thereof in his accusing conscience. He therefore that would use an argument to pacify and comfort a distressed conscience, that lies roasting upon these burning coals of God's wrath, kindled by his guilt, must quench these coals, and bring him the certain news of this joyful message that his sins are all pardoned, and God (whose wrath doth so affright him) is undoubtedly, yea everlastingly, reconciled to him. This, and no other argument, will stop the mouth of conscience, and bring the creature to true peace with his own thoughts. "Son, be of good cheer (said Christ to the man sick of the palsy) thy sins be forgiven thee." Matt. ix. 2. Not be of good cheer, thy health is given thee (though that he had also); but thy sins are forgiven thee. If a friend should come to a malefactor on his way to the gallows, put a sweet posey into his hands, and bid him be of good cheer, smell on that, alas! this would bring little joy with it to the poor man's heart, who sees the place of execution before him; but if one comes from the prince with a pardon, which he puts into his hand, and bids him be of good cheer, this and this only will reach the poor man's heart, and overrun it with a sudden ravishment of joy.
Truly any thing short of pardoning mercy is as incon-
siderable to a troubled conscience (towards any relieving
or pacifying it) as that posey in a dying prisoner’s hand
would be. Conscience demands as much to satisfy it
as God himself doth to satisfy him for the wrong the
creature hath done him. Nothing can take off con-
science from accusing but that which takes off God from
threatening. Conscience is God’s serjeant he employs
to arrest the sinner. Now the serjeant hath no power
to release his prisoner upon any private composition be-
tween him and the prisoner; but listens whether the debt
be fully paid, or the creditor fully satisfied: then, and
not till then, he is discharged of his prisoner.

Well, we have now only one step to go farther, and
we shall bring this demonstration to a head. From what
quarter comes this good news, that God is reconciled to
a poor soul, and that his sins are pardoned? Surely from
the Gospel of Christ, and no other way besides. Here
alone is the covenant of peace to be read betwixt God
and sinners; here the sacrifice by which this pardon is
purchased; here the means discovered by which poor
sinners may have the benefit of this purchase; and there-
fore here alone can the accusing conscience find peace.
Had the stung Israelites looked on any other object be-
sides the brazen serpent, they had never been healed:
neither will the stung conscience find ease with looking
upon any besides Christ in the Gospel promise. The
Levite and the priest looked on the wounded man, but
would not come near him, there he might have lain and
perished in his blood for all them; it was the good Sa-
maritan that poured oil into his wounds. Not the Law,
but Christ by his blood, bathes and supplies, closeth and
cureth the wounded conscience. Not a drop of oil in
all the world to be got that is worth any thing for this
purpose, besides what is provided and laid up in this
Gospel phial. There was abundance of sacrifices offered
up in the Jewish church; yet put all the blood of those
beasts together, which was poured out from first to last
in that dispensation, and they were not able to quiet
one conscience, or purge away one sin. “The con-
science of sin,” as the Apostle phraseth it, Heb. x. 2. that
is guilt in their conscience, would still have remained unblotted, notwithstanding all these (if severed from what was spiritually signified by them). And the reason is given, verse 4. "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." There is no proportion betwixt the blood of beasts (though it could swell into a river, a sea) and the demerit of the least sin. Man's sin deserves man's death, and that eternal both of body and soul in hell. This is the price God hath set upon the head of every sin. Now the death of beasts being so far beneath this price, which divine justice demands as satisfaction for the wrong sin doth him, it must needs be as far beneath pacifying the sinner's conscience; which requires as much to satisfy it, yea the very same, as it doth to satisfy the justice of God himself. But in the Gospel behold joyful news is brought to the sinner's ears of a fountain of blood there opened, which for its preciousness is as far above the price that divine justice demands for man's sin as the blood of bulls and of beasts was beneath it, and that is the blood of Jesus Christ, who freely poured it out upon the cross, and by it "obtained eternal redemption for us." Heb. ix. This is the door all true peace and joy comes into the conscience by; hence we are directed to bottom our confidence and draw our comfort here, and no where else. "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." Heb. x. 22. Mark that: "sprinkled from an evil conscience." Conscience by office is appointed to judge of a man's actions and state, whether good or bad, pardoned or unpardoned; if the state be good, then it is to acquit and comfort; if evil, then to accuse and condemn him; therefore the evil conscience here is the "accusing conscience." From this evil conscience we are said to be sprinkled, that is freed, by the blood of Christ sprinkled on us. It is sin the evil conscience accuseth of, and wrath (the due punishment for that) it condemns the poor creature unto; and to be sprinkled with the blood of Christ is to have the blood of Christ applied to the heart by the Spirit for pardon and reconciliation with God. Sprinkling in the Law did denote the cleansing of the person, so sprinkled,
The Gospel of peace.

from all legal impurities; yea the believing soul from all sinful uncleanness by the blood of Christ, which was signified by the blood of those sacrifices. Therefore David prays, Psalm li. 7. "Purge me with hyssop, then shall I be clean;" Lev. xiv. 6. that is, Apply the blood of Christ to my troubled conscience, as they with a bunch of hyssop did the blood of the beast into which it was dipped upon the leper to cleanse him: "then (saith he) I shall be clean;" this sin, which now doth affright my conscience, shall be washed off, and I at peace, as if I had never sinned. To this sprinkling of blood the Holy Ghost alludes, Heb. xii. 24. where we are said in the Gospel administration, "to be come to Jesus, the mediator of a better covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel;" that is, better things in the conscience. Abel's blood, sprinkled in the guilt of it upon Cain's conscience, spake swords and daggers, Hell and damnation; but the blood of Christ, sprinkled in the conscience of a poor trembling sinner, speaks pardon and peace. Hence it is called "the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. iii. 21. An answer supposeth a question; an answer toward God supposeth a question from God to the creature. Now the question God here is supposed to propound to the poor creature may be conceived to be this: What canst thou say, who art a sinner, that standest by the curse of my righteous law doomed to death and damnation, why thou shouldest not die the death pronounced against every sinner?

Now the soul that hath heard of Christ, and hearing of him hath received him by faith into his heart, is the person, and the only person, that can answer this question so as to satisfy God or himself. Take the answer, as it is formed and fitted for, yea put into the mouth of every believer, by the Apostle Paul, Rom. viii. 34. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Such an answer this is that God himself cannot object against it; and therefore Saint Paul, representing all believers, triumphs in the invincible strength thereof against all the enemies of
The Gospel of peace.

our salvation? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" ver. 35. and proceeds to challenge death and devils, with all their attendants, to come and do their worst against believers, who have got this breastwork about them; and at last he displays his victorious colours, and goes out of the field with this holy confidence, that none (be they what they will) shall ever be able to hurt them, verse 38, 39. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." In him he lodgeth his colours, and lays up all his confidence. But I am afraid I have been too long, if I can be said to be too long on this subject, the richest vein in the whole mine of Gospel treasure.

S E C T. II.

The second demonstration is taken from the strength and power required to press this argument home to the conscience, so as to satisfy it, and make it acquiesce therein. Conscience is a lock that goes hard; though the key fit it, I mean the argument used to comfort it be suitable and strong, yet if this key be in a weak hand, that cannot turn it in this lock, as it is whenever a mere creature holds it, conscience will not open; its doubts and fears will not be resolved. No: this must be the work of the Spirit, or else it will never be done. Conscience is God's officer; and though the debt be paid in Heaven, yet it will not let the soul go free till a warrant comes from thence to authorize it. And who can bring this but the Spirit of God? So that, as it is not in all their power that are about the poor prisoner to comfort him, till news come from court what the prince means to do with him; so here in this case. "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who can behold him?" Job xxxiv. 29. Now two things I shall do for the bringing this demonstration to a head. First, shew that the Gospel only presents the Spirit of God to us under the notion of a comforter. Secondly, the admirable fitness and sufficiency of the Holy Spirit to pacify and comfort a guilty troubled conscience.
The Gospel of peace.

The first will evince that peace of conscience is nowhere else to be found but from the Gospel; the second will shew that it is there abundantly to be found.

First, It is the Gospel alone that presents the Spirit of God as a comforter to poor sinners. Indeed the comforting office of the Spirit is founded on the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. When Christ had shed his blood, and in it laid down upon the nail the full price of a sinner’s peace with God, then at his return to Heaven he prays his Father to send the Comforter. Neither could Christ desire this request of his Father, nor his Father grant it to him, but upon the account of this his death, which secures the justice of God from receiving any damage by the comfort which the Spirit carries into the believing sinner’s bosom. Christ tells his disciples thus much: “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” John xvi. 7.

Pray mark: the Spirit, as a comforter, stays till Christ goes to Heaven to send him down; and no room for Christ there till the work was done he came about; and what was that, but by his bloody death to purchase peace with God for poor believing sinners? And now, let him come when he will, the Spirit is ready to be sent as a comforter as soon as he appears in the Heavens with his blood as an intercessor. But whence then had the Old Testament saints all their peace and comfort, who lived before Christ returned to Heaven, yea before he took his first journey from Heaven, I mean to earth? I answer, upon the same account they had their comfort that they had their pardon. They were pardoned through the blood of Christ, who was virtually a lamb slain from the beginning of the world; and they were comforted by the Spirit of Christ, whose comforting office bears the same date with Christ’s mediatiorial office. As all their pardons were issued out upon the credit of Christ, who stood engaged in the fulness of time to lay down his life; so all the comfort which the Spirit of Christ issued out into their consciences, was upon the same credit of Christ, who should as in the fulness of time die on earth for sinners, so appear also in the Heavens, by virtue of the satisfaction that his death should make, there to in-
tercede with the Father for a comforter. Thus you see the first thing. The Spirit as a comforter hath his office from the Gospel-covenant, and could never have spoken a word of comfort, but upon this Gospel account. Hence it is, when the Father sends him as a comforter, he sends him in Christ's name, who hath made up the breach between him and sinners, John xiv. 26. that is, for his sake, and at his entreaty; yea when the Spirit doth comfort, what is it he saith? the joyful news he brings is Gospel-intelligence: "he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, he shall speak;" John xvi. 13, 14. the meaning is, when he comes to teach, he shall not bring new light different from what shines in the Gospel, but what truth Christ preached in the Gospel that he shall teach; when he comforts, the ingredients which his soul-reviving cordials shall be made of are what grow in the Gospel-garden, as verse 14. "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it to you," that is my death, my merit, my resurrection, my ascension and intercession, my promises purchased and sealed with my blood; these he shall take and make report of them to you, for your eternal joy and comfort; so that, if it had not been for these, the Spirit, who is Christ's messenger, would have wanted an errand of this comfortable nature to have brought unto poor sinners: yea instead of a comforter, he would have been an accuser and a tormentor; he that now bears witness with our spirits for our reconciliation, adoption, and salvation, would have joined in a sad testimony with our guilty consciences against us, for our damnation and destruction.

Secondly, I am to shew the admirable fitness of the Spirit for this comforting office, which the Gospel reveals him to have for the pacifying and satisfying the consciences of poor disconsolate sinners. You have heard the Gospel affords an argument sufficient to satisfy the most troubled conscience in the world: to wit, the full satisfaction which Christ by his precious blood hath made to God for sinners. But if poor man had been left to improve this as well as he could for his comfort, he might have lien long enough roaring in the horror of his scorched conscience without ease, for want of one to drop this
cooling healing balm into it. But as both the wisdom and love of God appeared in providing an able Saviour to purchase eternal redemption for us; so also a mete comforter, as able to apply this purchased redemption to us; his consolations are called "strong consolations." Christ shewed his strength, when he unhinged the gates of the grave, and made his way out of that dark prison by his glorious resurrection. By this "he was declared to be the Son of God with power," as the Apostle hath it. Rom. i. 4. And truly, it requires no less power to break open the dungeon, wherein the guilty conscience lies shut up, as one free among the dead in his own despairing thoughts; for if you observe it well, the same stone and seal are upon the sinner's conscience to keep him down from a resurrection to comfort as was on Christ's grave, to keep him down from a resurrection to life. What was the heaviest stone, the strongest seal, upon dead Jesus to keep him from rising? not the stone man rolled upon him, not the seal the Jews thought to fasten the grave with; but the curse of the Law for sin, which divine justice rolled upon him; this prest the heaviest upon Christ without all compare. The angel himself that rolled away the stone, could not have removed the curse. Now, look in upon the distressed conscience's grave, where its own guilt hath laid it; what is that? no other than the lowest Hell in its fears and present dismal apprehensions. I am damned, I am for ever an undone creature, is the language such a one rings continually in his own ears. But enquire what is it that keeps him down in this grave, what hinders but the poor wretch may be helped out of this pit of horror, and receive some comfort? Alas! he will tell you, that it is but in vain to comfort him, this ointment is all wasted to no purpose, which you pour upon his head. No: he is an undone sinner; the curse of God sticks like a dagger in his heart; the wrath of God lies like a mountain of lead on his conscience; except you can put your hand into his bosom, and pluck out the one, or by main force roll off the other, it is impossible that he should be raised to any peace or comfort in his miserable conscience. You see it is the same grave-stone on both. But, for thy eter-
nal comfort know; poor heart, that art thus fast laid under the sense of the curse due to thy sins: as the weight is the same that keeps thee from comfort, which lay on Christ to keep him from life; so the same power and strength is sent to raise thee to comfort that enabled Christ to rise to life. That Spirit who kept the Lord Jesus from seeing corruption in the grave, that restrained death, when it had Christ in its very mouth, so as it could no more feed on him than the whale could digest Jonah in her belly, yea that quickened his dead body, and raised him with honour, not only to life, but immortality also, is he that Christ sends for his messenger to come and satisfy the trembling consciences of his poor children on earth concerning his love, yea his Father's love to them for his sake. This blessed Spirit brings all the properties of a comforter; "he is so pure and holy, he cannot deceive," called therefore "the Spirit of truth," John xiv. If he tell thee thy sins are pardoned, thou mayest believe him, he will not flatter; if it were not so, he would have brought another message to thee: for he can chide and reprove as well as comfort, convince of sin as well as of righteousness. He is so wise and omniscient that he cannot be deceived. Never did the Spirit of God knock at the wrong door, and deliver his letters into a wrong hand, as a man may do, especially where persons are very like. The Spirit exactly knows the heart of God to the creature, with all his counsels and purposes concerning him: "the Spirit searcheth all things, the deep things of God." 1 Cor. ii. 11. And what are those deep things of God the Apostle means, but the counsels of love, which lie deep in his heart, till the Spirit draws them forth and acquaints the creature with them? as appears by verse 9. And also he knows the whole frame of man's heart; it were strange, if he that made the cabinet should not know every secret box in it. Some few men have compassed that we call the greater world; but the little world of man, as we call him, never did any creature encircle with his knowledge, no not the devil himself, who hath made it his work so many thousands of years to make a full discovery of it. But the Spirit of God doth know him, situs est in nude
(as we say) thoroughly; and knowing both these, he cannot be deceived.

In a word, he is so irresistible, that none can hinder the efficacy of his comforts. The pardon brought by Nathan to David did not lie so close as the holy man desired; and therefore away goes he to beg comfort of the Comforter, Psalm li. where you find him on his knees praying hard to have his lost joy restored, and his trembling heart established by the free Spirit of God. Though thou canst baffle man, and through thy own melancholy fancy, and the sophistry of Satan, who coins distinctions for thee, evade the arguments that Christians and ministers bring for thy comfort, yet when the Spirit comes himself, all disputes end: the devil cannot chop logic with him. No: then the lying spirit vanisheth, and our own fears too, as the darkness flees before the sun; so sweetly and powerfully doth the comforting Spirit over-run the heart with a flood of joy, that the soul can no more see her sins in the guilt of them, than Noah could the mole-hills when the whole earth was under water.

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CHAP. IX.

A REPROOF TO THREE SORTS OF PERSONS THAT OFFEND AGAINST THIS PEACE WHICH THE GOSPEL BRINGS.

USE 1. First, Is peace of conscience the blessing of the Gospel? This reproves three sorts of persons.

SECT. I.

First, The Papists, who interpretatively deny this, in denying that any person can know in this life, unless by an extraordinary revelation, that he is a child of God, and one that shall be saved; which, if true, would stave all to pieces the vessel in which the Christian’s joy and inward peace is kept. Whence comes the peace we have with our own consciences, but from the knowledge we
have of our peace with God? "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, by whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. v. 1. If the poor soul be left at uncertainties here, and the Gospel cannot resolve it what its state is, for Hell or Heaven, farewell to all inward peace; the poor Christian then may say of himself, with a trembling heart, what St. John saith in another case of him that hateth his brother, 1 John ii. 11. "He walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth." Truly then it might rather be called the Gospel of fears and doubts than the Gospel of peace. But is that the top of the blessing the Gospel brings to saints, which was almost the bottom of the curse that the law denounced against sinners? Deut. xxviii. 66. that "their life should hang in doubt before them, and they should fear day and night, and should have no assurance of life." Bold men, that dare so wretchedly disfigure the sweet face of the Gospel; making Christ in his precious promises speak as doubtfully to his saints as the devil did in his oracles to his devotees. Because their hypocrisy makes them justly question their own salvation, and will not suffer them to apply the comfort of the promises to themselves, must they therefore seal up these wells of salvation from those that are sincere, and then lay the blame on the Gospel, which is due only to their own wickedness? But there is a mystery of iniquity which hath at last been found to be at the root of this uncomfortable doctrine of theirs: they are a little akin to Judas, who was a thief, and carried the bag. These have a bag too, into which they put more gold and silver, that this doctrine brings them in, than ever Judas had in his; though the doctrine of Gospel-grace to poor sinners would bring more peace to others' consciences, might it be seen in its naked glory among them, yet the superstitious fear which they keep ignorant souls in, brings more money to their purses; and this lies so near the heart of their religion, that, Gospel, Christ, Heaven, and all, must bow unto it.
SÉCT. II.

Secondly, Those are to be reproved who frame very unlovely images in their own foolish imaginations of the Gospel; as if there was nothing less than peace of conscience and inward comfort to be found in it; and all because they see some that profess it who cannot shew that they have got any more peace and comfort since their acquaintance with the Gospel than they had before, or than themselves have, who are yet strangers to it; yea may be discover more trouble of spirit. Such I would desire to take these following particulars, by way of answer, into their serious consideration.

First, Consider all are not true Christians that hang upon the Gospel by profession; and no blame can be laid on the Gospel, though it doth not lavish out this treasure to every one that scrapes acquaintance with it. The Spirit of God is too wise and faithful to set his seal to a blank. The minister indeed offers peace to all that will accept it; but where the peace of the Gospel meets with a false heart, it will not stay there. "If the house be not worthy, let your peace return unto you." Matt. x. 13. As the dove returned to the ark again, when it found the earth under water, so doth the Spirit of God carry his comfort back with him to Heaven from a soul that is yet in the suds of sin, soaking in his abominations; where can this heavenly dove find rest for the sole of her foot in such a soul? And will he speak peace to that soul in which himself can find no rest?

Secondly, As for those that are sincere true-hearted Christians, there are several considerations which will vindicate the Gospel to answer its name, and to be a Gospel of peace and consolation.

First, Some that are sincere Christians do not so clearly understand the doctrine of the Gospel as others; and the want of light and joy and comfort in their consciences comes from that want of light in their understandings. The ignorance of the workman doth not disparage the art. *Plus est in arte, quam in artifici*. There is a fulness of comfort in the principles of the Gospel; but every Christian hath not attained "to the riches of the full a-
The Gospel of peace.

surance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;" which the Apostle directs the Colossians to, as a sovereign means whereby "their hearts might be comforted." Col. ii. 2.

Secondly, Some that do understand the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ (the only foundation to build and rear up true comfort and peace of conscience on) yet may by their negligence in their Christian course (not walking carefully by the rule of the Gospel) deprive themselves at present of this sweet peace, which otherwise might flow into their bosoms from the promises of the Gospel. "As many as walk by this rule, peace be on them." Gal. vi. 16. And if so, what blame can be laid on the Gospel? Be the pen ever so good, and the hand ever so skilful, it will not write on wet paper; yet we do not blame the hand or pen, but paper: if the heart (though of a saint ever so eminent) be under the defilement of a present lust, not repented of, no promise will speak peace to him; he is a disorderly walker, and the Spirit hath his rod to whip such, no sweetmeats of joy and peace to entertain them with in that plight.

Thirdly, As for those which do walk close to the rule of the Gospel (I mean by a sincere endeavour) and thou seest no such comfort (as we speak of) that they have: I answer,

First, They may have it, and thou not know it. The saint's joy and peace is not such a light giggling joy as the world's: Res severa verum gaudium. The parlour wherein the Spirit of Christ entertains the Christian is an inner room, not next the street, for every one that goes by to smell the feast. "The stranger intermeddles not with his joy," Prov. xiv. 10. Christ and the soul may be at supper within, and thou not so much as see one dish go in, or hear the music that sounds so sweetly in the Christian's ears. Perhaps thou thinkest he wants peace, because he doth not hang out a sign in his countenance of the joy and peace he hath within. Alas, poor wretch! may not the saint have a peaceful conscience with a solemn, yea sad countenance, as well as thou and thy companions have a sorrowful heart, when there is no-
thing but fair weather in your faces? "In laughter the heart is sorrowful;" Prov. xiv. 13. sure he means the wicked man's laughter. It never looks more like rain with them than when it shines; their conscience lours when their face laughs; so, on the contrary, never more peace and comfort to be found in a saint's bosom than sometimes when his face is blubbered with tears. Shouldest thou come in and hear the Christian bemoaning himself, and complaining with sighs and sobs of his sins against God, thou wouldest go home, and cry out of this melancholy religion, and the sad condition this man was in; and yet he whom thou so pitiest can desire thee to save it for thyself, and not spend it in vain for him, who would not part with that very sorrow (that scares thee so much) for all the joy which the world with all its gallantry (when best set forth) could afford. There is a mystery in this sorrow thou canst not unriddle: know therefore there is a sorrow and anguish of heart which ariseth from the guilt of sin and the fearful apprehensions of God's wrath due to sin; and another that flows not from fear of wrath arising from guilt, but from the sense of sin's in-being in the soul, that provokes the Christian to do that which is dishonourable to that God who hath pardoned his sins to him; and this is the sorrow which sometimes makes the saints go for sad uncomfortable creatures, when all the same time their hearts are as full of comfort from the sense of God's pardoning mercy as they can hold. This sorrow is but like a summer shower, melted by the sense of God's love, as that by the warm sun, and leaves the soul (as that doth a garden of sweet flowers) on which it falls more fresh and odoriferous.

Secondly, Though some precious souls, that have closed with Christ and embraced the Gospel, be not at present brought to rest in their own consciences, but continue for a while under some dissatisfactions and troubles in their own spirits; yet even then they have peace of conscience in a threefold respect. In precio, in promisso, in semine.

First, Every true believer hath peace of conscience in precio; the Gospel puts that price into his hand which
will assuredly purchase it, and that is the blood of Christ. We say, that is gold which is worth gold, which we may any where exchange for gold; such is the blood of Christ, it is peace of conscience, because the soul that hath this may exchange it for this. God himself cannot deny the poor creature that prays on these terms, Lord, give me peace of conscience; here's Christ's blood the price of it. That which could pay the debt, surely can procure the receipt. Peace of conscience is but a discharge under God's hand that the debt due to divine justice is fully paid; the blood of Christ hath done that the greater for the believer, it shall therefore do this the less. If there were such a rare potion that did infallibly procure health to every one that takes it, we might safely say, as soon as the sick man hath drank it down, that he hath drunk his health; it is in him, though at present he doth not feel himself to have it; in time it will appear.

Secondly, *In promissio*. Every true believer hath peace of conscience in the promise; and that we count as good as ready money in the purse, which we have sure bond for. "The Lord will bless his people with peace." *Psal. xxi. 11.* He is resolved on it, and then who shall hinder it? It is worth your reading the whole Psalm, to see what weight the Lord gives to this sweet promise, for the encouragement of our faith in expecting the performance thereof. Nothing more hard to enter into the heart of a poor creature (when all is in an uproar in his bosom, and his conscience threatening nothing but fire and sword, wrath and vengeance from God for his sins) than thoughts or hopes of peace and comfort. Now the Psalm is spent in shewing what great things God can do, and that with no more trouble to himself than a word speaking: "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty." *verse 4.* "It breaks the cedars, it divides the flames, it shakes the wilderness, it makes the hinds to calve." This God that doth all this, promiseth to bless his people with peace, outward and inward; for without this inward peace, though he might give them peace, yet could he never bless them with peace as he there undertakes.

VOL. II.
A sad peace (were it not) to have quiet streets, but cutting of throats in our houses? yet infinitely more sad, to have peace both in our streets and houses, but war and blood in our guilty consciences. What peace can a poor creature taste or relish, while the sword of God's wrath lies at the throat of conscience? Not peace with God himself; therefore Christ purchased peace of pardon, to obtain peace of conscience for his pardoned ones; and accordingly hath bequeathed it in the promise to them: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," John xiv. 27. where you see he is both the testator to leave, and the executor of his own will, to give out with his own hands what his love hath left believers; so that there is no fear but his will shall be performed to the full, seeing himself lives to see it done.

Thirdly, In semaine. Every believer hath this inward peace in the seed. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart;" Psal. xcvi. 11. where sown but in the furrows of the believer's own bosom, when principles of grace and holiness were cast into it by the Spirit of God? hence it is called, "the peaceable fruit of righteousness," Heb. xii. 11. it shoots as naturally from holiness, as any fruit in its kind doth from the seed proper to it. It is indeed most true, that this seed runs and ripens into this fruit sooner in some than it doth in others. This spiritual harvest comes not alike soon to all, no more than the other that is outward doth; but here's the comfort, whoever hath a seed-time of grace pass over his soul, shall have his harvest-time also of joy; this law God hath bound himself to, as strongly as for the other, which "are not to cease while the earth remaineth;" Gen. viii. 22. yea, more strongly, for that was to the world in general, not to every particular country, town, or field in these, which may want a harvest, and yet God keep his word; but God cannot perform his promise, if any one particular saint should everlastingly go without his reaping-time: "He that goeth forth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Psal. cxxvi. 6. And therefore you who think so basely of the Gospel and the professors of it, because at present their
peace and comfort is not come; know it is on the way to them, and comes to stay everlastingly with them; whereas your peace is going from you every moment, and is sure to leave you without any hope of returning to you again. Look not how the Christian begins, but ends; the Spirit of God by his convictions comes into the soul with some terrors, but it closeth with peace and joy: as we say of the month of March, it enters like a lion, but goes out like a lamb. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." Psal. xxxvii. 36.

S E C T. III.

This reproves those that think to heal their consciences with other than Gospel-balm; who leave the waters of living comfort, that flow from this fountain, opened in the Gospel by Christ, to draw their peace and comfort out of cisterns of their own hewing; and they are two: a carnal cistern, and a legal cistern.

First, Some think to draw their peace out of a carnal cistern. There is not more variety of plasters and foolish medicines used for the cure of the ague of the body, than there is of carnal receipts, used by self-deceiving sinners, to rid themselves of the shaking ague, which the fear of God's wrath brings upon their guilty consciences. Some, if they be but a little awakened by the Word, and they feel their hearts chill within them, from a few serious thoughts of their wretched undone condition, fall to Felix's physic; who, as soon as his conscience began to be sick at Paul's sermon, had enough of the preacher, and made all the haste he could to get that unpleasing noise out of his head: "Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way." Acts xxiv. Thus many turn their back on God, run as far as they can from those ordinances, that company, or any thing else, that is likely to grate upon their consciences, and revive the thoughts of their deplored state, which all their care is to forget. Such a one I have heard of, that would not be present at any funeral, could not bear the sight of his own grey hairs, and therefore used a black-lead-comb to discolour them; lest by these, the thoughts of death (which he so
The Gospel of peace.

abhorred) should crowd in upon him. A poor cowardly shift, God knows; yet all that this wretch had, and many more have, betwixt them and a hell above ground in their consciences. Others their light is so strong, and glares on them so constantly, that this will not do; but wherever they go, though they hear not a sermon in a month, look not on a Bible in a year, and keep far enough from such company as would awake their consciences; yet they are haunted with their own guilt; and therefore, they do not only "go from the presence of the Lord," as Cain did, Gen. iv. 16. but as he also made diversion of those musing thoughts which gathered to his guilty conscience, by employing them another way in building a city, verse, 17. so do they labour to give their consciences the slip in a crowd of worldly businesses. This is the great Leviathan that swallows up all the thoughts of heaven and hell in many men's hearts. They are so taken up with that project and this, that conscience finds them not at leisure to exchange a few words with them of a long time together. Conscience is as much spighted among sinners, as Joseph was among the patriarchs. That which conscience tells them likes them no better than Joseph's dream did his brethren; and this makes many play the merchants with their consciences, as they did with him; which they do by bribing it with the profits of the world. But this physic is found too weak also; and therefore Saul's harp, and Nabal's feast, is thought on by others; with these they hope to drown their cares, and lay their raving consciences asleep, like some ruffian that is under an arrest for debt, and hath no way but now to prison he must go, except he can make the serjeant drunk in whose hand he is, which he doth, and so makes an escape. Thus many besot their consciences with the brutish pleasures of sin; and when they have laid it as fast asleep, in senseless stupidity, as one that is dead drunk, then they may sin without control till it wakes again. This is the height of that peace which any carnal receipt can help the sinner unto; to give a sleeping potion that shall bind up the senses of conscience for a while, in which time the wretch may forget his misery, as the condemned
man doth when he is asleep; but as soon as it awakes, the horror of his condition is sure again to affright him worse than before. God keep you all from such a cure for your troubles of conscience, which is a thousand times worse than the disease itself. Better to have a dog that will by his barking tell us a thief is in our yard, than one that will sit still, and let us be robbed before we have any notice of our danger.

Secondly, Some draw their peace of conscience from a legal cistern: all the comfort they have is from their own righteousness; this good work and that good duty they bless themselves in; when any qualm comes over their hearts, the cordial drink, which they use to revive and comfort themselves with, is drawn, not from the satisfaction which Christ by his death hath given to God for them poor sinners, but from the righteousness of their own lives; not from Christ's intercession in heaven for them, but their own good prayers on earth for themselves; in a word, when any spark of disquiet kindles in their consciences (as it were strange, if where so much combustible matter is, there should not at one time or other some smothering fire begin in such a one's bosom) then, not Christ's blood, but their own tears are cast on to quench it. Well, whoever thou art thatgoest this way to work, to obtain peace of conscience, I accuse thee as an enemy to Jesus Christ and his Gospel. If any herb could be found growing in thy garden to heal the wounds of thy conscience, why did the Lord Christ commend for such a rarity the balm which he came from heaven on purpose to compound with his own blood? Why doth he call sinners from all besides himself as comforters of no value, and bid us come to him, as ever we would find rest for our souls? *Matt.* xi. 28. No: know, poor creature, and believe it (while the knowing of it may do thee good) either Christ was an impostor, and the Gospel a fable, which I hope thou art not such an infidel (worse than the Devil himself) to believe, or else thou takest not the right method of healing thy conscience wounded for sin, and laying a sure bottom for solid peace in thy bosom. Prayers and tears (repentance I mean) good works and duties, these are not to be ne-
glected, nay, thou canst never have peace without them in thy conscience, yet these do not, cannot, procure this peace for thee, because they cannot obtain thy peace with God; and peace of conscience is nothing but the echo of pardoning mercy, which, sounding in the conscience, brings the soul into a sweet rest with the pleasant music it makes, and the echo is but the same voice repeated; so that, if prayers and tears, good duties, and good works, cannot procure our peace of pardon, then not our peace of comfort. I pray remember I said, you can never have inward peace without these; and yet not have it by these. A wound would hardly ever cure, if not wrapt up from the open air, and also kept clean; yet not these, but the balm cures it. Cease therefore, not from praying and the exercise of any other holy exercise of grace or duty, but from expecting thy peace and comfort to grow from their root; or else thou shuttest thyself out from having any benefit of that true peace which the Gospel offers. The one resists the other, like those two famous rivers in Germany, whose streams, when they meet, will not mingle together. Gospel-peace will not mingle and incorporate, as I may so say, with any other; thou must drink it pure and unmixed, or have none at all. “We (saith holy Paul for himself, and all other sincere believers) are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” Phil. iii. 3. As if he had said, We are not short of any in holy duties and services; nay we exceed them, for “we worship God in the Spirit;” but this is not the tap from whence we draw our joy and comfort; we “rejoice in Christ Jesus, not in the flesh;” where, that which he called worshipping God in the Spirit, now, in opposition to Christ and rejoicing in him, he calls flesh.

SECT. IV.

They are to be proved from hence, who do indeed use the balm of the Gospel for the healing of conscience-wounds; but they use it very unevangelically. The matter they bottom their peace and comfort on is right and good, Christ and the mercy of God through him in
The promise to poor sinners: what can be said better? But they do not observe Gospel rule and order in the applying it. They snatch the promise presumptuously, force and ravish it, rather than seek to have Christ's consent; like Saul, who was in such haste that he could not stay till Samuel came to sacrifice for him, but boldly falls to work before he comes, flat against order given him. Thus many are so hot upon having comfort, that they will not stay for the Spirit of God to come and sprinkle their consciences with the blood of Christ in Gospel order; but profanely do it themselves, by applying the comfort of those promises which indeed at present does not belong to them. O sirs, can this do well in the end? Should he consult well for his health, that will not stay for the doctor's direction, but runs into the apothecary's shop, and on his own head takes his physic without the counsel of the physician, how to prepare it or himself for the taking of it? This every profane wretch doth that lives in sin, and yet sprinkles himself with the blood of Christ, and blesseth himself in the pardoning mercy of God. But let such know that, as the blood of the Paschal lamb was not struck on the Egyptians' doors, but the Israelites'; so neither is the blood of Christ to be sprinkled on the obstinate sinner, but sincere penitent. Nay, further, as that blood was not to be spilt on the threshold of an Israelite's door, where it might be trampled on, but on the side-posts, so neither is the blood of Christ to be applied to the believer himself, while he lies in any sin unrepented of, for his present comfort. This were indeed to throw it under his foot to be trod upon. David confesseth his sin with shame, before Nathan comforts him with the news of a pardon.

CHAP. X.

WHERE WE HAVE A TRIAL OF OUR PEACE FROM FOUR CHARACTERS OF GOSPEL-PEACE OR COMFORT.

USE 2. Let this doctrine be as a touchstone to try the truth of your peace and comfort. Hath it a Gospel-
stamp upon it? the devil hath his false mint of comfort as well as of grace; put thyself therefore to the trial, while I shall lay before you some characters of the peace that Christ in his Gospel speaks to his people.

First, Gospel-comfort may be known by the vessel it is poured into, which is a broken heart. The promise is superscribed by name to such, and such only: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isa. lvii. 15. Christ's commission from his Father binds him up; he can comfort none besides: "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted;" Isa. lxi. 1. and what he receives himself from the Father the same he gives to those he sends upon the same errand; first, his Spirit, concerning whom he tells his disciples, that the "Comforter when he is come shall convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." John xvi. 7. Mark, first, of sin; and as for his inferior messengers they have direction to whom they are to apply the comforts of the Gospel: "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not." Isa. xxxv. 3. And upon their peril be it, if they pour this ointment upon the head of an unhumbled sinner; to give such any comfort, by promising life to him, as he is, God protests against it; he calls it a lie; a "strengthening the hands of the wicked;" and as much as in them lies, by blowing him up with a false comfort, to make sure that he shall never have the true peace. Thus you see the order of the Gospel in comforting souls. As in needle-work, the dark ground-work is laid, before the beautiful colours; as the statuary cuts and carves his statue before he gilds it; so doth the Spirit of Christ begin with sadness, ends in joy; first cuts and wounds, then heals and overlays the soul with comfort and peace. I hope you do not think I limit the Holy One in his workings to the same degree and measure in all: I have opened my thoughts in another place concerning this; but so far the convincing humbling work of the Spirit goes in every soul before peace and comfort comes, as to empty the soul of all her false
comforts and confidences which she had laid up; that the heart becomes like a vessel whose bottom is beat out, and all the water it held thereby spilt and let out. The sins it loved, now it hates; the hopes and comforts it pleased itself with, they are gone, and the creature left in desolate solitary condition; no way now it sees, but perish it must, except Christ be her friend, and interpose betwixt Hell and it; to him she therefore makes her moan, as willing to follow his counsel, and to be ordered by his direction, as ever patient was by his physician, of whose skill and care he is thoroughly satisfied. This I call the broken heart, which if you be wholly strangers to, your acquaintance is to begin with Gospel-peace. I beseech you, rest, not till you have an answer from your consciences. What is it they say? was your wine once water? doth your light arise out of darkness? is your peace the issue of a soul-conflict and trouble? did you bleed before you were healed? you may hope it is a kindly work of God's gracious Spirit: make much of it, and bless thy God that hath given this wine to cheer thy sad heart. But if thou commencesst per saltum, hast thy wine before thy pots were filled with water; thy morning be come, before thou hast had thy evening; thy peace be settled, before, thy false peace is broken; thy conscience sound and whole, before it is lanced, and the putrid, stuff of thy pride, carnal confidence, and other sins thou hast lived in, be let out, thou mayest have some ease for a while; but know it, the Lord Jesus denies it to be his cure. "The strong man's house is kept in peace," Luke xi. 21. as well as the good man's. It requires more power to work true sorrow than false joy and peace; a happier man thou wouldest be, if mourning in the distress of a troubled conscience, than dancing about this idol-peace, which the devil, thy sworn enemy, mocks thee with.

Secondly, Gospel-peace is obtained in a Gospel way, and that is two-fold.

First, In a way of obedience and holy walking: "as many as walk by this rule, peace be on them." Gal. vi. 16. Now this rule you may see, ver. 15. to be the rule of the "new creature," and what is, that but the holy rule of...
the Word? to which the principles of grace, planted in
the soul of a believer, are so fitted, that there is not a
more natural agreement betwixt the eye and light than
betwixt the disposition of this new nature in a saint and
the rule of holiness in the Word. Now, it is not enough
for one to be a new creature, and to have a principle of
grace in his bosom; but he must actually walk by this
rule, or else he will be to seek for true peace in his con-
science. No comfort in the saints is to be found but
what the Comforter brings. And he who commands us
"to withdraw from them (though our brethren) that walk
disorderly," 2 Thess. iii. 6. will himself surely withdraw
from such, and withhold his comforts, so long as they
are disorderly walkers; which they are as long as they
walk besides this rule. And therefore, if thou be such a
one, say not the Spirit brought thy comfort to thy hand,
for he would not bid thee good speed in an evil way; no,
he hath been withdrawn as a comforter ever since thou
hast withdrawn thy foot from walking by the holy rule.
All thy peace, which thou pretendest to have in this time,
is base-born; and thou hast more cause to be ashamed
of it than glory in it. It is little credit to the wife that
she hath a child when her husband is abroad, and can-
not father it; and as little to pretend to comfort, when
the Spirit of Christ will not own it.

Secondly, Gospel-peace is given in to the soul in a way
of duty and close attendance on God in his ordinances.
"Now the Lord of peace give you peace always by all
means," 2 Thess. iii. 16. that is, bless all means for com-
forting and filling your souls with inward peace, so that
he that drives no trade in ordinances, and brags of his
peace and comfort, speaks enough to bring the truth of
it into suspicion in the thoughts of sober Christians. I
know God can by immediate illapses of his Spirit com-
fort the Christian, and save him the labour of hearing,
praying, meditating; but where did he say he would?
Why may we not expect a harvest as well without sowing
and ploughing, as peace without using the means? If we
were like Israel in the Wilderness, in such a state and
posture wherein the means is cut from us, and not by
pride or sloth put from us; as sometimes it is the Chris-
tian's condition: he is sick, and knocked off from ordi-
nances, or, by some other providence as pressing, he is shut out from the help of this means or that; now I should not wonder to see comfort lie as thick in his soul as manna about the Israelites' tents; but as God would not rain bread any longer when once they had corn, of which with their labour they might make bread, *Josh.* v. 11, 12. so neither will the Lord comfort by a miracle, when the soul may have it in an ordinance. God could have taught the Eunuch, and satisfied him with light from Heaven, and never have sent for Philip to preach to him; but he cherisheth to do it out of Philip's mouth, rather than immediately out of his own, no doubt to put honour on his ordinance.

Thirdly, Gospel-peace in the conscience is strengthening and restorative; it makes the Christian strong to fight against sin and Satan; the Christian is revived, and finds his strength come upon him like a little tasting of this honey; but O what a slaughter doth he make of his spiritual enemies, when he hath a full meal of this honey, a deep draught of this wine? now he goes like a giant refreshed with wine into the field against them. No lust can stand before him, it makes him strong to work. O how Paul laid about him for Christ: "he laboured more abundantly than them all." The good man remembered what a wretch he once was, and what mercy he had obtained; the sense of this love of God lay so glowing at his heart that it fired him with a zeal for God above his fellow apostles. This made holy David pray so hard to drink again of this wine, which so long had been locked up from him: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." *Psalm* li. 12, 13. Pray mark, it was not his liquorish palate after the sweet taste of this wine of comfort that was the only or chief reason why he so longed for it; but the admirable virtue he knew in it, to inspirit and empower him with zeal for God; whereas the false peace and comfort of hypocrites is more heady than hearty, it leaves them as weak as they were before; yea it lies rotting, like unwholesome food in the stomach, and leaves a surfeit in their souls, as luscious summer
fruits do in the bodies of men, which soon breaks out in loose practices. Thieves commonly spend their money as ill as they get it: and so do hypocrites and formalists their stolen comforts; stay but a little, and you shall find them feasting some lust or other with them. "I have peace offerings with me (saith the religious whore, the hypocritical harlot) this day I have paid my vows, therefore came I forth to meet thee." Prov. vii. 14, 15. She pacifies her conscience, and comforts herself with this religious service she performs; and now having, as she thought, quit scores with God, she returns to her own lustful trade; yea emboldens herself from this in her wickedness: "therefore came I forth to meet thee;" as if she durst not have played the whore with man till she had played the hypocrite with God, and stopt the mouth of her conscience with her peace-offering. Look therefore, I beseech you, very carefully what effect your peace and comfort have in your hearts and lives. Are you the more humble or proud for your comfort? do you walk more closely or loosely after your peace? how stand you to duties of worship? are you made more ready for communion with God in them, or do you grow strange to and unfrequent in them? have you more quickening in them, or lie more formal and lifeless under them? if a word, can you shew that grace and peace grow in thee alike? or doth the one less appear, since thou dost more pretend to the other? By this thou mayest know whether thy peace comes from the peace-maker, or peace-marret, from the God of truth, or father of lies.

Fourthly, Gospel-peace comforts the soul, and that strongly, when it hath no other comfort to mingle with it. It is a cordial rich enough in itself, and needs not any other ingredient to be compounded with it. David singles God out by himself: "whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee." Psal. lxxxiii. 25. Give David but his God, and let who will take all besides; let him alone to live comfortably, may he but have his love and favour. Hence it is that the Christian's peace pays him in the greatest revenues of joy and comfort, when outward enjoyments contribute least, yea nothing at all, but bring in matter
of trouble: "But David encouraged himself in his God." 1 Sam. xxx. 6. You know when that was; if David's peace had not been right and sound, he would have been more troubled to think of God at such a time than of all his other disasters. "Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." Psalm cxix. 165. This distinguishes the saint's peace, both from the worldling's and the hypocrite's.

First, From the worldling's. His peace and comfort, poor wretch; runs dregs as soon as creature-enjoyments run a-tilt; when poverty, disgrace, sickness, or any thing else crosseth him, in that which he fondly doted on, then his night is come, and day shut up in dismal darkness. In which respect it is that Christ, as I conceive, opposeth his peace to the world's: "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John xiv. 27. Pray mark, Christ is laying in arguments of comfort for his disciples against his departure, which he knew would go so near their hearts. One among the rest is taken from the difference of that peace and comfort which he leaves them from what the world gives: as if he had said, If the peace and comfort you have from me lay in such things as the world's peace is made up of, plenty, ease, outward prosperity, and carnal joy, truly then you had reason to be the greatest mourners at my funeral that ever followed friend to the grave; for after my departure, you are like to have none of these; nay, rather expect trouble and persecution. But know, the peace I leave with you, is not in your houses, but hearts; the comfort I give you lies not in silver and gold, but in pardon of sin, hopes of glory, and inward consolations, which the Comforter, that is to come from me to dwell with you, shall upon my appointment, pay into your bosoms; and this shall outlive all the world's joy. This is such a legacy as never any left their children. Many a father dying, hath in a farewell speech to his children, wished them all peace and comfort when he should be dead and gone; but who besides Jesus Christ could send a Comforter into their hearts, and thrust peace and comfort into their bosoms?
Again, it distinguisheth the true Christian's peace from the hypocrite's, who, though he pretends to place his comfort not in the creatures but in God, and seems to take joy in the interest which he lays claim to have in Christ and the precious promises of the Gospel, yet when it comes indeed to the trial, that he sees all his creature-comforts gone, and not like to return any more, which at this time had his heart, though he would not it should be thought so, and now he sees he must in earnest into another world, to stand or fall eternally, as he shall then be found in God's own scrutiny to have been sincere or false-hearted in his pretensions to Christ and his grace, truly then his thoughts recoil, his conscience flies in his face, and reproacheth him for spiritual cozenage and forgery. Now, soul, speak, Is it thus with thee? does thy peace go with thee just to the prison-door, and there leave thee? art thou confident thy sins are pardoned all the while thou art in health and strength, but as soon as ever the sergeant knocks at the door, to speak with thee, death I mean comes in sight, then thy thoughts alter, and thy conscience tells thee he comes to prove thee a liar in thy pretended peace and joy? This is a sad symptom. I know indeed that the time of affliction is a trying time to grace that is true; the sincere Christian for a while may, like a valiant soldier, be beat from his artillery, and the enemy Satan may seem to possess his peace and confidence; yea so far have some precious saints been carried down the stream of violent temptations, as to question whether their former comforts were from the Holy Spirit the Comforter, or the evil spirit the deceiver; yet there is great difference between the one and the other.

First, They differ in their causes. This darkness, which sometimes is upon the sincere Christian's spirit in deep distress, comes from the withdrawing of God's lightsome countenance; but the horror of the other from his own guilty conscience, that before was lulled asleep with prosperity; but now, being awakened by the hand of God on him, doth accuse him to have been false with God in the whole course of his profession. It is true, some particular guilt may be contracted by the Christian, through negligence or strong temptation in his Christian course;
for which his conscience may accuse him, and may fur-
ther imbitter the present desertion he is in so far, as from
those particular miscarriages to fear his sincerity in the
rest, though he hath no reason to do it; but his con-
science cannot charge him of an hypocritical design to
have been the spring that hath set him on work through
the whole course of his profession.

Secondly, There is something concomitant with the
Christian’s present darkness of spirit that distinguisheth
it from the hypocrite’s horror; and that is the lively
working of grace, which then commonly is very visible
when his peace and former comfort are most questioned
by him. The less joy he hath from any present sense of
the love of God, the more abounding you shall find him
in sorrow for his sin that clouded his joy; the further
Christ is gone out of his sight, the more he clings in his
love to Christ, and vehemently cries after him in prayer,
as we see in Heman, Psalm lxviiii. 13. “Unto thee
have I cried, O Lord, and in the morning shall my pray-
ers prevent thee.” O the fervent prayers that then are
shot from his troubled spirit to Heaven, the pangs of af-
fec tion, which are springing after God, and his face and
favour! Never did banished child more desire admittance
into his angry father’s presence, than he to have the light
of God’s countenance shine on him, which is now veiled
from him. O how he searcheth his heart, studies the
Scripture, wrestles with God to give him that grace, the
non-evidence of which at present makes him so question
the comforts he hath formerly had; might he but have
true grace, he will not fall out with God for want of com-
fort, though he stays for it till the other world. Never
did any pregnant woman long more to have the child in
her arms that is at present in her womb, than such a
soul doth to have that grace, which is in his heart, but
through temptation questioned by him at present, evi-
denced to him in the truth of it. Whereas the hypocrite,
in the midst of all his horror, doth not; cannot (till he
hath a better heart put into his bosom) cordially love or
desire grace and holiness, for any intrinsical excellency
in itself; only as an expedient for escaping the torment-
or’s hand, which he sees he is now falling into.
They differ in the issue. The Christian, he, like a star in the heavens, wades through the cloud that for a time hides his comfort; but the other, like a meteor in the air, blazeth a little, and then drops into some ditch or other, where it is quenched; or as the Spirit of God distinguisheth them: *Prov.* xiii. 9. "The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp (or candle, as in the Hebrew) of the wicked is put out." The sincere Christian’s joy and comfort is compared there to the light of the sun, that is climbing higher while it is muffled up by clouds from our eye, and, by and by, when it breaks out more gloriously, doth rejoice over those mists and clouds that seemed to obscure it; but the joy of the wicked, like a candle, wastes and spends (being fed with gross fuel of outward prosperity, which in a short time fails) and the wretch’s comfort goes out in a snuff at last, past all hope of being lighted again. The Christian’s trouble of spirit again is compared to a swooning fainting fit, which he within a while recovers; *Psal.* lx. a qualm comes over a holy man’s heart, from the thought of his sins, in the day of his great distress, verse 12. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am unable to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me;" but, before the Psalm is at an end, after a few deep groans in prayer, verse 13, 14. he comes again to himself, and acts his faith strongly on God, verse 17. "Yet the Lord thinketh on me; thou art my help, and my deliverer." But the hypocrite’s confidence and hope, when once it begins to sink and falter, it dies and perisheth. "The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape; their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost." *Job* xi. 20.
CHAP. XI.

THAT THE GOSPEL ALONE CAN UNITE THE HEARTS OF MEN TOGETHER IN TRUE PEACE, AND HOW THE GOSPEL DOETH IT.

WE come now to the third kind of peace, which I called a peace of love and unity. A heavenly grace this is, whereby the minds and hearts of men, that even now jarred and rang backwards, are made tuneable each to the other, so as to chime all into an harmonious consent and concord among themselves. Thus peace in Scripture is frequently taken, as you may see, Mark ix. 50. Heb. xiii. 14. 1 Thess. v. 13. Now the Gospel is a Gospel of peace, if taken in this notion also, which we shall briefly speak to from this note.

Note. That the Gospel, and only the Gospel, can knit the hearts and minds of men together in a solid peace and love. This (next the reconciling us to God and ourselves) is especially designed by Christ in the Gospel; and truly those without this would not fill up the saint's happiness; except God should make a Heaven for every Christian by himself to live in. John the Baptist's ministry (which was as it were the preface to and brief contents of the Gospel) was divided into these two heads: "To turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God," Luke i. 16, "and to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children." verse 17. That is, to make them friends with God and one another. This is the natural effect of the Gospel, where it is powerfully and sincerely embraced, to unite and endear the hearts of men and women in love and peace together, how contrary soever they were before. This is the strange metamorphosis, which the Prophet speaks shall be under the Gospel, Isa. xi. 8. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid;" that is men and women, between whom there was as great feud and enmity as is betwixt those creatures, they shall yet sweetly agree, and lie in one another's bosoms.
peaceably; and how all this, but by the efficacy of the Gospel on their hearts? so verse 9. "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." Indeed it is in the dark when men fight, and draw upon one another in wrath and fury; if Gospel-light comes once savingly in, the sword will soon be put up; the sweet Spirit of love will not suffer these doings where he dwells; and so peculiar is this blessing to the Gospel, that Christ appoints it for the badge and cognizance by which they should not only know one another, but even strangers should be able to know them from any other sect and sort of men in the world: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another." John xiii. 35. A nobleman's servant is known as far as he can well be seen by the coat on his back whose man he is; so, saith Christ, shall all men know you, by your mutual love that you retain to me and my Gospel. If we would judge curiously of wine what is its natural relish, we must taste it before it comes into the huckster's hand, or after it is refined from its lees: so the best way to judge of the Gospel, and the fruit it bears, is to taste it either when it was professed, and embraced with most simplicity, and that was without doubt in the first promulgation; or, secondly, when it shall have its full effect on the hearts of men, and that is in heaven. In both these, though chiefly the last, this peace will appear to be the natural fruit of the Gospel.

First, When the Gospel was first preached and embraced, what a sweet harmony of peace and admirable oneness of heart was then amongst the holy professors of it, who but awhile before were either mere strangers to or bitter enemies one against another! they lived and loved, as if each Christian's heart had forsaken his own to creep into his brother's bosom. They alienated their estates to keep their love entire; they could give their bread out of their own mouths, to put it into their brethrens that were hungry; yea when their love to their fellow Christians was most costly and heavy, it was least grudged and felt by them. See those blessed souls, Acts ii. 46. "they sold their possessions and goods, and parted to all men, as every one had need; and they,
continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking of bread from house to house, did eat their bread with gladness and singleness of heart." Yea, they are more merry now they have been emptying their bags by charity, than if they had come from filling them by worldly traffic. So notorious was the love of Christians in the primitive times, that the very heathens would point at them, as Tertullian saith, and say, See how they love one another. And therefore, if less love and peace be found now amongst Christians, the blame lies not on the Gospel, but them; the Gospel is as peaceful, but they are minus evangelici, less evangelical, as we shall further shew.

Secondly, Look on the Gospel as at last in the complement of all in heaven; when the hearts of saints shall be thoroughly gospelized, and the promises concerning the peaceable state of saints have their full accomplishment; then, above all, this peace of the Gospel will appear. Here it puts out and in, like a budding flower in the spring; which one warm day opens a little, and another that is cold and sharp shuts again. "The silence in this lower heaven (the church on earth) is but for the space of half an hour." Rev. viii. 1. Now there is love and peace among Christians; anon scandals are given, and differences arise, which drive this sweet spring back; but in heaven it is full blown, and so continues to eternity. There dissenting brethren are made thorough friends, never to fall out; there, not only the wound of contention is cured, but the scar which is here oft left upon the place is not to be seen on the face of heaven's peace, to disfigure the beauty of it; which made that German divine so long to be in Heaven, where, said he, Luther and Zuingleius are perfectly agreed, though they could not on earth.

But I come to give some particular account how the Gospel knits the hearts and minds of men in peace together, and why the Gospel alone can do this; while I clear one, I shall the other also.

First, The Gospel knits the hearts of men together, as it propounds powerful arguments for peace and unity; and indeed such as are found nowhere else. It hath
cords of love, to draw and bind souls together that were never woven in nature's loom: such as we may run through all the topics of morality, and meet with none of them, being all supernatural and of divine revelation. Ephes. iv. 3. the Apostle exhorts them to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And how doth he persuade them, verse 4—7. First, "There is one body," but such a one as natural philosophy treats not of; but a mystical one, the church, which consists of several saints, as the natural body of several members. And as it were strange to see one member to fall out with another, which all are preserved in life by their union together; so much more in the mystical body. Again, "one spirit," that is the same Holy Spirit, which quickens all them that are true saints, and is to the whole number of saints as the soul is to the whole man, informing every part. Now as it were a prodigious violence to the law of nature, if the members by an intestine war among themselves, should drive the soul out of the body, which gives life to them in union together, so much more would it be for Christians to force the Holy Spirit from them, by their contentions and strifes; as indeed a wider door cannot easily be opened for him to go out at. Again, it presseth unity, from the "one hope of one calling," where hope is put pro re sperata; the bliss we all hope for in heaven; there is a day coming, and it cannot be far from us, in which we shall meet lovingly in heaven, and sit at one feast, without grudging one to see what lies in another's trencher; full fruition of God shall be the feast, and peace and love the sweet music that shall sound to it; and what folly is it for us to fight here who shall feast there? draw blood of one another here that shall so quickly lie in each other's bosoms? Now the Gospel invites to this feast, and calls us to this hope. I might run through the other particulars, which are all as purely evangelical, as these "one Lord, one faith, one baptism;" but enough to have given you a taste.

Secondly, The Gospel doth this, as it takes away the cause of that feud and enmity which is among the sons and daughters of men, and they chiefly two: the curse of God on them, and their own lusts in them.
First, The feud and hostility that is among men and women is part of that curse which lies upon man for his apostacy from God. We read, Gen. iii. 17. how the ground was cursed for man's sake: "thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee," (saith God); but a far greater curse it was, that one man should become as a thorn and brier to fetch blood of another. Some have a fancy that the rose grew in Paradise without prickles. To be sure, man, had he not sinned, should never have been such a pricking brier, as now the best of them is. These thorns that come up so thick in man's dogged quarrelsome nature, what do they speak but the efficacy of God's curse? The first man that was born in the world proved a murderer; and the first that died went to his grave by that bloody murderer's hand: may we not wonder as much at the power of God's curse on man's nature, that appeared so soon in Cain's malicious heart, as the disciples did at the sudden withering of the fig-tree, blasted by Christ's curse? And truly it was but just with God to mingle a perverse spirit among them who had expressed so false a one to him. They deserved to be confounded in their language, and suffered to bite and devour one another, who durst make an attempt upon God himself by their disobedience. Very observable is that in Zech. xi. 10. compared with the 14th. When once the "staff of beauty," verse 10. (which represented God's covenant with the Jews) was asunder, then presently the "staff of bands" (which signified the brotherhood between Judah and Jerusalem) was cut asunder also. When a people break covenant with God, they must not expect peace among themselves; it is the wisdom of a prince, if he can, to find his enemy work at home. As soon as man fell out with God, behold there is a fire of war kindled at his own door, in his own nature. No more bitter enemy now to mankind than itself; one man is a wolf, yea a devil, to another. Now, before there can be any hope of true solid peace among men, this curse must be reversed; and the Gospel, and only the Gospel, can do that, where an expedient is found how the quarrel betwixt God and the sinner may be reconciled; which done, the curse ceaseth. A curse
is a judiciary doom, whereby God in wrath condemns his rebel creature to something that is evil; but "there is no condemnation to him that is in Christ." The curse is gone, no arrow now in the bow of threatening; that was shot into Christ's heart, and can never enter into the believer's. God may whip his people, by some unbrotherly unkindness they receive one from another's hands, by way of fatherly chastisement, and indeed it is as sharp a rod as he can use in his discipline, the more to make them sensible of their falling out with him; but the curse is gone, and they under a promise of enjoying peace and unity, which they shall, when best for them, have performed to them.

Secondly, The internal cause of all the hostility and feud that is to be found amongst men, is lust that dwells in their own bosoms; this is the principle and root that bears all the bitter fruit of strife and contention in the world: "from whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?" James iv. 1. This breaks the peace with God, ourselves, and others. If there be a fiery exhalation wrapped up in the cloud, we must look for thunder and lightning to follow; if lust in the heart, it will vent itself, though it rends peace of family, church, and kingdom. Now, before there can be a foundation for a firm solid peace, these unruly lusts of men must be taken down. What peace and quiet can there be, while pride, envy, ambition, malice, and such like lusts, continue to sit in the throne, and hurry men at their pleasure? Neither will it be enough for the procuring peace to restrain these unruly passions, and bind them up forcibly; if peace be not made between the hearts of men, it is worth nothing. The chain that ties up the mad dog will in time wear; and so will all cords break, by which men seem at present so strongly bound together, if they be not tied by the heart-strings, and the grounds of the quarrel be there taken away. Now the Gospel, and only the Gospel, can help us to a plaister that can draw out of the heart the very core of contention and strife. Hear the Apostle telling us how himself and others, his fellow saints, got cured of that malicious heart, which once they
were in bondage to: "we ourselves were sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures; living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." Titus iii. 3. Well what was the physic that recovered them? See verse 4. "But after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." As if he had said, Had not this love of God to us in Christ appeared, and we been thus washed by his regenerating Spirit, we might have lain to this day under the power of those lusts, for all the help that any other could afford us. Mortification is a work of the Spirit: "if through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live." Rom. viii. 13; and the Gospel is the sacrificing-knife in the hand of the Spirit; the Word is called the "sword of the Spirit," as that which he useth to kill and slay sin within the hearts of his people.

Thirdly, As the Gospel lays the axe to the root of bitterness and strife, to stub that up, so it fills the hearts of those that embrace it with such gracious principles as incline to peace and unity: such are self-denial, that prefers another in honour before himself, and will not jostle for the wall; long-suffering, a grace which is not easily moved and provoked; gentleness, which if moved by any wrong, keeps the doors open for peace to come in at again, and makes him easy to be entreated. See a whole bundle of these sweet herbs growing in one bed: "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness." Gal. v. 22. Mark, I pray, this is not fruit that grows in every hedge, but "fruit of the Spirit;" fruit that springs from Gospel-seed. As the stones in the quarry, and cedars as they grew in the wood, would never have lain close and comely together in the temple; so neither could the one cut and polish, nor the other hew and carve, themselves into that fitness and beauty, which they all had in that stately fabric; no: that was the work of men gifted of God for that purpose; neither can men and women, with all their skill and tools of morality, square and frame their hearts so
as to fall in lovingly together into one holy temple; this is the work of the Spirit, and that also, with this instrument and chisel of the Gospel, to do, partly by cutting off the knottiness of our churlish natures, by his mortifying grace; as also carving, polishing, and smoothing them, with those graces which are the emanations of his own sweet, meek, and holy Spirit.

CHAP. XII.

WHEREIN IS SHEWN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PEACE THAT IS AMONG SAINTS, AND WHICH IS AMONG THE WICKED; THE GREATNESS OF THEIR SIN WHO ARE MINISTERS OF PEACE AND YET STIR UP STRIFE; AND THE REASON WHY THERE IS NO MORE PEACE AND UNITY AMONG SAINTS IN THIS LIFE.

USE 1. This helps us what to think of that peace and love which sometimes is to be found among the wicked of the world. It is not true peace and solid love, because they are strangers to the Gospel, that alone can unite hearts together. What then shall we call this their peace? In some it is a mere conspiracy: "say ye not a confederacy to all them, to whom this people shall say a confederacy." Isa. viii. 12. The peace of some is rather founded in wrath to the saints than love among themselves. They are united, but how? no other way than Samson's foxes, to do mischief to others rather than good to themselves. Two dogs, that are worrying one another, can leave off to run both after a hare that comes by them; who, when the chase is over, can to it as fiercely as before. "In the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together, for before they were at enmity between themselves." Luke xxiii. 12. Again, the peace and unity of others is founded upon some base lust that ties them together; thus shall you see a knot
of good fellows (as they miscall themselves) sit over the pot with abundance of seeming content in one another; and a pack of thieves, when upon a wicked design, jug and call one another together, as partridges their fellows, saying, "Come with us, cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse." Prov. i. 14. Here now is peace and unity; but, alas! they are only "brèthren in iniquity." Thirdly, where it is not thus gross, as it cannot indeed be denied but there are some that never felt the power of the Gospel, so as to be made new creatures by it, who yet hold very fair quarter one with another, and correspond together, and that not on so base and sordid an account, among whom such offices of love are reciprocated as do much sweeten their lives and endear them one to another; and for this they are much beholden to the Gospel, which doth civilize often where it doth not sanctify. But this is a peace so fundamentally defective, that it doth not deserve the name of true peace.

First, It is in cortice, non in corde, superficial and external, not inward and cordial; we may say, rather their lusts are chained from open war, than their hearts changed into inward love: as the beasts agreed in the ark pretty well, yet kept their hostile nature, so do unregenerate men.

Secondly, It is unsanctified peace. First, because, while they seem to have peace with one another, they have not peace with God; and it is peace with God takes away the curse. Secondly, because it proceeds from unsanctified hearts; it is the altar that sanctifies the gift; the heart, the unity. Amicitia non est nisi inter bonos. A heathen could say, True love and friendship can only be between good men; but, alas! he knew not what made a good man. When God intends in mercy to make the hearts of men one, he first makes them new: "and I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you;" Ezek. xi. 19. the peace of the right kind is a fruit of the Spirit, and that sanctifies before it unites. Thirdly, because the end that all such propound in their love, is carnal not spiritual. As Austin did not admire Cicero for his eloquence and oratory so much as he did undervalue and pity him because the name of Jesus Christ
was not to be found in him; so this draws a black line upon carnal men's peace and unity; nothing of God and Christ in it. Is it his glory they aim at? Christ's command that binds them to the peace? No: alas! here is the still voice, but God is not in it; their own quiet and carnal advantage is the primum mobile; peace and unity are such good guests, and pay so well for their entertainment, that this makes men who have no grace, if they have but their wits left, desirous to keep up an external peace among themselves.

In a word, it is a peace that will not long last, because it wants a strong cement; stones may awhile lie together without mortar, but not long. The only lasting cement for love is the blood of Christ; as Austin saith of his friend Alypius and himself, they were sanguine Christi glutinati.

Use 2. Is the Gospel a Gospel of peace in this sense, as taken for unity and love? This dips their sin into a deep dye, who abuse the Gospel to a quite contrary end; and make it their instrument to promote strife and contention with. Such the Apostle speaks of, "some indeed preach Christ out of envy and strife." Phil. i. 15. The Gospel of peace is a strange text, one would think, to preach division and raise strife from; and the pulpit as strange a mount for to plant the battering-pieces of contention on. O how strangely do these men forget their Lord that sent them, who is a prince of peace; and their work, which is not to blow a trumpet of sedition and confusion, or sound an alarm to battle, but rather a joyful retreat from the bloody fight wherein their lusts had engaged them against God and one another! Indeed, there is a war they are to proclaim, but it is only against sin and Satan; and I am sure we are not fit to march out against them, till we can agree among ourselves. What would the prince think of that captain who, instead of encouraging his soldiers to fall on with united forces, as one man against the common enemy, should make a speech to set his soldiers together by the ears among themselves; surely he would hang him up for a traitor. Good was Luther's prayer: A Doctore gloriose, à Pastore contentioso, et inutilibus questionibus liberet Ecclesiam
Deus. From a vain-glorying doctor, a contentious pastor, and nice questions, the Lord deliver his church. And we, in these sad times, have reason to say as hearty an amen to it, as any since his age. Do we not live in a time when the church is turned into a sophist's school? Where such a wrangling and jangling hath been that the preciousest truths of the Gospel are lost already to many; (whose eyes are put out with the dust these contentions have raised) and they have at last fairly disputed themselves out of all their sober principles: as some ill husbands that light among cunning gamesters, and play all their money out of their purses. O woe to such vile men, who have prostituted the Gospel to such devilish ends. God may have mercy on the cheated souls to bring them back to the love of the truth; but for the cheaters, they are gone so far towards Hell that we cannot look for their return.

Use 3. This gives us the reason why there is no more peace and unity among the saints themselves. The Gospel cannot be faulty, that breathes peace. No: it is not because they are Gospellers, but because they are but imperfectly gospelized, that they are no more peaceful; the more they partake of the spirit of the Gospel, the less will they be haunted with the evil spirit of contention and strife. The best of saints are in part unevangelical in two particulars, from which come all the unkind quarrelling and unbrotherly contests among them.

First, In their judgments. "They know but in part, and prophesy but in part." 1 Cor. xiii. 9. he that pretends to more, boasts without his measure, and doth thereby discover, what he denies, his ignorance, I mean, in the Gospel. And this defect in the saints' judgments exposeth them sometimes to drink in principles that are not evangelical. Now, these are they that make the bustle and disturb their peace and unity. All truth is reducible to an unity, like lines they lovingly meet in one centre; the God of truth; and are so far from jostling and clashing, that, as stones in an arch, they uphold one another. And they which so sweetly agree in one cannot learn us to divide. No: it is this stranger, error, that creeps in among the saints, and will needs be judge: this breaks
the peace, and kindles a fire in the house, that in a while, if let alone, will be seen at the house-top. Wholesome food makes no disturbance to a healthful body; but corrupt food doth presently make the body feverish and untoward, and then, when the man is distempered, no wonder if he begins to be pettish and peevish; we have seen it by woeful experience. Those, from whom we had nothing but sweetness and love, while they fed on the same dish of Gospel truth with us, how strangely froward are they grown since they have taken down some unevangelical and erroneous principles? that we know not well how to carry ourselves towards them, they are so captious and quarrelsome; yea at the very hearing of the Word, if they have not yet forgot the way to the ordinance, what a distasteful behaviour do many of them shew? as if every word went against their stomach, and made them sick. O sirs, let us not blame the Gospel; it is innocent as to these sad contentions among us. Paul tells us where to find a father for this brat of strife; see at whose door he directs us to lay it: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine ye have learned." Rom. xvi. 17. Where, I pray, observe how he clears the Gospel; this dividing quarreling spirit is contrary to the Gospel; they never learnt it in Christ's school; and then tacitly implies they have it somewhere else, from some false teacher and false doctrine or other. "Mark them," saith he; as if he had said, Observe them well, and you shall find them tainted some way or other; they have been warming themselves at Satan's fire, and from thence have brought a coal with them that does the mischief.

Secondly, Christians are in part unevangelical in their hearts and lives. The whole root of sin is not stubbed up at once; no wonder some bitter taste remains in the fruit they bear. Saints in Heaven shall be all grace, and no sin in them, and then they shall be all love also; but here they are part grace, part corruption, and so their love is not perfect; how can they be fully soldered together in unity, never to fall out, as long as they are not so fully reconciled to God, in point of sanctification, but now and then there happens some breaches betwixt
them and God himself? and the less progress the Gospel hath made in their hearts to mortify lust and strengthen grace, the less peace and love is to be expected among them. The Apostle concludes, from the contentions among the Christians at Corinth, that they were of little growth in grace; such as were not past the child's spoon and meat: "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able, for ye are yet carnal." 1 Cor. iii. 2. Nay, he conceives this to be so clear evidence, that he appeals to their consciences if it be not so: ver. 3. "for whereas there is among you envyings, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" But as grace strengthens, and the Gospel prevails on the hearts of Christians, so does love and a spirit of unity encrease with it. We say, older and wiser; though children (when young) do scratch and fight, yet when they get up into years, they begin to agree better. Omne invalidum est naturae quaerulum; those that are young and weak, are peevish and quarrelsome. Age and strength brings wisdom to overcome those petty differences that now cannot be borne. In the controversy between Abraham and Lot's servants, Abraham, who was the elder and stronger Christian, was most forward for peace, so as to crave it at the hands of his nephew, every way his inferior; Paul, who was a Christian higher by the head than others, O how he excelled in love; he saith of himself, "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in Jesus Christ." 1 Tim. i. 14. Where, saith Calvin, Fides incredulitati opponitur; dilectio in Christo, saevitiae, quam exercuerat adversus fideles. Faith is opposed to his former obstinate unbelief, when a Pharisee; love in Christ Jesus, to the cruelty he expressed against Christians, when (breathing slaughter) he went on a persecuting errand to Damascus. Now he was as full of faith, as then of unbelief; now as fire-hot of love to the saints, as then of cruelty against them. But what I quote chiefly the place for is to see how this pair of graces thrive and grow together; if abundant in faith, then abundant in love.
The Gospel of peace.

CHAP. XIII.

An exhortation to the saints to maintain peace among themselves, and promote it to their utmost; from three arguments.

USE 3. It brings a seasonable exhortation to all the saints, that they would nourish peace what they can among themselves. You all profess to have been baptized into the spirit of the Gospel; but you do not shew it when you bite and snarl at one another. The Gospel, that makes wolves and lambs agree, doth not teach the lambs to turn wolves, and devour each other. Our Saviour told the two disciples, whose choler was soon up, that they would be fetching fire from Heaven to go on their revengeful errand, that they little thought from what hearth that wild-fire of their passion came: "ye know not what spirit ye are of." Luke ix. 56. As if he had said, Such fiery wrathful speeches do not suit with the meek master you serve, nor with the Gospel of peace he preacheth to you. And if the Gospel will not allow us to pay our enemies in their own coin, and give them wrath for wrath; then much less will it suffer brethren to spit fire at one another's faces. No: when any such embers of contention begin to smoke among Christians, we may know who left the spark; no other but Satan, he is the great kindle-coal of all their contentions. If there be a tempest in the spirits of Christians, and the wind of their passions be high and loud, it is easy to tell who is the conjuror: O it is the devil, that is practising his black art upon their lusts, which yet are so much unmortifed as gives him too great an advantage of raising many times sad storms of division and strife amongst them. Paul and Barnabas set out in a calm together; but the devil sends a storm after them, such a storm as parted them in the midst of their voyage: "and the contention was so sharp betwixt them, that they departed asunder one from the other." Acts xv. 39. There is nothing (next Christ and Heaven) that the devil grudged believers more than their peace and
The Gospel of peace.

mutual love; if he cannot rend them from Christ, stop them from getting to Heaven, yet he takes some pleasure to see them go thither in a storm; like a shattered fleet severed one from another, that they may have no assistance from nor comfort of each others company all the way; though, where he can divide, he hopes to ruin also, well knowing this to be the most probable means to effect it. One ship is easier taken than a squadron; a town, if it can be but set on fire, the enemy may hope to take it with more ease; let it therefore be your great care to keep the devil's spark from your powder. Certainly peace among Christians is no small mercy, that the devil's arrows fly so thick at its breast. Something I would fain speak to endear this mercy to the people of God. I love I confess a clear and still air, but above all in the church among believers, and I am made the more sensible what a mercy this would be by the dismal consequence of these divisions and differences, that have for some years together troubled our air, and filled us with such horror and confusion that we have not been much unlike that land called Terra del fuego, the land of smoke, because of the frequent flashings of lightnings and abundance of smoke found there. What can I compare error to, better than smoke? and contention to, than fire? a kind of emblem of hell itself, where flames and darkness meet together to increase the horror of the place. But to press the exhortation a little closer, give me leave to provoke you by three arguments to peace and unity.

Section I.

First, For Christ's sake. And methinks, when begging for his sake, I should have no nay. When you pray to God, and do but use his name in the business, you are sure to speed. And why should not an exhortation, that woos you for Christ's sake, move your hearts to duty, as a prayer put up by you in his name moves God's heart to mercy? Indeed, how can you in faith use Christ's name, as an argument to unlock God's heart to thee, which hath not so much credit with thyself as to open thy own heart into a compliance with a duty which
is so strongly set on his heart to promote among his
people? as appears,

First, By the solemn charge he gave his disciples in
this particular, John xiii. 34. "A new commandment I
give unto you, that you love one another; as I have
loved you, that ye also love one another." I pray ob-
serve how he prepares their hearts to open readily, and
bid this commandment kindly welcome; he sets his
own name upon it: "A new commandment I give unto
you." As if he had said, Let this command, though as
old as any other, Lev. xix. 18. yet go under my name in
an especial manner; when I am gone, and the fire
of strife begins at any time among you, remember
what particular charge I now give you, and let it quench
it presently. Again, observe how he delivers this pre-
cept, and that is by way of gift and privilege. A new
commandment "I give unto you." Indeed, this was
Christ's farewell sermon, the very cream of that milk
which he had fed them with; never dropped a sweeter
discourse from his blessed lips; he saved his best wine
till the last. He was now making his will, and amongst
other things that he bequeathes to his disciples he takes
this commandment, as a father would do his seal-ring
off his finger, and gives it to them. Again, thirdly, he
doeth not barely lay the command before them, but, to
make it the more effectual, he annexeth in a few words
the most powerful argument why they should, as also
the most clear and full direction how they might, do this
that is possible to be given: "As I have loved you, that
ye also love one another." O Christians! what may not
the love of Christ command you? if it were to lay down
your lives for him that loved you to death, would you
deny them? and shall not this his love persuade you to
lay down your strifes and divisions? This speaks enough
how much weight he laid upon this commandment. But
then again, observe how Christ in the same sermon, over
and over again, reminds them of this; which if he had
not been very solicitous of, should not have had so large
a room in his thoughts, then, when he had so little time
left, in which he was to crowd and sum up all the
heavenly counsel and comfort that he desired to leave
with them before his departure; nay, so great weight he
lays on this, that he seems to lock up his own joy and
and theirs together in the care that they should take
about this one command of loving one another: "These
things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain
in you; and that your joy might be full." John xv. 11.
What these things were, appears by the preceding verse:
"If ye keep my commandment, ye shall abide in my
love." These were the things that he spake of in order
to his joy in them, and theirs in him, that they would
keep his commandments. Now, to let them know how
high a place their obedience to this particular command
of love and unity had in his heart, and how eminently it
conduced to the continuing his joy in them, and filling
up their own, he chuseth that above any for his in-
stance, in order to what he had said, as you may see
verse 12. "This is my commandment, that ye love one
another." Observe still, how Christ appropriates this
commandment to himself: "This is my commandment;"
as if he would signify to them, that as he had one disci-
ple, who went by the name of the disciple "whom Jesus
loved;" so he would have a darling commandment, in
which he takes some singular delight, and that this
should be it: "their loving one another." But we are
not yet at the last link of this golden chain of Christ's
discourse. When he hath put some more warmth into
their affections to this duty, by exposing his own love to
them in the deepest expression of it, even to die for them,
verse 13. then he comes on more boldly, and tells them
he will own them for his friends, as they are careful to
observe what he had left in charge with them, verse 14.
"ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."
And now, taking it for granted that he had prevailed
upon them, and they would walk in unity and love as he
had commanded them, he cannot conceal the pleasure
he takes therein, yea and in them, for it; verse 15. he
opens his heart to them, and locks no secret from them,
aye bids them go and open their heart to God and be
free to him, as he is to them, verse 16. And mark from
what blessed hour all this familiarity that they are ad-
mitted to, bears date: "From henceforth I call you not
VOL. II. 31
servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth.” That is, from the time that you walk dutefully to me, and lovingly to one another. One would think now he had said enough; but he thinks not so. In the very next words he is at it again, verse 17. “These things I command you, that ye love one another;” as if all he had left else in charge with them had been subservient to this.

A second thing, that speaks Christ’s heart deeply engaged in the promoting of love and unity among Christians, is his fervent prayer for this. Should you hear a preacher with abundance of vehemency press a grace or duty upon the people in his pulpit, and as soon as sermon is done, you should go under his closet-window and hear him as earnestly wrestling with God, that he would give his people what he had so zealously pressed upon them; you would easily believe the man was in earnest. Our blessed Saviour hath taught us ministers whither to go, when we come out of the pulpit, and what to do: no sooner hath he done his sermon to them, but he is at prayer with God for them. And what he insisted on most in preaching, he enlargeth most upon in prayer; unity and peace was the legacy he desired so much to leave with them, and this is the boon he puts in strongly with God to bestow on them, John xvii. 11. “Father, keep, through thine own power, those that thou hast given me;” and why all this care? “that they may be one as we are.” As if he had said, Father, did we ever fall out? was there ever discord betwixt us? Why then should they who are thine and mine disagree? so verse 21. and again, verse 23. he is pleading hard for the same mercy. And why so oft? Is it so hardly wrung from God that Christ himself must tug so often for it? No, sure; but, as Christ said of the voice that came from heaven, John xii. 30. “This voice came not for me, but for your sakes.” So may I say here: This zeal of Christ for his people’s unity and love, was for their sakes.

First, He would by this raise the price of this mercy in their thoughts; that sure is worth their care which he counted worth his redoubled prayer (when not a
word was spoke for his own life), or else he misplaced his zeal and improved not his time with God for the best advantage of his people.

Secondly, He would make divisions appear more scaring and dreadful things to his people, by putting in so many requests to God for preventing them. Certainly, if Christ had known one evil worse than another like to come upon his people at his departure, he would have been so true and kind to his children, as to deprecate that above all, and keep that off. He told his children what they must look for at the world's hand, all manner of sufferings and torments that their wit could help their malice to devise; yet Christ prays not so much for immunity from these as from unbrotherly contentions among themselves; he makes account, if they can agree together, and be in love, saint with saint, church with church, they have a mercy that will alleviate the other, and make it tolerable, yea joyous; this heavenly fire of love among themselves will quench the flames of their persecutors' fire, at least the horror of them.

In a word, Christ would, as strengthen our faith to ask boldly for that which he hath bespoke for us, so also aggravate the sin of contention to such a height, that all who have any love to Christ, when they shall see that they cannot live in strife, but they must sin against those prayers which Christ with strong cries put up for peace and unity, they may tremble at the thoughts of it.

Thirdly, The price that Christ gave for the obtaining of this peace and unity. As Christ went from preaching up peace to pulling down peace from heaven by prayer, so he went from praying to paying for it. Indeed Christ's prayers are not a beggar's prayers, as ours are; he prays his Father that he may only have what he pays for. He was now on the way to the place of payment, Calvary, where his blood was the coin he laid down for this peace. I confess peace with God was the chief pearl that this wise merchant Christ bought up for his people; but he had this in his eye also; and therefore the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is the commemoration-feast of Christ's death, as it seals our peace with God, so it signifies our love one with another, 1 Cor. x. And need I
now give you any account why our dear Lord pursued this design so close of knitting his people in peace and unity together? Truly the church is intended by Christ to be his house, in which he means to take up his rest; and what rest could he take in a house all on fire about him? It is his kingdom, and how can his laws be obeyed, if all his subjects be in a hubbub one against another? inter arma silent leges. In a word, his church are a people that are called out of the world, to be a praise to him in the sight of the nations, as Peter saith, "God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name;" Acts, xv. 14. that is a people for his honour; but a wrangling, divided people would be little credit to the name of Christ, yea, such where they are found (and where, alas! are they not to be found?) are to the name of Christ as smoke and dirt to a fair face; they disfigure Christ so that the world will not acknowledge him to be who he saith he is; they lead them even into temptation to think basely of Christ and his Gospel. John xvii. 23. Christ prays his people may be made perfect in one, and mark his argument: "that the world may know that thou hast sent me." Whose heart bleeds not to hear Christ blasphemed at this day by so many black mouths? And what hath opened them more than the saints' divisions?

S E C T. II.

The second argument shall be taken from yourselves; for your own sakes, live in peace and unity; consider your obligations to love and unity, your relations call for it. If believers, Paul tells you your kindred, Gal. iii. 27. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Not only children of God, so are all by creation, but by faith in Jesus Christ also. Christ is the foundation of a new brotherhood to believers. O Christians, consider how near you are set one to another; you were conceived in the same womb of the church, begot by the same seed of the Word of this new creation, whereby, as one saith, you become brethren of the whole blood; and therefore there should be the more unity and dear affection among you than any other. Joseph's heart went out more to Benjamin than any of the rest of his brethren, because
he was his brother both by father and mother. If you fall out, who shall agree? what is it that can rationally break your peace? Those things which used to be bones of contention, and occasion squabbling among other brethren, Christ hath taken care to remove them all; so that of all others your quarrelings are most childish, yea sinful. Sometimes one child finds himself grieved at the partiality of his parents' affection, more set on some others than himself, and this makes him envy them, and they despise him; but there is no such fondling in God's family, all dear alike to Christ: "walk in love, as Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us," Ephes. v. 2. that is, for one as well as another. Christ in the church is like to the soul in the body; he is totus in toto, et totus in qualibet parte. Every member in Christ hath whole Christ, his whole heart and love, as if there were none besides himself to enjoy it.

Again, Among men, though the father shews not so much partiality in his affection, yet oft great inequality in the distribution of his estate; though all are children, yet not all heirs, and this sows the seed of strife among them; as Jacob found by woeful experience. But Christ hath made his will so, that they are all provided for alike, called therefore the "common salvation," Jude iii. and "the inheritance of the saints in light," 1 Col. xii. for the community. All may enjoy their happiness without jostling with, or prejudicing of one another, as millions of people who look on the same sun, and at the same time, and none stand in another's light; methinks that speech of Christ looks a little this way: "the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one."

John xvii. 22. By glory there I would understand Heaven's glory principally; now, saith Christ, "I have given it," that is, in reversion, I have given it them; not this or that favourite, but "them;" I have laid it out as the portion of all sincere believers: and why? that "they may be one;" that all squabbles may be silenced, and none may envy another for what he hath above him when he sees glory is his. It is true indeed some difference there is in Christians' outward garb; some poor, some rich, and in common gifts also, some have more of them, some less.
But are these of such weight to commence a war upon among those that wait for the same Heaven? If the father clads all his children in the same cloth, it were sad to see them stab one another because one hath a lace more than the other, nay because one's lace is red, and the other is green; for indeed the quarrel among Christians is sometimes, not for having less gifts than another, but because not the same in kind, though another, as good and useful, which possibly he wants whom we envy.

Secondly, Consider where you are, and among whom; are you not in your enemy's quarters? if you fall out, what do you but kindle a fire for them to warm their hands by? Ah! so would we have it, say they. The sea of their rage will weaken this bank fast enough, you need not cut it for them; the unseasonableness of the strife betwixt Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's is aggravated by the near neighbourhood of the Heathens to them: "and there was a strife between Abraham's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle. And the Canaanite and Perizzite dwelled in the land." Gen. xiii. 7. To fall out while these idolaters looked on, this would be town-talk presently, and put themselves and their religion both to shame. And, I pray, who have been in our land, all the while the people of God have been scuffling? Those that have curiously observed every uncomely behaviour among them, and told all the world of it; such as have wit and malice enough to make use of it for their wicked purposes. They stand on tip-toes to be at work, only we are not yet quite laid up and disabled, by the soreness of those our wounds which we have given ourselves, from withstanding their fury. They hope it will come to that; and then they will cure us of our own wounds, by giving one, if they can, that shall go deep enough to the heart of our life, Gospel and all. O Christians, shall Herod and Pilate put you to shame? They clapped up a peace to strengthen their hands against Christ; and will not you unite against your common enemy? It is an ill time for mariners to be fighting, when an enemy is boring a hole at the bottom of their ship.

Thirdly, Consider the sad consequences of your contentions.
First, You put a stop to the growth of grace. The body may as well thrive in a fever, as the soul prosper when on a flame with strife and contention. No: first this fire in the bones must be quenched, and brought into its natural temper; and so must this unkindly heat be slaked among Christians, before either can grow. I pray observe that place, Eph. iv. 15. "But, speaking the truth in love (or being sincere in love) may grow up into him in all things." The Apostle is upon a cure, shewing how souls that at present are weak, and their grace rather wan and withered than growing, may come to thrive and flourish; and the receipt he gives is a composition of these two rare drugs, sincerity and love; preserve these, and all will do well, as verse 16, where the whole body is said "to edify itself in love." There may be preaching, but no edifying, without love. Our times are a sad comment upon this text.

Secondly, You cut off your trade with Heaven at the throne of grace; you will be little in prayer to God, I warrant you, if much in squabbling with your brethren. It is impossible to go from wrangling to praying with a free spirit. And if you should be so bold as to knock at God's door, you are sure to have cold welcome: "leave thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Matt. v. 24. God will not have the incense of prayer put to such strange fire; nor will he eat of our leavened bread, taste of any performance soured with malice and bitterness of spirit. First, the peace was renewed, and a covenant of love and friendship struck between Laban and Jacob, Gen. xxxi. 44. and then, verse 54. "Jacob offered sacrifice upon the Mount, and called his brethren to eat bread." The very Heathens thought no serious business could be well done by quarreling spirits; therefore the senators of Rome used to visit the Temple dedicated Jovi deposotorio, because there they did deponere inimicitias, lay down all their feuds and controversies, before they went into the senate to consult of state affairs. Durst not they go to the senate till friends? and dare we go up to God's altar, bow our knees to him in prayer, while our hearts are disturbed and swoln with anger, envy, and malice? O God humble us.
Thirdly, As we cut off our trade with Heaven, so with one another. When two countries fall out, whose great interest lies in their mutual traffic, they must needs both pinch by the war. Truly the Christians' great gains come in by their mutual commerce; and they are the richest Christians commonly who are seated with greatest advantage for this trade. As no nation have all their commodities of their own growth, but needs some merchandise with others, so there is no Christian that could well live without borrowing from his brethren. There is that "which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part." Eph. iv. 16. Paul himself is not so well laid in, but he hopes to get something more than he hath from the meanest of those he preacheth to; he tells the Christians at Rome, chap. i. he longs to see them, as to impart some spiritual gift to them, verse 11. so saith he, "that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me;" verse 12. yea he hopes to be "filled with their company." Rom. xv. 24. As a man is filled with good cheer, he hopes to make a feast of their company. Now contentions and divisions spoil all intercourse among believers; they are as baneful to Christian communion as a great pestilence or plague is to the trade of a market town. Communication flows from communion and communion that is founded upon union. The church grows under persecution: that sheds the seed all over the field, and brings the Gospel where it had not been heard of; but divisions and contentions, like a furious storm, washes the seed out of the land with its heart, fatness, and all.

Fourthly, You do not only hazard the decay of grace, but the growth of sin. Indeed it shews there is more than a little corruption got within doors already, but it opens the door to much more. "If ye have bitter envying, and strife, glory not;" James iii. that is, do not think you are such good Christians. This stains all your other excellencies; had ye the knowledge and gifts of holy angels, yet this would make you look more like devils than them; he gives the reason, verse 16. "for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." Contention is the devil's forge, in which if he can but give a Christian a heat or two, he will not doubt but to
The Gospel of peace.

soften him for his hammer of temptation. Moses himself, when his spirit was a little hot, "spake unadvisedly with his lips." It must needs be an occasion of much sinning which renders it impossible for a man while in his distemper to do any one righteous action: "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." James i. 20. Now what a sad thing is it for Christians to stay long in that temper in which they can do no good to one another, but provoke lust.

Fifthly, They are prognostics of judgment coming. A louring sky speaks foul weather at hand; and mariners look for a storm at sea, when the waves begin to swell and utter a murmuring noise. Hath there been nothing like these among us? What can we think but a judgment is breeding, by the louring countenances of Christians, their swellings of heart, and discontented passions vented from their swollen spirits, like the murmuring of waters, or rumbling of thunder in the air before a tempest? When children fight and wrangle, now is the time they may expect their father to come and part them with his rod: "he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I smite the earth with a curse." Mal. iv. 6. Strife and contention set a people next door to a curse. God makes account he brings a heavy judgment upon a people, when himself leaves them: if the master leaves the ship, it is near sinking indeed. And truly no readier way to send him going, than by contentions. These smoke him out of his own house. "Be of one mind (saith the Apostle), live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with you," 2 Cor. xiii. 11. implying, if they did not live in peace, they must not look to have his company long with them. God was coming in Moses with a great salvation to the Israelites, and, as a hand of the good services he was to do for them, he begins to make peace between two discontented brethren, as they strove; but his kindness was not accepted, and this was the occasion of many years misery more that they endured in Egypt. "Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian," Acts vii. 29. "and no news of deliverance for the space of forty years after." verse 30. And have not our dissensions,
or rather our rejecting those overtures which God by men of healing spirits hath offered for peace, been the cause why mercy hath fled so fast from us, and we left to groan under those sad miseries that are upon us at this day? and who knows how long? O who can think what a glorious morning shone upon England in that famous parliament begun 1640, and not weep and weep again to see our hopes for a glorious reformation, that opened with them, now shut up in blood and war, contention and confusion? Miseries too like the fire and brimstone that fell from Heaven upon those unhappy cities of the plain.

S E C T. III.

Thirdly and lastly, O labour for peace and unity for others' sake. I mean those who at present are wicked and ungodly, among whom ye live. We are not, saith Austin, to despair of the wicked, but do our utmost they may be made good and godly. Quia numerus sanctorum, semper de numero impiorum auctus est. Because God ever calls his number out of the heap and multitude of the ungodly world. Now no more winning means to work upon them, and pave a way for their conversion, than to commend the truths and ways of God to them, by the amiableness of your love and unity that profess the same. This is the cummin-seed, that would draw souls, like doves, to the window; this the gold to overlay the Temple of God (the church), so as to make all in love with its beauty that look into it. Every one is afraid to dwell in a house haunted with evil spirits; and hath Hell a worse than the spirit of division? O Christians, agree together, and your number will increase. It is said: "they continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Acts ii. 46. And mark what follows, verse 47. "they had favour with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The world was so great a stranger to love and peace, that it was amused and set of considering what heavenly doctrine that was which could so mollify men's hearts, plane their rugged
natures, and joint them so close in love together, and were the more easily persuaded to adopt themselves into that true family of love. But, alas! when this gold became dim (I mean, peace among Christians faded) then the Gospel lost credit in the world, and the doctrine of it came under more suspicion in their thoughts, who seeing such clefts gape in her walls, were more afraid to put their heads under its roof. "I charge ye, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor wake my love till he please." Cant. ii. 7. Master Cotton on the place, "by the roes and hinds of the field," (which are fearful creatures, easily scared away, yet otherwise willing to feed with the sheep) takes the Gentiles to be meant, inclinable to embrace the Jewish religion, but very soon scared away by the troublesome state of it, or any offensive carriage of the Jews. And what more offensive carriage than divisions and strifes? see them joined together, Rom. xvi. 17. "Mark them which cause divisions and offences." If divisions, then there are sure to be offences taken, and many possibly hardened in their sins thereby. Do not your hearts tremble to lay the stumbling-block for any to break his neck over? to roll the stone over any poor sinner's grave, and seal him down in it, that he never have a resurrection to grace here or glory hereafter? As you would keep yourselves free of the blood of those that die in their sins, O take heed of lending anything by your divisions to the hardening of their souls in their impenitency.

SECT. IV.

The fourth and last sort of peace, which I thought to have spoken of, is a peace with all the creatures, even the most fierce and cruel. I called it a peace of indemnity and service. This Adam in his primitive state enjoyed; while he was innocent, all the creatures were innocent and harmless to him; the whole creation was at his service; no mutinous principle was found in any creature that did incline it in the least to rebel against him. When God sent the beasts of the field, and fowls of the air, to receive names from him, it was that they
should do their homage to him, and acknowledge him as their Lord; and that he, by exercising that act of authority over them (in giving them names) might have an experiment of his perfect (though not absolute and independent) dominion over them. But no sooner did man withdraw his allegiance from God, but all the creatures (as if they had been sensible of the wrong man by his apostacy had done his and their Maker, by whose patent he held his lordship over them) presently forget their subjection to him, yea, take up arms in their supreme Lord's quarrel against apostate man. And thus they continue in array against him, till God and man meet together again in a happy covenant of peace; and then the commission, which God in wrath gave them against rebel man, is called in, and in the same day that God and the believing souls are made friends, the war ends between him and them. Hosea ii. 18. "In that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of the heaven;" and mark the day from whence this covenant bears date: "In that day," that is, in the day that "I betroth thee unto me," so that our peace with the creatures comes in by our peace with God; and this being the blessing of the Gospel, so must that also. But as our peace with God is not so perfectly enjoyed in this life, but God hath left himself at liberty to chastise his reconciled ones, and that sharply too, so our peace with the creatures doth not hinder but that they may be (yea, often are) the rod which God useth to correct them with. The water may drown one saint, and the fire consume another to ashes, and yet these creatures at peace with these saints; because they are not sent by God in wrath against them, for any real hurt that God means them thereby. This indeed was the commission that he gave all the creatures against apostate man as part of his curse for his sin: he sent the creatures against him (as a prince doth his general against a company of traitors in arms against him) with authority to take vengeance on them for their horrid rebellion against their Maker. But now the commission is altered, and runs in a more comfortable strain: Go fire, and be the chariot in which such a saint may be brought home
from earth to me in heaven's glory. Go water, waft another; and so of all the rest. Not a creature comes on a worse message to a saint. It is true they are sharp corrections as to the present smart they bring; but they are ever mercies, and do a friendly office in the intention of God, and happy issue to the believer. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. viii. 28. And the Apostle speaks of it as a common principle, well known among the saints: "We know that all things work," &c. As if he had said, Where is the saint that doth not know this? And yet it were happy for us we knew it better; some of us would then pass our days more comfortably than now we do. But I intend not a discourse of this; let brevity here make amends for prolixity in the former.

CHAP. XIV.

THE DUTY OF A CHRISTIAN TO STAND SHOD WITH A HEART PREPARED FOR ALL SUFFERINGS; WITH ONE REASON OF THE POINT.

WE come to the third enquiry or question from these words propounded.

S E C T. I.

Quest. What is meant by this "preparation of the Gospel of peace," with which the Christian's feet are to be shod? or thus, What grace doth this preparation, with which we are to be shod, signify? And why called the preparation of the Gospel of peace?

Answ. As for the grace held forth by this "preparation of the Gospel," &c. I find great variety in the apprehensions of the learned, and indeed variety rather than contrariety. I shall therefore spare the mentioning them (many of which you may find in a bunch collected by the Rev. Dr. Gouge upon the place, with his thoughts
And your feet shod with

upon them) and crave the boldness to lay down, with
due respect to others, the apprehensions I have had
thereon; which, I conceive, will rather amplify than
thwart their sense. Now what this preparation is will
best appear by considering the part it is designed for;
and that is the foot, the only member in the body to be
shod, and the piece of armour it is compared to, and
that is the soldier’s shoe, which (if right) is to be of the
strongest make, being not so much intended for finery as
defence; and that so necessary, that for want of it alone,
the soldier in some cases is disabled for service; as
when he is called to march far on hard ways, and those
perhaps streewed with sharp stones, how long will he
go (if not shod) without wounding or foundering? or if
the way be good, but the weather bad, and his feet not
fenced from the wet and cold, they are not so far from
the head, but the cold got in them may strike up to that;
yea bring a disease on the whole body, which will keep
him on his bed when he should be in the field: as many
almost are surfeited as slain in armies. Now, what the
foot is to the body, that the will is to the soul. The
foot carries the whole body, and the will the soul; yea,
the whole man, body and soul also. Voluntas est loco
motiva facultas; we go whither our will sends us. And
what the shoe is to the foot, that preparation, or, if you
please, readiness and alacrity, is to the will. The man
whose feet are well shod fears no ways, but goes through
thick and thin, foul or fair, stones or straws, all are alike
to him that is well shod; while the barefooted man, or
slenderly shoed, shrinks when he feels the wet, and
shrinks when he lights on a sharp stone. Thus, when
the will and heart of a man is prompt, and ready to do
any work, the man is as it were shod and armed against
all trouble and difficulty, which he is to go over in the
doing of it. They say the Irish tread so light on the
ground, that they will run over some bogs, wherein any
other almost would stick or sink; a prepared ready
heart I am sure will do this in a spiritual sense; none
can walk, where he can run; he makes nothing of af
fictions, yea persecutions, but goes singing over them.
David never so merry as in the cave Psal. Ivii. and how
came he so? "My heart in prepared, my heart is prepared (saith he), I will sing and give praise." If David's heart had not been shod with this preparation, he would not have liked his way so well he was in; you would have had him sing to another tune, and heard him quarrel with his destiny, or fall out with his profession, that had put him to so much trouble, and driven him from the pleasures of a prince's court, to hide himself under ground in a cave from those that hunted for his precious life. He would have spent his breath rather in pitying and bemoaning himself, than in praising of God. An unprepared heart, that is not well satisfied with its work or condition, hangs back; and, though it may be brought to submit to it with much ado, yet it is but as a foundered horse on a stony way, who goes in pain every step, and would oft be turning out of the path, if bit and whip did not keep him in.

**Quest. 2.** But why is it called the "preparation of the Gospel of peace?"

**Answ.** Because the Gospel of peace is the great instrument by which God works the will and heart of man into this readiness and preparation to do or suffer what he calls to. It is the business we are set about, when preaching the Gospel, to make a "willing people," *Psalm* cx. "To make ready a people prepared for the Lord." *Luke* i. As a captain is sent to beat up his drum in a city, to call in a company that will voluntarily list themselves to follow the prince's wars, and be in readiness to take the field and march at an hour's warning: thus the Gospel comes to call over the hearts of men to the foot of God, to stand ready for his service whatever it costs them; now this it doth as it is a "Gospel of peace." It brings the joyful tidings of peace concluded betwixt God and man by the blood of Jesus, and this is so welcome to the trembling conscience of poor sinners, who before melted away their sorrowful days in a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation from the Lord to devour them as his adversaries, that no sooner the report of a peace concluded betwixt God and them sounds in their ears by the preaching of the Gospel, and is certainly confirmed to be true in their own consciences.
And your feet shod with

by the Spirit, who is sent from Heaven to seal it to them, and give them some sweet gust of it, by shedding abroad the sense of it in their souls, but instantly there appears a new life in them, that they, who before were so fearful and shy of every petty trouble, as to start and boggle at the thought of it, knowing it could bring no good news to them, are now shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, able to go out smilingly to meet the greatest sufferings that are or can be on the way towards them, and say undauntedly to them, as once Christ did to those that came with swords and staves to attack him: "whom seek ye?" "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," (saith the Apostle) Romans v. 1. And this how mightily doth it work? even "to make them glory in tribulations." The words opened afford these two points.

Doct. 1. It is our duty to be always prepared and ready to meet with any trial, and endure any hardship, which God may lay out for us in our Christian warfare.

Doct. 2. The peace which the Gospel brings and speaks to the heart will make the creature ready to wade through any trial or trouble that meets him in his Christian course.

SECT. II.

Doct. 1. We ought to maintain a holy readiness of spirit to endure any hardship which God may lay out for us in our Christian course; saints are sure to want no trials and sufferings: these, as Christ saith of the poor, "we shall have always with us." The bloody sweat which Christ felt, signified (saith Augustine) the sufferings which in his whole mystical body he should endure. Christ's whole body was lifted upon the cross, and no member must now look to escape the cross. And when the cross comes, how must we behave ourselves towards it? It will not speak us Christians that we are merely passive, and make no notorious resistance against the will of God; but we must be active in our patience, if I may so speak, by shewing a holy readiness and alacrity of spirit to be at God's ordering, though it were to be led down into the very chambers of death itself. That epi-
taph would not become a Christian's grave-stone, which I have heard was engraved upon one's tomb, and might too truly on most that die: "Here lies one against his will." Holy Paul was of a better mind: "I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die, at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts xxi. 13. But may be this was but a flourish of his colours, when he knew the enemy to be far enough off; he may yet live to change his thoughts, when he comes to look death in the face. No: what he hath said he stands to: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." 2 Tim. iv. 6. he speaks of it, as if it were already done; indeed he had already laid his head on the block, and was dead before the stroke was given, not with fear, as some have been, but with a free resignation of himself to it; and if a malefactor be civili ter mortuus, dead in a law sense, as soon as the sentence is out of the judge's mouth, though he lives some weeks after, then I am sure in a Gospel sense we may say, those are dead already, that are ready to die, that have freely put themselves under the sentence of it in their own willingness. And this alacrity and serenity that was on Paul's spirit was the more remarkable, if we consider how close he stood to his end. Indeed some, from the Greek word, which properly signifieth a libation or drink-offering, conceive that Paul knew the very kind of death which he should suffer, namely beheading; and that he alludes to the pouring out of blood or wine used in sacrifice, as that kind of sacrifice, which did best illustrate the nature of his death, viz. the pouring out his blood; which he did as willingly offer up in the service of Christ and his church, as they did pour out their wine in a drink-offering to the Lord. We shall now give some rational account of the point, why we are to be ready and prompt at suffering-work. The reasons of the point shall fall under two heads; first, taken from Christ, for or from whom we suffer. The second, from the excellency of such a temper as this readiness to endure any hardship imports.

First, In regard of Christ. 1. He commands it. 2. He deserves it.
SECT. III.

First, He commands it. Indeed this frame of spirit is implied in every duty, as the modus agendi, that qualification, which, like the stamp on coin, makes it current in God’s account: “Put them in mind (saith the Apostle) to be ready to every good work;” Tit. iii. 1. be it active or passive, they must be ready for it, or else all they do is to no purpose. The word there is the same with this in the text, and is taken from a vessel that is fashioned and fitted for the use the master puts it to; we do not like, when we are to use a vessel, cup or pot, to have them out of the way, or to mend, and scour, at that time we call for them; but look to find them at hand on the shelf, clean, and fit for present use, or our servants shall hear of it. Thus God expects we should keep our hearts clean from the defilements of sin, and our affections whole and entire for himself, that they be not lent out to the creature, nor broken and battered by any inordinacy of delight in them, lest we should be to seek, when he calls us to do or suffer; or be found very unprepared, without much ado to set us right, and make us willing for the work, as the same Apostle: “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared ‘unto every good work.” 2 Tim. ii. 21. Now, as God commands this readiness in all, so especially in suffering-work: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Luke ix. 23. These words may be called the Christian’s indenture; every one that will be Christ’s servant, must seal to this, before he hath leave from Christ to call him master; wherein you see the chief provision Christ makes is about suffering-work, as that which will most try the man. If the servant can but fadge with that, no fear but he will like the other part of his work well enough. Now, I pray, observe how careful Christ is to engage the heart in this work; he will have his servants not only endure the hardship of his service, but shew their readiness in it also; four remarkable passages are put in for this purpose.
First, He must deny himself; that is, deliver up his own will out of his own hands, and from that day that he enters into Christ's service, acknowledge himself not to be sui juris, at his own disposal. Whatever Christ bears, he cannot to hear his servants, when sent by him on any business, say, "I will not."

Secondly, He tells them the worst at first, and chuseth to speak of the cross they must bear, rather than the crown they shall at last wear; and withal that he expects they should not only bear it (this the wicked do full sore against their wills), but also "take it up." Indeed he doth not bid them make the cross, run themselves into trouble of their own head, but he will have them take that up which he makes for them; that is, not step out of the way by any sinful shift to escape any trouble, but to accept of the burthen God lays for them, and go cheerfully under it, yea thankfully, as if God did us a favour to employ us in any suffering for him. We do not take so much pains as to stoop to take up that which is not worth something; Christ will have his people take up the cross, as one does to take up a pearl that lies on the ground before him.

Thirdly, This they must do every day: "and take up his cross daily." When there is none on his back, he must carry one in his heart, that is continually be preparing himself to stand ready for the first call; as porters stand at the merchants' doors in London, waiting when their masters have any burthen for them to carry. Thus Paul professeth he died daily; how, but by a readiness of mind to die? he set himself in a posture to bid God's messenger welcome, whenever it came. This indeed is to take up the cross daily; when our present enjoyments do not make us strange to or fall out with the thoughts of future trials. The Jews were to eat the passover with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, and all in haste. Exod. xii. 11. When God is feasting the Christian with present comforts, he must have this Gospel-shoe on, he must not set to it as if he were feasting at home, but as at a running meal on his way in an inn, willing to be gone as soon as he is refreshed a little for his journey.
Fourthly, When the cross is on, what then? Then he must follow Christ; not stand still and fret, but follow; not be drawn and haled after Christ, but follow as a soldier his captain voluntarily. Christ doth not, as some generals, drive the country before him, and make his servants fight whether they will or no; but he invites them in: "I will allure her into the wilderness." Indeed a gracious heart follows Christ into the wilderness of affliction as willingly as a lover his beloved into some solitary private arbour or bower, there to sit and enjoy his presence. Christ useth arguments in his Word and by his Spirit so satisfactory to the Christian, that he is very willing to follow him; as the patient, who at first, may be, shrinks and draws back, when the surgeon talks of cutting or bleeding, but when he hath heard the reasons given by him why that course must be taken and is convinced it is the best way for his health, then he very freely puts forth his arm to the knife, and thanks the surgeon for his pains.

SECT. IV.

Secondly, Christ deserves this frame of spirit at our hands; of many, take but two particulars, wherein this will appear. First, if we consider his readiness to endure trouble and sorrow for us. Secondly, his tender care over us, while we endure either for or from him.

First, His readiness to endure sorrow and trouble for us. When God called him to the work of mediatorship, he found the way laid with sharper stones than we do in the road that is appointed us to walk in. He was to tread upon swords and pikes, all manner of sorrows, and those edged with the wrath of God; this was the sharpest stone of all, which he hath taken out of our way, and yet how light did he go upon the ground? O had not his feet been well shod with love to our souls, he would soon have turned back, and said the way was impassable; but on he goes and hesitates not; never did we sin more willingly, than he went to suffer for our sin.

"Lo, I come (saith he to his Father) I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart." Psalm xl. 7. O what a full consent did the heart of Christ re-
bound to his Father's call: like some echo, that answers what is spoken twice or thrice over, thus, when his Father speaks to him to undertake the work of saving poor lost man, he doth not give a bare assent to the call but trebles it: "I come, I delight to do thy will, yea thy law is in my heart." He was so ready, that before his enemies laid hands on him, he, as it were, laid hands on himself, in the instituting of the Lord's supper, and there did sacramentally rend the flesh of his own body, and broach his own heart, to fill that cup with his precious blood, which with his own hand he gave them, that they might not look upon his death now at hand but as a mere butchery from the hand of man's violence, but rather as a sacrifice, wherein he did freely offer up himself to God for them and all believers. And when the time was come that the sad tragedy should be acted, he, knowing the very place whither the traitor with his black guard would come, goes out and marcheth into the very mouth of them. O what a shame were it that we should be unwilling to go a mile or two of rugged way to bear so sweet a Saviour company in his sufferings? "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" said Christ to Peter, Matt. xxvi. 40. Not with me, who am now going to meet with death itself, and ready to bid the bitterest pangs of it welcome for your sakes? not with me!

Secondly, Christ deserves this readiness to meet any suffering he lays out in his providence for us, if we consider his tender care over his saints, when he calls them into a suffering condition. Kind masters may well expect cheerful servants. The more tender the captain is over his soldiers, the more prodigal they are of their own lives at his command. And it were strange, if Christ's care, which deserves more, should meet with less ingenuousness in a saint. Now Christ's care appears,

First, In proportioning the burthen to the back he lays it on. That which overloads one ship, and would hazard to sink her, is but just balance for another of greater burthen. Those sufferings which one Christian cannot bear, another sails trim and even under. The weaker shoulder is sure to have the lighter carriage. As Paul burthened some churches, which he knew more able, to
And your feet shod with

spare others, so Christ, to ease the weaker Christian, lays more weight on the stronger. “Paul laboured more abundantly than them all,” he tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 10. But why did Christ so unequally divide the work? Observe the place, and you shall find that it was but necessary to employ that abundant grace he had given him. “His grace (saith he) which was bestowed on me, was not in vain, but I laboured more,” &c. There was so much grace poured into him, that some of it would have been in vain, if God had not found him more to do and suffer than the rest. Christ hath a perfect rate by him of every saint’s spiritual estate, and according to this all are assessed, and so none are oppressed. The rich in grace can as easily pay his pound, as the poor his penny. Paul laid down his head on the block for the cause of Christ, as freely as some (and those true but weak Christians) would have done a few pounds out of their purse. He endured death with less trouble than some could have done reproach for Christ. All have not a martyr’s faith, nor all the martyr’s fire. This forlorn consists of a few files picked out of the whole army of saints.

Secondly, The consolations he gives them then above other of their brethren, that are not called out to such hard service. That part of an army which is upon action in the field is sure to have their pay (if their masters have any money in their purse or care of them); yea, sometimes, when their fellows left in their quarters are made to stay. I am sure there is more gold and silver (spiritual joy I mean, and comfort) to be found in Christ’s camp, among his suffering ones, than their brethren at home in peace and prosperity ordinarily can shew. What are the promises, but vessels of cordial wine, tunned on purpose against a groaning hour, when God usually broacheth them? “Call upon me (saith God) in the day of trouble;” Psal. l. 15. and may we not do so in the day of peace? yes, but he would have us most bold with him in the day of trouble. None find such quick dispatch at the throne of grace as suffering saints. “In the day that I cried, (saith David) thou answerest me, and gavest me strength in my soul;” Psal. cxxxviii. 3. he
was now at a strait, and God comes in haste to him. Though we may make a well friend stay (that sends for us) yet we will give a sick friend leave to call us up at midnight. In such extremities we usually go with the messenger that comes for us, and so doth God with the prayer: Peter knocked at their gate (who were assembled to seek God for him) almost as soon as their prayer knocked at Heaven's-gate in his behalf. And truly it is no more than needs, if we consider the temptations of an afflicted condition; we are prone then to be suspicious our best friends forget us, and to think every stay a delay and neglect of us; therefore God chuseth to shew himself most kind at such a time: "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth also by Christ." 2 Cor. i. 5. As man laid on trouble, so Christ laid in consolation: both tides rose and fell together; when it was spring-tide with him in affliction, it was so with him in his joy; we relieve the poor as their charge increaseth, so Christ comforts his people as their troubles multiply. And now, Christian, tell me, doth not thy dear Lord deserve a ready spirit in thee to meet any suffering with, for, or from him, who gives his sweetest comforts where his people use to expect their saddest sorrows? Well may the servant do his work cheerfully, when his master is so careful of him, as with his own hands to bring him his breakfast into the fields. The Christian stays not till he come to Heaven for all his comfort. There indeed shall be the full supper; but there is a breakfast, Christian, of previous joys, which Christ brings to thee into the field, and shall be eaten on the place where thou endurest thy hardship.

Thirdly, In the seasonable succours which Christ sends to bring them off safe. He doth not only comfort them in, but helps them out of all their troubles. There is ever a door more than the Christian sees in his prison, by which Christ can with a turn of his hand, open a way for his saints' escape. And what can we desire more? all is well that ends well. And what better security can we desire for this, than the promise of the great God, with whom to lie is impossible? And I hope the credit which God bath in his people's hearts, is not so low,
but a bill under his hand will be accepted at first sight, by them in exchange of what is dearest to them, life itself not excepted. Look to thyself when thou hast to do with others: none so firm, but may crack under thee, if thou layest too much weight on them. One would have thought so worthy a captain as Uriah was might have trusted his general, yea his prince; (and he so holy a man as David was) but he was unworthily betrayed by them both into the hands of death. Man may, the devil to be sure will, leave all in the lurch that do his work. But if God sets thee on, he will bring thee off; never fear a "look thee to that," from his lips, when thy faithfulness to him hath brought thee into the briars. He that would work a wonder rather than let a runaway prophet perish in his sinful voyage (because a good man in the main), will heap miracle upon miracle, rather than thou shalt miscarry and sink in thy duty; only be not troubled if thou art cast overboard (like Jonah) before thou seest the provision which God makes for thy safety; it is ever at hand, but sometimes lies close, and out of the creature's sight, like Jonah's whale (sent of God to ferry him to shore) under water, and the prophet in its belly before he knew where he was; that which thou thinkest comes to devour thee, may be the messenger that God sends to bring thee safe to land. Is not thy shoe, Christian, yet on? art thou not yet ready to march? canst fear any stone now can hurt thy foot through so thick a sole?

CHAP. XV.

THE SECOND REASON OF THE POINT, TAKEN FROM THE EXCELLENCY OF THIS FRAME OF SPIRIT.

Reas. 2. The second reason of the point, is taken from the excellency of this frame of spirit; which will appear in divers particulars.
the preparation of the Gospel of peace. 457

SECT. I.

First, This readiness of heart to stoop to the cross evidenceth a gracious heart; and a gracious spirit (I am sure) is an excellent spirit; flesh and blood never made any willing to suffer either for God or from God, he that can do this hath that "other spirit" with Caleb, Numb. xiv. 24. which proves him of a higher descent than this world. A carnal heart can neither act nor suffer freely; voluntas libera, in quantum liberata. Luther. The will is no more free than it is made free by grace. So much flesh as is left in a saint, so much awkwardness and unwillingness to come to God's foot; and therefore where there is nothing but flesh, there can be nothing but unwillingness. He that can find his heart following God in his command or providence cheerfully, may know who hath been there (as one said of the famous Grecian limner). This is a line that none but God could draw on thy soul. The midwives said of the Israelitish women, they were not like the Egyptian in bringing forth their children, "for they were lively, and delivered, ere the midwives could come at them." Exod. i. 19. Truly thus lively and ready is the gracious heart in any thing it is called to do or suffer. It is not delivered with so much difficulty of a duty as a carnal heart, which must have the help and midwifery of some carnal arguments, or else it sticks in the birth; but the gracious heart has done before these come to lend their helping hand. Pure love to God, obedience to the call of his command, and faith on the security of his promise, facilitate the work, that be it never so burthensome to the flesh, yet it is not grievous to their spirit; that is ever ready to say, "Thy will be done, and not mine." The Apostle makes this free submission to the disposal of God's afflicting hand to evidence a son's spirit, Heb. xii. 7. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." Observe, he doth not say, "If you be chastened," but, "if you endure chastening." Naked suffering doth not prove sonship, but to endure it so as not to sink in our courage, or shrink from under the burthen God lays on, but readily to offer our shoulder to it, and

VOL. II. 3 M
patiently carry it, looking with a cheerful eye at the reward, when we come, not to throw it off, but to have it taken off by that hand which laid it on, this shews a childlike spirit; and the evidence thereof must needs be a comfortable companion to the soul, especially at such a time when that sophister of hell useth the afflictions which lie upon it as an argument to disprove its child's relation to God; now to have this answer to stop the liar's mouth at hand: Satan, if I be not a child, how could I so readily submit to the Lord's family discipline? this is no small mercy.

SECT. II.

Secondly, This frame of spirit makes him a free man that hath it; and no mean price useth to be set upon the head of liberty. The very birds had rather be abroad in the woods with liberty (though lean with cold and care), to pick up here and there a little livelihood, than in a golden cage with all their attendance. Now truly there is a bondage which few are sensible of, and that is a bondage to the creature; when a man is so enslaved to his enjoyments and low contentments here on earth, that they give law to him that should give law to them, and measure out his joy to him (what he shall have) little or much, as he abounds with, or is cut short of them. Thus some are slaves to their estates: it is said, "their heart goes after their covetousness," that is, as the servant after the master, who dares not be from his back; their money is the master, and hath the best keeping, their heart waits on it, shall I say as a servant after his master? yea as a dog at his master's foot. Others are as great slaves to their honours, so poor-spirited that they cannot enjoy themselves if they have not the cap and knee of all they meet; such a slave was Haman, the great favourite of his prince, who but he at court? that could at the expense of a few words, get the king's ring to seal a bloody decree for the massacreing of so many thousands of innocent persons, against all sense and reason of state, merely to fulfil his lust; had not this man honour enough put upon him to content his ambitious spirit? No: there is a poor Jew at the king's gate will
not make a leg to him as he goes by, and this so disturbs his proud stomach, that he has no joy of all his other greatness, *Esther* v. 13. "yet all this availeth me nothing (saith the poor-spirited wretch) so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." A third sort are as much in bondage to their pleasures, they are said to "live in pleasure on earth," *Jam.* v. 5. their life is bound up in their pleasures, as the rush grows in the mud, and the fish lives in the water; they cannot live without their pleasures; take them from their feasts and sports, and their hearts, with Nabal's, die like a stone in their bosoms. Now this frame of spirit we are speaking of, breaks all these chains, and brings the Christian out of every house of bondage. It learns him to like what fare God sends; if prosperity comes, "he knows how to abound," so that if he be by a turn of providence thrown out of the saddle of his present enjoyment, his foot shall not hang in the stirrup, or his enslaved soul drag him after it with whining desires. No, through grace he is a free man, and can spare the company of any creature, so long as he may but have Christ's with him. Blessed Paul stands upon his liberty; "all things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." *1 Cor.* vi. 12. I know the place is meant of those indifferent things concerning which there was a dispute; but there is another sense, in which all things here below were indifferent things to that, holy man; honour, or dishonour; abundance, or want; life or death. These were indifferent to Paul; he would not come under the power of any one of them all. It did not become a servant of Christ, he thought, to be so tender of his reputation, as to write himself undone, when he had not this or that; nor to be so in love with abundance, as not to be ready to welcome want; nor to be endeared so to life, as to run from the thoughts of death; nor to be so weary of a suffering life, as to hasten death to come for his ease. *Major animus dicendus est, qui ōrum nosam vitam magis eligit ferre, quàm fugere.* Aug.
Thirdly, This readiness to suffer, as it ennobles with freedom, so it enables the Christian for service. It is a sure truth, so far and no more is the Christian fit to live serviceably, than he is prepared to suffer readily. Because there is no duty, but hath the cross attending on it, and he that is offended at the cross will not be long pleased with the service that brings it. Prayer is the daily exercise of a saint; this he cannot do as he should, except he can heartily say, “thy will be done;” and who can do that in truth, unless ready to suffer? Praising God is a standing duty; yea “in every thing we must give thanks;” 1 Thes. 5. but what if affliction befalls us, how shall we tune our hearts to that note, if not ready to suffer? can we bless God and murmur? praise God and repine? The minister’s work is to preach; “woe to him if he do not;” and if he do preach, he is sure to suffer. Paul had his orders for the one, and mittimus for the other together; he was sent at the same time to preach the grace of God to the world, and to endure the wrath of the world for God; so God told Ananias “that he should bear his name before the Gentiles, and suffer great things for his name’s sake.” Acts ix. 15, 16. And if the Gospel did not please the ungrateful world out of Paul’s mouth, who had such a rare art of sweetening it, it were strange that any who fall so far short of his gifts to move in the pulpit, and of his grace to win upon the hearts of men when out, should (if they mean to be faithful) think to go without the wages which the world paid him for his pains; reproach and contempt, if not downright blows of bloody persecution, as he met with. And is not this shoe needful for the preacher’s foot, that is to walk among so many hissing serpents? Who but a Paul, that had got over the fond love of life, and fear of a bloody death, would have been so willing to go into the very lion’s den, and preach the Gospel there, where he invited death in a manner to come unto him? I mean at Rome itself, the seat of cruel Nero. “So much as in me is, I am ready to
preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also, for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," Rom. i. 15, 16.

In a word, it is the duty of every Christian to make a free profession of Christ. Now this cannot be done without hazard many times. And if the heart be not resolved in this point what to do, the first storm that riseth will make the poor man put into any creek or hole rather than venture abroad in foul weather: "among the chief rulers also many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." John xii. 42. Poor souls, they could have been content if the coast had been clear to have put forth, but had not courage enough to bear a little scorn that threatened them. O what folly is it to engage for God, except we be willing to lay all at stake for him? It is not worth the while to set out in Christ's company by profession, except we mean to go through with him, and not leave him unkindly, when we are half-way, because of a slough or two.

S E C T. IV.

This readiness of spirit to suffer gives the Christian the true enjoyment of his life: a man never comes to enjoy himself truly in any comfort of his life, till prepared to deny himself readily in it. It is a riddle, but two considerations will unfold it. First, then, and not till then, is that which hinders the enjoyment of our lives taken away, and that is fear: "where this is, there is torment." The out-setting deer is observed to be lean, though where good food is, because always in fear. And so must they needs be in the midst of all their enjoyments, on whose heart this vulture is continually feeding. There needs nothing else to bring a man's joy into a consumption, than an inordinate fear of losing what he hath at present: let but this get hold of a man's spirit, and once become hectical, and the comfort of his life is gone past recovery. How many by this are more cruel to themselves, than it is possible their worst enemies in the world could be to them? They, alas! when they have done their utmost, can kill them but once; but by anticipating their own miseries, they kill themselves a thousand times over,
even as oft as the fear of dying comes over their miserable hearts. But when once the Christian hath got his piece of armour on, his soul is prepared for death and danger; he sits at the feast, which God in his present providence allows him, and fears no messenger with ill news to knock at his door; yea he can talk of his dying hour, and not spoil the mirth of his present condition, as carnal men think it does, to whom a discourse of dying in the midst of their junkets, is like the coming in of the officer to attach a company of thieves that are making merry together with their stolen goods about them; or like the wet cloth that Hazael clapped on the king his master's face; it makes all the joy, which flushed out before, squat in on a sudden, that the poor creatures sit dispirited and all a mort (as we say) till they get out of this affrighting subject, by some divertissement or other; which only relieves them for the present, and puts them out of that particular fit this brought upon them, but leaves them deeper in slavery to such amazement of heart, whenever the same ghost shall appear for the future. Whereas, the Christian, that hath this preparation of heart, never tastes more sweetness in the enjoyments of this life than when he dips these morsels in the meditation of death and eternity. It is no more grief to his heart to think of the removal of these, which makes way for those far sweeter enjoyments, than it would be to one at a feast, to have the first course taken off, when he hath fed well on it, that the second course of all rare sweetmeats and banquetting stuff may come on, which it cannot till the other be gone. Holy David, Psal. xiii. 4, 5. brings in, as it were, a death's-head with his feast. In the same breath almost he speaks of his dying, verse 4. and of the rich feast he at present sat at through the bounty of God, verse 5. to which he was not so tied by the teeth, but if God that gave him this cheer, should call him from it, to look death in the face, he could do it and "fear no evil, when in the valley of the shadow thereof," Psalm lxi. And what think you of the blessed Apostle Peter? had not he, think you, the true enjoyment of his life, when he could sleep so sweetly in a prison (no desirable place), "fast bound between two sol-
diens,” (no comfortable posture), and this the very night before Herod would have brought him forth, in all probability, to his execution, no likely time, one would think, to get any rest; yet we find him even there, thus and then so sound asleep, that the angel, who was sent to give him his gaol-delivery, smote him on the side to awake him, Acts xii. 6, 7. I question whether Herod himself slept so well that night, as this his prisoner did. And what was the potion that brought this holy man so quietly to rest? No doubt this preparation of the Gospel of peace; he was ready to die, and that made him able to sleep; why should that break his rest in this world, which, if it had been effected, would have brought him to his eternal rest in the other? Secondly, the more ready and prepared the Christian is to suffer from God, or for God, the more God is engaged to take care for him and of him. A good general is most tender of that soldier’s life who is least tender of it himself. The less the Christian values himself, and his interests for God’s sake, the more careful God is of him, either to keep him from suffering, or in it; both which are meant, Matth. xvi. 28. “whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it.” Abraham was ready to offer up his son; and then God would not suffer him to do it. But if the Lord at any time takes the Christian’s offer, and lets the blow be given, though to the severing of soul and body, he yet shews his tender care of him, by the high esteem he sets upon their blood, which is not more prodigally spilt by man’s cruelty, than carefully gathered up by God. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

Thus we see, that by resigning ourselves up readily to the disposal of God, we engage God to take care of us, whatever befalls us. And that man or woman sure, if any other in the world, must needs live comfortably that hath the care of himself wholly taken off his own shoulders, and rolled upon God, at whose finding he now lives. The poor widow never was better off, than when the prophet kept house for her; she freely parted with her little meal for the prophet’s use, and a reward of her faith, in crediting the message he brought from the Lord, so far as to give the bread out of her own mouth, and
And your feet shod with child's, to the prophet: she is provided for by a miracle. 1 Kings xvi. 12, 13. O when a soul is once thus brought to the foot of God, that it can sincerely say, Lord, here I am, willing to deliver up all I have, and am, to be at thy disposal; my will shall be done, when thou hast thy will of me," God accounts himself deeply obliged to look after that soul.

CHAP. XVI.

THE NUMBER OF TRUE CHRISTIANS BUT LITTLE, SHEWN FROM THIS READINESS TO SUFFER, THAT IS REQUIRED IN EVERY CHRISTIAN MORE OR LESS, WITH AN EXHORTATION TO THE DUTY, FROM TWO ARGUMENTS.

USE 1. Must the Christian stand thus shod in readiness to march at the call of God in any way or weather? this will exceedingly thin and lessen the number of true Christians, to what they appear to be at the first view, by the estimate of an easy cheap profession. He that should come into our assemblies, and see them wedged in so close with multitudes flocking after the Word, might wonder at first to hear the ministers sink the number of Christians so low, and speak of them as so little a company. Surely their eyes fail them, that they cannot see wood for trees: Christians for multitudes of Christians that stand before them. This very thing made one of the disciples ask Christ, with no little straining at it, "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" Luke xiii. 23. Observe the occasion of this question. Christ, verse 22. "went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying towards Jerusalem." He saw Christ so free of his pains, to preach at every town he came, and people throng after him, with great expressions of joy that fell from many, verse 17. "Then said he, Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" As if he had said, This seems very strange and almost incredible. To see the way to Hea-
ven strewed so thick with people, and the means of salvation in such request, and yet but few saved at last; how can this be? Now mark our Saviour's unriddling this mystery: "And he said to them (it seems the man spoke more than his own scruple) strive to enter in at the straight gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek, but shall not be able." verse 24. As if Christ had said, You judge by a wrong rule. If profession would serve the turn, and flocking after sermons with some seeming joy at the Word, were enough to save, Heaven would soon be full; but as you love your souls, do not bolt or try yourselves by this coarse sieve; "but strive to enter," fight and wrestle, venture life and limb, rather than fall short of Heaven. "For many shall seek, but shall not be able;" that is, seek by an easy profession, and cheap religion, such as hearing the Word, performance of duties, and the like; of this kind there are many that will come and walk about Heaven-door, willing enough to enter, if they may do it without ruffling their pride in a crowd, or hazarding their present carnal interest by any contest and scuffle. "But they shall not be able," that is, "to enter;" because their carnal cowardly hearts shall not be able to strive. So that take Christians under the notion of seekers, and, by Christ's own words, they are many; but consider them under the notion of strivers, such as stand ready shod, with a holy resolution to strive even to blood, if such trials meet them in the way to Heaven, rather than not enter, and then the number of Christian soldiers will shrink, like Gideon's goodly host, to a little troop. O how easy were it to instance in several sorts of Christians, so called in a large sense, that have not this Gospel-shoe to their foot, and therefore sure to founder and falter, when once they be brought to go upon sharp stones.

SECTION I.

First, The ignorant Christian: what work is he like to make of suffering for Christ and his Gospel? and they are not the least number in many congregations; they who have not so much light of knowledge in their understanding as to know who Christ is, and what he hath
done for them, will they have so much heat of love as to march cheerfully after him, when every step they take must fetch blood from them? Nabal thought he gave a rational answer to David's servants, that asked some relief of him in their present straight, when he said, "Shall I take my bread and my water, and my flesh, that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men I know not whence they be?" 1 Sam. xxv. 11. He thought it too much to part with upon so little acquaintance. And will the ignorant person, think you, be ready to part, not only with his bread and flesh out of the pot, a little of his estate I mean, but the flesh of his own body, if called to suffer, and all this at the command of Christ, who is one he knows not whence he is? Paul gives this as the reason why he suffered and was not ashamed, "for (saith he) I know whom I have believed." 2 Tim. i. 12. History tells us of the Samaritans, a mongrel kind of people, both in their descent and religion, that, when it went well with the people of God the Israelites, then they would claim kindred with them, and be Jews; but when the church of God was under any outward affliction, then they would disclaim it again. And we may the less wonder at this base cowardly spirit in them, if we read the character Christ gives of them, to be a people "that worshipped they knew not what." John iv. 22. Religion hath but loose hold of them that have no better hold of it than a blind man's hand.

Secondly, Carnal gospellers, who keep possession of their lusts while they make profession of Christ. A generation these are that have nothing to prove themselves Christians by but their baptism, and a Christian name which they have obtained thereby; such, as were they to live among Turks and Heathens, their language and conversation, did they but conceal whence they came, would never betray them to be Christians. Can it now be rationally thought, that these are the men and women who stand ready to suffer for Christ and his Gospel? no sure; they who will not wear Christ's yoke, will much less bear his burden. If the yoke of the command be thought grievous that binds them to duty, they will much more think the burden of the cross insupportable. He
that will not do for Christ, will not die for Christ. That servant is very unlikely to fight to blood in his master's quarrel, that will not work for him so as to sweat in his service.

Thirdly, The politic professor: a fundamental article in whose creed is to save himself, not from sin, but from danger; and therefore he studies the times more than the Scriptures, and is often looking what corner the wind lies in, that accordingly he may shape his course, and order his profession, which, like the hedge-hog's house, ever opens towards the warm side.

Fourthly, The covetous professor, whose heart and head are so full of worldly projects, that suffering for Christ must needs be very unwelcome to him, and find him far enough from such a disposition. You know what the Egyptians said of the Israelites, "they are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in." Exod. xiv. 13. More true it is of this sort of professors; they are entangled in the world; this wilderness hath shut them in. A man whose foot is in a snare is as fit to walk and run as they to follow Christ, when to do it may prejudice their worldly interest. Our Saviour, speaking of the miseries that were to come on Jerusalem, "Woe (saith he) unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days." Matt. xxiv. 19. Because it would be more difficult for them to escape the danger by flight, the big-bellied mother being unable to fly fast enough with her child in her womb, and the nurse as unwilling to leave her dear babe behind her. But many more woes to them, who in days of trial and persecution of the Gospel, shall he found big with the world, or that give suck to any covetous inordinate affection to the creatures, such will find it hard to escape the temptation that these will beset them with. It is impossible in such a time to keep estate and Christ together, and as impossible for a heart that is set upon the world to be willing to leave it for Christ's company.

Fifthly, The conceited professor, who hath an high opinion of himself, and is so far from an humble holy jealousy and fear of himself, that he is self-confident. Here is a man shod and prepared he thinks, but not with the
right gospel-shoe. By "strength shall no man prevail." 1 Sam. ii. 9. He that in Queen Mary's days was so free of his flesh for Christ, as he said he would see his fat, of which he had good store, melt in the fire, rather than fall back to popery, lived, poor man, to see this his resolution melt, and himself cowardly part with his faith, to save his fat. Those that glory of their valour when they put on the harness, ever put it off with shame. The heart of man is deceitful above all things, a very Jacob that will supplant its own self. He that cannot take the length of his own foot, how can he of himself fit a shoe to it?

Sect. II.

Use 2. Be exhorted, all you that take the name of Christ upon you, to get this shoe of preparation on, and keep it on, that you may be ready at all times to follow the call of God's providence, though it should lead you into a suffering condition. Take but two motives:

First, Consider, Christian, suffering-work may overtake thee suddenly, before thou art aware of it; therefore be ready shod. Sometimes orders come to soldiers for a sudden march; they have not so much as an hour's warning, but must be gone as soon as the drum beats. And so mayest thou be called out, Christian, before thou art aware, into the field, either to suffer for God or from God. Abraham had little time given him to deal with his heart and persuade it into a compliance with God, for offering his son Isaac. A great trial and short warning: Gen. xxii. 2. "Take now thy son, thy only son Isaac:" not a year, a month, a week hence, but "now." This was in the night, and Abraham is gone early in the morning, verse 3. How would he have entertained this strange news, if he had been to gain the consent of his heart? but that was not now to do; God had Abraham's heart already, and therefore he doth not now dispute his order, but obeys. God can make a sudden alteration in thy private affairs, Christian: how coudest thou in thy perfect strength and health, endure to hear the message of death? If God should, before any lingering sickness hath brought thee into some acquaintance with death, say no more, but up and die, as once to Moses, art thou
shod for such a journey? couldest thou say, "Good is the word of the Lord?" What if in one day thou wert to step out of honour into disgrace, to be stripped of thy silks and velvets, and in vile raiment called to act a beggar's part? couldest thou rejoice that thou art made low, and find thy heart ready to bless the Most High? This would speak thee a soul evangelically shod indeed.

Again, God can as soon change the scene in the public affairs of the times thou livest in as to the Gospel and profession of it. May be now authority smiles on the church of God; but within a while it may frown, and the storm of persecution arise. "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea;" Acts ix. 31. this was a blessed time; but how long did it last? alas! not long, chap. xii. There is sad news of a bloody persecution, verse 1. "About this time Herod the king stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church;" in which persecution, James the brother of John lost his life by his cruel sword; and Peter in prison, like to go to the same shambles; and the church driven into a corner to pray in the night together, verse 12. O what a sad change is here! now in blood, who even now had rest on every side. It is observed that in islands the weather is far more variable and uncertain, than on the continent; here you may know ordinarily what weather will be for a long time together, but in islands in the morning we know not what weather will be before night; we have oft-times summer and winter in the same day, and all this is imputed to the near neighbourhood of the sea that surrounds them. The saints in Heaven live, as I may so say, on the continent; a blessed constancy of peace and rest there enjoyed. They may know by what peace and bliss they have at present, what they shall have to eternity; but here below, the church of Christ is as a floating island, compassed with the world, I mean men of the world, as with a sea; and these sometimes blow hot, and sometimes cold; sometimes they are still and peaceable, and sometimes enraged and cruel; even as God binds up or lets loose their wrath. Now, Christian, doth it not behove thee to be always in readiness, when thou knowest not but the next moment the wind may turn into the cold cor-
And your feet shod with

ner, and the times, which now favour the Gospel, so as
to fill the sails of thy profession with all encouragement,
may on a sudden blow full in thy face, and oppose it as
much as it did before countenance it?

Secondly, Consider if thy feet be not shod with a pre-
paration to suffer for Christ here on earth, thy head can-
not be-crowned in Heaven: "if children then heirs, heirs
of God, joint-heirs with Christ." Rom. viii. 17. Now mark
the following words, "if so be we suffer with him, that
we may be also glorified together." It is true all the saints
do not die martyrs at a stake, but every saint must have
a spirit of martyrdom, as I may so call it, a heart prepared
for suffering. God never intended Isaac should be sac-
cificed, yet he will have Abraham lay the knife to his
throat. Thus God will have us lay our neck on the block,
and be, as Paul said of himself, "bound in the spirit,"
under a sincere purpose of heart to give up ourselves to
his will and pleasure, which is called "a presenting our
bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God."
Rom. xii. 1. That as the Jew brought the beast alive, and
presented it freely before him, to be done with as God
had commanded, so we are to present our bodies before
God, to be disposed of as he commands, both in active
and passive obedience. He that refuseth to suffer for
Christ, refuseth also to reign with Christ. The putting
off the shoe among the Jews was a sign of a man’s put-
ing off the right of an inheritance, Deut. xxv. 9, 10.
Thus did Elimelech’s kinsman, when he renounced and
disclaimed any right that he might have in his estate, he
"drew off his shoe." Ruth. iv. 7, 8. O Christian, take
heed of putting off thy Gospel-shoe; by this thou dost
disclaim thy right in Heaven’s inheritance; no portion
is there laid up for any that will not suffer for Christ.
The persecutions which the saints endure for the Gospel
are made by Paul an evident token to them of salvation,
and that of God. Phil. i. 28. Surely then the denying
Christ to escape suffering is a sad token of perdition. O
sirs, is not Heaven’s inheritance worth enduring a little
trouble for it? Naboth’s vineyard was no great matter;
yet rather than he would sell it for its worth or
change it for a better in another place, he chose to lay
his life at stake, by provoking a mighty king. Thou canst, Christian, venture no more for thy heavenly inheritance than he paid for refusing to alienate his petty patrimony in an acre or two of land (thy temporal life I mean). And besides, the odds between his vineyard on earth, and thy paradise in heaven (which is infinite and suffers no proportion); thou hast this advantage also of him in thy sufferings for Christ: when Naboth lost his life, he lost his inheritance also, that he so strove to keep; but thy persecuting enemies shall do this friendly office against their wills, that when they dispossess thee of thy life, they shall help thee into possession of thy inheritance.

CHAP. XVII.

SIX DIRECTIONS FOR THE HELPING ON OF THIS SPIRITUAL SHOE.

Quest. The great question I expect now to fall from thy mouth, Christian, is, not how thou mayest escape these troubles and trials, which, as the evil genius of the Gospel, do always attend it; but rather how thou mayest get this shoe on, thy heart ready for a march, to go and meet them when they come, and cheerfully wade through them, whatever they be, or how long soever they stay with thee?

Answ. This is a question well becoming a Christian soldier, to ask for armour wherewith he may fight; whereas the coward throws away his armour, and asks whither he may fly. I shall therefore give the best counsel I can, in these few particulars.

SECT. I.

First, Look carefully to the ground of thy active obedience, that it be sound and sincere. The same right principles whereby the sincere soul acts for Christ, will carry him to suffer for Christ, when a call from God
comes with such an errand. "The children of Ephraim being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." Psal. lxxviii. 9. Why? what is the matter? so well armed, and yet so cowardly! this seems strange. Read the preceding verse, and you will cease wondering; they are called there "a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God." Let the armour be what it will, yea, if soldiers were in a castle whose foundation were a rock, and walls brass, yet if their hearts be not right to their prince, an easy storm will drive them from the walls, and a little scare open their gate, which hath not this bolt of sincerity on it to hold it fast. In our late wars we have seen that honest hearts within thin and weak works have held the town, when no walls could defend treachery from betraying trust. O labour for sincerity in the engaging at first for God and his Gospel. Be oft asking thy own soul for whom thou prayest, hearest, reformest this practice and that. If thou canst get a satisfactory answer from thy soul here, thou mayest hope well; if faith's working hand be sincere, then its fighting hand will be valiant. That place is observable, Heb. xi. 33. "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire;" and with other great things that faith enabled them to endure, as you may read in the 34th, 35th, and 36th verses. Where, I pray note, how the power of faith enabling the Christian "to work righteousness," (that is, live holily and righteously) is reckoned among the wonders of sufferings which, it strengthened them to endure. Indeed had it not done this, it would never have endured these.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Pray for a suffering spirit. This is not a common gift which every carnal Gospeller and slight professor hath. No: it is a peculiar gift, and bestowed but on a few sincere souls: "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." Phillip. i. 20. All the parts and common gifts that a man hath will never enable him to
drink deep of this cup for Christ; such is the pride of man's heart, he had rather suffer any way than this; rather from himself and for himself, than from Christ or for Christ. You would wonder to see sometimes how much a child will endure at his play, and never cry for it: this fall, and that knock, and no great matter is made of it by him, because got in a way that is pleasing to him; but let his father whip him, though it puts him not to half the smart, yet he roars and takes on that there is no quieting of him. Thus, men can bring trouble on themselves, and bite in their complaints. They can, one play away his estate at cards and dice, and another whore away his health, or cut off many years from his life by beastly drunkenness, and all is endured patiently; yea, if they had their money and strength again, they should go the same way; they do not repent of what their lusts have cost them, but mourn they have no more to bestow upon them; their lusts shall have all they have, to a morsel of bread in their cupboard, and drop of blood in their veins; yea, they are not afraid of burning in hell as martyrs for their sins. But come and ask these, that are so free of their purse, flesh, soul, and all, in lust's service, to lay their estate or life for a few moments at stake in Christ's cause and his truth; and you shall see that God is not so much beholden them. And therefore pray and pray again for a suffering spirit in Christ's cause; yea, saints themselves need earnestly plead with God for this. Alas! they do not find suffering work follow their hand so easily. The flesh loves to be cockered, not crucified; many a groan it costs the Christian, before he can learn to love this work. Now prayer, if any means, will be helpful to thee in this particular. He that can wrestle with God, need not fear the face of death and danger; prayer engageth God's strength and wisdom for our help; and what is too hard for the creature, that hath God at his back for his help, to do or suffer? We are bid to "count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations." James i. 2. Not temptations to sin, but for righteousness; he means troubles for Christ and his Gospel. Ah! but might the poor Christian say, it were cause of more joy to be able to
And your feet shod with

stand under these temptations, than to fall into them: little joy would it be to have the temptation, and not the grace to endure temptation. True indeed; but for thy comfort, Christian, be that leads thee into this temptation, stands ready to help thee through it; therefore, verse 5. there is a gracious si quis set up: “If any of you (i. e. you sufferers chiefly) lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” This, methinks, should not much strain our faith to believe. There are not many masters so disingenuous to be found, that would twit and upbraid their servant for asking humbly their counsel in a work of peril and difficulty, which they cheerfully undertake out of love to their persons and obedience to their command; how much less needest thou fear such dealing from thy God? If thou hast so much faith and love as to venture at his command upon the sea of suffering; he will, without doubt, find so much mercy, as to keep thee from drowning. If, feeling thyself begin to sink, thou criest earnestly, as Peter did to him, “Lord, save me;” wert thou even under water, prayer would buoy thee up again. But if thou art not a man of prayer before suffering-work come, thou wilt be able to do little at that weapon then. The proverb indeed is, “He that would learn to pray, let him go to sea.” But I think it were better thus: he that would go to sea, (this I mean of suffering) let him learn to pray before he comes there.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Be much in the meditation of a suffering state. He will say his lesson best, when his master calls him forth, that is oftenest conning it over beforehand to himself. Do by the troubles thou mayest meet with, as porters use to do with their burdens; they will lift them again and again, before they take them on to their back. Thus do thou: be often lifting up in thy meditations those evils that may befall thee for Christ and his truth; and try how thou couldst fadge with them, if called to endure them; set poverty, prison, banishment, fire and faggot, before thee, on the one hand;
and the precious truths of Christ on the other, with the
sweet promises made to those that shall hold fast the
word of patience held forth in such an hour of tempta-
tion. Suppose it were now thy very case, and thou wert
put to thy choice, which hand thou wouldest take, study
the question seriously, till thou determinest it clearly in
thy conscience; and do this often, that the arguments
which flesh and blood will then be sure to use for thy
pitying thyself, may not be new and unanswered; nor
the encouragements and strong consolations, which the
Word affords, be strange and under any suspicion in thy
thoughts, when thou art to venture thy life upon their
credit and truth. That of Augustine we shall find most
true, non facile inveniuntur præsidia in adversitate, quæ
non fuerint in pace quæsita. The promises are our garr-
rison and fastness at such a time; and we shall not find
it easy to run to them in a strait, except we were ac-
quainted with them in a time of peace. A stranger,
that flies to a house for refuge in the dark night, fum-
bles about the door, and knows not how to find the
latch; his enemy, if nigh, may kill him before he can
open the door; but one that lives in the house, or is well
acquainted with it, is not long getting in. “Come my
people (saith God) enter thou into thy chambers.” Isa.
xxvi. He is shewing them their lodgings, in his attributes
and promises, before it is night, and their sufferings be
come, that they may readily find the way to them in the
dark.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, Make a daily resignation of thyself up to
the will of God. Indeed this should be, as it were, the
lock of the night, and key of the morning: we should
open and shut our eyes with this recommending of our-
silves into the hands of God. This, if daily performed,
not formally (as all duties frequently repeated, without
the more care are like to be) but solemnly, would
sweetly dispose the soul for a welcoming of any trial
that can befall him. The backwardness of our hearts to
suffer comes much from distrust. An unbelieving soul
treads upon the promise, as a man upon ice; at first
going upon it, it is full of fears and tumultuous thoughts lest it should crack; now this daily resignation of thy heart, as it will give thee an occasion of conversing more with the thoughts of God's power, faithfulness, and other of his attributes, (for want of familiarity with which jealousies arise in our hearts when put to any great plunge) so also it will furnish thee with many experiences of the reality both of his attributes and promises; which, though they need not any testimony from sense, to gain them credit with us, yet so much are we made of sense, so childish and weak is our faith, that we find our hearts much helped by those experiences we have had to, rely on him for the future. Look therefore carefully to this: every morning leave thyself and ways in God's hand, as the phrase is. Psal. x. 14. and at night look again, how well God hath looked to his trust, and sleep not till thou hast affected thy heart with his faithfulness, and laid a stronger charge on thy heart to trust itself again in God's keeping in the night. And when any breach is made, and seeming loss befal thee in any enjoyment which thou hast by faith ensured of thy God, observe how God fills up that breach, and makes up that loss to thee; and rest not till thou hast fully vindicated the good name of God to thy own heart. Be sure thou lettest no discontent or dissatisfaction lie upon thy spirit at God's dealings; but chide thy heart for it, as David did his. Psal. xliii. And thus doing, with God's blessing, thou shalt keep thy faith in breath for a longer race, when called to run it.

SECT. V.

Fifthly, Make self-denial appear as rational and reasonable as thou canst to thy soul; the stronger the understanding is able to reason for the equity and rationality of any work or duty, the more readily and cheerfully (if the heart be honest and sincere) is it done. Suppose, Christian, thy God should call for thy estate, liberty, yea, life and all, can it seem unreasonable to thee? especially,

First, If thou considerest that he bids thee deliver his own, not thy own. He lent thee these; but he never
gave away the propriety of them from himself. Dost thou wrong thy neighbour, to call for thy money thou lent him a year or two past? No sure; thou thinkest he hath reason to thank thee for lending it to him, but none to complain for calling it from him.

Secondly, Consider he doth not, indeed cannot, bid thee deny so much for him, as he hath done for thee. Is reproach for Christ so intolerable, that thy proud spirit cannot brook it? Why, who art thou? what great house comest thou from? See one, that had more honour to lay at stake than I hope thou darest pretend to, Jesus Christ, "who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation." Is it pain and torment thou art afraid of? Look up to the cross, where the Lord of life hung for thy sins, and thou wilt take up thy own cross more willingly, and thank God too, that he hath made thine so light and easy, when he provided one so heavy and tormenting for his beloved Son.

Thirdly, Consider whatever God calls thee to deny for his truth, it is not more than he can recompense. Moses saw this, and that made him leap out of his honours and riches into the reproach of Christ, "for he had respect to the recompence of reward." Heb. xi. 26. It is much that a man will deny himself in, for something his heart strongly desires in this life. If a man be greedy of gain, he will deny himself of half the night's sleep, to plot in his bed, or rise early from it to be at his work; he will eat homely fare, go in vile raiment, dwell in a smoky hole, (as we see in London) for the convenience of a shop; how men of quality will crowd themselves up into a little corner, though to the prejudice of their healths, and hazard sometimes of their lives, yet hope of gain recompenceth all. And now put their gains into the scale with thine, Christian, that are sure to come in by denying thyself for Christ, which theirs are not, and ask thy soul, whether it blush not to see them so freely deny themselves of the comfort of their lives for an imaginary, uncertain, at best a short advantage, while thou haggles so with Christ for a few outward enjoyments, which shall be paid thee over a hundred-fold here, and beyond what thou canst now conceive, when thou comest to heaven's glory.
Sixthly, Labour to carry on the work of mortification every day to further degrees than others. It is the sap in the wood that makes it hard to burn, and corruption unmortified that makes the Christian loath to suffer; dried wood will not kindle sooner than a heart dried and mortified to the lusts of the world will endure any thing for Christ. The Apostle speaks of some that were "tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection;" *Heb.* xi. 35. they did not like the world so well, as, being so far on their journey to heaven (though in hard way) to be willing to come back to live in it any longer. Take heed, Christian, of leaving any worldly lust unmortified in thy soul; this will never consent thou shouldst endure much for Christ. Few ships sink at sea, they are the rocks and shelves that split them; couldest thou get off the rocks of pride and unbelief, and scape knocking on the sands of fear of man, love of the world, and the like lusts, thou wouldest do well enough in the greatest storm that can overtake thee in the sea of this world. "If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." *2 Tim.* ii. 21. O that we knew the heaven that is in a mortified soul! one that is crucified to the world and lusts of it; he hath the advantage of any other in doing or suffering for Christ, and enjoying Christ in both. A mortified soul lives out of all noise and disturbance from those carnal passions which put all out of quiet where they come. When the mortified soul goes to duty, here are not those rude and unman- nerly intrusions of impertinent carnal, yea sinful thoughts between him and his God. Is he to go to prison? here is not such weeping and taking on, no lust to hang about his legs, and break his heart with its insinuations; no self-love to entreat him that he would pity himself; his heart is free, got out of the acquaintance of these trou- blers of his peace, and a prison to him, if he may go upon so honourable an errand as testifying to the truth is, O how welcome is it to him! whereas an unmortified heart
is wedged in with so great acquaintance and kindred (as I may so say), which his heart hath in the world, that it is impossible to get out of their embraces into any willingness to suffer. A man that comes into an inn in a strange place, he may rise at what time he pleaseth, and be gone as early as he pleaseth in the morning: there are none entreat him to stay; but hard to get out of a friend's house, these, like the Levite's father-in-law, will be desiring him to stay one day, and then one more, and another after that. The mortified soul is the stranger; he meet with no disturbance (I mean comparatively) in his journey to heaven, while the unmortified one is linked in fast enough for getting on his journey in haste, especially so long as the flesh hath so fair an excuse as the foulness of the way or weather, any hardship likely to be endured for his profession. I have read of one of the Catos, that in his old age withdrew himself from Rome to his country-house, that he might spend his elder years free from care and trouble; and all the Romans, as they rode by his house, used to say, *Iste solus scit vivere*; this man alone knows how to live. I know not what art Cato had to disburden himself (by his retiring) of the world's cares; I am sure a man may go into the country, and yet not leave the city behind him; his mind may be in a crowd, while his body is in the solitude of a wilderness. Alas! poor man, he was a stranger to the Gospel; had he been but acquainted with this, it could have shewn him a way out of the world's crowd, in the midst of Rome itself and that is by mortifying his heart to the world both in the pleasures and troubles of it; and then that high commendation might have been given him without an hyperbole; for, to speak truth, he only knows aright how to live in the world, that hath learnt to die to the world. And so much for the first point; which was, that the Christian is to stand ready for all trials and troubles that may befall him. The second follows, which is—
And your feet shod with

CHAP. XVIII.

SHEWETH WHO IS THE PERSON THAT IS SHOD AND PREPARED FOR SUFFERINGS, i. e. HE THAT HATH THE GOSPEL'S PEACE IN HIS BOSOM; AND HOW THIS PEACE DOTH PREPARE FOR SUFFERING, WITH A BRIEF APPLICATION OF ALL.

DOCT. 2. That he who enjoys the peace of the Gospel in his bosom is the person, and the only person, that stands shod for all ways, prepared for all troubles and trials.

SECT. I.

None can make a shoe to the creature's foot, so as he shall go easy on hard way, but Christ; he can do it to the creature's full content; and how doth he it? Truly no other way, than by underlaying it, or, if you will, lining it, with the peace of the Gospel; what though the way be set with sharp stones, if this shoe go between the Christian's foot and them, they cannot be much felt. Solomon tell us, "The ways of wisdom (that is Christ) are ways of pleasantness." But how so, when some of them are ways of suffering? The next words resolve us: "And all her paths are peace;" *Prov. iii.* 17. Where there is peace, such peace as peace with God and conscience, there can want no pleasure. David goes merry to bed when he hath nothing to supper, but the gladness that God by this puts into his heart, and promiseth himself a better night's rest than any of them all that are feasted with the world's cheer. *Psal. iv.* 7. 8. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine encreased. I will both lay me down in peace and sleep." This same peace with God, enjoyed in the conscience, redounds to the comfort of the body. Now David can sleep sweetly, when he lies on a hard bed; what here he saith he would do, *Psal.* iii. 5.  he saith he had'done: "I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." The title of the
Psalm tells us when David had this sweet night's rest; not when he lay on his bed of down in his stately palace at Jerusalem, but when he fled for his life from his unnatural son Absalom, and possibly was forced to lie in the open field under the canopy of heaven. Truly it must be a soft pillow indeed that could make him forget his danger, who then had such a disloyal army at his back, hunting of him; yea, so transcendant is the sweet influence of this peace, that it can make the creature lie down as cheerfully to sleep in the grave as on the softest bed. You will say that child is willing that calls to be put to bed; some of the saints have desired God to lay them at rest in their beds of dust; and that not in a pet and discontent with their present trouble, as Job did, but from a sweet sense of this peace in their bosoms. "Now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," was the swan-like song of old Simeon. He speaks like a merchant that had got all his things on ship-board, and now desires the master of the ship to hoist sail, and be gone homewards. Indeed what should a Christian, that is but a foreigner here, desire to stay any longer for in the world, but to get this full lading in for heaven; and when hath he that if not when he is assured of his peace with God? This peace of the Gospel, and sense of the love of God in the soul, doth so admirably conduce to the enabling of a person in all difficulties, and temptations, and troubles, that ordinarily before he calls his saints to any hard service, or hot work, he gives them a draught of this cordial wine next their hearts to cheer them up, and embolden them in the conflict. God calls Abraham out of his native country, Gen. xii. 1. and what so fit, as a promise of Christ, to bring his heart to God's foot, verse 2, 3. A sad errand it was that sent Jacob to Padan-Aram; he fled from an angry wrathful brother, that had murdered him already in his thoughts, to an unkind deceitful uncle, under whom he should endure much hardship.

Now God comes in a sweet Gospel vision to comfort this poor pilgrim: for by "that ladder, whose feet stood on earth, and top reached heaven," Christ was signified to his faith, in whom heaven and earth meet, God and
And your feet shod with

man are reconciled; and by the "moving up and down of the angels on the ladder," the ministry of the angels, which Christ by his death and intercession procures for his saints, that they shall attend on them, as servants on their master's children; so that the sum of all is as much as if God had said, Jacob, thy brother Esau hates thee, but in Christ I am reconciled to thee; thy uncle Laban, he will wrong thee, and deal hardly by thee, but fear him not; as I am in Christ at peace with thee, so through him thou shalt have my especial care over thee, and the guardianship of the holy angels about thee, to defend thee wherever thou goest. The Israelites, when ready to take their march out of Egypt into a desolate wilderness, where they should be put to many plunges, and their faith tried to purpose, to prepare them the more for these, he entertains them at a Gospel-supper before they go forth, I mean the passover, which pointed to Christ; and no doubt the sweetness of this feast made some gracious souls among them (that tasted Christ in it) endure the hardship and hunger of the wilderness the more cheerfully. And the same care and love did our Lord Jesus observe in the institution of his supper, choosing that for the time of erecting this sweet ordinance when his disciples' feet stood at the brink of a sea of sorrows and troubles, which his death and the consequences of it would inevitably bring upon them. Now the pardon of their sins, sealed to their souls in that ordinance, must needs be welcome, and enable them to wade through their sufferings the more comfortably. Indeed the great care which Christ took for his disciples, when he left the world, was not to leave them a quiet world to live in, but to arm them against a troublesome world; and to do this, he labours to satisfy their poor hearts with his love to them, and his Father's love to them for his sake: he bequeathes unto them his peace, and empties it in the sweet consolations of it into their bosoms; for which end he tells them, as soon as he got to heaven, he would "pray his Father to send the Comforter to them," with all speed, and sends them to Jerusalem, there to stay privately, and not go into the field, or openly contest with the angry world, till they received
the preparation of the Gospel of peace.

483

the strength and succour which the Spirit in his comfort should bring with him. By all which it doth abundantly appear how powerful this Gospel-peace is to enable the soul for suffering. Now I proceed to shew how this peace doth prepare the heart for all sufferings. And that it doth these two ways.

First, As it brings along with it, and possesseth the soul (where it comes) with, such glorious privileges, as lift it above all danger and damage from any sufferings whatever, from God, man, or devils.

Secondly, As it is influential into the Saint's graces and affections, exciting them, and making them act to such a height, as lifts the Christian above the fear of trouble and suffering.

Sect. II.

First, By possessing the believing soul of such glorious privileges as secure it from any real hurt that the worst of sufferings can do it. If a man could be assured that he might walk as safely on the waves of the sea, or in the flames of fire, as he doth in his garden, he would be no more afraid of one than he is to do the other; or if a man had some coat of mail secretly about him, that would undoubtedly resist all blows, and quench all shot that are sent against him, it would be no such careful thing for him to stand in the midst of swords and guns: now the soul that is indeed at peace with God is invested with such privileges as do set it above all hurt and damage from sufferings. “The peace of God (is said) to garrison the believer's heart and mind;” Phil. iv. 7. he is surrounded with such blessed privileges, that he is as safe as one in an impregnable castle. A person at peace with God becomes then a child of God. And when once the Christian comes to know his relation, and the dear love of his heavenly Father to him, afflictions from or sufferings from him dread him not, because he knows it is inconsistent with the love of a father, either to hurt his child himself, or suffer him to be hurt by another, if he can help it. I have often wondered at Isaac's patience, to submit to be bound for a sacrifice, and see the knife so near his throat, without any hideous outcries
or strugglings that we read of; he was old enough to be apprehensive of death, and the horror of it, being conceived by some to be above twenty years of age; that he was of good growth is out of doubt, by the wood which Abraham caused him to carry for the sacrifice; but, such was the authority Abraham had over his son, and the confidence that Isaac had in his father, that he durst put his life into his hands; which, had the knife been in any other hand, he would hardly have done. Whoever may be the instrument of any trouble to a saint, the rod or sword is at God's disposal. Christ saw the cup in his Father's hand, and that made him take it willingly.

Secondly, Every soul at peace with God is heir to God. This follows his relation. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ." Rom. viii. 17. This is such a transcendent privilege, that the soul to whom the joyful news of it comes is lifted up above the amazing and affrighting fears of any suffering. The Apostle having (in the forenamed place) but a little sweetened his thoughts with a few meditations on this soul-ravishing subject; see how his blessed soul is raised into a holy slighting of all the troubles of this life: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." verse 18. He will not allow his own soul, or any that hath the hope of this inheritance, so far to undervalue the glory thereof, or the love of God that settled it on them, as to mention the greatness of their sufferings in any way of pitying themselves for them. As if he had said, Hath God made us his heirs, and bestowed heaven upon us in reversion; and shall we be so poor-spirited, to sit down and bemoan ourselves for our present sorrows, that are no more to be compared with the glory that we are going to than the little point of time (into which our short life with all our sufferings are contracted) is to be compared with the vast circumference of that eternity which we are to spend in endless bliss and happiness? He is a poor man we say that one or two petty losses quite undoes: and he a poor Christian that cries out he is undone by any cross in this life. We may safely conclude such a one either is heir to no-
thing in the other world, or hath little or no evidence for what he hath there.

Secondly, This peace shoes and prepares the Christian for sufferings, as it is influential into his graces, and affections; making them act to such a height as lift him above the fear of any suffering.

First, This peace, where it is felt, makes the Christian unconquerable in his faith. Nothing is too hard for such a one to believe, that carries a pardon in his conscience, and hath his peace with God sealed to him. Moses was to meet with many difficulties in that great work of conducting Israel out of Egypt towards Canaan; therefore, to make them all a more easy conquest to his faith, when he should be assaulted with them, God gives him at his very first entering upon his charge an experiment of his mighty power, in some miracles: as the turning his rod into a serpent, and that again into a rod, making his hand leprous, and then restoring it again to be as sound as before, that he might never think any thing too hard for that God to do towards their salvation and deliverance, when things seem most desperate; and how unconquerable Moses was after these in his faith, we see. Truly, when God speaks to a poor soul, he gives such a testimony of his almighty power and love, that so long as the sweet sense of this lasts in the soul, the creature's faith cannot be posed. What doth God in his pardoning mercy, but turn the serpent of the law with all its threatenings, from which the sinner fled, as that which would sting him to death, into the blossoming rod of the Gospel, that brings forth the sweet fruit of peace and life? and which is the greater miracle of the two, think you, Moses's leprous hand made clean and sound, or a poor sinner's heart, leprous with sin, made clean and pure by washing in the blood of Christ? Certainly this miracle of mercy, where it is strongly believed to be done, will make it easy for that soul to trust God in a sea of temporal sufferings, and cheerfully follow him through a whole wilderness of troubles in this life. When David hath comfortable apprehensions of God's pardoning mercy, then his faith is up, and can strongly act on God for temporal deliverance. Psalm xxxii. we find him, under the sweet
sense of his peace with God, able to vouch God as reconciled to him. "I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," verse 5. And now see to what a height his faith acts on God as to outward troubles, verse 7. "Thou art my hiding-place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble, thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." He spells this, which is the less, from the other, that is incomparably the greater mercy.

Secondly, This peace with God, where it is felt, fills the heart with love to Christ. The Christian's love to Christ takes fire at Christ's love to him; and the hotter Christ's love lies on the soul, the stronger reflection both the creature make of love to him again. "She loved much to whom much was forgiven," Luke vii. 47. And the more love, the less fear there will be of suffering. We will venture far for a dear friend; when Christ told his disciples, "Lazarus was dead;" Thomas would needs go and die with him for company, John xi. 16. so powerful is love, even as strong as death. "For a good man (saith the Apostle) some would even dare to die;" that is a merciful kind man, whose love had endeared him to them: how much more daring will a gracious soul be to sacrifice his life for a good God? "Thy name (saith the spouse of Christ) is as ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love thee." Cant. i. 2. Then Christ's name is poured forth, when the love of God through him is shed abroad in the soul. Let this precious box be but broke, and the sweet savour of it diffused in the heart, and it will take away the unsavoury scent of the most stinking prison in the world. This heavenly fire of Christ's love, beaming powerfully on the soul, will not only put out the kitchen-fire of creature-love, but also the hell-fire, as I may call it, of slavish fear. What makes us so aghast at the thoughts of death, especially if it comes towards us in a bloody dress, and hath some circumstances of persecutor's cruelty, to put a further grimness on its unpleasing countenance? Surely this comes from guilt and unacquaintance with Christ, and what he hath done for us; who came partly on this very errand into the world, "to deliver them who, through
fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." Heb. ii. 15. And how hath he done it? but by reconciling us to God, and so reconciling us to the thoughts of death itself, as that which can only do us this kind office, to bring us and Christ, that hath done all this for us, together.

Thirdly, This peace enjoyed in the Christian's bosom hath a sweet influence upon his self-denial: a grace so necessary to suffering, that Christ lays the cross, as I may so say, upon the back of this grace: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Mark viii. 34. Another (with Simon of Cyrene) may be compelled to carry Christ's cross after him a little way; but it is the self-denying soul that will stoop willingly, and down of his knees, to have this burthen laid on him at Christ's hand. Now the sense of a soul's peace with God will enable the creature in a two-fold self-denial, and by both sweetly dispose him for any suffering from or for Christ.

First, It will enable him to deny himself in his sinful self. Sin may well be called ourself, it cleaves so close to us, even as members to our body: as hard to mortify a lust as to cut off a joint. And some sins are more ourself than others, as our life is more bound up in some members than others; well, let them be what they will, there is a good day, in which, if Christ ask the head of the proudest lust among them all, he shall have it with less regret than Herodias obtained the Baptist's at Herod's hands. And what that gaudy day, in which the Christian can so freely deny his sin, and deliver it up to justice, but when Christ is feasting him with his hidden manna of pardon and peace? A true friend will rather deny himself than one he loves dearly, if it be in his power to grant his request; but least of all can he deny him, when his friend is doing him a greater kindness at the same time that he asks a less. No such picklock to open the heart as love. When love comes begging, and that at a time when it is shewing itself in some eminent expression of kindness to him at whose door she knocks, there is little fear but to speed. Esther chose that time to engage Ahashuerus's heart against Haman her
enemy when she expressed her love most to Abashe-
rus, viz. at a banquet: when doth God give, or indeed
where can he give, the like demonstration of his love to a
poor soul, as when he entertains it at this Gospel ban-
quett? now sure, if ever, God may prevail with his child
to send the cursed Amalekite to the gallows, his lust to
the gibbet. Do you think that Mary Magdalen, when that
blessed news dropped from Christ into her mournful
heart that "her sins, which were many, were all forgiven
her," could now have been persuaded to have opened
the door to any of her former lovers, and gone out of
these embraces of Christ's love, to have played the whore
again? No; I doubt not but she would sooner have
chosen the flames of martyrdom than of lust. Indeed
that which can make the creature deny a lust, can make
the creature it shall not deny a cross.

Secondly, The sense of this peace will enable the
Christian to deny his carnal enjoyments; and these the
Christian finds his great pull-backs from suffering. As
the heart burns in the hot fit of love to the pleasures
and profits of this world when he abounds with them, in
that degree will his shaking fit of fear and grief be, when
Christ calls him to part with them. What the sweet
wines and dainty fare of Capua was to Hannibal's soldiers,
that we shall find any intemperance of heart to the crea-
ture will be to us; it will enervate our spirits, and so eff-
feminate us that we shall have little mind to endure
hardship, when drawn into the field to look an enemy
in the face. Now the sense of this Gospel-peace will
deaden the heart to the creature, and facilitate the work
of self-denial, as to the greatest enjoyments the world
hath. "God forbid (saith Paul) that I should glory, save
in the cross of our Lord Jesus, by whom the world is
crucified to me, and I unto the world." Gal. vi. 14. Paul's
heart is dead to the world; now mark what gave the
death-wound to his carnal affections: "by whom (saith
he) the world is crucified to me, and I unto it," that is,
Christ and his cross. There was a time indeed that
Paul loved the world as well as most; but since he hath
been acquainted with Christ, and the mercy of God in
him to his soul, pardoning his sins, and receiving him
into favour and fellowship with himself: now he is of another mind; he leaves the world, as Saul his seeking of the asses at the news of a kingdom; his haunt lies another way now. Let the Zibas of the world take the world, and all they can make of it with their best husbandry, he will not grudge them their happiness, forasmuch as his heavenly lord and king is come in peace to his soul. None can part with the comfort of the creature so cheerfully as he who hath his mouth at the fountain-head, the love of God himself. Parents are near, and friends are dear, yet a loving wife can forget her father’s house and leave her old friends’ company, to go with her husband, though it be to a prison; how much more will a gracious soul bid adieu to these, yea life itself, to go to Christ, especially when he hath sent the Comforter into his bosom, to cheer him in the solitariness of the way with his sweet company.

A fourth suffering grace, which the sweet sense of this Gospel-peace doth promote, is patience; affliction and suffering to a patient soul are not grievous. Patience is, as one calls it, the concotive faculty of the soul; that grace which digests all things, and turns them into good nourishment. Meats of hard digestion will not do well with squeamish weak stomachs, and therefore they are dainty and nice in their diet; whereas men of strong stomachs they refuse no meat that is set before them, all fare is alike to them. Truly thus there are some things of very hard digestion to the spirits of men; the peevish, passionate, short-spirited professor will never concoct reproaches, prison, and death itself, but rather quarrel with his profession, if such fare as these attend the Gospel. “When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended.” Matth. xiii. 21. This will not stay on his stomach, but makes him cast up even that which else he could have kept, a profession of Christ, might he have had it with a quiet life and a whole skin. But now the patient soul he makes his meal of what God in his providence sets before him; if peace and prosperity be served up with the Gospel, he is thankful, and enjoys the sweetness of the mercy while it lasts; if God takes these away, and instead of them will have him

VOL. II. 3 Q
And your feet shod with
eat the Gospel-feast with sour herbs of affliction and persecution, it shall not make him sick of his cheer. It is but eating more largely of the comforts of the Gospel with them, and they go down very well wrapped up in them. Indeed the Christian is beholden to those consolation which flow from the peace of the Gospel for his patience. It were impossible for the people of God to endure what sometimes they meet from men and devils also as they do, had they not sweet help from the sense of God's love in Christ, that lies glowing at their hearts in inward peace and joy. The Apostle resolves all the saints' patience, experience, and hope, yea glorying in their tribulations, into this, as the cause of all: "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." Rom. v. 5. Sin makes suffering intolerable: when that is gone, the worst part of the trouble is removed; a light cart goes through that slough easily where the cart deeply loaden is set fast; guilt loads the soul, and bemires it in any suffering; take that away, and let God speak peace to his soul, and he that raged before like a mad man under the cross, shall carry it without wincing and whining. "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds." Phil. iii. Now what is patience but the keeping of the heart and mind composed and serene in all troubles that befall us? But a word or two for application.

SECT. III.

Use 1. This informs our judgments in two particulars: First, What to judge of their patience in afflictions that have no interest in the Gospel-peace. Secondly, What to think of their peace who in affliction have no patience at all.

First, Some you shall see very still and quiet in affliction, yet mere strangers to this peace, ignorant of Christ the peace-maker, walking in opposition to the terms God offers peace in the Gospel upon, and yet very calm in affliction. Certainly all is not right with this poor creature; if he had any sense how it is with him, he would have little patience, to see himself under the
hand of God, and not know but it may leave him in hell before it hath done with him. When I see one run over stones and hard ways barefoot, and not complain, I do not admire his patience, but pity the poor creature that hath benumbed his feet, and as it were soled them with a brawny dead kind of flesh, so as to lose his feeling; but save your pity much more for those whose consciences are so benumbed, and hearts petrified into a senseless stupidity, that they feel their misery no more than the stone doth the mason's saw which cuts it asunder. What good does physic put into a dead man's mouth? If he cannot be chafed to some sense of his condition, all applications are in vain. And if afflictions, which are the strongest physic, leave the creature senseless, there is little hope that any other will work upon him.

Secondly, What shall we think of those that are great pretenders to this peace, yet cannot think with any patience of suffering from God or for God? Certainly, so far as the creature is acquainted with this peace, and hath the true sense of God's love in Christ lying warm at his heart, he cannot but find proportionably his heart stand ready to submit to any suffering that God lays out for him. And therefore it behoves us well to try our peace and comfort. If thou hast no heart to suffer for God, but chusest a sin to escape a cross, thy peace is false; if thou hast but little patience under ordinary afflictions, to compose thy spirit from murmuring, and sustain thy heart from sinking, thy faith on the promise is weak. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." Prov. xxiv. 10.

Use 2. Let this stir thee up, Christian, to be very tender of thy peace with God and thy own conscience. Keep this peace clear and unbroken, and it will keep thy heart whole, when the whole world breaks about thee. So long as this peace of God rules in your hearts, you are safe from fear or danger, though in a prison, or at a stake. But if that be wounded, then thy enemies will come upon thee, as Simeon and Levi on the men of Shechem, and be too hard for thee. O it is sad, friends, you will find it so, to go with sore and smarting consciences into a suf-
And your feet shod with
fering condition. A thorn in the foot will make any way uneasy to the traveller; and guilt in the conscience any condition uncomfortable to the Christian, but most of all a suffering one. Now, if you will keep your peace unbroken, you must bestow some attention on it, and set as it were a life-guard about it. The choicest flowers need most looking to. The richer the treasure, the safer we lay it. This peace is thy treasure; look well where thou layest it. Two ways our Saviour tells us that worldly treasure, such as silver and gold, may be lost: "by thieves that break in and carry it away, and by rust that eat and corrupt it." Matt. vi. 19. There are two ways wherein the Christian may go by the loss in this his heavenly treasure of inward peace and comfort. Presumptuous sins, these are the thieves that break through and steal the saint’s comfort away; when the Christian comes to look into his soul after such a bold act, and thinks to entertain himself (as formerly) with the comforts of his pardoned state, interest in Christ, and hopes of heaven through him, alas! he finds a sad change, no promise that will give out its consolations to him. The cellar door is locked, Christ withdrawn, and the keys carried away with him. He may even cry out with a sad complaint, as Mary when she found not Christ’s body in the sepulchre: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Thus the Christian may with an aching heart bemoan his folly: My pride, my uncleanness, my earthly-mindedness, they have taken away my treasure, robbed me of my comfort; I could never have a comfortable sight of God’s face in any duty or promise since I fell into that foul sin. And therefore, Christian, have a care of such robbers of thy peace as this. "The spirit of man is called the candle of the Lord." Prov. xx. 27. Hath God lighted thy candle, Christian, cheered thy spirit (I mean) with the sense of his love? take heed of presumptuous sins; if such a thief be suffered in this thy candle, thy comfort will soon swail out. Hast thou fallen into the hands of any such presumptuous sins, that have stolen thy peace from thee; send speedily thy hue-and-cry after them, I mean make thy sad moan to God, and raise heaven upon them
by a spirit of prayer. This is no time to delay; the further thou lettest these sins go without repentance, the harder thou wilt find it to recover thy lost peace and joy; and for thy encouragement know, God is ready, upon thy serious and solemn return, to restore thee the joy of his salvation, and do justice upon these enemies of thy soul by his mortifying grace, if thou wilt prosecute the law upon them closely and vigorously, without relenting towards them, or being bribed with the pleasure, or carnal advantage, that they will not spare to offer, so their lives may be spared.

Again, As presumptuous sins are the thieves that with a high hand rob the Christian of his comfort; so sloth and negligence are as the rust, that in time will fret into his comfort, and eat out the heart and strength of it. It is impossible that the Christian who is careless and secure in his walking, unfrequent or negligent in his communion with God, should long be owner of much peace or comfort that is true? What if thou dost not pour water of presumptuous sins into the lamp of thy joy to quench it, it is enough if thou dost not pour oil of duty to feed and maintain it. Thou art murderer to thy comfort by starving it, as well as by stabbing of it.