

~ Puritan Teaching on Holy Living ~

"Our Savior tells us, unless our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. 5:20." - W.B.

Spiritual Perfection

Unfolded & Enforced

William Bates, D.D.

Chaplain to Charles II of England and known as "The Queen's Puritan" under William and Mary

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1848 Edition

“Spiritual Perfection Unfolded and Enforced” by William Bates, D.D., originally published in 1699, in the 1848 Edition, is here reprinted by Hail & Fire, 2009.

Category: Religion, Protestant, Holy Living

William Bates, D.D.

1625-1699, Chaplain to King Charles II of England known as “The Queen’s Puritan,” in reference to his favor with Queen Mary and King William of England.

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PREFACE
to the Protestant Reprint of

“Spiritual Perfection Unfolded and Enforced”
by William Bates (1699)

by Hail & Fire

PROTESTANT SERMONS & EXHORTATIONS

In this age of ecumenism, when the lines have been blurred between the two major denominations and the world itself speaks of the Pope as head of all Christians, we join with so many to call to remembrance the truth of the Gospel and of those who, in times past, both well-known and unknown, answered a good answer for a pure and Gospel faith against the traditions of men. The intention of Hail & Fire is to make available Gospel and Reformed Theology in the works, sermons, exhortations, prayers, and apologetics of those who have maintained the Gospel and expounded upon the Scripture as the Eternal Word of God and the sole authority in Christian doctrine.

THE
WRITINGS
OF THE
DOCTRINAL PURITANS
AND
DIVINES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

DURING the last twenty years, the Committee of the RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY have sent forth many of the valuable writings of those devoted servants of Christ, who lived and wrote in the seventeenth century, and of others of a later date, who, being like-minded, have borne a similar testimony. These are THE DOCTRINAL PURITANS of our land.

Few persons are aware of the extent to which these publications have been prepared by the RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY, and that for a few shillings many of the most valuable writings of our divines who succeeded the Reformers may be obtained. Amidst the continued efforts now made to engage public attention to the productions of the press, the Committee of the RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY find it an imperative duty prominently to state what has been done, and to show that readers of every station may *at once* avail themselves of the result of these exertions, to a greater or less extent, as they please.

Although these invaluable treasures have now, for some years, been placed within the reach of all classes of the

community, public attention has not been directed to them as a whole, forming a collective body of sound Protestant, scriptural truth, suitable for libraries, whether for private use or public circulation, and for the many circumstances and states of life, which render the possession of such books, and their presentation to others, valuable benefits. The advantages arising from improved methods and proceedings in mechanical preparation, and in other ways, also enable the Committee now to offer this series in volumes, on terms at which, a few years since, only the pamphlet of a few pages could be acquired.

Many of the Society's works—as LEIGHTON, BUNYAN, and CHILLINGWORTH—are now given in a more correct form than in the numerous reprints of late years. Others are abridged or condensed, so as to render them much more valuable for circulation, and desirable for perusal; these books being distinguished accordingly, while, as a whole, they will be found edited with much care and fidelity.

The Series of publications now in the course of issue contains some of the best works of The Doctrinal Puritans and Divines of the Seventeenth Century. They are arranged in pocket volumes, containing, on the average, three hundred and sixty pages each, in neat cloth boards, price 1s. 4d. each volume.

A volume is published every alternate month, or six volumes in the year.

The following were the six volumes for the first year, beginning with January, 1846.

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AND INTERCESSION; AND, A DISCOURSE ON MOURNING
FOR OTHER MEN'S SINS.

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NATHANAEL RANEW ON SOLITUDE IMPROVED BY DIVINE
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VOL. XIII.

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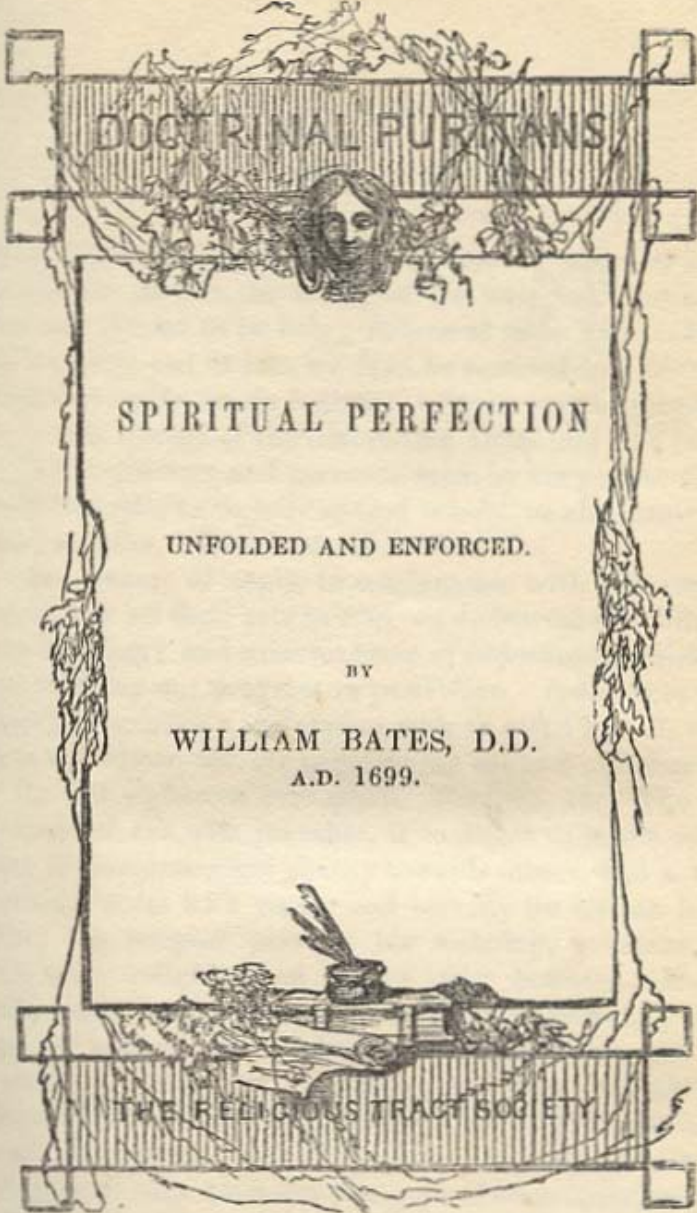
September 1.

SPIRITUAL PERFECTION UNFOLDED AND ENFORCED. BY WILLIAM BATES, D.D.

VOL. XVIII.

November 1.

IMMANUEL; OR, TRUE RELIGION A LIVING PRINCIPLE IN THE MINDS OF MEN; AND, A WELCOME TO AFFLICTION. BY SAMUEL SHAW, M.A.



DOCTRINAL PURITANS

SPIRITUAL PERFECTION

UNFOLDED AND ENFORCED.

BY

WILLIAM BATES, D.D.
A.D. 1699.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.

88
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REPT. ON THE PROGRESS OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

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P R E F A C E.

THE great design of God in his saving mercies, is to transform us into the image of his unspotted holiness. We are elected to be holy ; redeemed to be holy ; called to be holy ; and at last, we shall be received into heaven, and made glorious in holiness, without spot or blemish.

It was worthy of the descending Deity into this lower world, to instruct and persuade men, by his perfect rules and example, to be holy as God is holy, in all manner of conversation, 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

The enemy of souls, in combination with the carnal mind, use all their arts to cool our endeavours in following holiness ; and raise an army of objections to dismay us, and stop our progress to perfection. Sometimes the deceiver inspires a temptation with so soft a breath, that it is not discerned. He suggests the counsel of Solomon, " Be not righteous over-much," Eccl. vii. 16. The intention of the wise preacher, is to direct us in the exercise of compassionate charity towards others, and not to censure them with rigour and severity for human frailties ; the tempter perverts his meaning, to make us remiss in religion, and shy of strict holiness. Moral men value themselves upon their fair conversation ; they are not stained with foul and visible pollutions, but are externally sober and righteous ; and they will advise, that men should not take a surfeit of religion, but rise with an appetite ; that it is wisdom to use so much of religion as may quiet the clamours of conscience, secure reputation, and afford some colour of comfort : but it is

a spice of folly to be over-religious, and justly exposes persons to derision, as vainly nice and scrupulous. They commend the golden mean, and under the pretence of temper, encourage lukewarmness.

The objection in some part of it is specious, and apt to sway the minds of men that do not attentively consider things. To discover its false colour, and to make a true and safe judgment of our duty, it will be useful to consider.

It is true, there is a medium between vicious extremes, wherein the essence of inferior moral virtues consists; for they are exercised upon objects of limited goodness, and must be regulated both in our affections and actions, correspondently to the degrees of their goodness. Thus fortitude is in the middle, between base fear and rash boldness; and the more firm and constant the habitual quality of fortitude is, the more eminent and praiseworthy it appears. But in spiritual graces, that raise the soul to God, whose perfections are truly infinite, there can be no excess. The divinest degrees of our love to God, and fear to offend him, our endeavours in their height and excellency to obey and please him, are our wisdom and duty.

That part of the objection, that strict holiness will expose us to scorn, is palpably unreasonable. Did ever any artist blush to excel in the art that he professes? Is a scholar ashamed to excel in useful learning? And shall a christian, whose high and holy calling obliges him to live becoming its dignity and purity, be ashamed of his accurate conversation? Can we be too like God in his holiness, his peculiar glory? Can that be matter of contempt, which is the supreme honour of the intelligent creature? A saint, when despised with titles of ignominy by the carnal world, should bind their scorns as a diadem about his head, and wear them as beautiful

ornaments. The apostles rejoiced, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ, Acts v. 41. What reproaches did the Lord of glory suffer for us! And what pride and folly is it, that we should desire to be glorified by his suffering reproaches, and not willingly endure reproach for his glory! Our continual and ardent endeavours to rise to perfection, commend us to our Sovereign and Saviour. A cold dead heathen is less offensive and odious to him than a lukewarm christian.

It is a common objection, that to live in all things according to rule, to walk circumspectly and exactly, to be confined to the narrow way, will not only infringe, but destroy our liberty. This is so precious a possession, that men will defend their liberty with their lives. An ingenuous person will rather wear a plain garment of his own, than a rich livery, the mark of servitude. But if men will appeal to their understandings, they will clearly discern that the word liberty is abused, to give countenance to licentiousness. There is a free subjection, and a servile liberty. The apostle tells the Romans, "When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness; and being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness," Rom. vi. 18. 20.

The soul has two faculties, the understanding and will. The object of the understanding is truth, either in itself or appearance: the object of the will is goodness, either real or counterfeit. Liberty is radically in the understanding, which freely deliberates, and by comparative consideration, directs the will to choose good before evil; and of good the greater, and of evil the less. When the understanding is fully illuminated as to the absolute goodness of an object, without the least mixture of evil, and represents it to the will, it is an act retrograde in nature, and utterly repugnant to the rational appetite, to reject it. The indifference of the

will proceeds from some defects in the object, or in the apprehension of it; but when an infinite good is duly represented to the will, the choice is most clear and free. Of this there is an illustrious example in the life of Moses; he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect to the recompense of reward," Heb. xi. 24—26. His enlightened mind considerably pondered the eternal reward with the transient pleasure of sin, and his judgment was influential on his will, to choose the glorious futurity, before the false lustre of the court. What is the goodly appearance of the present tempting world, but, like the rainbow, painted tears? The heavenly felicity is substantial and satisfying. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. He dispels the darkness of the mind, and by its illuminating guidance, turns the will to accept and embrace those objects that exceedingly satisfy its vast desires and capacity. This is an eminent part of the Divine image engraven on the soul in its creation. For God is sovereignly free, "and does all things according to the counsel of his will," Eph. i. 11. Our servitude was by seduction; "Eve being deceived, was in the transgression," 1 Tim. ii. 14. Our liberty is restored by light; "The truth makes us free," John viii. 32. The necessity that proceeds from external compulsion, and from the indeliberate and strong sway of nature, that determines to one thing, is inconsistent with liberty. The understanding is a free faculty in the apprehension of objects, the will free in the election of them: but in the consequent choice of the will, that infallibly proceeds from light and love, the perfection of its freedom consists. When God and his

commands are duly represented in their amiable excellences, the love of the Lawgiver, and his laws, certainly produces obedience to it with choice and complacency. David expresses his affection to the Divine law, and the principal motive of it, "I love thy law, because it is pure," Psa. cxix. 140. As the hands are free when they are directed by the eyes and will; so a saint, who with understanding and voluntary veneration worships God, and obeys his precepts, "which is our reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1. exercises and enjoys the truest, sweetest, and most honourable liberty: "If the Son make you free, ye are free indeed," John viii. 36. Freedom and felicity are inseparable: servitude is the fatal concomitant of vice. When a philosopher was asked, what advantage he had obtained by the study of philosophy, he replied, This among others—that if all the laws were cancelled, a philosopher would live as uniformly, according to the rules of decency and honesty, as before. A christian that has an inward principle of Divine knowledge and love, without the constraint of penal laws, will, from a clear judgment and election, obey God with delight and constancy.

There is a servile liberty. There are three mistakes in the world of eternal destructive consequence to the souls of men; concerning wisdom and folly, happiness and misery, liberty and servitude. Some are seeming wise, whose ignorance is esteemed judgment: such are the worldly wise, who contrive and labour to "lay up treasures for themselves here, but are not rich towards God," Luke xii. 21. Our Saviour gives them a true character, "They are fools." Others are esteemed happy in enjoying what they love; whereas if they set their love upon those objects that deserve not that principal affection, but are pernicious to their souls, they are truly miserable in the fruition of them. It is the sign of

God's severe displeasure to "give men up to satisfy their vile affections," Rom. i. 26. Some are seemingly free, whose bondage is esteemed liberty. Carnal men presume of their liberty, because they follow the swing of their appetites : but they serve divers lusts and pleasures, and are under the dominion of Satan, taken captive by him at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26. As if a horse that takes a career in a pleasant plain were free when the bridle is in his mouth, and he is curbed by the rider at his pleasure. The apostles say of idolaters, that what they sacrificed to idols, they sacrificed to devils, 1 Cor. x. 20. It is equally true, that when men serve their lusts, they serve the devil, constructively doing things pleasing to them.

When man turned rebel against God, he became an absolute slave. His understanding is now in the chains of darkness, under ignorance and errors ; his will is enslaved by infamous lusts ; his affections are fettered by ensnaring objects. "If no man can serve two masters," Matt. vi. 24. how wretched is their condition, whose numerous and fierce passions exact things contrary, and are their tyrants and tormentors continually ! St. Peter speaks of impure persons, "Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin," 2 Pet. ii. 14. This is true of all sinners, whose hearts are possessed by any kind of lusts. They are hurried by them against the reason and rest of their minds, to the commission of sin ; which is the most cruel and contumelious bondage, and the more shameful because voluntary. But they are insensible of those subtle chains that bind the soul, and think themselves to be the only free men. As when the angel awakened Peter, to release him from prison, he "thought he saw a vision," Acts xii. 9. so when they are excited to go out of their dark prison, they think the freedom of duty, the gracious

liberty of the sons of God, to be a mere imagination. Like one in the paroxysm of a fever, who sings and talks high, as if he were in perfect health, but after the remission of the disease, feels his strength broken with pains, and himself near to death : thus within a little while, when the furious precipitancy of their passions is cooled and checked by afflictions, they will feel and sink under the weight of their woful bondage.

Another objection, and pernicious fallacy of the tempter, whereby he frightens many young persons from the strictness of a holy life, is, that religion is a sour severity ; they must renounce all delights, turn capuchins, if they seriously engage themselves in a religious course, and resolve to strive after pure and perfect holiness. But there is neither truth nor terror in this suggestion to the enlightened mind. It is impossible true holiness should make men joyless, and in the least degree miserable, which is in the highest perfection in God, who is infinitely joyful and blessed. Religion does not extinguish the joyful affections, but transplant them from Egypt to Canaan. The pleasures of sin, which are only forbidden, in the first taste, ravish the carnal senses : but, like Jonathan's honey, they kill by tasting ; when the sweetness is vanished, the sting remains. Whereas the joy that proceeds from the exercise and improvement of Divine grace, and the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, the eternal Comforter, Rom. v. 5. the present reward of it, is vital and reviving, the foretaste of eternal life. It is true, carnal men are strangers to this joy, they cannot relish Divine delights ; but the Spirit of God, like a new soul, inspires the sanctified with new thoughts, new inclinations, new resolutions, and qualifies them, that spiritual objects are infinitely pleasing to them. And whereas carnal pleasures are but for a season, and within a little while die, and

end in bitter distaste, (Amnon's excessive love was suddenly turned into more excessive hatred,) spiritual joys are increasing, and ever satisfying. Now it is an infallible rule to direct our choice, that is true happiness, which the more we enjoy, the more highly we value and love.

I thought it fit to show the unreasonableness of these objections, that are perverse and poisonous, which if not removed, would blast my design, and desired success, in the subsequent discourses. But it is more easy to prove our duty to follow holiness, than to persuade men to practise it. I shall only add, that the reward of holiness being so excellent and eternal, our zeal should encounter and overcome all difficulties that oppose our obtaining it. The strongest and swiftest wings are too slow to dispatch our way to heaven. The Lord give his blessing to make sacred truths effectual upon the souls of men.

SPIRITUAL PERFECTION.

2 CORINTHIANS VII. 1.

HAVING THEREFORE THESE PROMISES, DEARLY BELOVED, LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES FROM ALL FILTHINESS OF THE FLESH AND SPIRIT, PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD.

CHAPTER I.

The coherence opened. The inconsistency and danger of the communion of christians with infidels. The dignity of believers prohibits it. The promise of Divine communion obliges them to separate from contagious converse with unbelievers. The inference from those motives. The cleansing from all pollutions, and perfecting holiness. Purifying themselves is the duty of christians. A principle of holiness, actuated by the supplies of the Spirit, is requisite to enable christians to purify themselves. The pollutions of the flesh from the desiring and the angry appetite. They defile and debase human nature. The difficulty of purifying from uncleanness, and the causes of it specified. Means for purifying.

THESE words are argumentative, inferring the indispensable duty of christians to preserve themselves untainted from the idolatrous impure world, by the consideration of the promises specified in the preceding chapter: "What fellowship hath righteousness

with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? What part hath he that believes with an infidel?" ver. 14, 15. The form of questions evidently implies the absolute inconsistency between them; and the danger from such communion. We are not in Paradise, where the viper and the asp were innocent, and might be handled without danger from their poison, but in a contagious world full of corrupters and the corrupted. He represents the dignity of true believers; "Ye are the temple of the living God. He hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people," ver. 16. The unclean spirits that possessed the man spoken of in the gospel, dwelt among the tombs, the repositories of the dead, in their corruption and rottenness; but the Holy Spirit dwells only in living temples, purified and adorned for his habitation. The apostle enforces his advice; "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," ver. 17, 18. The promise contains the highest honour, and most perfect felicity of the reasonable creature.

In the text are observable,

I. The title wherewith the apostle addresses to them, "Having therefore, dearly beloved."

II. The matter of the address; to strive after pure and perfect holiness.

III. The motives: the exceeding great and precious promises assured to them from the mouth of God himself.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved.” The title expresses the truth and strength of his affection.

1. To recommend his counsel to their acceptance. Light opens the mind by clear conviction, but love opens the heart by persuasive insinuation, and makes an easy entrance into the soul. He seems to divest himself of his apostolical commission, and in the mildest and most tender manner mixes entreaties with his authority: as in a parallel place, “I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” &c. 1 Cor. i. 10.

2. The matter of the address. The cleansing us from all pollution of flesh and Spirit, and the changing us into the unspotted image of God’s holiness. These are the comprehensive sum of renewing grace, and are inseparable. The Holy Spirit works both together in the saints; as the sun, by the same emanation of light, dispels the darkness of the air, and irradiates it. But they are not merely different notions, but different parts of sanctification. For the corruption of nature is not a mere privation of holiness, as darkness is of light, but a contrary inherent quality, the principle of all sinful evils. We are commanded to put off the old man, and to put on the new, Col. iii. 9, 10. to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well, Isa. i. 16, 17.

We must purify ourselves from the pollutions of flesh and spirit. The soul and body, in the state of depraved nature, are like two malefactors fastened with one chain, and by their strict union infect one another. The pollution is intimate and radical, diffusive through all the powers of the soul, and members of the body. The spirit of the

mind, the supreme faculty, with the will and affections, want renewing. We are commanded to perfect holiness; to aspire and endeavour after our original holiness, and to be always advancing till we arrive at the final consummate state of holiness in heaven.

“In the fear of God.” That grace has an eminent causality and influence in this sanctification of christians. It is a powerful restraint from sins in thoughts and acts, in solitude and society, to consider God’s pure and flaming eye, that sees sin wherever it is, in order to judgment. Holy fear excites us to exercise every grace, and perform every duty in such a manner that we may be approved and accepted of God.

3. The motive arises from the excellency of the promises, and the qualifications requisite for the obtaining them. It is promised, that God will dwell in us, and walk in us; whose gracious presence is heaven upon earth. Strange condescension! that the God of glory should dwell in tabernacles of clay; far greater than if a king should dwell in a cottage with one of his poor subjects. He will adopt us into the line of heaven; “I will be your Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.” The qualifications are the purifying ourselves from all defilements, and striving to be entirely holy. By the order of God, every leper was to be excluded from the camp of Israel; and will he have communion with the souls of men, overspread with the leprosy, and covered with the ulcers of sin? there is a special emphasis in the words, “Saith the Lord Almighty.” Without the cleansing and renewing of sinners, Omnipotence cannot receive them into his favour and family.

There are fatal bars fixed, which the unholy cannot break through.

The proposition that arises from the words is this :

THE PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL LAY THE MOST POWERFUL OBLIGATIONS ON CHRISTIANS, TO STRIVE FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF PURE AND PERFECT HOLINESS.

1. In the management of this subject, I will first consider the duty as acted upon ourselves.

2. The parts of it ; the cleansing from sin, and perfecting holiness.

3. The force of the motives ; the precious and invaluable promises of the gospel : and make application of them.

1. We are commanded to cleanse ourselves, which is our duty, and implies an ability derived from Christ to perform it. It may seem strange that men, in their depraved state, should be excited to renew themselves : "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? not one," Job xiv. 4. yet this duty is frequently inculcated upon us. "Wash ye, make ye clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes," Isa. i. 16. "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness ; how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee ?" Jer. iv. 14. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners ; purify your hearts, ye double-minded," James iv. 8. A clear answer may be given to this.

There is no productive principle of holiness in man's corrupt nature, but strong aversions from it, and inclinations to what is contrary to it. There is a miserable impotency to all spiritual good, better expressed with tears than words. It is natural and hereditary, more difficultly cured than what is accidental. God is the sole efficient in the

regeneration of the soul, and the first infusion of grace, and the principal in the growth and improvement of it. The Holy Spirit does not work grace in us, as the sun forms gold in the earth without any sense in ourselves of his operations; but we feel them in all our faculties, congruously to their nature, enlightening the mind, exciting the conscience, turning the will, and purifying the affections.

After a principle of life and holiness is planted in us, we are, by a continual supply of strength from Christ, assisted to exercise it in all the acts that are proper to the Divine life. There is a resemblance between the fruits of the earth, and the graces of a christian; seed must be first sown in the earth before it springs out of it; and when it is sown, the natural qualities of the earth, coldness and dryness, are so contrary to fructifying, that without the influences of the heavens, the heat of the sun, and showers of rain, the seed would be lost in it. Grace is drawn forth into flourishing and fruitfulness, by the irradiating and warm influx of the Spirit. But we are subordinate agents in carrying on the work of grace to perfection. The apostle exhorts us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God works in us to will and to do. Carnal men abuse the freeness of grace to looseness and security, and the power of grace to negligence and laziness. Our dependence on God infers the use of means to save our souls. Our Saviour commands us to watch and pray, that we may not enter into temptation. To watch without prayer is to presume upon our own strength; to pray without watching is to presume upon the grace of God. The Lord's prayer is the

rule of our duty and desires ; we are engaged by every petition to co-operate and concur with Divine grace to obtain what we pray for. Naaman presumed he should be immediately cleansed from his leprosy by the prayer of Elisha ; but he was commanded to go and wash himself in Jordan seven times for his purification. A stream preserves its crystal clearness by continual running ; if its course be stopped, it will stagnate and putrefy. The purity of the soul is preserved by the constant exercise of habitual grace. In short, we must be jealous of ourselves, to prevent our being surprised by sin, and continually address the throne of grace, for the obtaining grace and mercy in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. and by faith apply the blood of sprinkling, that has a cleansing efficacy. The death of Christ meritoriously procures the Spirit of life and renovation, and is the strongest engagement upon christians to mortify those sins that were the cause of his agonies and sufferings.

2. The parts of the duty are to be considered : the cleansing us from the defilements of flesh and spirit, and the perfecting holiness.

The cleansing must be universal, as the pollution is : we are directed to " cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts," James iv. 8. that we may draw near to God with acceptance. It is observable that, in a general sense, all sins are the works of the flesh ; whatever is not Divine and spiritual is carnal, in the language of scripture. For since the separation of men from God by the rebellious sin of Adam, the soul is sunk into a state of carnality, seeking for satisfaction in lower things. The two jarring opposite principles are flesh and spirit, lusting against one another. It is as carnal to desire

vain glory, or to set the heart on riches, as to love sensual pleasures; for our esteem and love are entirely due to God for his high perfections; and it is a disparagement to set them on the creatures, as if he did not deserve them in their most excellent degrees. Whatever things are below the native worth of the soul, and unworthy of its noblest operations, and are contrary to its blessed end, defile and vilify it. A more precious metal mixed with a baser, as silver with tin, is corrupted, and loses of its purity and value: but in a contracted sense sins are distinguished; some are attributed to the spirit, and some to the flesh. The spirit is always the principal agent, and sometimes the sole agent in the commission of sin, and the sole subject of it: of this sort are pride, infidelity, envy, malice, &c. There are other sins, wherein the body conspires and concurs in the outward acts; they are specified by the apostle, and distinguished according to the immediate springs from whence they flow; the desiring and the angry appetites. "The works of the flesh are manifest, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like," Gal. v. 19—21. Col. iii. 5. 8. The cleansing from carnal foul lusts, is like the washing one that is fallen into the mire, which is a mixture of the two lowest elements, heavy earth and slippery water, that defile by the touching them. The more spiritual lusts are like the stormy winds and smoky fire, in which the two higher elements are contained. Pride swells the mind, and causes violent agitations in the thoughts; anger darkens and fires it. The lusts of the flesh

are tenacious by the force of the imagination, when conversant upon objects presented by the senses; but the lusts of the spirit are formed and wrought in its own forge, without the concurrence of the sensual faculties.

The lusts of the desiring appetite, intemperance and uncleanness, are so polluting, that the consciousness of such crimes will cover the guilty with confusion. Of all the debasing titles, whereby the devil is characterised in scripture, none is more vilifying than that of "the unclean spirit:" this is attributed to him from the general nature of sin. But there is such a notorious turpitude in lusts grossly carnal, that they defile and defame the sinner in a special manner, not only as a rebel against God, but the servant of corruption. The understanding is the leading supreme faculty; sense that rules in beasts, should serve in man. Now what does more vilify him, than to be dissolved in filthy pleasures, to be drowned in a sea of wine; than a life sensual and dissolute, drawn out in a continual connexion of dreggy delights? gaming succeeds feasting; the ball follows the comedy; the impurities of the night, the intemperance of the day. Sensual lusts degrade men from the nobility of their nature, the dignity of their condition, as if they were all flesh, and had not a spirit of heavenly original, to regulate and restrain their lower appetites within the limits of purity and honour. The slaves of sense "are like the beasts that perish," Psa. xlix. 12. He that is a beast by choice, is incomparably more vile than a beast by nature. It would infect the air to speak, and pollute the paper to write, their secret abominations, wherein they lie and languish; and it is

natural for men to die in those sins wherein they live; they seal their own damnation by impenitence.

How difficult the purification of these passions is, experience makes evident. The radicated habits of uncleanness and intemperance are rarely cured. We must first die to ourselves, before we can be born of ourselves; the forsaking a sinful course is necessary antecedently to the ordering the conversation according to the rules of virtue. How few instances are there, of persons recovered from the practice and bondage of those lusts, by the wise counsels of philosophers. It is in vain to represent to them, that sensual lusts are prolific of many evils; that intemperance is pregnant with the seeds of many diseases; it prepares matter that is inflammable into fevers; it is attended with the gout, stone, cholic, dropsy, &c. which are incomparably more tormenting than the pernicious pleasures of taste are delightful. Represent to them the foul progeny of lasciviousness, rottenness in the body, wasting the estate, infamy, to sacrifice what is most valuable for the sake of a vile woman; the wisest considerations are lost upon them, they are too weak a bridle to check their brutish lusts.

But are not these lusts easily subdued in christians, who have the advantage of clearer light, stronger motives, and more liberal assistance of grace, to rescue them from the power of sin?

The wise observer tells us, "I find more bitter than death, the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands are as bands: whoso pleases God, shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her. Behold this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one to find out the

account, but I find not: one man of a thousand have I found, but a woman among all these have I not found," Eccl. vii. 26—28.

It is astonishing, that for a short dream of pleasure, men should despise heaven and hell, what is most desirable, and most fearful. How just is the reproach mixed with compassion and indignation! "How long, ye simple ones, will you love simplicity, and fools hate knowledge?" Prov. i. 22.

It is worth the inquiry, how men are sottishly seduced to live unchastely and intemperately, against the reason and rest of their minds.

The great temptation to sin is the love of pleasure: accordingly the degrees of sensual pleasure, being more intense in those carnal faculties that are for the preservation and propagation of life, especially when heightened by the carnal fancy, the love of the members prevails against the law of the mind. It is said of unclean persons, whose eyes are full of adultery, they cannot cease from sin; they cannot disentangle themselves from the embraces of the circling serpent.

Carnal pretences are made use of to defend, or at least excuse the sin of intemperance, which makes it more easily indulged, and pernicious in effect. Men, if it were possible, would sin without sin, without discovering the guilt and turpitude of it, that they may enjoy their pleasures without accusing, recoiling thoughts, which will turn the sweetest wine into vinegar. Now since meats and drinks are necessary for our vital support, and the measure is uncertain and various, according to the dispositions and capacities of men's bodies, intemperate persons feed high, and drink deep, without

reflection or remorse, and pretend it is for the refreshment of nature.

Fleshly lusts steal into the throne by degrees. An excess of wickedness strikes at first sight with horror. No prodigal designed to waste a great estate in a day; yet many from immense riches have fallen into extreme poverty. This expense is for his pleasure, this for his honour, this will not be ruinous; thus proceeding by degrees, till all be squandered away, he becomes voluntarily poor.

An intemperate person begins with lesser measures, and goes on further and further: conscience for a time resists, and suspends the entireness of his consent to the temptation; he drinks too much for his time, for his health and estate, but he will not totally quench his reason; yet by degrees he becomes hardened, and freely indulges his appetite till he is drowned in perdition.

A lascivious person begins with impure glances, tempting words and actions, and proceeds to unclean actions.

Sensual lusts stupify conscience; they kill the soul in the eye, and extinguish the directive and reflecting powers. Wine and women take away the heart, that it is neither vigilant nor tender. Chastity and temperance, joined with prayer to the Father of lights, clarify and brighten the mind, and make it receptive of sanctifying truths; but carnal predominant passions sully and stain the understanding by a natural efficiency, and by a moral and meritorious efficiency. When the spirits that are requisite for intellectual operations are wasted for the use of the body, the mind is indisposed for the severe exercise of reason. Although the dispositions of the body are not directly operative

upon the spirit, yet in their present state of union, there is a strange sympathy between the constitution of the one, and the conceptions and inclinations of the other. Luxury and lust fasten a rust and foulness on the mind, that it cannot see sin in its odious deformity, nor virtue in its unattainable beauty. They raise a thick mist that darkens reason, that it cannot discern approaching dangers. The judicative faculty is by the righteous judgment of God impaired and corrupted, that it does not seriously consider the descent and worth of the soul, its duty and accounts for all things done in the body; but as if the spirit in man were for no other use, but to animate the organs of intemperance and lust, they follow their pleasures with greediness. It is said of the young man, enticed by the flatteries of the harlot, that he goes after her like an ox crowned with garlands, that insensibly goes to be sacrificed. He looks to the present pleasure, without considering the infamy, the poverty, the diseases, the death and damnation, that are the just consequents of his sin. The sensual are secure; the effects of carnal lusts were visible in the darkness of heathenism.

Lust alienates the thoughts and desires of the soul from converse with God. His justice makes him terrible to the conscience, and holiness distasteful to the affections of the unclean. We read of the Israelites, they were so greedy of the onions and garlick, and fleshpots of Egypt, that they despised the food of angels; the manna that dropped from heaven. Till the soul be purified from the dregs of sense, and refined to an angelic temper, it can "never taste how good the Lord is," Psa. xxxiv. 8. and will not forsake sensual enjoyments.

The conversion of the soul proceeds from the enlightened mind, and the renewed will, enraptured with Divine delights that overcome all the pleasures of sin. There are, for our caution, recorded in scripture, two fearful examples of the enchanting power of lust. Samson, enticed by his lust, became a voluntary slave to a wretched harlot, that first quenched the light of his mind, and then the light of his body, and exposed him to the cruel scorn of his enemies. Solomon, by indulging his sensual appetite, lost his wisdom, and was induced by his idolatrous concubines, to adore stocks and stones; and became as very an idol as those he worshipped, "that have eyes and see not, ears and hear not," Psa. cxxxv. 15, 16. He rebelled against God, who had made him the richest and wisest king in the world, and miraculously revealed his goodness to him. Dreadful consequence of sensuality!

There is a special reason that makes the recovery of the sensual to sobriety and purity, to be almost impossible. The internal principle of repentance, is the enlightened conscience, reflecting upon past sins, with heart-breaking sorrow and detestation. This is declared by God concerning Israel; "Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations," Ezek. xxxvi. 31. The bitter remembrance of sin is the first step to reformation. Now there are no sinners more averse and incapable of such reflections, than those who have been immersed in the delights of sense. The unclean wretch remembers the charming objects and exercise of his lusts with pleasure; and when his

instrumental faculties are disabled by sickness or age, for the gross acts, he repeats them in his fancy, renews his guilt, and the sin is transplanted from the body to the soul. The intemperate person remembers with delight the wild society wherein he has been engaged, the rich wines wherein he quenched his cares, the ungracious wit and mirth that made the hours slide away without observation. Now it is a rule concerning remedies applied for the recovery of the sick, that physic is ineffectual without the assistance of nature; but the case of the sick is desperate, when the only medicine proper for his cure increases the disease, and brings death more certainly and speedily. Those who are defiled by carnal lusts have a special curse; they provoke God to withdraw his grace, according to that fearful threatening, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh," Gen. vi. 3. and after so desperate a forfeiture, they are seldom redeemed and released from the chains of darkness wherein they are bound. Accordingly Solomon frequently repeats this observation; "The strange woman flatters with her words; her house inclines unto death, and her paths to the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life," Prov. ii. 16. 18, 19. "The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit; he that is abhorred of the Lord shall irrecoverably fall therein," Prov. xxii. 14.

If it be said, that this representation of the deplorable state of the unclean seems to cut off all hopes of their reclaiming and salvation, and may induce despair, I answer with our Saviour, in another instance, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible,"

Mark x. 27. He can open and cleanse, adorn and beautify, the most obstinate and impure heart. He can, by omnipotent grace, change a brutish soul into an angelic, and plant a Divine nature, "that abhors and escapes the corruption in the world through lust," 2 Pet. i. 4. Notwithstanding the severity of the threatening, yet the Divine mercy and grace has been exercised and magnified in the renewing such polluted creatures. The apostle tells the Corinthians, they were fornicators and adulterers, but they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

1. Let them address their requests to God, that he would cleanse them from the guilt of their sins in the blood of Christ, the only fountain of life; and "baptize them with the Holy Ghost as with fire," Matt. iii. 11. to purge away their dross and pollutions. An unholy life is the offspring of an unclean heart. The loose vibrations of the impure eye, the enticing words of the impure tongue, the external caresses and incentives of lust, are from the heart. The heart must be purified, or the hands cannot be cleansed.

2. Suppress the first risings of sin in the thoughts and desires. Sins at first are easily resisted; but indulged for a time, are difficultly retracted.

3. Abstain from all temptations to these sins. As wax near the fire is easily melted, so the carnal affections are suddenly kindled by tempting objects. The neglect of this duty fills the world with so many incorrigible sinners, and hell with so many lost souls. Men venture to walk among snares and serpents without fear, and perish for the neglect of circumspection.

4. Do not presume that you will forsake those sins hereafter, which you are unwilling to forsake at present. There is in many a conflict between conviction and corruption: they love sin, and hate it; they delight in it, and are sorry for it; they cannot live without it, nor with it, in several respects: now to quiet conscience, and indulge their lusts, they please themselves with resolutions of a future reformation. The tempter often excites men to consent for once, and obtains his aim; but it is a voluntary distraction to think men may, without apparent danger, yield to a present temptation, resolving to resist future temptations: for if when the strength is entire, a temptation captivates a person, how much more easily will he be kept in bondage when the enemy is more tyrannous and usurping, more bold and powerful, and treads upon his neck, and he is more disabled to rescue himself! The enlightened natural conscience is armed against sin; and if men regarded its dictates, if they believed and valued eternity, they might preserve themselves from many defilements: but God has never promised to recover sinners by special grace, who have neglected to make use of common grace. In short, consider what is more tormenting than all the pleasures of sin that are but for a season can be delightful, the reflection of the guilty accusing conscience, and the terrible impression of an angry God for ever.

CHAPTER II.

Anger is a lust of the flesh. No passion less capable of counsel. Directions to prevent its rise and reign. Motives to extinguish it. The lust of the eyes, and pride of life, are joined with the lusts of the flesh. Covetousness considered. It is radically in the understanding, principally in the will, virtually in the actions. The love of it produces many vicious affections. It is discovered in getting, saving, and using an estate. The difficulty of curing covetousness made evident from the causes of it; and the unsuccessfulness of means in order to it. It is the root of all evil. Excludes from heaven. It is the most unreasonable passion. The present world cannot afford perfection or satisfaction to the immortal soul. The proper means to mortify covetousness.

ANGER is another lust of the flesh. Of all the passions none is less capable of counsel, nor more rebellious against the empire of reason. It darkens the mind, and causes such a fierce agitation of the spirits, as when a storm fills the air with black clouds, and terrible flashes of lightning. It often breaks forth so suddenly, that as some acute diseases, if checked at first, become more violent, there is no time for remedy, nor place for cure; so there is such an irrevocable precipitancy of the passions, that the endeavour to repress their fury, enrages them. It is astonishing what enormous excesses and mischiefs are caused by it! how many houses are turned into dens of dragons, how

many kingdoms into fields of blood, by this fierce passion!

1. To prevent its rise and reign, the most necessary counsel is, if possible, to quench the first sparks that appear, which are seeds pregnant with fire. But if it be kindled, do not feed the fire by exasperating words. A prudent silence will be more effectual to end a quarrel, than the most sharp and piercing reply that confounds the adversary. Julius Cesar would never assault those enemies with arms, whom he could subdue by hunger. He that injuriously reviles us, if we revile not again, and he has not a word from us to feed his rage, will cease of himself; and like those who die with pure hunger, will tear himself. Hezekiah commanded his counsellors not to say a word to Rabshekah.

2. Try by gentle and meek addresses to compose the ruffled minds of those who are provoked. It is the observation of the wisest of men, that a soft answer breaks the bones, Prov. xxv. 15. It is usually successful to make stubborn spirits compliant. Indeed some are so perverse in their passions, that the mildest words will incense them; no submission, no satisfaction will be accepted; their anger causes mortal and immortal hatred. But these are so far from being christians, they are not heathens, but divested of all humanity.

3. If anger has rushed into the bosom, that it may not rest there, cancel the remembrance of the provocation. The continual reflecting in the thoughts upon an injury, hinders reconciliation. The art of oblivion, if practised, would prevent those resentments that eternize quarrels. For this end, let us consider what may lessen the offence in

our esteem. In particular, if very injurious words are spoken against us by one in a transport of anger, they should be more easily despised, when they seem more justly provoking; for they proceed from rage, not from reason; and no person, that is of a wise and sober mind, will regard them, but as words spoken by a sick man in the height of a paroxysm.

Now to make us careful to prevent or allay this passion, it will be requisite to consider the inclination and sway of our natures; some as soon take fire as dry thorns, and retain it as knotty wood. Now it is a fundamental rule of life, that our weakest part must be guarded with the most jealousy, and fortified with the strongest defence. There we must expect the most dangerous and frequent assaults of Satan; there he will direct his battery, and place his scaling-ladders. Let, therefore, the following considerations settle in our hearts:—How becoming an understanding creature it is to defer anger: for the passions are blind and brutish, and without a severe command of them, a man forfeits his natural dignity. What is more unreasonable, than for a man deeply to wound himself, that he may have an imaginary satisfaction in revenging an injury! into what a fierce disorder is the body put by anger! the heart is inflamed, and the boiling spirits fly up into the head, the eyes sparkle, the mouth foams, and the other symptoms of madness follow. Inwardly, the angry man suffers more torments than the most cruel enemy can inflict upon him. A man of understanding is of a cool spirit. It was the wise advice of Pyrrhus, to those whom he instructed in the art of defence, “that they would not be angry; for

anger would make them rash, and expose them to their adversary." "He that hath not rule over his own spirit, is like a city broken down, and without walls," Prov. xxv. 28. and consequently exposed to rapine and spoil by every enemy. Satan hath an easy entrance into them, and brings along with him a train of evils. We are therefore directed to watch against anger, and not to "give place to the devil," Eph. iv. 27. Consider how honourable it is to pass by an offence; it is a royalty of spirit; an imitation of God, in whose eyes "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is of great price," 1 Pet. iii. 4. The greater the offence, the greater the glory of pardoning it. How pleasant it is! the soul is possessed in patience; it is cool and quiet; there is a divine and heavenly consent of the mind, the will, and affections. The breast of a dispassionate man is the temple of peace. Besides, let us frequently remember our want of the Divine compassion. There is no man so innocent unless he absolutely forgets that he is a man, and his many frailties, but desires that the cause of his life, in the day of judgment, may be tried by the tribunal of clemency; for no man can then be saved but by pardon. The due consideration of this will make us more hardly provoked, and more easily appeased with those who offend us.

Let us pray for the descent of the dove-like Spirit into our bosoms, to moderate and temper our passions. "Meekness is the fruit of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22, 23. There is a natural meekness, the product of the temperament of the humours in the body: this is a rare felicity. There is a moral meekness, the product of education and counsel: this is an amiable virtue. There is a spiritual

meekness, that orders the passions according to the rule of the Divine law, in conformity to our Saviour's example: this is a Divine grace, that attracts the esteem and love of God himself. This prepares us for communion with the God of peace here, and in heaven.

To obtain this excellent frame of spirit, let us be humble in our minds, and temperate in our affections, with respect to those things that are the incentives of passion. The false valuations of ourselves, and the things of this world, are the inward causes of sinful anger. Contempt and disdain, either real or apprehended, and the crossing our desires of worldly enjoyments, inflame our breasts. Our Saviour tells us he is "meek and lowly," Matt. xi. 29. and meekness is joined with temperance, as the productive and conservative cause of it. He that doth not overvalue himself, nor inordinately affect temporal things, is hardly provoked, and easily appeased.

I will consider the two other vicious affections, joined by St. John with the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life; from which we must be purged, or we are incapable of the blessed relation of God's children, and of his favour. The infamous character of the Cretians, is proper to the ambitious, covetous, and voluptuous; that they are "evil beasts, and slow bellies," Tit. i. 12. Covetousness is a diffusive evil, that corrupts the whole soul. It is radically in the understanding—principally in the will and affections—virtually in the actions.

1. It is radically in the understanding. Men are first enchanted in their opinion of riches, and then chained by their affections. The worldly

mind overvalue riches, as the only real and substantial happiness: the treasures of heaven, which are spiritual and future, are slighted as dreams, that have no existence but in the imagination. They see no convincing charms in grace and glory; the lustre of gold dazzles and deceives them; they will not believe it is dirt. Gold is their sun and shield, that supplies them with the most desirable good things in their esteem, and preserves them from the most fearful evils. Gain is their main design, and utmost aim; their contrivances and projects are, how to maintain and improve their estates; and the most pleasant exercise of their thoughts, is to look over their inventory.

2. Covetousness is principally in the will, the glaze of its residence; it is called "the love of money," 1 Tim. vi. 10. There is an inseparable relation between the heart and its treasure. We are directed, "If riches increase, set not your hearts upon them," Psa. lxxii. 10. It is observable, that the eager desire to procure riches, is often subordinate to other vicious affections, either to prodigality or pride. Prodigality excites to rapine and extortion, from the violent motive of indigence, that is its usual attendant, and from the conspiring lusts of sensuality, which languish, unless furnished with new supplies and nourishment. Or pride urges to an excessive procuring of wealth, to maintain the state and pomp of the vain-glorious. Now if these vicious affections are corrected, the inordinate desire of riches will be suddenly cured.

But covetousness, in its proper sense, implies the seeking riches for the love of them, not respectively to their use. From hence it is the most unreasonable affection, and more inexcusable than any that

are derived from the carnal appetites. Now love is the leading affection, and produces,

(1.) Immoderate desires of riches. For what is loved for itself, is desired with an unlimited appetite. Covetousness, like the grave, never says, It is enough, Prov. xxx. 15.

(2.) Immoderate joy in possessing them. A covetous man is raised and ravished above himself, in the sight of his treasures; he thinks himself happy without reconciliation and communion with God, wherein heaven consists. It was a convincing evidence of Job's sacred and heavenly temper, that he did not rejoice because his wealth was great, and his hand had gotten much, Job xxxi. 25.

(3.) Anxious fears of losing them. The covetous suspect every shadow, are fearful of every fancy, wherein their interest is concerned. They are vexed with the apprehensions, lest they should be oppressed by the rich, robbed by the poor, circumvented by the crafty, or suffer loss by innumerable unforeseen and inevitable accidents. Content is the poor man's riches, when possession is the rich man's torment.

(4.) Heart-breaking sorrow in being deprived of them. If you touch their treasure, you wound their hearts. According to the rule in nature, what is possessed with joy, is lost with grief; and according to the degree of the desires, such will be the despair when they are frustrate. Poverty, in the account of the covetous, is the last of evils, that makes men absolutely desolate. Blind unhappy wretches! eternal damnation is the extremest evil. It is infinitely better to be deprived of all their treasures, and go naked into paradise, than to fall laden with gold into the pit of perdition.

3. Covetousness is virtually in the actions; which are to be considered either in the getting, saving, or using an estate.

The covetous are inordinate and eager in their endeavours to get an estate. They "rise early, lie down late, and eat the bread of carefulness," Psa. cxxvii. 2. They rack their brains, waste their strength, consume their time; they toil and tire themselves to gain the present world: for when lust counsels and commands, violence executes. Their eyes and hearts, their aims and endeavours are concentrated in the earth. Who will show us any good? is their unsatisfied inquiry.

They are greedy and earnest to obtain great riches; for they measure their estates by their desires.

They will use all means, fair or fraudulent, to amass wealth. The lucre of gain is so delightful they will not make a stand, but venture into a house infected with the plague, to get treasure.

They are also sordid in saving, and contradict all Divine and human rights by robbing God, their neighbours, and themselves, of what is due to them. A covetous man robs God, the Proprietor, in neglecting to pay what he has reserved for works of piety and charity, as an acknowledgment, that all is from his bounty; he robs the poor, his reputed receivers: he defrauds himself; for God bestows riches for the support and comfort of our lives, that we may with temperance and thanksgiving enjoy his benefits; he wants what he has, as well as that he has not.

They are also defective in using riches. If they do works externally good, the spring and motive is vicious; and the ends more surely discover men

than their actions. They do not acts of piety and charity in obedience and thankfulness, to imitate and honour God, but sometimes for reputation and fame; as the Pharisees, whose inseparable properties were pride and covetousness, dispensed their alms with the sound of a trumpet, to call the poor together, Matt. vi. 1, 2. Other sins seek shades and retirements, but pride to be conspicuously distinguished from others.

Sometimes they do good, to compound with God, and appease conscience, for their unrighteous procuring riches: their gifts are sin-offerings to expiate the guilt contracted by ill-gotten goods, not thank-offerings for God's free favours and benefits. To countenance their opinion and practice, they allege our Saviour's counsel, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations," Luke xvi. 9. As if bestowing part of their unrighteous gains, would purchase a discharge from the arrears due to Divine justice. Can there be a more monstrous perverting the rectitude of truth to conform it to the crooked lusts of men? St. Austin speaking of this vain and impious presumption of some of his time, advises them, "Do not form such an unworthy conception of God, as were very unbecoming a good man: he is not to be bribed by offerings of robbery, as if he were a party in the robbery: such alms and legacies are so far from propitiating him, that they cry for vengeance against those that offer them." Yet how many, who have raised great estates by unrighteousness, quiet their accusing thoughts by resolving to bequeath some pious legacies, when they shall leave the world! and how often when a

rich man dies, his last will dies with him, and is buried in oblivion! how can an unrighteous man confide in the conscience of another, when his own has been so unfaithful? besides that is only ours that remains when all our debts are paid; and till there be restitution of what by deceit or force was unjustly got, there is nothing to give.

A covetous man is also very defective in the manner of giving. There are internal affections to be mixed with the acts of charity. They must be done with readiness and alacrity; and not wrung out as a man presses sour grapes: for there is no moral value in benefits so obtained. God loves a cheerful giver, 2 Cor. ix. 7. Charity must be unconstrained as well as unconfined; free, and respecting all in their wants and miseries. Now covetousness makes one as unwilling to part with his money as to have blood, the treasure of life, drawn from his veins. We are directed to put on bowels of compassion, and to remember them in bonds, as bound with them, Heb. iii. 3. Covetousness infuses an unrelenting frame into the breast, hardens the heart, and makes it incapable of melting impressions. The languishing looks, the pleading eyes, the complaints and calamities of the miserable, do not affect those in whom covetousness reigns: the tender inclinations of humanity are quenched by it.

The covetous will not give in proportion to their abilities, and the exigencies of others. It is true, an estate is often more in reputation than in reality, and there cannot be a visible convincing proof of covetousness from the meanness of the gift; but there is a secret proof from the conscience of the giver, and known to God. The widow that gave two mites to the sacred treasury, was more liberal

than those who threw into it richer gifts. God accepts according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not, 2 Cor. viii. 12. A covetous man, though rich, will pretend the smallness of his estate to excuse and palliate his illiberal giving; and makes himself doubly guilty, of feigned poverty and real avarice in God's sight; but "a liberal man deviseth liberal things," Isa. xxxii. 8. He duly considers the circumstances of persons in want; and esteems a just occasion of charity, to be a golden opportunity, and will be noble and magnificent.

I will now consider the difficulty of the cure. This will be evident from the causes of the disease, and the frequent unsuccessfulness of the means in order to it. There is no kind of sinners more inconvincible and incurable than the worldly-minded. It is a rule without exception, that those sins which have the greatest appearance of reason, and the least of sensuality, are the most plausible and prevailing. So long as there are remains of reason in mankind, there will be modesty; and brutish lusts will expose to shame. The high birth and honourable rank of the unclean, cannot varnish and disguise their impurities, but renders them more infamous and odious. Besides, unless men are not prodigiously bad, if they are not free from fault, they will not defend their intemperance and incontinency. If there be any spark of conscience alive, it discovers and condemns those sins, and assists a faithful counsellor in their cure. But the covetous, by many fair pretences, justify themselves: the apostle expresses them by the cloak of covetousness, 1 Thess. ii. 5. to hide its filthiness. They pretend to be frugal, but not covetous; they

allege the example of those who are reputed wise, who prosecute the gains of the world, as the main scope of their actions. They will tell you, it is necessary prudence to improve all opportunities to increase their estates, to secure them from evils that may happen; and to neglect providing for our families is worse than infidelity. Thus reason is engaged to join with the affection. From hence the covetous are not only enamoured with the unworthy object, but averse from the cure of the vicious affection. The love of money smothers the mind with ignorance, and darkens its serenity, so that the filthiness of the sin is indiscernible. The covetous are like persons sick beyond the sense of their disease, and near death, without feeling the presages of it. Besides, those corrupt affections, which in their rise and degrees depend upon the humours of the body that are mutable, are sometimes with force and violence carried to their objects; but when the disposition of the body is altered, they flag, and distaste succeeds: but the root and principle of covetousness is in the will; and when that is depraved, it is diabolical in obstinacy. The most fierce and greedy beasts, when they have glutted their ravenous appetites, do not presently seek after new prey; but covetousness, like a dropsy-thirst, is inflamed by drinking, and enraged by increasing riches. And whereas other vicious desires are weakened and broke by the course of time, covetousness derives new life and vigour from age. The thoughts and affections of the covetous are never more deeply tainted with the earth, than when they draw near to their fatal period, and their bodies must be resolved into their original elements.

The difficulty of the cure is evident from the inefficacy of the means used to effect it. The Divine authority of the scripture, the clearest reason, the plainest experience, are often used in vain to reform the covetous. Of a thousand persons, in whom covetousness is the reigning lust, scarcely ten are cleansed and changed from covetous to be liberal.

The word of God has no commanding persuasive power upon them. The word declares, that "covetousness is idolatry;" for it deposes God, and places the world, the idol of men's heads and hearts, in his throne: it deprives him of his regalia, his royal prerogatives, which he has reserved to himself in the empire of the world. He is infinitely jealous of our transferring them to the creature. Our highest adoration and esteem, our confidence and trust, our love and complacency, our dependence and observance, are entirely and essentially due to him. "Who in the heaven can be compared to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to him? Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of thee. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us," Psa. lxxxix. 6. lxxiii. 25. Lam. iii. 24. Prov. xviii. 10. Psa. cxxiii. 2. These scriptures are declarative of those eternal respects that are due to God from reasonable creatures; and he is highly dishonoured and displeased, when they are alienated from him. Now the covetous defy the world. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as

a high wall, in his own conceit," Prov. xviii. 11. He will trust God no farther than according to visible supplies and means: he takes not God for his strength, but trusts in the abundance of his riches, Psa. lii. 7. His heart is possessed and polluted with the love of the world, and God is excluded; therefore we are commanded, not to love the world, nor the things of it: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. He is provoked to jealousy, the most severe and sensible attribute, by the coldness of men's love. From hence it appears how this comprehensive sin is injurious to God. The psalmist tells us, that the covetous are not only the objects of God's anger, but abhorrence: thus he brands them, "The covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth," Psa. x. 3. The words are of the most heavy signification. If his loving-kindness be better than life, his hatred is worse than death.

It is the root of all evil, in persons of all conditions, civil and sacred. This bribes those that are in the seat of judgment, to clear the guilty; and which is a bolder crime, to condemn the innocent. Of this there is recorded a cruel and bloody instance, in the death of Naboth, occasioned by Ahab's covetousness. This corrupts the preachers of the word, to speak to the lusts, not the consciences of men, upon whom they have a servile dependence. And as the spirit of delusion is never more the spirit of delusion, than under the appearance of an angel of light; so his ministers are never more his ministers, than when they pervert the word of God to support sinful practices by corrupt principles. Covetousness makes men faint and false in the time of trial; they will save the world

with the loss of their souls. In short, it was the impulsive cause of a sin of the greatest guilt that ever was committed, in betraying the Son of God; and his suffering the most cruel and ignominious death; a sin never to be expiated but by the flames that shall consume this world, the place wherein he suffered.

Covetousness excludes all, in whom it is predominant, from the kingdom of heaven. Lazarus may as soon be expelled from Abraham's bosom, as a covetous man may be received into it. "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. A covetous wretch is in as direct a progress to damnation, as the most notorious sinners, guilty of the most filthy lusts, natural and unnatural. Did men believe and prize heaven, how would this terrible denunciation strike them through! but what tongue has so keen an edge, as to cut a passage through rocks, the hardened hearts of the covetous? the word cannot enter into the conscience and conversation of the earthly-minded. If you discourse to them of righteousness and judgment to come, they are not at leisure to hear, or will not attend. Tell them of another world, when they are ready to be expelled from this present world. We have a most convincing instance of inefficacy of Divine instruction upon the covetous. Our Saviour directed his auditory to the best use of riches, in doing good to the saints in their wants, that after death they might be introduced into everlasting habitations: and it is said, "that the pharisees, who were covetous,

heard all these things, and derided him," Luke x. 14. They were fixed in the principles, and resolutions to increase and secure their wealth; they had their religion; gain was their godliness; and were so strongly conceited of their own wisdom, that they despised the authority, counsel, and love of the Son of God.

The love of money, discovered in the heaping up riches, and the tenacious humour in keeping them, is directly contrary to the clearest reason, and perfectly vain. The notion of vanity consists either in the change and inconstancy of things, or when they have not reasonable and worthy ends. In both respects, covetousness is vanity; for the object of that passion is the present world, the sphere of mutability; and the immoderate care and labour to obtain and preserve it, is not for a solid, substantial, but a mere imaginary good. In this sense, the most beautiful colours, were there no eyes to see them, and the sweetest sounds, were there no ears to ear them, are vanities. According to this rule, the greedy desire of riches for riches' sake, which is the most proper notion of avarice, is the most unreasonable and vain affection; for it has no end. The apostle tells us, that "an idol is nothing in the world," 1 Cor. viii. 4. the matter of it may be gold or silver, but it has nothing of a deity in it. He that worships it, worships an object not only most unworthy of adoration, but which has no existence, but in the fancy of the idolater. So he that loves money for itself, sets his affection upon an end that has no goodness, but in his foolish imagination, and consequently is no true and valuable end. This will be evident, by considering there is a double end to which human

actions should be directed ; the particular immediate end, and the universal last end. The particular end to which reason directs in acquiring money, is to supply us with necessaries and conveniences in the present state ; and this is lawful, when our care and labour to obtain it, are not inordinate nor immoderate. Fruition gives life and sweetness to possession. Solomon observes with a severe reflection, "There is one of whose labour there is no end, who is not satisfied with riches, neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good ; this is also vanity, and sore travail," Eccl. iv. 8. If one has a cabinet full of pearls, and has not a heart to make use of them, it is all one as if it were full of cherry-stones ; for there is no true value in the possession, but in order to the true and noble use of them. This draws so deep of folly, that it is amazing that reasonable men should love money for itself ; but the covetous have reprobate minds, without judgment, and discerning faculties, without using them.

The universal and last end of our actions, consists in the eternal enjoyment of God. Now the possession of the whole world, is of no advantage toward the obtaining future happiness : nay, it deprives men of heaven, both as the love of the world binds their hands from the exercise of charity, and as it alienates their hearts from the love of God.

The present world cannot afford perfection or satisfaction to an immortal spirit.

Not perfection. The understanding is the highest faculty in man, and raises him above the order of sensible creatures ; and this is exceedingly debased by over-valuing earthly things. Indeed

sense and fancy, that cannot judge aright of objects and actions, if they usurp the judgment-seat, the riches of this world appear very goodly and inestimable. There is no lust more degrades the eternal soul of man from the nobility of its nature, than covetousness; for the mind is denominated and qualified from the objects, upon which it is conversant. Now when men's thoughts are grovelling on the earth, as if there were no spark of heaven in them, when their main designs and contrivances are to amass riches, they become earthly, and infinitely fall short of their original and end.

Riches cannot give satisfaction to the soul, upon the account of their vast disproportion to its spiritual nature and capacity, and eternal duration. You may as reasonably seek for paradise under the icy poles, as for full contentment in riches. The kingdoms of the world, with all their treasures if actually possessed, cannot satisfy the eye, much less the heart. There is no suitableness between a spiritual substance, and earthly things. The capacity of the soul is as vast as its desires, which can only be satisfied with good truly infinite; but carnal men, in a delusive dream, mistake shadows for substance, and thin appearances for realities. Besides, the fashion of this world passes away; riches take wings, and, like the eagle, fly to heaven, or the possessors of them fall to the earth. The soul can only be satisfied in the fruition of a good, as everlasting as its own duration. In short, the favour of God, the renewed image of God in the soul, and communion with him, are the felicity of reasonable creatures.

The plainest experience does not convince the covetous of their folly, and correct them. It is

universally visible, that riches cannot secure men from miseries and mortality : they are like a reed, that has not strength to support, but sharpness to wound any one that rests on it. Earthly treasures cannot secure us from the anger of God, nor the violence and fraud of men. How often are fair estates snatched from the owners ? but suppose they are continued here to the possessor, they are not antidotes against the malignity of a disease ; they cannot purchase a privilege to exempt the rich from death. And is he truly rich that must be deprived of his treasures when he leaves this world, and enter naked and solitary into the next world, where he will be poor for ever ? He is rich that carries with him Divine graces and comforts, the treasures of the soul, when he dies and takes possession of the " inheritance undefiled, that passes not away," 1 Pet. i. 4. How often do worldly men in their last hours, when the thoughts of the heart are declared with most feeling, and least affectation, condemn their unaccountable folly, for their having set their affections on things below, and neglecting things above, Col. iii. 2. that with such fervour and constancy they prosecuted their secular ends, and were so coldly affected to eternal things, as unworthy of their care and diligence. Those forlorn wretches in their extremity, with what significant and lively expressions do they decry the vanity of this world, and the vanity of their hearts in seeking it ! It is related of Philip king of the Macedonians, that while one was pleading before him, he dropped asleep, and waking on a sudden, passed sentence against the righteous cause ; upon this the injured person cried out, " I appeal." The king with indignation asked, " To whom ?" He

replied, "From yourself sleeping, to yourself waking;" and had the judgment reversed that was against him. Thus in matters of eternal moment, if there be an appeal from the sleeping to the waking thoughts of men, when death opens their eyes to see the dross of false treasures, and the glory of the true, what a change would it make in their minds, affections, and actions! But, O folly and misery! they but superficially consider things, till constrained, when it is too late.

From these considerations we understand the reasons of our Saviour's declaring, that it is as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as for a rich man, that trusts in his riches, to enter into the kingdom of heaven. But what is impossible with men, is possible with God, Matt. xix. 24. 26. He can by so strong a light represent the eternal kingdom to men's minds, and purify their affections, that they shall so use the world, that they may enjoy God. We should from hence be excited to watchfulness against this sin. Our Saviour gave a double caution to his disciples, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness," Luke xii. 15. In some, the leprosy appears in their foreheads; their company, their conversation, make it evident, that the world is set in their hearts; in others the leprosy is in their bosoms; their affections are intensely and entirely set on the world, though the discovery is not so visible; none but the circum-spect can be safe.

In order to the mortification of this lust, the following means, with the Divine blessing, will be very useful. The inward causes of the greedy desires and tenacious humour of the covetous, are the irregular esteem of riches, and consequently,

the jealousy of losing what is so highly valued, and solicitude to prevent all possible future wants. Now to take away these causes, consider,

1. There are treasures infinitely more precious and durable, and more worthy of our esteem and love, than all the gold that is drawn from the mines in Peru, the true enrichments of the soul; without which a man, possessed of all the wealth of the flota, is not rich towards God, but "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17. God offers himself to be our portion, who is rich in all perfections, whose treasures are unsearchable and unwasted: if we seek his love, and grace to love him, we shall inherit substance and durable riches. The apostle, when the scales were fallen from his eyes, discovered such an excellency in the knowledge of Christ, that he counted all things loss and dung, that he might have an interest in him, Phil. iii. 8, 9. This eminent advantage there is in seeking heavenly treasures—we shall certainly obtain them, and never be deprived of them; whereas the most eager pursuit of earthly riches, is uncertainly successful; and if we do acquire them, they will certainly be lost. Now as inward bleeding that endangers life, is stopped by revulsion, in opening a vein; so if the stream of our affections be directed to things above, it will stop their impetuous current to things below.

2. The liberal use of riches for the glory of God, and in charity to others, is the best means to secure the tenure of our temporal possessions. For the neglect of paying the tribute we owe to God makes a forfeiture of our estates; and he can by right and power resume them in a moment. Besides, there is no epithet more proper to be joined with

riches, than "uncertain." Is that man certainly rich whose entire estate is in a ship sailing through dangerous seas, and open to frequent piracies? there is not a greater difference between a tempest and a shipwreck, than between *often* and *always*. Innumerable disasters are imminent, and nearly threaten the undoing of the richest man; but God who commands the winds and the seas, and governs the wills of men, whose providence orders the most fortuitous events, has promised, "that the liberal man, who deviseth liberal things, he shall stand," Isa. xxxii. 8. He has a special protection; and as he is like to God in giving, so he shall be in not being poorer for his giving. The apostle encourages christians not to be covetous, by this argument, God has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. We may firmly rely on his promise; for truth is the foundation of trust, and rest on his providence, which is omnipotent.

Add to this consideration, there is an additional security to the charitable from the assistance of others. Man is sociable by instinct, and the civil life that is proper to him, will be dissolved without mutual assistance. It is ordered by the rule of Providence, that there is no man so completely sufficient in himself, so absolutely and independently happy, but he wants the counsel, the courage, the help of others. It is usual, that he who possesses most can do less, and that he that has less can do more: from hence it follows, that the wealth of the one, and the strength of the other, the giving that wherein one abounds, and the receiving that which the other wants, makes such an equipoise between the rich and the poor, that they cannot be disjoined.

Experience declares, there is nothing that does more endear and engage the affections of others to us, than acts of kindness. Beneficence joined with innocence, render men venerable and amiable, conciliate esteem and love: "For a good man some would even dare to die," Rom. v. 7. Whereas the covetous and incompassionate, not only provoke God, (for he that abuses a benefit despises the benefactor, and by imprisoning their treasures without doing good, the abuse is as real, as by riotous wasting them,) but are exposed to hatred and contempt; and if a disaster surprises them, a secret joy touches the hearts of others.

2. It is a means to increase riches. It is a rule not only in spirituals, but in temporals—As a man sows, so he shall reap, Gal. vi. 7. both in the recompenses of justice, and the rewards of mercy: he that sows bountifully shall reap bountifully. Charity is a productive grace, that enriches the giver more than the receiver. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thy increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine," Prov. iii. 9, 10. He that gives to the poor, lends to the Lord. He signs himself our debtor for what is laid out for him, and he will pay it with interest; not only with eternal treasures hereafter, but in outward blessings here. Riches obtained by regular means, are the effects and effusions of his bounty; but sometimes by admirable ways, he gives a present reward, as by his own hand. As there are numerous examples of God's blasting the covetous, either by a gangrene in their estates, that consumes them before their eyes, or by the luxury and profuseness of their children; so it is as visible he prospers the

merciful, sometimes by a secret blessing dispensed by an invisible hand, and sometimes in succeeding their diligent endeavours in their callings.

But it is objected, the liberal are not always prosperous. To this a clear answer may be given.

1. External acts of charity may be performed from vicious motives, without a mixture of internal affections, which make them accepted of God.

2. Supposing a christian abounds in works of charity, and is not rewarded here, this special case does not infringe the truth of God's promise; for temporal promises are to be interpreted with an exception, unless the wisdom and love of God sees it better not to bestow them: but he always rewards them in kind, or eminently in giving more excellent blessings. The crown of life is a reward more worthy the desires of a christian, than the things of this world. Our Saviour assures the young man, "Sell all, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," Matt. xix. 21. Eternal hopes are infinitely more desirable than temporal possessions. The apostle charges "the rich to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up for themselves a good foundation," not of merit but assurance, "against the time to come, laying hold of eternal life," 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. If I could direct the covetous, how to exchange a weight of silver for an equal weight of gold, or a weight of gold for an equal weight of diamonds, how attentively would they hear, and earnestly follow such profitable counsel! But what comparison is there between earthly and heavenly treasures? Godliness, of which the grace of charity is an excellent part, "is profitable for all things," 1 Tim. iv. 8. it makes

our profit eternally profitable. It is the wisdom as well as duty of believers, to lay up treasures, not on earth, the land of their banishment, but in the celestial country, the place of their nativity.

CHAPTER III.

Pride considered in its nature, kinds, and degrees.

It consists in an immoderate appetite of superiority. It is moral or spiritual. Arrogance, vain-glory, and ambition, are branches of it. A secret undue conceit of our own excellences, the inordinate desire of praise, the aspiring after high places, and titles of honour, are the effects of pride. Spiritual pride considered. A presuming upon self-sufficiency to obtain men's ends: a reliance upon their own direction and ability to accomplish their designs. Sins committed with design and deliberation are from insolence. A vain presumption of the goodness of men's spiritual estates. Pride is in the front of those sins that God hates. Pride is odious in the sight of men. The difficulty of the cure apparent from many considerations. The proper means to allay the tumour of pride.

PRIDE of life is joined with the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes. Pride destroyed both worlds; it transformed angels into devils, and expelled them from heaven; it degraded man from the honour of his creation, into the condition of the beasts that perish, and expelled him from paradise. I will consider the nature, several kinds and degrees of it, and the means to purify us from it.

The nature of this vice consists in an irregular

and immoderate appetite of superiority, and has two parts: the one is the affectation of honour, dignity, and power, beyond their true value and worth; the other is, the arrogating them as due to a person beyond his just desert. The kinds of it are moral and spiritual, which are sometimes concealed in the mind and will, but often declared in the aspect and actions. Accordingly it is either arrogance that attributes an undue pre-eminence to a man's self, and exacts undue respects from others; or vain-glory, that affects and is fed with praise; or ambition, that hotly aspires after high places, and titles of precedency and power: all which are comprised in the universal name of pride.

1. Pride includes a secret conceit of our own excellences, which is the root of all its branches. Self-love is so natural, and deeply impressed in the heart, that there is no flatterer more subtle and concealed, more easily and willingly believed, than this affection. Love is blind towards others, and more towards one's self. Nothing can be so intimate and dear, as when the lover, and the person beloved are the same. This is the principle of the high opinion, and secret sentiments men entertain of their own special worth. "The heart is deceitful above all things," Jer. xvii. 9. and above all things deceitful to itself. Men look into the enchanting glass of their own fancies, and are vainly enamoured with the false reflection of their excellences. Self-love hinders the sight of those imperfections, which discovered, would lessen the liberal esteem of themselves. The soul is a more obscure object to its eye, than the most distant stars in the heavens. Seneca tells of some that had a strange infirmity in their eyes, that wherever they turned

they encountered the visible moving image of themselves. Of which he gives this reason ; it proceeds from the weakness of the visive faculty, that, for want of spirits derived from the brain, cannot penetrate through the transparent air, to see objects ; but every part of the air is a reflecting glass of themselves. That which he conjectured to be the cause of the natural infirmity, is most true of the moral, the subject of our discourse. It is from the weakness of the mind, that the judicative faculty does not discover the worth of others, but sees only a man's self, as singular in perfections, and none superior, or equal, or near to him. A proud man will take a rise from any advantage to foment pride : some from the perfections of the body, beauty, or strength ; some from the circumstance of their condition, riches, or honour ; and every one thinks himself sufficiently furnished with understanding. For reason being the distinguishing excellency of a man from the brutes, a defectiveness in that is very disgraceful, and the title of fool the most stinging reproach ; as is evident by our Saviour's gradation : Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause, is liable to judgment ; whoever says, *Racha*, that expresses his anger contumeliously, is subject to the council ; but whoever shall say **Fool**, shall be punished with hell fire, *Matt. v. 22.* Therefore men are apt to presume on their intellectual abilities. One says, I have not learning, as those who are pale with study, and whose lamps shine at midnight, but I have a stock of natural reason ; or I have not a quick apprehension, but I have a solid judgment ; I have not eloquence, but I speak good sense. The high conceit of men's own worth declares itself several ways : sometimes

it is transparent in the countenance ; “ There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes, and their eye-lids are lifted up,” Prov. xxx. 13. Sometimes it is manifest in haughty carriage ; if others do not express eminent respect to them, it is resented as a neglect and injury. Their apparel, at first made to hide shame, proclaims their pride.

2. An inordinate desire of reputation and praise, is another branch of pride. The desire of praise is sowed in the human nature for excellent ends ; to restrain them from those alluring lusts that will ruin their reputation, and to excite them to do things noble and beneficial to the public. Praise, the reward of doing good, is a powerful incentive to improve and secure the civil felicity. The wise king tells us, “ A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,” Prov. xxii. 1. It is a recompense God has promised, “ The upright shall be praised,” Psa. cxii. 2.

The apostle excites us to strive after universal holiness, by motives from reputation, as well as from conscience ; whatsoever things are true, for conscience, honest for fame ; whatsoever are just and pure, for conscience ; whatsoever are lovely, for esteem, if there be any virtue in ourselves, and praise from others, to propagate it, think on these things, Phil. iv. 8. But the inflamed desire of praise from men, the being incensed against others as envious or enemies that deny it, the assuming it for unworthy causes, (where there is no true virtue, there is no just praise,) the terminating it on ourselves, and not transferring it to God, are the effects of a vain-glorious mind. Pride undervalues goodness in itself, and respects it only for the shadow that attends it. Praise is a music so enchanting

that it inclines men to believe that to be true which is pleasing, and which they desire others should believe to be true. A philosopher, when a box of ointment of precious composition was presented to him, feeling his spirits revived with its fragrancy, broke forth with indignation against those effeminate persons that perfumed their hair and habits with it for vicious ends, and made the use of it disgraceful. But when praise, that is so sweet and powerful a motive to encourage generous minds to the exploits of virtue, is bestowed on worthless persons, it is more detestable. The poisonous flowers of false praise are pernicious to those who are deceived and pleased with them. It is the infelicity of those who are in the highest dignity, to whom it is uneasy to descend into themselves, and take a sincere serious view of their internal state, and to whom truth is harsh and displeasing, they are in great danger of being corrupted by flatterers. Flattery is the familiar figure of those who address princes: sometimes by fine fraud and unsuspected artifice they give the countenance of truth to a lie, in representing them to excel in wisdom and virtue. But if princes be so vain-glorious, that moderate praise is esteemed a diminution to their greatness, and only the strongest perfumes affect their sense, they will represent them as half deities, as second suns to the world. It was the judicious observation of Galba in his discourse with Piso, whom he designed to be his successor in the empire of Rome, We speak with simplicity between ourselves; but others will rather speak with our state than with our persons. In short, all that have an eminent advantage to bestow favours and benefits are liable to be deceived by flatterers, who are like concave

glasses, that represent small objects in an exorbitant figure. They will feed the humours of those upon whom they depend, and speak things pleasing to them, and profitable to themselves. It is their surest security to remember, that flatterers have a double tongue, and speak with one to them, and with another of them.

In short, virtue, like the sun, is crowned with its own beams, and needs no foreign lustre; and it argues a sound mind to esteem praise as resulting from virtue, and virtue for itself: but a proud man as proud, prefers the praise and shadow of virtue before the reality: as a vain woman would rather wear a counterfeit necklace that is esteemed true, than one of the finest oriental pearls that is esteemed counterfeit.

3. Ambition, or the hot aspiring after high places, and titles of precedency and power, is another branch of pride. The desire of superiority in this instance, is so natural and universal, that it is manifest in persons of the lowest rank: servants, shepherds, labourers, desire power over others in their condition. It is like fire, the more it is fed the more it is increased. Ambition, if reinforced by emulation, will venture through foul ways, by treachery, by oppression, and by indignities, to obtain dignity. If any cross accident spoil their feathers of flying to their mark, they fall into melancholy: if any competitors be preferred, they are ready to say, it was not virtue or merit, but favour and fortune that advanced them; and that their own desert makes them unfortunate; according to the two properties of pride—to exalt themselves, and depress others.

Spiritual pride is distinguished from moral, as it more directly and immediately dishonours God.

It is true, pride is the poison of every sin ; for in transgressing the Divine law, men prefer the pleasing their corrupt wills and depraved appetites, before the obeying the sovereign and holy will of God but in some sins there is a more immediate and explicit contempt of God, and especially in pride. Sins of this nature exceedingly provoke and kindle his displeasure.

1. When men presume upon a self-sufficiency of counsel, or power, or riches, to obtain their ends. This sin was charged upon Sennacherio ; “ I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom ; for I am prudent,” Isa. x. 12, 13. The folly is equal to the impiety ; as it is expressed by the prophet, “ Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Or the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?” ver. 15. Thus God speaks to Pharaoh, king of Egypt ; “ Behold I am against thee, the great dragon that lies in the midst of his waters, which has said, My river is mine own,” O blasphemer ! “ and I have made it for myself,” Ezek. xxix. 3. Thus Nebuchadnezzar boasted, walking in his palace, “ Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty ?” Dan. iv. 30. I have laid the foundations thereof on the centre of the earth, and raised its towers to the heavens.

This pride is attended with reliance and confidence in their own direction to contrive, and ability to accomplish their designs ; and with assuming the glory of all their success entirely to themselves. The proud manage their affairs independently upon

the providence of God, who is the Author of all our faculties and the efficacy of them, and totally neglect the two essential parts of natural religion, prayer, and praise; or very slightly perform the external part, without those inward affections that are the spirit and life of them. It was the wise prayer of Agur, "Give me not riches, lest I be full, and deny thee," Prov. xxx. 9. God strictly cautions his people against this dangerous sin, "Beware thou forget not the Lord, and say in thy heart, My power and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth: remember it is he that gives thee power to get wealth," Deut. viii. 17, 18. And it is equally dangerous, lest men should attribute victories or prosperity, in any kind, to their own counsel and resolution, their prudence and power, without humble and thankful observing and acknowledging the Divine Providence, the fountain and original of all our blessings.

2. Whatever the kinds of sin be, when committed against knowledge with design and deliberation, they proceed from insolence and obstinacy. The Israelites are charged with this aggravation in their sinning; "They dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to the commandments, and refused to obey," Neh. ix. 16, 17. Proud sinners are introduced boasting, "Our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?" Psa. xii. 4. They will endure no restraints, but are lawless and loose, as if they were above fear and danger. It is true, there are few so prodigiously wicked as to speak thus; but men's actions have a language as declarative as their words. And sinning presumptuously with a high hand, is constructively a denial, and despising of the dominion and power of the law-giver; as if he had no right to command, nor

strength to vindicate the honour of his despised deity. In the last judgment the punishment of rebellious sinners will be according to the glory of God's majesty, and the extent of his power that was contemned and vilified by them.

3. When Divine judgments are sent to correct the dissolute disorders of the world, and sinners should with tenderness and trembling "hear the voice of the rod, and who has appointed it," Mic. vi. 9. yet they proceed in their wickedness, as if God were not always present to see their sins, nor pure to hate them, nor righteous to exact a severe judgment for them, nor powerful to inflict it; this argues intolerable pride and obstinacy. God and sinners are very unequal enemies. The effects of his displeasure should be received with obsequiousness, not with obduration: therefore the apostle puts that confounding question, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" 1 Cor. x. 22. Can you encounter with offended Omnipotence? To despise his anger is as provoking as to despise his love. It is astonishing that dust and ashes should rise to such an incorrigible height of pride, as to fly in the face of God: "Who hath hardened himself against Him, and prospered?" Job ix. 4. All that are careless of God's design to reform them by afflictions, that seek for relief in diverting business or pleasures, provoke God to more severe inflictions of his anger: but those surly proud natures that are exasperated by sufferings, and wrestle with the strongest storms, are in combination with the stubborn spirits of hell, and shall have their portion with them.

4. When men have a vain presumption of the goodness of their spiritual state, of the degrees of

their goodness, and their stability in goodness, not sensible of their continual want of renewed supplies from Heaven, they are guilty of spiritual pride. Of this there are two instances in scripture; the one in the church of lukewarm Laodicea, the other in the Pharisee, mentioned by our Saviour. The first said, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knew not, that they were wretched, and poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17. The pharisee, to raise the esteem of his own goodness, stands upon comparison with others, whose vices may be a foil to his seeming graces: he said, "I am not as other men are, extortioners, adulterers, or even as this publican," Luke xviii. 11. It is true, he superficially thanks God, but the air of pride transpires through his devotion, by valuing himself above others worse than himself; as if his own virtues were the productive cause of his distinguishing goodness. If humility be not mixed in the exercise of every grace, it is of no value in God's esteem: the humble unjust publican was rather justified than the proud pharisee.

This spiritual pride is very observable in the superstitious, who measuring divine things with human, from that mixture of imaginations, introduce carnal rites into the worship of God, and value themselves upon their opinionative goodness. They mistake the swelling of a dropsy for substantial growth, and presume themselves to be more holy than others, for their proud singularity. Superstition is like ivy, that twines about the tree, and is its seeming ornament, but drains its vital sap; and under its verdant leaves covers a carcass: thus carnal ceremonies seem to adorn religion, but

really dispirit, and weaken its efficacy. Pharisaical pride is fomented by a zealous observance of things uncommanded in religion, neither pleasing to God, nor profitable to men. On the contrary, some visionaries pretend to such a sublimity of grace and eminent sanctity, that they are above the use of Divine ordinances: they pretend to live in immediate communion with God, as the angels; and, dazzled with specious spiritualities, they neglect prayer, hearing the word, and receiving the sacrament, the means of growing in grace, as if they were arrived at perfection. This is the effect of spiritual pride and delusion.

For the mortifying this vicious disposition, consider that pride is in a high degree injurious and provoking to God. An ordinary malefactor breaks the king's laws, but a rebel strikes at his person and crown. The first and great commandment is to honour God with the highest esteem and love, with the most humble adoration; consequently, the greatest sin is the despising his Majesty, and obscuring his glory. There is no sin more clearly opposite to reason and religion: for the most essential duty and character of an understanding creature, is dependence and observance of God as the first cause and last end of all things; receiving with thankfulness his benefits, and referring them all to his glory. Pride contradicts natural justice, by intercepting the grateful affectionate ascent of the soul to God, in celebrating his greatness and goodness. A proud man constructively puts himself out of the number of God's creatures, and deserves to be excluded from his tender providence. The jealousy of God, his most severe and sensible attribute, is kindled for this revolt of the creature

from its duty, and the depriving him of his proper glory. It is true, God's declarative glory is not profitable to him: but he will not give his glory to another, nor permit another to usurp it: his concession and consent would be directly contrary to the eternal rule of righteousness, and therefore impossible without the denial of himself.

Pride is in the front of those sins which God hates, and are an abomination to him: a proud look, that is seldom disjoined from a proud heart, Prov. vi. 16, 17. God looks upon the proud afar off with a holy disdain, Psa. cxxxviii. 6. He resists the proud. Pride is the most pernicious of all vices: for whereas any single vice is opposite to its contrary virtue: uncleanness expels chastity; covetousness, liberality; pride, like an infectious disease, taints the sound parts, corrupts the actions of every virtue, and deprives them of their true grace and glory. Pride is so offensive to God, that he sometimes permits his children to fall into sins of another kind to correct pride: and he is an unskilful physician that cures one disease by a worse. When the apostle was liable to the temptation of pride, for his celestial visions, Satan was permitted to buffet him: a strange dispensation, that the prince of pride was let loose to instruct him in humility!

The fearful examples of God's wrath upon the proud, most convincingly prove how odious they are in his sight. The angels fell by pride, and are the most cursed creatures of the creation, and bound with chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day. Adam was sick of the same disease, which involved him and his progeny under the sentence of the first and second death. How many great kings, for the insolent forgetfulness of their

frail condition, were by Divine vengeance cast down from the height of their glory, and made spectacles of ignominious misery! The proud and stubborn Pharaoh that defied the Almighty, and said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him, and let Israel go?" Exod. v. 2. that threatened, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil," Exod. xv. 9. Like the raging sea that roars, and foams, and swells, threatening to drown the land, but when it is come to its appointed limits, the weak sand, as if its fury were turned into fear, retires into its own channel; that proud king was tamed by frogs and flies, and at last drowned with his army in the Red Sea. Sennacherib, so high flown with the conceit of his irresistible strength, that he challenged Heaven—Who is your God, that he should be able to deliver you out of my hands? 2 Chron. xxxii. 14. found there was a just power above, that in one night destroyed his mighty army, and afterward cut him off in his idolatry. Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold in the figure representing the empires of the world, was for his pride turned a grazing among the beasts, and by his fall was the argument of the insultation, "Thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken nations," Isa. xiv. 12—14. Herod for usurping Divine honour was devoured by worms. In every age there are instances of God's terrible wrath upon the proud.

Pride is very odious in the sight of men: therefore it often borrows the mask of humility to obtain

its ends : but it is always odious to God, who sees the most intimate workings of it in the heart. A proud man is an enemy to the more excellent and worthy : he is pleased with the vices and infelicities of others, as they afford an advantage to exalt himself above them, and grieved at their virtues and happiness which render them more valuable than himself.

Pride is the parent of contention : it exasperates the sense of a small offence, puts an edge upon anger, and has often afforded tragical subjects, that have filled the scenes with tears and blood. Humility produces patience : for it makes a man lower in his own eyes, than he is in the opinion of others. Pride treats others with contempt and censure, and thereby provokes them to turn reverence into despising, and love into hatred : when a proud man falls into misery, he is the least lamented.

That the cure of this lust is very difficult, will be evident from various considerations.

Pride is the sin to which angels and men in their best state were peculiarly liable. The angels intermitting the vision of the Divine glory, and reflecting upon their excellences, were intoxicated with self-admiration. It is strange to amazement, that they should so suddenly unlearn their natures, and disclaim their Maker, who had first given them his excellent benefits, and raised them to that bright eminence above other creatures. Man in the state of unstained innocence, when all perfections of body and mind entered into his composition, with all his luminaries and graces was corrupted by pride. "Ye shall be as gods," Gen. iii. 5. was the temptation that corrupted him. Prodigious disorder !

His pride begins when his true glory ends: and his humility ends when his shame begins.

In the depraved nature of man, pride is the radical reigning sin, that first lives and last dies. It is called "the pride of life," 1 John ii. 16. Pride springs up in the heart of a child, and continues to extreme age. Other vices have their seasons, which being expired, they wither and decay. Carnal pleasures change their natures, and become distasteful, Eccl. xii. but pride flourishes and grows in every age. Now it is usually in vain to give counsels of wisdom to those who are sunk into folly; the proper season is to instruct and caution, when it may be preventive of folly.

The difficulty of the cure is increased, in that, like a hectic fever, it is not easily discerned till it is almost incurable. Some vices are odious from the visible matter of them, intemperance, uncleanness, and injustice, by defrauding and oppressing others; but pride is often excited and drawn forth by the same things wherein virtues are exercised, and distinguished only by the end, which is often concealed from our own sight. The pharisee is a signal instance of this. A man may visibly despise the pomp and vanities of the world, and this may raise his esteem in the minds of real saints; and the outward practice of goodness, will be productive of the praise of goodness in others: this will afford a strong temptation of pride. All the operations of virtues, even the exercise of humility, that are the matter and argument of praise, may be incentives of pride; and those diseases are extremely dangerous, which are nourished by that food which is necessary to support life. The old serpent when he

cannot seduce men by carnal temptations, which are easily discovered, inspires with so soft a breath the opinion of their own virtues, that they are insensibly tainted.

The desire of external honour and power beyond what they deserve to be desired, and what is due to the persons desirous of them, is not easily discovered : partly, in that the aspiring after dignity is, in the universal consent of men, an argument and indication of a sublime spirit ; whereas the modest refusal of it, exposes to infamy, as if the refuser had a leaden soul, whose body is rather its sepulchre than its instrument. And the heart is the archdeceiver, the most partial parasite, and its natural falseness is fomented by the artificial flatteries of servile spirits. Every man is a stranger to himself ; as the eye sees things without, but is blind as to the seeing itself. Men study to know more of others than of themselves, and therefore know less.

In curing the diseases of the soul, we are directed by the method of curing the diseases of the body ; which is sometimes by medicines contrary to their nature, and sometimes by those which are like to it. The feverish heat is not only quenched by cooling draughts, but by cordials that fortify the vital heat, which consumes the peccant humours that foment the fever.

1. Consider those things which may allay the tumour of pride and vanity. Reason is the perfection of man, and the knowledge of God and ourselves is the perfection of reason : from hence proceeds the magnifying God, and vilifying ourselves.

God is the eternal Jehovah, and there is none besides him, Isa. xlvi. 9. He alone has an independent and infinite existence. All other things

are from his efficiency: every spark of life, and degree of being is from him. Without the least strain of his power he made the world, and as easily upholds it. All created things have but an appearance and show of being, in him alone is the solidity and stability of being for ever. He dwells in light unapproachable, not only to mortal eyes, but to the immortal angel. He is the only wise, and good, and immortal Being. In the present state, great and small are not words of absolute but comparative signification, with respect to the various conditions of men; as one pearl is called great respectively to another, though small in itself: but there is none absolutely great but God, who is truly infinite. In heaven, where the blessed spirits have the most immediate and fullest view of the Deity, the Lord alone is exalted.

2. Consider that the whole world, intellectual and sensible, compared to God, is but as the drop of the bucket, and the dust of the balance, Isa. xl. 15. And what part are we of that drop and dust? If we consider men in the state of primitive nature, it is an evident principle written in their hearts, with characters of the clearest light, that it is their most reasonable duty, entirely to renounce themselves, and to devote themselves to the glory of God; but if we consider them as creatures and sinners, that can assume nothing as their own, but their sins and miseries, the penal consequents of them; this will humble us below the brutes, who never transgressed the order of their creation. We are less than the least of all God's mercies, Gen. xxxii. 10. and our sins deserve the heaviest of his judgments.

Consider the men that most excel others are as

destitute of natural good, of moral and spiritual good, as others. "Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of lights," James i. 17. And as those are the best gifts that come from him in that notion, so they are most depending upon him, and are continued by irradiations from him. There is a difference between the impressions of sounds, and the emanations of light in the air. Sounds are propagated by successive motion from one part of space into another; after the first cause the sounding instrument is silent; but a line of light extended through the air, depends entirely and necessarily upon the original point of light from whence it proceeds. The rays of light that fill the air, in the first instant that the sun withdraws from the horizon, all vanish. Thus all spiritual gifts depend continually upon the influxive presence of God. Now how can we be proud of his most precious gifts, of which we make a forfeiture, and cannot possess without humility? the most eminent advantages which some have above others, are the shining marks of his bounty. How absurd is it for one to boast of wealth, who daily lives upon alms? the more we receive, the higher are our obligations, and the more heavy will be our account. The mind is darkened with the thickest dregs of ignorance that no light can penetrate, that arrogates the honour of his free favours, and bountiful hand to the creature.

To be more instructive, let us consider what are the usual incentives of pride, and we shall discover that ignorance and vanity are always mixed with them.

Women, by men's wretched idolizing them, are vainly proud of their beauty, and more jealous lest

their faces be deformed than their souls. Now what is flesh and blood, but a mixture of earth and water? What is beauty? a superficial appearance, a flower blasted by a thousand accidents. How soon do the colours and charms of the face vanish! How often does it betray them to those sins, that are signally punished with the foulest deformity and rottenness! The most beautiful are not less mortal than others: they must shortly be the prey of death, and pasture of worms; and can such a fading toy inspire pride into them?

Some are swelled with the conceit of their riches; but this is very unreasonable, for no external accession can add real value to a person: fools only worship a golden calf. If any air of pride rises in a rich possessor, it may as justly provoke God to recall his blessings as he liberally bestowed them.

Others presume upon the nobility of their extraction, but whoever our more immediate parents be, if we ascend in our thoughts, we must come to our grand progenitor Adam, the son of the earth, and fountain of mankind. All are streams from him, if some slide along in the low grounds, and some are received in marble repositories, they all flow from the same original. How often do the honourable tarnish the colour and lustre of their blood by degenerate actions! How often are the rich and great forsaken of their dependents, and only attended by a train of miseries, maintained by their expenses! Such revolutions are not more strange than eclipses are to the moon.

Some are raised to the height of secular honour, and there is nothing sends up more hot, fuming and intoxicating spirits, than sovereign power.

Humility in a state of the highest honour, is a very rare virtue. But there are many things, which duly considered, will lower the train of pride even in kings. The pre-eminence of external order, is seldom joined with the pre-eminence of inherent excellences. How many wear royal crowns, that are slaves to their lusts, and govern others, who cannot govern themselves! Besides, there is no height and eminence upon earth, but is encompassed with precipices and perils. The throne leaves some, and all must leave the throne. The greatest monarchs, and the most proud of their greatness, must descend into the grave without their sceptres and flatterers, and be confined to a dark solitude, where they shall have no other state or carpets, but the worms to cover them, and corruption under them. There is but one kingdom that cannot be shaken, and one immortal king. In the next world they must stand upon a level with the meanest wretches, and be accountable to the high and everlasting Judge, for their management of his vicegerency.

There is nothing men value themselves more than upon the account of their understandings; "Knowledge puffs up," 1 Cor. viii. 1. But how little do we know! pride is the effect of great presumption, and little knowledge. Suppose one by experimental curiosity and inquiries could know all things in the latitude of the sensible creation, this were but a refined kind of vanity, and could not afford satisfaction to an immortal spirit. In short, suppose a person eminently endowed with Divine qualities, wherein the resemblance of God consists, there cannot be the least reason of pride, for they are all graces dispensed from the sovereign unaccountable

pleasure of God, who makes the most excellent saint to differ from others.

It will be an excellent means to cure pride, to convince the minds of men what is true honour, and direct their desires to it.

The wisest of kings has told us, that "before honour is humility," Prov. xv. 33. Pride is a degenerate passion, debases a man, and brings him into miserable bondage, enslaves him to the ignorant multitude. Dependence upon the opinion and applause of the people, whose humours are very changeable, is so uneasy, that the ambitious often bite their heavy chains, though sometimes they kiss them because they are gilded. But humility preserves the true and noble freedom of the mind of man, secures his dear liberty and peaceful dominion of himself. This is the effect of excellent wisdom.

3. Humility is the most precious ornament in God's sight: and to be approved by the Divine mind, and accepted by the Divine will, is the highest honour most worthy of our ambition. It is like the precious balm, that, mixed with other liquors, sinks to the bottom: but then it is visible, and most amiable in the eyes of God. The apostle's ambitious labour was, whether present or absent, to be accepted of him, 2 Cor. v. 9. Now what is the vain esteem and fading breath of men, compared with the acceptance of God? Doth a learned man value the praise of the ignorant given to his compositions, and disregard the approbation of the learned, the proper judges of it? Is worldly honour a certain indication of real worth, or can it satisfy the desires of the soul? a piece of rotten wood shines in the dark, but when the day-light

appears, forfeits its lustre: so in the darkness of this world, titles of honour seem glorious, but in the morning of eternity they lose their flaming brightness, and vanish for ever. It is true magnanimity, to despise the praise of men, and to seek and value the honour that comes from God only, John xii. 43. After this short life, men are dead for ever to the pleasure of their fame.

I shall conclude this part of our subject with observing that humility is a virtue not known to the philosophers, who thought it to be opposite to magnanimity; but it is especially recommended in the gospel as a most amiable and excellent grace. We are commanded to "do nothing through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves," Phil. ii. 3. This may seem an unreasonable lesson, and inconsistent with sincerity. But although the difference between men in civil things and intellectual perfections be clear, yet in moral qualities, we, knowing our own defects and secret faults, may prefer others, whose concealed excellences are visible to God, before ourselves. The apostle Paul, though he so excellently represented the King of saints in his life, acknowledged himself to be the chief of sinners. It is observable that St. Peter, in the account of his fall and repentance, recorded by St. Mark, who wrote the gospel by his direction, aggravates his sin more than is expressed in the gospel of St. Luke and St. John, where his denial is related, but not his cursing and swearing, saying, "I know not this man," Mark xiv. 71. and his repentance is not so fully declared; for the other evangelists tell us, he wept bitterly in the reflection

upon his denial of Christ, but it is only said in Mark, when he thought on it he wept, Mark xiv. 72.

Many excellent promises are made to the humble. They are declared blessed by our Saviour, who are not rich in treasures, but poor in spirit; God will revive the spirit of the humble; he will give grace to the humble, and hear their prayers, Matt. v. 3. Isa. lvii. 15. James iv. 6. We are assured though the Lord be high, yet he has respect to the lowly; he sets his esteem and love on them, regards and relieves them; humility attracts the eye and heart of God himself. Job was never more accepted of God than when he abhorred himself.

I shall add this consideration, that should be of infinite weight with us. The Son of God came down from heaven, to set before us a pattern of humility. He does in a special manner instruct us in this lesson: "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly," Matt. xi. 29. Never could glory ascend higher than in his person, nor humility descend lower, than in his actions. There are the deepest imprinting passages of humility in the whole course of his despised life, and ignominious sufferings. What can be more honourable than to imitate the humble King of glory?

CHAPTER IV.

Infidelity, hypocrisy, envy, are in a special sense pollutions of the spirit. The unreasonableness of infidelity. Hypocrisy considered; it sometimes proceeds from ignorance and error. Sins are hid under the appearance of virtues. The stedfast belief of God's pure eye an effectual means to cure it. Envy at the good of others, with malice wishing them evil. The necessity of regeneration evident from the consideration of inward defilements. Motives to cleanse the spirit. God is highly dishonoured by them. They are more easily contracted, and more frequently committed than those that are acted by the sensitive faculties. They are more incurable. The injections of Satan distinguished from those sinful thoughts that arise from the hearts of men. They are our infelicities.

I SHALL now proceed to consider some other sins, that, in a special sense, are the pollutions of the spirit. It has been observed already, that in carnal sins, the spirit is the principal agent, but of other sins it is the subject. Such are infidelity, hypocrisy, envy, and malice, by which the mind becomes dark and impure.

Infidelity, whether proceeding from secret atheism or open deism, rejects revealed religion, as unnecessary and groundless. But the arguments that are drawn from the clear and living springs of nature to prove the being of God, are of such convincing evidence, that none but those whose interest it is, that there were no supreme Lawgiver and Judge to call them to an account for their actions, can doubt

of his eternal existence. Now that there is a God being proved, the necessary consequence from that principle is, that he must be honoured and served according to his own will, and that it becomes his wisdom and goodness to reveal his will to men, the rule of their duty, and that this be done in the most instructive and permanent way, in writing, that is less liable to corruption than oral tradition, and that the holy scripture has in it such conspicuous characters of its descent from heaven, besides the most undoubted testimony that it was written by men divinely inspired and infallible, that without violating the rules of sound discourse we must yield our assent to its Divine authority, and supernatural doctrines revealed in it. I shall not here amplify and illustrate these particulars, having in some discourses, formerly published, of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, and the divinity of the christian religion, manifested how desperate the cause of the atheists and deists is to unprejudiced minds.

Now though the deduction specified be according to the true rule of ratiocination, yet there are some that account it a slavery to fix their belief upon any authority, but will be free in believing, as they are in their actions. I will therefore briefly produce some proofs of the truth of christian religion, that carry an uncontrollable evidence in them. The abolition of idolatry in the pagan world, in the time foretold by the prophets, is a palpable proof that the christian religion was from the true God. The instruments of this great work, were a few fishermen that had neither learning, nor arms, nor treasures; patience was their strength, poverty their choice, disgrace their ho-

nour ; that without any force, but of illumination and persuasion, of humility and charity, and enduring the most terrible sufferings, they should vanquish the pride of philosophers, the tyrannous power of princes, the rebellious opposition of men's carnal lusts, is not conceivable without the assistance of Divine strength, that convinced the most obstinate enemies that the doctrine was Divine, by the miracles done in confirmation of it. Besides, that which the wise men in all ages were searching for, that is, the perfection of the law of nature, (at first engraven in the hearts of men by the author of it,) but in vain ; for although philosophy affords some notices of good and evil, sufficient to check many notorious vices, yet it is not sufficient to direct men in their universal duty towards God, others, and themselves : but the gospel is an instructive light of our full duty ; it speaks to the heart, and changes its thoughts and affections, and reforms the life according to the pure and perfect rule revealed in it. Now could an imposture produce such a perfection of virtue in the wicked world ? the true interpretation of the moral law in the gospel is from God alone. Could such a change be made without visible miracles ? if the christian religion was planted and propagated without the confirmation of miracles, it were a transcendent miracle. And though we saw not the miracles done by the apostles, yet we see the permanent effects of them, in the belief and lives of true christians. Infidels are apt to reply, if they saw miracles performed to assure them of the divinity of the christian religion, they would believe it. It is a vain pretence that men would submit to the power of God declared by miracles, who

deny his authority made known in that eminent degree of evidence in his word. Abraham answered the rich man, who desired a messenger from the dead might be sent to convert his brethren, "They have Moses and the prophets, and if they hear not them, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead," Luke xvi. 29. 31.

In short, those who resist so strong a light as shines in the scripture, the delusion of their mind is from their depraved hearts. Speculative truths obtain the present and easy assent of the mind; but truths directive of practice, if opposite to men's lusts, though their evidence be unexceptionable, yet the carnal mind is very averse from receiving them. This account is given of the pharisees' infidelity,—they repented not that they might believe in him, Matt. xxi. 32. When the will is engaged in the love of sin, and rebels against the sanctity and severity of the gospel commands, it is congruous to reject it. The corrupt affections hinder the due application of the mind to consider the motives of credibility, and stain the mind that it does not sincerely judge of them. Though infidels pretend to be the only discoursing wits of the age, to have the oracles of reason in their breasts, and despise others as captives of a blind belief, yet their folly is palpable and penal, for having provoked God by their infidelity, they are left to the power of their lusts and of the tempter, and sink deeper into darkness, and become more hardened and presumptuous. Those who embark with these distracted pilots in such dangerous seas, have a mind to perish for ever.

Hypocrisy is a spiritual pollution. In its theological consideration it implies a counterfeiting

religion and virtue: an affectation of the name joined with a disaffection to the thing: the having a form of godliness, with denying the power of it, 2 Tim. iii. 5. Accordingly,

Every nominal christian, who professes subjection to Christ, and lives in habitual disobedience to his commands, is a hypocrite. The actions are the incarnate issues of the heart wherein they are formed, and the clearest discovery of it. A rebellious course of sin, declares a person to be an infidel, notwithstanding his owning Christ to be our King; his life is a continual lie: he vainly presumes that God is his Father, when his actions declare him to be a child of the devil, John viii. 41. 44.

Hypocrisy in a stricter sense is, when men presume their spiritual condition to be good, upon false grounds. It is observable, no man is a hypocrite to himself out of choice; he does not deliberately deceive himself: but one may be a hypocrite without his knowledge, by ignorance and error; he may think his inclination to some virtues, and his aversion from some vices, to be Divine grace: but sympathies and antipathies proceed often from natural temper, and not from the renewed mind and will, from judgment and choice. A tame dog is as truly a beast as a wild wolf. A man that performs only some good things, and abstains from some evil, from natural conscience, is as truly in a state of polluted nature, as one that is wholly careless of his duty, and freely indulges every carnal lust. One may be exact in light matters, as the pharisees in tithing mint and cummin, and neglect substantial duties; he may be zealous in the outward parts of religious worship, and neglect

righteousness and mercy, and think to compensate his defects in the duties of one table, by strictly observing the duties of the other; this is pernicious hypocrisy. The subtilty and strength of Satan are employed to deceive men by an airy religion, by an opinionative goodness, to prevent their being awakened from their drowsy and deadly state. It is worthy of notice, the tempter has a double operation in the minds of men: he deceives the hypocritical with false hopes, by concealing or extenuating their sins, to induce them to presume of the favour of God, and to secure his quiet possession of them; and he troubles the sincere with vain terrors by concealing their graces, to discourage their progress in the way to heaven. He is an envious explorer, and searches to find out their defects, to accuse them to God; and he defames God to them, as if he would not spare his sons that serve him. He is triumphant in the unsanctified, and militant in the saints.

Some hide their crying sins under the colourable appearance of virtues; and pretend to holiness, that they may sin with less suspicion, and more security. Such persons will speak of those sins in others with severity, which they freely indulge. The characters of religion are drawn in their countenance, but their lusts are deeply engraven in their hearts. These our Saviour compares to painted sepulchres, that within contain sordid dust and rottenness. This is perfect hypocrisy; a deadly pollution, that wounds the vitals, sears the conscience, quenches all goodness in the will; for this hypocrite is voluntarily so. Hypocrisy in the heart is like poison in a spring, that spreads itself through all the veins of the conversation. This sin

our Saviour never speaks of but with detestation: for this he denounced such a heavy woe against the pharisees, that used religion as a masking habit to appear glorious in the eyes of men, and disguised their worldly aims in devotions; and made long prayers to be esteemed of men, Matt. xxiii. 14. This is so odious to God, that he forbids all the emblems and resemblances of it to the Jews,—linsey-wolsey garments, and mixed corn, Lev. xix. 19. Our defects acknowledged with ingenuousness, excite his compassion; but counterfeit virtues excite his indignation. For what can be more provoking, than to appear to be like God in holiness, the glory of the Deity, for this end, to be secretly wicked, and to affront his omniscience, as if he could not discern them through all their close and dark concealments. A hypocrite is fearful of men, but faces God. Pride mixed with hypocrisy was the devil's original sin, he abode not in the truth, John viii. 44. and religious hypocrites are his own children. The hottest climate in hell will be their habitation; for our Saviour threatens to some sinners a portion with hypocrites; that is, aggravated damnation. This sin is difficultly cured, in that it is not easily discovered by men, and does not expose to shame; but is subservient to many carnal ends. Men cannot dive into the hearts of others, and cannot discern between the paint of hypocrisy, and the life of holiness. The mixture of beautiful colours in the countenance, may be so artificial, that at a distance, it may be thought to be natural. Besides, hypocrisy turns the remedy into poison; for the frequent exercise of religious duty, which is the means to sanctify us, confirms and hardens hypocrites.

The effectual means to cure it, is a stedfast belief of the pure and flaming eye of God ; who sees sin wherever it is, and will bring it into judgment, Eccl. xii. 14. A hypocrite may hide his sin from the eyes of others, and sometimes from his own conscience, but can never impose upon God. And as nothing so confounds men with shame, as to be found false and perfidious in their dealings ; how much more will the hypocrites be covered with confusion at the great day, when they shall appear naked, with their loathsome ulcers, before innumerable angels and saints ? They will desire the rocks to hide them from that glorious assembly, Rev. vi. 16.

The stedfast belief of this great truth will cause frequent and solemn thoughts of God, as our Inspector and Judge : " I have set the Lord always before me ; he is at my right hand : I shall not be moved," Psa. xvi. 8. This was the effect of David's faith. This will produce sincerity in religion irrespective of the eyes of men ; and preserve us from secret sins. It is the prescription of our Saviour ; " Beware ye of the leaven of the pharisees, which is hypocrisy for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ; neither hid, that shall not be known ; whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness, shall be heard in the light ; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed on the house-tops," Luke xii. 1—3.

3. Envy at the good of others, and malice wishing them evil, is a deep pollution of the spirit. This absolutely alienates men from the nature and life of God ; for the clearest conception we have of the Deity is, that he is good, and does good. This is contrary not only to supernatural grace, but to

natural conscience ; and turns a man into a fiend. This vice is immediately attended with its punishment. The envious man is his own tormentor, and has the viper's fate in the fable, that in biting the file wounded itself. Besides, this stops the descent of Divine blessings, and turns the petitions of the envious into imprecations against themselves.

To finish this head, it is observable, nothing more discovers the necessity of renovation, than the defilements of the spirit. As birds by incubation hatch their brood ; so from sinful thoughts and desires actual sins proceed. Our Saviour tells us, " Out of the heart proceed murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, which defile a man," Matt. xv. 19, 20. It is above all things necessary, to keep the heart ; for the issues of death flow from it. The design, contrivance, and consent to sin, are in the heart ; the body is only the instrument of sin. To enforce this counsel, there are many motives.

(1.) God is infinitely dishonoured and displeased by the sins of our spirits : for the soul is of near alliance with God, and of incomparably more value than the vile body : therefore the defiling it is highly provoking. The soul is the place of his special residence ; and the entertaining sin in it, is a fouler indignity than the bringing dung into the presence chamber of a king. We should be more careful to approve our thoughts and desires to God, than our words and actions to men.

(2.) They are more easily contracted than those which are acted by the sensitive faculties : they secretly insinuate into the soul. External sins require fit time, and place, and means for their commission ; and are often hindered by the moral

restraints of fear and shame : but speculative sins may be committed without convenient circumstances. In whatever place, or company, men are, they may retire into their hearts, and please themselves with vicious thoughts and desires of future sins, and devices how to make provision for the flesh ; with carnal representations and complacency of the sins they have committed. They may personate the pleasures of sin in the scene of fancy ; and the imagination of old sins becomes a new temptation, and deeply stains their minds ; and as it is usual, what pleases is favoured and defended, they by carnal discourse pervert scripture to countenance their lusts ; which is the highest wickedness.

(3.) Spiritual sins are most frequently committed, being of quick despatch, without the toil of the body : from hence their number is as the sand upon the sea-shore. They infinitely increase men's accounts with the high and eternal Judge ; whose understanding is as searching as it is unsearchable. The judgment of the last day is distinguished from the process of inferior human courts, which are confined to take cognizance only of men's intentions by overt acts ; for then there shall be a revelation of the thoughts and secrets of the heart.

(4.) Spiritual sins are more incurable than those that are done by the body ; for when the sensitive faculties by diseases and age are disabled, then the vicious habits of the soul may be strong ; and, like the poison of a serpent, be more deadly by age.

Notwithstanding inward pollutions induce such a guilt, yet carnal men are apt to think that till sin be perfected in the gross act, it is not deadly : and for this they pervert scripture, wherein it is said, " That when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth

sin ; and sin when it is finished, brings forth death," James i. 15. But in God's sight, the contemplative commission of sin, renders one as truly guilty as the actual sinner ; and consent to the doing it, renders as obnoxious to his enlightened and impartial tribunal, as the performance. His pure and perfect law, the rule of our duty, forbids all defilements fleshly and spiritual, and that shall be the rule of our judgment. And as the soul is the first and principal agent in sin, it shall first receive the recompense of it. In the interval between death and the resurrection, while the body is without sense in the grave, the soul is tormented in hell.

Before I proceed to the next head, it will be useful to add, that many sincere saints are in perplexity from the injections of Satan, fearing they arise from their own hearts.

[1.] They may be distinguished by their quality. Unnatural thoughts against ourselves, and blasphemous of God, are usually from the tempter.

[2.] When they make terrible impressions upon our spirits, they are his fiery darts. For the native offspring of our hearts are conceived with freedom and complacency.

[3.] They are our infelicities, but induce no guilt when resisted by us. As the virgin, that cried out for rescue from violence, was declared by God himself innocent, so when the tempted soul, with strong cries, prays for Divine relief, God will not lay those terrible injections to our charge. Our Saviour was tempted by the unclean spirit, yet was holy, harmless, and undefiled, Matt. iv. Heb. vii. 26. and has a compassionate tenderness for those who are tempted, and will make them partake of the

fruits of his glorious victory. It is true, if the injections of Satan are cherished by the carnal mind, they are ours by adoption, though of his begetting. The devil put in the heart of Judas the design of betraying Christ, but it was entertained by his covetous mind, and involved him under the heaviest guilt. The inclinations of carnal men are to various sins, to which they are more inclinable by the temptations of Satan; but that does not excuse them from guilt.

CHAPTER V.

The perfection of holiness considered. The perfection of innocence. The perfection of grace. The perfection of glory. The essential perfection of grace consists in sincerity. Constancy proceeds from it. Integral perfection, comparative perfection, intellectual and moral. The threefold comparison of moral perfection. Relative perfection according to the conditions of the saints in this life. Absolute perfection only attained in heaven.

I NOW come to discourse of the perfection of holiness, the sublime object and aim of the desires and endeavours of sincere christians. I shall premise—There is a threefold perfection of holiness spoken of in scripture: the perfection of innocence, the perfection of grace, and the perfection of glory.

1. The perfection of innocence. God made man upright, in the bright image of his holiness. The

excellency of the efficient cause, infers the excellency of the effect; and the final cause was for his own glory, and man's happiness, in order to which he was endowed with those moral perfections, which qualified him to obtain that end. There was an exact regularity in all his faculties: the enlightened mind directed the will, the will commanded the affections, the affections ruled the senses. He had power to stand, but was free to fall: with his original perfection there was a possibility of sinning and dying. The eyes of his mind were clear, discovering his duty and felicity; and the assisting grace of God was like the sun shining in the air to actuate his visive faculty; but he wilfully shut his eye, and fell from that height of happiness into a pit without a bottom.

2. The perfection of grace. This in the language of scripture signifies uprightness and sincerity, and is attributed to the saints in several respects, which I will particularly consider.

3. The perfection of glory. This implies a union of all excellences in a sovereign degree. The church in the present state is compared to the moon, that receives light from the sun in half its globe, but in the next state will be filled with light as a ball of crystal penetrated by the sun-beams. The church shall be glorious in holiness, without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," Eph. v. 27. Natural righteousness was of short continuance, as nature left to itself always is: but the supernatural state is not only undefiled, but fades not away, 1 Pet. i. 4. The perfection of paradise was frail, for man in his best state was changing: from this root his ruin sprang: but the perfection of heaven is immutable, for there God is all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 28. His

influxive presence is the productive and conservative cause of their holiness and blessedness.

I will now consider the perfection of grace that is attributed to the saints in the present state.

1. There is an essential perfection, that consists in the unchangeable nature of things, and is absolutely requisite to the kind. A gradual perfection belongs to individuals, and is various: all gold is not refined to the same degree and height of purity: but true gold, though in the lowest degree of fineness, will endure the furnace and the touchstone, and by that trial is discerned from counterfeit metal. There are different degrees of active heat in fire: sometimes it flames, but always burns, if fed with combustible matter.

Now the essence of true holiness consists in a conformity to the nature and will of God, whereby a saint is distinguished from the unrenewed world, and is not actuated by their principles and precepts, not governed by their maxims and customs.

There are different degrees of holiness in the saints, but sincerity is inseparable from the being of it.

(1.) This includes a conformity in the heart and life to God. As a good complexion flourishes in the countenance from the root of a good constitution within, so real holiness shining in the conversation, proceeds from an internal principle of life seated in the mind and heart. The understanding esteems the precepts of God's law, as best in themselves, and best for us: the will consents to the sanctity and royalty of the law. David declares, "I esteem all thy commandments to be right: and I hate every false way," *Psa. cxix. 128.* If the Divine will be the reason of our obedience, it will be

impartial. Many elude duty, and deceive conscience by partial respects to the law : they will make amends for delinquencies in some things, by supererogations in others that are suitable to their carnal ease and interest. Thus the pharisees were mighty sons of the church, very accurate in sanctimonious forms, great pretenders to piety, but stained religion with injustice and uncharitableness. They pretended to love God, but hated their neighbour ; they fasted twice a week, but devoured widows' houses ; they were very nice in observing the numerous rites of religion, but neglected the duties of substantial goodness. There is not a more exact resemblance between the immediate sight of the face, and the sight of it by reflection in a clear and true glass, than the spirit of the old pharisees is like the formalist in every age. Thus among the papists, how many under the veil of celibacy conceal the grossest impurities, and under the appearance of poverty, are covetous and rapacious ! But our Saviour tells us, unless our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matt. v. 20. If our obedience be not of equal extent to the rule, if there be an indulgence to contravene any precept, the words of St. James are decisive and convincing. "Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one instance, he is guilty of all," James ii. 10. In one allowed sin of omission or commission, there is a universal disobedience to the authority of the Lawgiver. Although the best saint on earth is not without sin, yet the least is without guile.

(2.) Sincerity produces constancy. There is a strict connexion between the leading faculties, and

their inward operations, with the outward actions. According to the renewed temper of the mind and will, such is the tenour of the life. Pure religion and undefiled before God, that is exercised from Divine principles and eternal motives, will fortify a christian against all temptations: he will neither be allured nor terrified from his duty.

Some, when religion is in public esteem, are forward professors: but if the testimony of truth exposes them to reproach, as seditious and disloyal, and the consequences of that reproach, they will comply with the temper of the times to secure their secular interest. And as there are changes of garments, summer and winter garments according to the seasons of the year, so they have changes of religions as the times vary. Persecution discovers them to have been formal professors, without the spirit and depth of religion in their hearts. But sincere christians are conspicuously such in the fiery trial. It is observed in digging wells in the hot months of July and August, if a vein of water flows, it is a sign of a lasting spring: thus if in the burning heat of persecution the profession of the pure religion is declared, it is an argument it proceeds from sincere grace, that will be "springing up to everlasting life," John iv. 14. There are numerous examples of the holy martyrs, who despised the enraged world, as a swarm of angry flies, and turned persecution into a pleasure, and with undecaying fervour and courage persevered in the confession of Christ, till they obtained the crown of eternal life. Unfeigned faith and sincere love are the strongest security against apostasy: he that is sound at the centre is unshaken by storms. The double-minded, whose hearts are divided be-

tween the enlightened conscience, and their carnal affections, are unstable in all their ways, James i. 8.

Some have short expiring fits of devotion : while they are in afflicting circumstances either by terrors of conscience, or diseases in their bodies, or disasters in their estates they resolve to be regular and reformed in their lives, to walk circumspectly and exactly : but when they are released from their troubles, they degenerate from their designs, and falsify their resolutions, and like a lion slipt from his chain, that returns to his fierceness with his liberty, so they relapse into their old rebellious sins. The reason is, they were not inwardly cleansed from the love of sin, nor changed into the likeness of God. In all their miseries they were in the state of unrenewed nature, though restrained from the visible eruptions of it. But real saints have their conversation all of a colour : in prosperity and adversity they are holy and heavenly

In short, sincere christians study the Divine law to know the extent of their duty, and delight in the discovery of it : they do not decline the strictest scrutiny. It is David's prayer, "Lord, search me, and try me, and see whether there be any way of wickedness in me," Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24. and discover it to me, that I may forsake it. Conscience will be quick and tender like the eye, which if any dirt be in it, weeps it out. There may be rebels in a loyal city, but they are not concealed and cherished : the loyal subjects search to discover them, and cast them out : but the hypocrites "hate the light, because their deeds are evil," John iii. 20. they cherish a wilful ignorance, that they may freely enjoy their lusts. The sincere christian aims at perfection : he prays, resolves, watches, mourns, and strives against

every sin. This is as necessary to uprightness, as it is impossible we should be without spot or blemish here : but the hypocrite though he externally complies with some precepts of easy obedience, yet he will not forsake his sweet sins. Now if any sin be entertained or unrenounced by a person, he is unregenerate, and a captive of Satan : as if a bird be ensnared by one leg, it is as surely the prey of the fowler, as if it were seized by both wings.

I shall only add, sincerity commends us to God, it gives value to the meanest service, and the want of it corrupts the most eminent service. Jehu's zeal was a bloody murder, though the destruction of Ahab's family was commanded by God.

The consciousness of sincerity rejoices the living saint with present comfort, and the dying with the hopes of future happiness. The apostle when surrounded with calamities, declares, "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of conscience, that with simplicity, and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in this world," 2 Cor. i. 12. Hezekiah, having received a mortal message by the prophet, addressed himself to God, "Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee, in truth, with a perfect heart," 2 Kings xx. 3. Truth and perfection are equivalent ; this was a reviving cordial in his dying hour. A sincere life is attended with a happy death, and that is attended with a more happy life. God is the rewarder of moral virtues, with temporal blessings, but he is the eternal reward of godly sincerity. This is the first notion of perfect holiness in the present state.

2. There is an integral perfection of holiness : that is, an entire union of all those sanctifying graces of which the image of God consists. The

new creature in its forming is not like the effects of art, but the living productions of nature. A sculptor in making a statue of marble, finishes the head, when the other part is but rude stone; but all the parts of a child are gradually formed together, till the body is complete. The Holy Spirit in renewing a man, infuses a universal habit of holiness, that is comprehensive of all the variety of graces to be exercised in the life of a christian. As the corrupt nature, styled the old man, is complete in its earthly members, all the lusts of the flesh, both of the desiring and angry appetite, and disposes, without the corrective of restraining grace, the natural man to yield to all temptations: to be fierce with the contentious, licentious with the dissolute, intemperate with the drunkard, lascivious with the impure, and impious with the scorers of religion—so the Divine nature, styled the new man, is complete in all spiritual graces, and inclines and enables the sanctified to do every good work. “The fruit of the Spirit, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,” Gal. v. 22, 23. Although they are distinguished in their activity, and particular objects, yet they always are joined in the same subject, and centre in God, who is immutably holy and One. They are mixed in their exercise without confusion. As in a chorus, the variety of voices is harmonious and conspiring; so in spiritual graces according to the degrees of their perfection, such is the degree of their union. Every real saint is conformed to Christ, of whom “he receives grace for grace,” John i. 16. There are spiritual gifts of arbitrary dispensation: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the gifts of

healing, the works of miracles, 1 Cor. xii. 8—10. are separately given. But when the Spirit prepares a soul for his habitation, he purifies it from sin, and adorns it with every grace : if there be a defect of any grace, the opposite sin in its power remains in the soul, and makes it impossible for the Holy Spirit to dwell there.

It is to be observed, that when a promise is made as to any particular grace in scripture, that grace is to be considered in union with other graces. Our Saviour tells us, "Whoever believes shall be saved," John iii. And St. Paul, inspired by the Spirit of our Saviour, saith, that faith separate from charity is of no avail for salvation ; "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing," 1 Cor. xiii. 2. A faith that does not work by love, and is not productive of obedience, is of no saving efficacy. St. James puts the question, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say, he hath faith, and hath not works? Can faith save him?" James ii. 14. It is evident it does not : for nothing asserts or denies more strongly than a question. He that does not, by faith in the Son of God, live a holy life, must die for ever. St. John assures us, that we are in a state of favour with God, if we love the brethren ; "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 14. But the sincerity of our love to the children of God, is proved by our love to God, and keeping his commandments, 1 John v. 2. and is inseparable from it. Wherever salvation is promised to a particular duty, it must be understood in a collective sense. We read, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved,"

Acts ii. 21. But a prevailing prayer must proceed from a holy person, who keeps the commands of God, and does those things that are pleasing in his sight, 1 John iii. 22. The prayer must be mixed with faith and fervency : "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much," James v. 16. The connexion of saving graces cannot be broken. St. Peter excites us, 2 Pet. i. 5—7. to give all diligence to add to our faith in the mysteries of godliness, virtue; an active power to render it lively and operative, otherwise faith is a mere speculative dead assent : "To virtue, knowledge;" prudence to direct its exercise in the seasons wherein, and the manner how our duties are to be performed : "To knowledge, temperance;" to regulate our appetites and enjoyments in the use of things pleasing to the senses : "To temperance, patience;" to endure the evils to which we are exposed in this lower state; which is equally, if not more necessary and excellent: for human nature is more affected and tempted by sharp pains and grief, than delighted with pleasure. Without the exercise of these graces, our religion will be by fits and flashes, with interrupting intervals : "To patience, godliness;" that is, a respect to the commands of God as our rule, and his glory as our end, that is distinguished from mere morality; that proceeds only from human reason, and respects the civil happiness : "To godliness, brotherly-kindness;" a sincere love to all of the same heavenly extraction, in whom the image of God shines : "and to brotherly-kindness, charity;" that extends to all the partakers of our common nature. All spiritual graces take their residence together in the soul; not one singly enters, and keeps entire possession. Our Saviour tells the

young man who had lived so regularly, that he was lovely in his eyes; "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all, and give to the poor, and come follow me," Matt. xix. 21. He wanted charity and self-denial to make his obedience entire.

3. There is a comparative perfection: this in scripture is intellectual or moral.

(1.) Intellectual perfection. The apostle excites the Hebrews, "Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the beginning of Christ, let us go on to perfection," Heb. vi. 1. to more eminent degrees in the knowledge of the gospel, both of the supernatural doctrines of the gospel, or the duties contained in it. Of the first the apostle is to be understood, "We speak wisdom among those that are perfect," 1 Cor. ii. 6. that is, declare Divine mysteries to those who are prepared to receive them. The light of nature declares the being of God, and his essential perfections, wisdom, power, and goodness, shining in his works; but not his counsels, in order to our salvation: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. There are some notices of good and evil, of virtue and vice, by the instructive light of reason, but not sufficient to inform us of our full duty. The discovery of the purity and perfection of the moral law is from God. The gospel, like a clear and equal glass, that discovers the beauties and blemishes of the face, makes known to us what defiles, and what beautifies the soul.

Now it is our duty to increase in knowledge, both in the extent and degrees, and in the quality and efficacy of it.

In the extent and degrees. There is a mutual

dependence of Divine truths ; one illustrates and infers another : there is a harmonious agreement between them ; one supports another ; and it is our duty to apply our minds intensely to understand them. How many that have the revelation of the gospel, are mean proficient in the school of heaven ! Of these the apostle speaks with reprehension, " They needed to be taught again, the first principles of the oracles of God ; and are become such that had need of milk, and not of strong meat : whereas others were come to full age, and had their senses exercised, to discern more perfectly good and evil," Heb. v. 12. 14. How many professors need the first principles of religion to be planted in them ! They pretend to exempt their ignorance from discredit, that it only belongs to the ministers of the word to study the mysteries of religion : but it is of infinite consequence, they should be wise to salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. Our Saviour tells us, " This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. The dispensation of the gospel is a state of perfection. It is the full and final declaration of God's will, in order to our future blessedness : it is not a provisional establishment as the levitical law : there is no other alliance to be made between God and men ; no other sacrifice to be offered for sin : all the types and prophecies are completely fulfilled in Christ. Now some understand more clearly and distinctly the contrivance and parts of our mysterious redemption ; and are comparatively perfect. All the treasures of the world are in real value infinitely inferior to saving truths. There may be knowledge without saving grace : but no saving grace without knowledge. The understanding

is the leading faculty: conversion begins in the renewed mind; "Ye were darkness, now ye are light in the Lord," Eph. v. 8. The gospel cannot be profitable for our holiness and comfort, but by the intervening of the enlightened applicative understanding; the conscience, that discovers the will of God to us, from whence our immediate obligation arises to obey it.

It is true, some doctrines of the gospel are fundamental, and some are perfective: some are not of that consequence and clearness as others; and the ignorance of them is not damning, nor the knowledge of them saving. But every Divine truth is worthy of our attentive consideration, according to our capacity; for they contribute to our perfection. We should strive to advance in knowledge; that, as the sun gradually ascends the horizon, till it gives light to the day, and day to the world; so our knowledge of Christ should be more clear and extensive, till we are completely transformed into his glorious image: When we shall see him as he is, we shall be entirely like him, 1 John iii. 2.

As our knowledge is more vital, affective and practical, it is more perfective of us. Divine truths have a goodness in them, and are not duly known, without a stedfast belief of their truth, and a just estimate of their goodness; when the conviction of the mind, and the consent of the will, is influential upon our lives. The knowledge of some things is merely speculative. One knows that the eclipse of the sun is from the interposing of the moon between that globe of light and our sight, and the mind acquiesces in the theory; for it is of no practical use: but the knowledge that sin separates

between God and us, and intercepts the light of his countenance from shining upon us, is infinitely profitable to make us fearful to offend him, that we may not be deprived of the joyful sense of his love. Spiritual knowledge includes a correspondent permanent impression upon the heart, and in the life to the nature of sanctifying truths. In civil matters there is a knowledge of discourse and direction, and a knowledge of performance: and in holy things there is a knowledge of apprehension and in words, and a knowledge that orders the conversation aright. The first is not only fruitless, but accidentally pernicious: according to Solomon's expression, "He that increases knowledge increases sorrow," Eccl. i. 18. A smaller degree of knowledge of God and Christ that is productive of love and obedience, is far more valuable than a more large and accurate knowledge of the Divine attributes, of the union of the natures and offices of Christ, that is not fruitful in good works: as a spot of ground cultivated according to its quality, is more profitable than a large field that lies waste.

(2.) Moral perfection is evident by a threefold comparison. 1. Of the saints with visible sinners. 2. Of the saints among themselves. 3. Of some eminent acts of grace, with lower acts in the same kind.

[1.] The comparison of saints with visible sinners makes them appear as perfect. It is true there is a mixture of principles in the best here, of flesh and spirit, inherent corruption, and infused grace, and the operations flowing from them accordingly are mixed. But as one who has not the brightest colours of white and red in the complexion, appears an excellent beauty, set off by the

presence of a blackamoor, so the beauty of holiness in a saint, though mixed with blemishes, appears complete when compared with the foul deformity of sinners. Thus the opposition between them is expressed, "He destroys the perfect and the wicked," Job ix. 22. It is recorded of Noah, that he was a "just man and perfect in his generations," Gen. vi. 9. in an age when wickedness reigned, when chastity was expelled from the number of virtues, and modesty was censured as a vice, when impiety was arrived at the highest pitch, and the deluge was necessary to purge the world from such sinners: then the sanctity and piety of Noah shined as brightness issues from the stars. He appeared perfectly good, compared with the prodigiously bad.

[2.] In comparing the saints among themselves, some are styled perfect. There are different degrees among sinners: some are so disposed to wickedness, that they may be denominated from as many vices that possess their souls, as the evil spirit, in the man spoken of in the gospel, answered, his name was Legion, from the number of devils that possessed him. They drive through all the degrees of sin so violently and furiously, that, compared to them, other sinners seem innocent, and are far less obnoxious to judgment.

Thus there are singular saints whose graces are so conspicuous and convincing, and a universal holiness appears in their conversation, which makes them venerable among the vicious. Their presence will restrain the dissolute from excesses either in words or actions, as effectually as a magistrate by the terror of his power. As to other saints, though sincere, yet there is such a mixture of shades and lights in their actions, that they are in low esteem.

Compare meek Moses with the passionate prophet Jonah, who justified his anger to the face of God himself, "I do well to be angry, even unto death," Jonah iv. 9. We read of Moses, that he was the meekest man upon the face of the earth, Numb. xii. 3. Of this there is recorded a very eminent effect and evidence. When Aaron and Miriam had contumeliously and seditiously spoke against him, as if he had usurped undue authority, "Hath the Lord only spoken by Moses? hath he not also spoken by us?" ver. 2. He might by a sharp reply have confounded them, but he was silent. Several circumstances concur to heighten the value of his victory over himself. There was a double offence, and violation of the respects due to the dignity of his person, and the nearness of the relation. This accusation was public before the congregation of Israel: in the heat of the contention, when there is a great disposition to be fired by anger, when the silent and patient bearing the indignity might be interpreted as a conviction of his guilt, yet he calmly endured their false charge. How great is the disparity between Moses and Jonah!

[3.] In comparing some raised acts of grace, with lower in the same kind, there is a perfection attributed to them. As it is in diamonds, many small ones are not of equal value with one great one, though of equal weight with it: so one act of piety, of faith, of charity, of self-denial, may for its rareness, exemplariness, and efficacy, have such a Divine degree of worth in it, that it far excels many less illustrious effects of those graces. As a single act of wickedness may be so extremely evil, so enormously vicious as to exceed many crimes in its pollution and guilt of the same kind. There are

some instances of this in scripture: Ahaz, in the time of his distress, "did yet trespass more against the Lord," 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. Judgments in their nature and God's design are fit means to soften the obdurate, as iron is made malleable by the fire: but to kick against the pricks, to be more stubborn by the infliction of wrath, that should correct men into their duty, is a wickedness so unnatural and prodigious, that it has left a brand of infamy on him for ever: "This is that king Ahaz," that desperate rebel against God. The idolatry of Manasseh was aggravated with such open contempt of God, that made it infinitely more provoking than the secret idolatry of others. It is related, "He set a carved image, that he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house will I put my name for ever," 2 Chron. xxxiii. 7. He deposed God, and with the boldest defiance set an idol in his throne before his face.

I will produce some instances of the exercise of grace in its radiancy and power, both in doing and suffering.

Abraham received a command, "Take now thy son, thy only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering," Gen. xxii. 2. How many circumstances with respect to nature and grace, increased the difficulty of his obedience! The command was so hard, God would not permit the fulfilling it. Isaac was the object of his most ardent desires, in whom he lived more dearly than in himself. When his own life was almost expired, and was miraculously renewed in his son, the heir of the promise in whose seed all the nations of the world were to

be blessed, ver. 18. how grievous to human affections, not only to be a spectator, but actor! the priest to offer the sacrifice! Yet "he rose early," and "went to the place of which God had told him," ver. 3. He applied himself without relenting or delay—that would have argued unwillingness, in such a severe trial. He built an altar, bound Isaac, and laid him on the altar, and stretched out his hand to slay him, if he had not been countermanded by a call from heaven. In this work was his faith made perfect, James ii. 22. and appears in its exaltation. This was an act so pleasing to God, that he declared his approving and accepting it by a voice from heaven. His obedience to the Divine command to leave his country, and go into a strange land, was the excellent effect of his faith in the promise of God, but less illustrious than the offering of his son.

The self-denial of Moses was as perfect and admirable in its kind; "When he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," Heb. xi. 24. When he understood the value of a crown, with the honours and riches annexed to it: in the age of youth and strength, when the carnal appetites are vehemently inclined to pleasures, and there was an opportunity of the freest fruition: then he chose rather to suffer "affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," ver. 25. It is prudent advice not to choose when the passions are in a ferment and disorder: it is like eating meat in a fever, that increases the feverish heat, and destroys the vitals. A terrible temptation hinders deliberation, and a free judgment of what is our duty to choose: a pleasant temptation corrupts the mind, that we do

not discern the true from the false good. Yet Moses in that time of his life, when the sensual passions are most inflamed and urgent, had his mind so clear and calm, that he, deliberately, and with a full choice, preferred disgrace, poverty, and persecution, before the variety of attractive delights, that ravish the carnal senses. Such was the sovereignty of his faith, that it composed the unruly passions, and kept them in obedience.

The patience of Job, is as rare an instance, who was exposed to all the cruelty and arts of the tempter to overcome him. If we consider the nature of his afflictions, and their immediate succession like waves of the sea, that he was suddenly and unexpectedly stripped of his estate, deprived of his children, and his body was covered with loathsome and painful ulcers, that Satan was confident his misery would so exasperate his spirit, that he would blaspheme God to his face, yet he blessed him with the most humble reverence and resigned submission to his sovereign will. Add another consideration, when his wife that should have been a comforter, insulted over him, and became a tempter, he repelled her with holy zeal and constancy. The tempter neither by assaults on his body, nor by treachery in his wife could prevail. In him patience had its perfect work, James i. 4. It is recorded as the most celebrated instance in that kind: "You have heard of the patience of Job, and seen the end of the Lord," James v. 11. I shall only add the example of the three Hebrew martyrs, who, when the proud and cruel king commanded them to bow to the golden idol, or threatened to cast them into the burning furnace, with unshaken courage exposed themselves to his fury to preserve

their integrity. In them perfect love cast out fear.

4. There is a relative perfection of holiness according to the several conditions of the saints in this life. As in a garden, there are trees that produce different fruits, and of different degrees of goodness—the vine, the fig-tree, the apple-tree: if an apple-tree produce the best fruits in its kind, though not equal to the fruit of the vine, it is perfectly good. Thus in the world there are several conditions of life among men: some are in places of dignity and superiority: others of subjection and service. A servant that is faithful and diligent, adorns the gospel, Tit. ii. 10. and excels in that relation, and is equally accepted of God, as others in a higher order. He that gained two talents was esteemed as faithful as he that gained five, because the profit resulting from the improvement was in proportion to the stock intrusted with him.

There is a perfection relative to the various spiritual states of christians here. St. John addresses his counsel to christians under several titles, to children, to young men, and fathers, with respect to their different ages in christianity. A child is perfect in the quality of a child, when he has the stature, the strength, the understanding that is becoming his age, though he is distant from that complete state to which he will arrive in his mature age. A young man has the perfection proper to his age. A new convert that has such degrees of knowledge and holiness as are suitable to the means and his time of advancement by them, is esteemed complete in that state of grace. Some are entered into the school of heaven, and are in the first lessons of christianity, others have made a

higher progress in it, to the fulness of the stature, Eph. iv. 13.

Beyond the perfection attainable here, there is an absolute perfection of holiness in the extent of its parts, and intention of degrees. It is our present duty to aspire and endeavour after this, but attained only in heaven, where every saint is renewed into the perfect image of God, and made glorious in holiness, the great end of our Saviour's love in dying for us. By gradations christians ascend to that consummate state, the period of perfection.

CHAPTER VI.

Particular graces considered, the internal principles of perfection. Divine faith doctrinal, justifying, and in the disposal of Providence. Doctrinal faith is not imagination, nor reason. The objects of it. The motives considered. The essential perfections of God. Faith in Divine revelation is the most reasonable act of the human mind. God's truth a principle immediately evident. His jurisdiction reaches to men's understandings. God never requires our assent to supernatural truths, but he affords sufficient conviction, that they are revealed by him. God reveals himself in scripture by human expressions according to our capacity. We are obliged to believe supernatural doctrines, no further than they are revealed. To attempt the comprehensive knowledge of them, is perfectly vain; it is impossible, impertinent, and dangerous. Curiosity often fatal to faith. An answer to objections, that supernatural doctrines are not reconcilable to reason. That when men use all means sincerely to know the truth of them, and are not convinced of it, they shall not be condemned for involuntary, speculative errors.

I WILL now particularly consider those graces that are of a more excellent nature, and have a more powerful causality and influence in the lives of christians. Faith and love, hope and fear are the internal principles of christian perfection.

I will first discourse of Divine faith, the first principle and foundation of religion, as the apostle

declares: "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6. The belief of his being and bounty, is the motive of holy worship.

This grace is most honourable to God, and beneficial to us. The understanding is our supreme faculty, and by submitting it to Divine revelation, we pay the most humble homage to him. By faith we conceive of God, becoming his Divine perfections: in believing the revelation he has made of his nature, which is as incomprehensible as it is invisible, and the declaration of his will, though the things promised are encompassed with opposition and seeming impossibilities, we glorify his perfect veracity and omnipotence in the highest manner. He that believes the Divine testimony, sets his seal that God is true; ratifies his word in the most solemn manner.

Faith is most beneficial to us. It is the root of the spiritual life, from whence all other graces derive their flourishing and fruitfulness. It is not only productive of its own acts, but excites and animates every grace in its distinct exercise: like the animal spirits, that give motion and vigour to all the senses. Faith in Christ conveys to a weak christian, a kind of omnipotence: the apostle declares, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me," Phil. iv. 13. The most eminent effects of other graces, either active or suffering, fortitude, zeal, self-denial, patience, are attributed to faith; as the honour of a victory is ascribed to the general, by whose conduct and courage the battle is managed, though it is obtained by the valour of the soldiers.

"By faith we are justified," Rom. v. 1. from the

guilt of our many and mighty sins. We are purified from their deep pollutions, Acts xv. 20. We are adopted into the line of heaven; and are saved from misery extreme and eternal.

I will consider Divine faith under three heads. First. Doctrinal faith. Second. Justifying faith. Third. Faith in the disposal of all things, by the ruling providence of God.

First. Doctrinal faith I will consider. I. In its nature. II. The objects of it. III. The motives. IV. The efficacy.

I. The nature of it. All the notions of faith agree in this; it is a dependence upon the truth of another. Thus trust is called faith; because it relies upon the truth of a promise: and one is said to keep his faith inviolate, when he performs the promise that another relied on. Faith in the propriety of expression, is an assent for the veracity of the speaker. Accordingly, Divine faith is a firm assent of the mind to things, upon the authority of Divine revelation. It is distinguished from imagination, and from comprehensive reason.

Fancy draws a copy of those objects that are perceived by the external senses, or compounds many copies together, but creates no images of things not perceptible by the senses. We can imagine mountains of gold, because we have seen gold and mountains: we conceive monstrous mixtures in dreams; but no actors can appear on the theatre of fancy, but in borrowed habits from sensible things. But the objects of faith are such things, as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," 1 Cor. ii. 9. and transcend the capacity of the imagination to conceive, and of the external senses to represent: yet

infidels blaspheme the eternal truths of Divine things, as the fictions of fancy.

Faith is distinguished from science, acquired by study, and from reason. Reason implies a progress from one degree of knowledge to another, by consequences drawn from the first to the second: but faith assents to things upon the account of superior authority that reveals them, and commands us to believe them. The same things may be the objects of faith and of reason, but in different respects: reason may discover them, by ascending from effects to their causes, or descending from causes to their effects. Faith receives them as revealed in scripture; by faith we know the worlds were made, Heb. xi. 3. which may be proved by clear reason.

II. The objects of faith. The general object of faith is the word of God; the special, are those doctrines, and promises, and things, that reason cannot discover by its own light, nor perfectly understand when revealed. The word of God contains a narrative of things past, and predictions of things to come. The destruction of the old world by a deluge of waters, and the consumption of the present world by a deluge of fire, are objects of faith: but the unity of the Divine nature, and the trinity of Divine Persons, the incarnation of the Son of God, his eternal counsels respecting man's redemption, never entered into the heart of man to conceive, 1 Cor. ii. 9. but are as far above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth, and cannot be comprehended.

God may be considered absolutely in himself, or as revealing himself and his will to us. We have

some knowledge of his being and Divine attributes, wisdom, power, goodness in his works of creation and providence; but we believe in him, as declaring his mind and will to us in his word. We may know a person, and his excellent virtues intellectual and moral, but we cannot believe in him without some discovery of his thoughts and affections to us.

III. The motives of belief are to be considered. Divine faith must have a Divine foundation. Faith may be absolutely true, and relatively false. Many believe the doctrine of the gospel, upon no other grounds than the Turks believe the Alcoran; because it is the reigning religion of their country, and by the impression of example. From hence their faith is like the house built on the sand; and when a storm arises, is in danger of falling. The firm foundation of faith is the essential supreme perfections of God; unerring knowledge, immutable truth, infinite goodness, almighty power. It is equally impossible that he should be deceived or deceive. His infinite understanding is the foundation of his perfect veracity. And whatsoever is the object of his will, is the object of his power; for to will and to do are the same thing in him.

It is true, the knowledge of things by experimental sense, is a clearer perception than the persuasion of them by faith. The first is to see the original, the other is to see the copy, that usually falls short of it. It is therefore said, "We now see in a glass darkly," 1 Cor. xiii. 12. But the Divine testimony in itself has the most convincing evidence, above the assurance we can have by the report of our senses, which often deceive us, through the indisposition of the faculty, or the unfitness of the medium, or the distance of the objects, or the knowledge

of things by discursive ratiocination. The objective certainty of faith is infallible. We know with the highest assurance, that God can no more lie, than he can die. It is said, "All things are possible with God," Mark x. 27. but to lie or die are not possibilities, but passibilities; not the effects of power, but proceed from weakness. We know the sacred scriptures are the word of God, by the signatures of his perfections, wisdom, holiness, goodness, justice; and by the miracles performed by the penmen of them, that proved they were divinely inspired; and consequently infallible in what they wrote.

From hence faith is often expressed by knowledge. Nicodemus gives this testimony of our Saviour, "We know that thou art a Teacher come from God. We believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. We know that he was manifested to take away our sins. We know that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," John iii. 2. vi. 69. 2 Cor. v. 1. 1 John iii. 5, 2.

I will not insist upon the particular supernatural doctrines revealed in the gospel, for there is little new to be said upon those points. If men with renewed minds and hearts considered the testimony of scripture, there would need no more arguing. But I will lay down some considerations, that prove Divine faith to be the reasonable act of the human understanding, and answer the objections alleged to justify the disbelief of Divine doctrines, that we are not able to conceive nor comprehend.

That God is true, is a principle immediately evident, not dependently upon an antecedent motive. This, by its native irresistible evidence is beyond all dispute, and exempted from all critical inquiries. There is no principle written in the minds of men with clearer characters. It was the saying of a wise heathen, If God would converse visibly with men, he would assume light for a body, and have truth for his soul. God is most jealous of the honour of his truth. "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name," Psa. cxxxviii. 2. Truth is the supreme character of the Deity. The apostle builds the assurance of christians upon the promises, and their strong consolation upon this infallible rock, "God that cannot lie," Heb. vi. 28. From hence it follows, that in supernatural doctrines, we must first consider the authority of the revealer, and then the nature of doctrines.

God's jurisdiction extends to our understandings, as well as to our wills: he rules our understandings by light, our wills by empire. If God did command us to believe only truths in themselves evident, our receiving them would not be an undoubted respect to his authority; but to believe his testimony without the evidence of things, is an obedience worthy of him. And we are equally obliged to believe his testimony concerning the truth of things, notwithstanding the reluctancy of the carnal mind, and their seeming repugnance to the natural notions of reason; as to obey his precepts, notwithstanding the reluctancy of the corrupt will, and the inclinations to forbidden things.

God never requires our assent to supernatural things revealed in his word, but he affords sufficient conviction that they are Divine revelations. When

God deputed any by commission for an extraordinary work, he always afforded a light to discover that the commission was uncounterfeit. Moses was sent from God with a command to Pharaoh, to release the Israelites from their cruel servitude; and he had the wonder-working rod to authorize his commission, and confirm the truth of his message by miracles. The divinity of the scripture, the rule of faith, shines with that clear and strong evidence, that only those whose minds are prevented with a conceit of the impossibility of the doctrines contained in it, and perverted by their passions, can resist it. Coloured objects are not discerned more clearly by their colours, nor light by its lustre, than that the scriptures are of Divine revelation.

Reason is an essential faculty of man, and by it we are directed why to believe, and what things are revealed as objects of faith. To believe, and not to understand the reason of our belief, is to turn faith into folly and extravagance. The men of Samaria were first induced to believe in Christ, for the testimony of the woman that told them, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did," John iv. 29. but when they heard Christ speak, they said, Now we believe, not for thy words, for we have heard, and know, that he is the true Saviour of the world, ver. 42. The understanding is convinced by reason of the divinity of the scriptures; and as a pole supports a vine, but does not give life and virtue to its root, so reason assists faith in directing it to the scriptures the rule of it, but faith in the mysteries of the gospel derives its life from God, the Author of them. By reason we discover the relation, order, distinction, and dependence of revealed truths; and reject the vain opinions

of men, when proposed as divine oracles, and the fruits of fancy, that are proposed as mysteries of faith.

God reveals himself to us in scripture by human expressions, according to our capacity of receiving the knowledge of divine things; and we are to understand them in their apparent sense, unless the precise literal sense contains an evident contradiction to what is certainly known by reason, and disparaging the Divine perfections. The sure rule of interpreting them, is to separate whatever is defective in them, and apply them to God in the highest degree of perfection. We read of the hands and eyes of God in scripture, which signify the perfection of God's knowledge and power: they are the organs by which men do and know things; but it is infinitely unworthy of God to think that the Divine operation has need of such instruments.

Thus the communicating of the Divine nature from the Father to the Son, is expressed by generation, which is the most noble production of one living creature from another, especially of an intelligent creature with all its properties: "But who can declare his generation?" Isa. liii. 8. We must not conceive it with the imperfection of human generation, wherein the effect is separate from the cause, and successive to it. For it is a contradiction, that God should beget a Son in his most perfect image, but he must be eternal as the Father; otherwise he would be defective in the resemblance of the first perfection of the Deity. All resemblances of God in scripture have their disparity and defects, which must be separated from him. But excepting such cases, the word of God is to be understood in its proper sense. For we must suppose that God speaks to us with an intention that we should

understand him, otherwise it were not just to require us to believe it: our minds could not firmly assent to his word, but would be floating between faith and doubts. And if God intends we should understand his meaning, how can we reconcile his wisdom with his will if he does not speak to us in the same sense as men do to one another.

We are obliged to believe supernatural doctrines no farther than they are revealed. God does not require our assent to an object beyond the merit of it; that is, the degrees of its revelation. We cannot see an object more fully than it is visible. The truth of evangelical mysteries is clearly revealed, the manner of them is not discovered. To attempt the comprehensive knowledge of them is perfectly vain; for it is impossible, impertinent, and of dangerous consequence.

It is *impossible*. Supernatural truths cannot be primarily and immediately discovered by reason, but are only known to the Divine mind, and communicated to created understandings according to the pleasure of God; "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. The gospel is called, "The mystery of Christ," Eph. iii. 4. Col. ii. 2. iv. 3. "The mystery of God and of the Father, and of Christ." Because God and Christ is the author and revealer of it. God contrived in the secret of his eternal wisdom the design of our redemption, and revealed it in his own time; it is therefore called, "The mystery of his will," Eph. i. 9. It is called, "The mystery of faith," 1 Tim. iii. 9. that is, it is received by faith. It is called, "The mystery of the kingdom of God," Mark iv. 11. concealed from the world, and only known in the church.

The sublime doctrines of the gospel, it is impossible for the clearest spirits of men to discover without special revelation, were they as pure as they are corrupt, and as sincere as they are perverse. This word mystery is never applied to the revelation that God has made of his wisdom in framing the world, and in the effects of his providence, because since the creation it has been exposed to the sight of all reasonable creatures. Men were not commanded to believe in order to salvation, till by experience they were convinced of the insufficiency of reason to direct them how to be restored to the favour of God. The apostle declares, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe," 1 Cor. i. 21. The doctrine of the Trinity is purely supernatural; for the internal distinction of the Persons in the Divine nature, by their incommunicable characters, is only proper to God. The counsels of the Divine will are above any created understanding: Who knows the things of a man but the spirit of a man, so none knows the things of God but the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. ii. 11. The angels are superior spirits to us, and excel us in sublimity and perspicacity of understanding, but they could never know the decrees of God, though in his immediate presence, but as gradually revealed. It is said of the mysteries of his counsels, "They desire to look into them," 1 Pet. i. 12. We cannot form a conception in our minds but what takes its rise from sensible things.

Also the attempt is *impertinent*; for God has revealed those great mysteries sufficiently for saving faith, though not to satisfy rash curiosity. There is

a knowledge of curiosity and discourse, and a knowledge of doing and performance. The art of navigation requires a knowledge how to govern a ship, and what seas are safe; what are dangerous by rocks and sands, and terrible tempests, that often surprise those who sail in them; but the knowledge of the causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea is not necessary. To believe savingly in Christ, we must know that he is the living and true God, and true Man, that died for our redemption; but it is not necessary that we should know the manner of the union of his two natures. It is prudent to confine our inquiries to things which are possible and profitable to be known. The discovery of the manner of Divine mysteries is not suitable to the nature of faith, for it is the evidence of things not seen, Heb. i. 1. The obscurity of the object is consistent with the certainty of the assent to it; and it is contrary to the end of revelation, which is to humble us in the modest ignorance of Divine mysteries which we cannot comprehend, and to enlighten us in those things which are requisite to be known. "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter," Prov. xxv. 2. He saveth us by the submission of faith, and not by the penetration of reason. The meanest understanding, as well as the most raised, are equally capable of salvation. The light of faith is as much below the light of glory as it is above the light of nature.

Also it is of *dangerous consequence*. There is a dropsical curiosity that swells the mind with pride, and is thirsty after the knowledge of things unsearchable. This curiosity has often been fatal to faith. It is like a man's endeavour to climb up to the inaccessible point of a rock that is very

hazardous, to see the sun in its brightness, which may safely be seen from the plain ground. The searching into the unsearchable things of God's nature and decrees, has been the occasion of many pernicious errors. It is like the silly moth fluttering about the burning light till its wings are singed. Besides, the affecting to be wise above what is written, and the attempt to make supernatural doctrines more receivable to reason by insufficient arguments, weakens the authority and credit of revelation: the endeavour to make them more easily known, makes them more hard to be believed. To venture to explicate them beyond the revelation of them in scripture, is like a man's going out of a fortress, wherein he is safe, into an open field, and exposing himself to the assaults of his enemies.

I will now consider the objections against supernatural doctrines.

It is alleged they are irreconcilable with reason; and it is not possible for the understanding to believe against its own light and judgment. In answer to this specious objection, the following particulars are to be considered:

1. Sense, reason, and faith, are the instruments of our obtaining knowledge. Sense is previous to reason, and reason prepares the way to faith. By our senses we come to understand natural things, by our understandings we come to believe Divine things. Reason corrects the errors of sense, faith reforms the judgment of reason. The stars seem but glittering points; but reason convinces us they are vast bodies, by measuring the distance, that lessens their greatness to our sight. We cannot imagine that there are men whose feet are directly opposite to ours, and are in no danger of falling;

but reason demonstrates there are antipodes. It is as absurd for reason to reject Divine testimony and violate the sacred respect of faith, as for sense to contradict the clearest principles of reason. To deny supernatural truths because they are above our conception and capacity, is not only against faith, but against reason, that acknowledges its own imperfection.

It is true, reason and faith are emanations from the Father of lights, and consequently there cannot be a real repugnance between them; for "God cannot deny himself." Errors are often contrary, but truth is always harmonious with truth. If there seem to be an opposition, it proceeds not from the light of the reasonable mind, but from the darkness that encompasses it. It is certain that a proposition which contradicts right reason, the general light of nations that have nothing common between them but the human nature, cannot be true: as the doctrine of Epicurus, that God was not to be worshipped because he had no need of our service; and the popish doctrine of transubstantiation, that imputes contradictions to God.

We must distinguish between things that cannot be discovered by reason, nor comprehensively known when they are revealed, and those that are contrary to reason. In Paradise reason was an inferior and imperfect light: Adam could not perfectly know God. He dwells in light inaccessible, not only to mortal eyes, but to the immortal angels: they cannot penetrate to the centre of his perfections. The propositions that involve a contradiction have the plain characters of falsity; but the doctrines of the gospel, that are incomprehensible, have the characters of sublimity. Reason cannot measure

the extent, nor reach the height of the love of Christ, that passes knowledge, Eph. iii. 19. That supernatural doctrines are incomprehensible now they are revealed, is one argument to prove they could never be invented and discovered by men: for that which naturally cannot enter into the mind of man, cannot naturally proceed out of it.

2. Since the fall reason is weakened, and its light is clouded. In the narrow and low sphere of natural things, how often is reason mistaken and lost in a labyrinth! There is not a flower, a fly, a stone, but is a mystery: we cannot fully understand the vegetation of the one, nor the sensation of the other, nor the motion of the other. Let us make a trial of the light of reason upon ourselves, and we shall discover its defects. Who can discern the vital bands wherewith the soul and body are combined? By what power does the soul represent absent objects? Sounds without noise, colours without tinctures, light without clearness, darkness without obscurity. What account can be given of the admirable operations of the soul in dreams, when the senses are suspended from working, and the body seems to be a warm carcass? It is one of those secrets that human wit labours in vain to explain, how it composes discourses so just and regular as to the invention and style, which by their impression in the memory we know were not the effects of wild fancy, but of sober judgment; and that awake, and intent, we could not so speedily and orderly frame. It is as strange as that an artificer should work more exactly with his eyes covered, than seeing; that a painter should draw a face better in the dark than in open daylight. That man were totally deserted of reason, who,

not being able to see things that are but a just distance from his eyes, would not acknowledge that things distant from him the extent of the horizon are beyond his sight. We are finite beings ; there is some proportion between our minds and our natures. If we cannot understand ourselves, what folly is it to presume that we know God ! “ Canst thou by searching find out God ? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ? It is high as heaven ; what canst thou do ? deeper than hell ; what canst thou know ? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea,” Job. xi. 7—9. Who can unfold the Divine attributes ? They are not confused in their unity, nor divided in number ; they are not separable qualities, but his essence : he is not only wise, but wisdom ; not only lives, but is life. We cannot speak of some attributes without distinction, wisdom and power ; nor of others without a seeming opposition, justice and mercy ; yet they are the same Divine nature, and cannot be separate but in our thoughts. He is eternal without succession ; with him there is no past and to come : he sees all things with one view, not only events that proceed from the constraint of natural and necessary causes, but that depend upon causes variously free and arbitrary. This knowledge is too wonderful for us, Psa.cxxxix. 6. To believe no more than we can understand, proceeds from the ignorance of God’s nature and our own ; for the Divine nature is truly infinite, and our minds are narrow and finite.

3. The human understanding in our lapsed state is dark and defiled, weakened and vitiated. Of this we have innumerable instances. Although the Deity be so illustriously visible in the creation, yet

even the wise heathen represented him in such a degree of deformity as is highly blasphemous. They could not conceive his infiniteness, but made every attribute a god. They transformed the glory of the immortal God into the likeness of an earthly dying man. And the papists transform a mortal man into the likeness of the great God. They attribute to the pope a power of contradicting the Divine laws; for though God, in the second commandment, so strictly forbids the worship of images, and has annexed to the prohibition the most terrible threatening of "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation," Exod. xx. 5. yet in defiance of the majesty of the Law-giver, the pope commands all his adorers to worship the images of the dead saints. He arrogates a power to dispense with oaths, the most sacred bands of human society, and thereby authorizes perjury.

4. Though reason is not able to conceive and comprehend supernatural mysteries, yet it can never demonstrate that they cannot be. Who can prove by irresistible evidence that God, who is an infinite good, cannot, by an infinite communication of himself, be in distinct subsistences? It is true our reason may find unaccountable difficulties, that one should be three in the subsistence of persons, and three one in nature; but there can be no proof that it is impossible without the perfect understanding of the nature of God. The incarnation of the Son of God is matter of astonishment, that two natures so different and immensely distant as finite and infinite, mortal and immortal, should be so intimately and inseparably united in one Person, without confusion of their properties; but we have the strongest

reason to believe that God knows his own nature, and is to be believed upon his own testimony. If the matter of his testimony be inconceivably great, we must exalt faith, and depress reason. If we will believe the word of God no farther than it is comprehensible by our reason, we infinitely disparage him; for this is no more than the credit we give to a suspected witness.

5. The doctrine of the Trinity and incarnation have a clear connexion with other truths that right reason comprehends and receives without reluctance. That men transgress the laws of God natural conscience is their accuser, an essential faculty of the human nature that can neither die with them, nor without them. That every sin needs pardon is most evident. That God is just is known by the general light of reason in all men. That it is becoming God to pardon sin in a way honourable to his justice, is as certain. Now the satisfaction of Divine justice requires the enduring the punishment ordained by the law, and equal to the guilt of sin. The guilt of sin rises from the majesty of the Law-giver, who is dishonoured by it, and the satisfaction must be by a person of equal dignity; and consequently only God can make satisfaction. Now reason dictates that he who satisfies, and he who receives satisfaction, must be distinguished. For it is not reasonable that the same person be the judge and the criminal; therefore there must be two distinct persons in the Deity. From hence the reason of the incarnation is evident; for the Deity is incapable of suffering, and it was necessary that the dignity of the Divine nature should give value to the sufferings. It was therefore requisite that the Deity should assume our nature capable of

suffering, and the salvation of the world should result from their conjunction. This doctrine is very honourable to God, and beneficial and comfortable to man, which are the conspicuous characters and strongest evidence of a doctrine truly Divine. This maintains the royalty of God, and the rights of justice; this secures our pardon and peace, and removes all the difficulties and doubts that are apt to rise in the minds of men, whether God, infinitely provoked by our rebellious sins, will be reconciled to us. It is our duty to admire the mysterious doctrines of the gospel which we do understand, and to adore those we do not. We may observe the same connexion in errors as in Divine truths; for they who rob our Saviour of his natural glory, his eternal Deity, vilify and disbelieve the value and virtue of his priestly office, by which our pardon is obtained. In short, the fabric of our salvation is built on the contrivance and consent of the Divine Persons, and the concurrence and concord of the Divine attributes.

6. The belief of supernatural things may be confirmed by comparisons and examples of things in nature, for they prove and persuade that a thing may be. Our Saviour, to cure the infidelity of the pharisees, tells them, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God," Matt. xxii. 29. In the book of scripture we read the declaration of God's will; in the book of nature we see the effects of his power. The apostle says, "The weakness of God is stronger than men," 1 Cor. i. 25. The expression is strange to a wonder; for it seems to attribute a defect to God: but he speaks in that manner to declare with emphasis that God is always equal to himself, and has no need to strain his power to overcome the strongest opposition.

The same apostle argues against infidels that say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it pleaseth him," 1 Cor. xv. 35—38. If our eyes are witnesses of such an admirable resurrection in nature, which our understandings cannot comprehend, shall it not confirm our belief of the resurrection of the body, the wonder of grace, when it is promised by God, the author of both? All difficulties vanish before infinite power. St. Paul declares, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. We are assured the Lord will change our vile bodies into the likeness of his glorious body, by the power whereby he can subdue all things to himself, Phil. iii. 21. The belief of the resurrection is drawn from the clearest springs of nature and scripture.

7. It is a prudent foundation of judging things attended with difficulties, to compare the difficulties, and to determine our judgment for that which has least. Now it is certainly much more suitable to the reasonable mind to acknowledge, that things may be true which we are not able to conceive and comprehend, than to deny the natural and proper sense of many clear and express texts of scripture, that declare those things. And by this we may judge of the glosses of Socinus, and his followers, who, without reverence of the majesty of God, and the sincerity of his word, rack the scriptures to make them speak what they do not, and use all arts to

silence them in what they do reveal. Unhappy men! that affect to be esteemed ingenious and subtle, to the extreme hazard of their own salvation. How much safer, and more easy is it to believe the plain sense of the scriptures, than the turns and shifts that are invented to elude it, and extricate heretical persons out of the difficulties that attend their opinions!

I shall add, the doctrine of the Trinity is so expressly set down in the gospel of Christ, that it is impossible the Son of God, who is infinite and eternal love, who gave himself for our redemption, should have declared it, and engaged his disciples in all ages and places in an error of such dreadful consequence, as the worshipping those who are not God.

Also it is alleged, that if a person sincerely searches into the scripture, and cannot be convinced that the supernatural doctrines of the Trinity, and others depending upon it are contained in them, he shall not be condemned by the righteous Judge of the world for involuntary and speculative errors.

To this I answer, This pretence has deceived many who were guilty of damnable heresies, and there is great reason to fear deceives men still. "The heart is deceitful above all things," Jer. xvii. 9. and most deceitful to itself. Who can say that neither interest nor passion, neither hope nor fear, neither anger nor ambition, have intervened in his inquiry after truth, but he has preferred the knowledge of Divine truths before all temporal respects, and yet he cannot believe what the scripture reveals of the nature of God, and the economy of our salvation; let this imaginary man produce his plea, for I believe there was never any such. There are

many that make reason the sovereign rule of faith, and determine such things cannot be true, because they cannot understand how they can be true. Prodigious inference! the most absurd of all errors, that makes the narrow mind of man the measure of all things. This is the proper principle of that horrible composition of heresies and execrable impieties, which so many that are christians in profession, but antichristians in belief, boldly publish. They will choose to err in matters of infinite importance, rather than confess their ignorance. And, which is astonishing, they will readily acknowledge the defectiveness of reason with respect to the understanding of themselves; but insolently arrogate a right to determine things in the nature of God!

It is true, ignorance the more invincible is the more excusable; but when the error of the mind is from a vicious will, both the error and the cause of it are sinful and inexcusable. When the corrupt will has an influence upon the understanding, and the mind is stained with some carnal lust, when a temptation diverts it from a serious and sincere considering the reasons that should induce us to believe Divine doctrines, their unbelief will be justly punished. The scripture declares that an evil heart is the cause of unbelief, Heb. iii. 12. Pride and obstinacy of mind, and carnal lusts, are the cause that so many renounce those eternal truths, by which they should be saved.

Also it is alleged, that speculative errors cannot be damnable.

To this I answer,

(1.) The understanding of man in his original state, was light in the Lord, and regular in its directions; now it is dark and disordered: and in

the points of religion that are revealed, any error induces guilt, and if obstinately defended exposes to judgment. Some truths are written because necessary to be believed; others are to be believed because written.

(2.) According to the quality of the truths revealed in scripture, such is the hurtfulness of the errors that are opposite to them. Some truths are necessary, others profitable: some errors are directly opposite to the saving truths of the gospel, others by consequence undermine them. Those who deny the Lord that bought them, are guilty of damnable heresies, capital errors, "not holding the Head," Col. ii. 19.

(3.) The doctrine of the Trinity is not a mere speculative truth, nor the denial of it a speculative error: the Trinity is not only an object of faith, but of worship. In baptism, we are dedicated to the sacred Trinity, "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," Matt. xxviii. 19. which clearly proves they are of the same authority and power, and consequently of the same nature; for it is impossible to conceive of three infinite Beings, for by necessity one would limit another. The apostle declares, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. The nature and end of this Divine mystery, is to form the spirit of man to believe, and love, and obey God. For in it, there is the clearest revelation of God's admirable love to men, of his unspotted holiness, his incorruptible justice, the great motives of religion. In that Divine doctrine we have the most delightful image of piety and virtue, the most becoming the nature of God to give, and of man to receive.

Briefly, God commands us to believe in his Son ; without faith in him we are incapable of redemption by him. When Christ performed miraculous cures, he required of the persons whether they did believe in his Divine power, and what he declared himself to be. Electing mercy ordains the means and the end ; the apostle gives thanks to God, because he has chosen the Thessalonians to salvation, " through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," 2 Thess. ii. 13. Holiness and faith in the doctrine of the gospel, are indispensable qualifications in the learned and ignorant, that would be saved by the Son of God. It is a high contempt of the truth and goodness of God, not to yield a firm assent to what he has revealed concerning our salvation by his incarnate Son. He that believes not the record that God hath given of his Son, makes God a liar, 1 John v. 10. This infinitely provokes him, and inflames his indignation. To disbelieve the testimony that Jesus Christ has given of the Divinity of his person and doctrine, is to despise him ; it robs him of his essential and his acquired glory by the work of our redemption. There can be no true love of God without the true knowledge of him, as he is revealed not only in his works, but in his word. Our Saviour, who is " the way, the truth, and the life," John xiv. 6. has declared, when he gave commission to his apostles to preach the gospel to the world, " He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. We cannot make laws to be the rule of God's judgment, but must receive them. However some may flatter erring persons in their security, it will be found in the great day, that infidelity in the light

of the glorious gospel, will have no excuse before God.

The doctrine of the gospel is like the pillar of cloud and of fire, that was darkness to the Egyptians, but enlightened the Israelites in their passage out of Egypt: it is concealed from the proud, and revealed to the humble. The human mind is imperious and turbulent, and averse from submitting to God's authority, who commands the wise and most understanding to yield full assent to his word, as the meanest capacities. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14. There is no proportion between the faculty and the object. You may as well see an angel by the light of a candle, as see the great mysteries of the gospel, by the natural mind, their reality, beauty, and excellency, so as savingly to believe them. Faith is the fruit of the Spirit, Eph. i. 17. who is styled the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, who discovers the object, and enlightens the mind to see it, and by free preventing grace inclines the will to embrace it. The Holy Spirit alone can pull down strong-holds, and cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 5. The Spirit overcomes the pride of the natural understanding by the authority of the Revealer, and enlightens the ignorance of it by the infallible revelation. Violence and temporal respects, may by terrors and allurements make men hypocrites, but cannot make them sincere believers;

there will be a form of religion without, and atheism within. It is special grace inspires the elect of God with light to see spiritual things, and requires special thankfulness.

Let us humbly pray to the Father of mercies, and of lights, that he would reveal the mysteries of his kingdom to the minds of men. "If the gospel be hid, it is hid to those that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

CHAPTER VII.

The power of faith to overcome all that is opposite to our salvation. A speculative assent to supernatural truths is not saving. The efficacy of faith against the temptations of the world proceeds from the nature of its objects, and the degrees of assent, and the frequent application of them to our hearts. There is an incomparable difference between the good and evil things that are present, and those that are future. The evidence and importance of future good things, and our interest in them, fixes our assent, and makes it effectual. Justifying faith considered in its nature and purifying virtue. Faith in the disposals of Divine providence, is a fundamental principle from whence many practical consequences are derived. The heathens had very disparaging conceptions of God's providence. The scripture declares that nothing happens without the knowledge, the will, either permissive or approving, and the ordering providence of God. This is very influential to the lives of men.

IV. I WILL now consider the power and efficacy of faith, to overcome all that is opposite to our salvation.

I shall premise, there is a common delusion, that has a pernicious influence into the minds and lives of many; that those are true believers, who yield a dry and barren assent to the mysteries of the gospel, without the practical belief of them. They do not foment and authorize doubts by the

pretence of reason, nor excite revolts in their minds, and entertain objections against supernatural truths; but they never felt the spirit and power of faith in raising them above the low descents of carnal minds, and setting their affections on things above. The love of the present world, like a stupifying wine, causes in them a forgetfulness of heaven, and that which is the most dangerous idolatry in the sight of God, is seated in their hearts. The understanding submits to Divine revelation, but the will is rebellious against the Divine commands. They believe what is necessary to believe, but not what is necessary to do. They are satisfied with a speculative faith that costs nothing, and will go with them to hell, for the devils believe supernatural truths. They are rich in the notions of faith, but poor in the precepts of obedience. Now in the language of scripture, saving faith and knowledge of Divine things are productive of such affections and actions as are correspondent to the nature of the things believed. If the head be enlightened, and the heart in darkness, if one professes ever so fully his assent and adherence to all the articles of faith, and the beams of faith are not visible in his conversation, he is an infidel. He that says, I know Christ, or which is equivalent, believe in him, "and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," 1 John ii. 4. Every habitual sinner is an unbeliever. Unfeigned faith receives the word of God in all its parts, doctrines, commands, promises, not only as infallibly true, but superlatively good and precious, and entirely embraces them, with a despising of all things that may come in competition with them, and expresses the esteem and love of them in the practice. The

two inseparable properties of saving faith, are—It is humble and submissive to Divine revelation—It is dutiful and obedient to Divine precepts.

This being premised, I will consider the power of faith proceeding, 1. From the nature of the objects upon which it is exercised. 2. From the degrees of its assent and adherence to them. 3. From the serious and frequent application of the objects to our heart.

1. From the nature of the objects upon which it is exercised. Now between them and the most enticing good things, and the most fearful evil in this present state, there is an incomparable difference. The apostle tells us, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith," 1 John v. 4. Victory supposes a fight, and a fight supposes an enemy; the enemy is declared, the world, including the men of the world, and the things of it. This enemy is in combination with the devil and the flesh. He is styled the "prince of this world," that manages the temptations of it for the ruin of souls. He tries his poisons according to the dispositions of men, in hopes of working in them. He presents to some a charming cup, to intoxicate them with the pleasures of sin; he tempts others with things of lustre, with titles of honour and dignity, that dazzle their minds, that they cannot give a true and safe judgment of things; he allures others with riches. And as heat is doubled by reflection, so he enforces his temptations, from the prevalence of these motives upon men in all places and times. If these methods are unsuccessful to turn men from God, he tries to make terrible impressions upon the minds of men by afflicting evils, by the rage of the perverse

world. Now faith is the victorious principle, that defeats all his designs, and overcomes all his strength. In mechanical operations, we judge by the force of the mover, how easily a weight will be moved. Thus when eternal realities are by faith put into the scales against temporal vanities, they infinitely outweigh them. The apostle makes a judicious comparison ; " Our light afflictions that are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17. He extremely vilifies things present, and magnifies things future. All that is pleasant or painful here is but for a moment, and in true value is infinitely inferior to the good things, and the evil to come. I count, saith the apostle, the afflictions of the present time, are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed, Rom. viii. 18. And since the impressions of pain are incomparably stronger, and more affecting human nature than impressions of pleasure, one sharp pain deadens the sensitive faculties to the most vehement pleasures. We are assured by irresistible evidence, that the happiness of this world is in true value infinitely inferior to the happiness of the next. The most pleasant things here cannot satisfy the narrow faculties of sense ; " The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing," Eccl. i. 8. but the favour of God, and the blessed effects of it, pass all understanding, our most comprehensive faculty.

There is more shadow than light in our brightest condition ; more gall than honey in our sweetest fruitions. But suppose the appearance of worldly happiness, gilded with specious tinctures, were truly great and goodly, joyful and satisfying, according

to the fancies of carnal men, yet the price would extremely fall, by considering that they are of no longer continuance than the flight and expiring breath of our present life. The glory of this world is like a flash of lightning in its appearing and vanishing. The longest line of time, from its first rise to its last period, is but a point to eternity. Now that happiness which is fading is not true happiness in its own nature, nor correspondent to our reasonable desires; for the apprehension of its approaching end will imbitter the relish of the present enjoyment.

But the happiness of the next life is doubly infinite in the degrees and duration. The least part of that happiness is a perfect freedom from any touch or shadow of evil. Human language has not words worthy or fully significant to describe it. God, who is an infinite good and goodness, communicates himself to the immortal soul according to its utmost capacity and desires. It seems impossible for men to offer such violence to their understandings as, calmly considering, and in cold blood, to prefer the fashion of this world that passes away, 1 Cor. vii. 31. before the perfect and unchangeable happiness in the next world.

2. According to the degrees of our assent to future eternal things, such is their victorious power in our souls. The objective efficacy of things is not from their existence, but from their evidence to our minds. Now according as our apprehensions are more clear, and our belief more steadfast of things future, such impressions are made either of terror or desire in our breasts. The apostle defines faith to be "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. It

represents things future and distant as present and in our actual possession. A superficial fluctuating belief of the good or evil things in the next state, is of no force to encounter present temptations and vanquish the carnal affections. The report of the senses concerning things present will preponderate the authority of God's word, that declares things future infinitely to exceed them. All fire has heat; but not strong enough to melt down gold and silver. There is an assent in every degree of faith, but not able to overcome the world. A rooted firm belief of the infallible truth, the transcendent goodness, and our sure right in heavenly things, will cause all the false colours of this world, the shadows in masquerade, to disappear.

The evidence and importance of things fixes our resolutions to adhere to them. The son of a king, and heir of a kingdom, will invincibly assert the truth of his relation and title. A sincere believer of the heavenly glory, and his eternal interest in it, will live in that faith and die in it; and die for it if necessity require. The belief of it has a vital taste, a joy sincere and sweet, that makes the pleasant temptations of the world nauseous. As faith is the foundation and basis of hope, (it is the substance of things hoped for,) so hope is reciprocally as a strong pillar that establishes the basis upon which it is fixed; for one voluntarily and stedfastly believes that which is for his advantage and comfort. The serious belief of the prepared plagues for those who are unfaithful to God, and their souls hereafter, will make all the evils threatened and inflicted upon the godly here to be contemptible. If we are surrounded with an army of evils, let faith draw forth the powers of the world to combat us, "we shall be more

than conquerors," Rom. viii. 37. There are many temptations we cannot avoid; there are none but we may vanquish by the power of faith. The fear of God, like Aaron's rod, turned into a serpent that swallowed up the rods of the magicians, will overrule the fear of men, and make those evils that to nature are invincible, easily endured. This is evident from the courage and constancy of the martyrs, who despised the proudest tyrants upon their thrones, and the most cruel executioners upon the scaffold: the effects of faith in the time of its triumph. If the same objects have not the same efficacy in the minds of men, it is for want of faith. If faith declines, we shall faint and die away. Peter walked on the sea while he relied on the word of Christ, but when a blast of wind shook his faith he presently sunk. The apostles doubted of Christ's power, when a storm fell upon the ship. Our Saviour first rebuked their fear before he laid the storm, ("Why are ye afraid, O ye of little faith?" Matt. viii. 26.) as a danger more near, and of worse consequence.

Let us try the singular efficacy of faith by exercising of it upon eternal objects; let our faith represent to us in as lively a manner the eternal judgment, as Enoch had a prospect of it; "Behold the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints to judge all the ungodly," Jude 14. Let faith direct its view to him rending the heavens, and coming in his own glory as the Son of God, and in his Father's glory as constituted by him to be Judge of the world, and in the glory of the mighty angels his attendants. Let faith contemplate the Judge upon a white throne, the emblem of his holiness, whom none can surprise or resist. Let faith make that

day as present when there will be no place for repentance; when the fountain of mercy to sinners will be sealed for ever; when the books of eternal life and death shall be opened, and all men shall receive an irrevocable judgment; a judgment so fearful that sinners, how great and terrible soever they were in this world to others, shall "call to the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them, from the wrath of the Lamb; for his day is come," Rev. vi. 16. a judgment so strict that the righteous shall scarcely be saved, 1 Pet. iv. 18. Now what impressions of tormenting fear or reviving hopes will the strong belief of the eternal judgment and the consequences of it make in us, when heaven and hell shall divide all men according as we are prepared or unprepared for the trial of that deciding day! How will it make us circumspect and cautious to avoid evil, active and ardent in doing good; for every thing must be brought in judgment! How ambitious and diligent to be accepted of our Judge! Let faith open a window into heaven, and represent the saints in their sun-like brightness, their glory and joy, and triumphant felicity in the eternal kingdom where God is all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 28. How will the believing view of this rectify our minds, and convince us that nothing deserves our esteem and love but the favour and fruition of the blessed God!

Let faith open the fatal gates of hell that are ever shut upon the damned, and discover the scenes of woe, the sights of horror, the tormenting passions of reprobates, their desperate sorrow for the loss of heaven, and fierce indignation that others enjoy it; both which are implied in their weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, Matt. viii. 12.

How powerful will this representation be to keep us in awe and order, to control the lusts and licentiousness of carnal appetites! How would this double vision make us esteem all the good things here as vile as dross, and all the evil as light as feathers, in comparison of eternal things! How would this inspire us with resolutions to take heaven by violence, and to fly from the wrath to come!

3. The efficacy of faith proceeds from the serious and frequent application of eternal objects to our minds and hearts. All that are christians in profession, prefer in the idea and speculation eternal things before temporal; but in practice and choice the most prefer temporal before eternal. Present and sensible things strongly affect the carnal faculties, and excite the natural inclinations that were dormant in the absence of alluring objects; but when awakened, they distract and scatter the mind from a just comparing of things present and things future; and the will applies the thoughts to what is delightful to the carnal part, and the application determines the choice. The interposition of earthly things eclipses the light of faith, and weakens the reflections of that light upon the mind. A strong temptation defaces the impression of things future, though infinitely great; and consequently the passions prevail, and faith is vanquished. What man, who has heaven and hell in his view, and considers that the day of death and judgment are equally uncertain as to the fixed time, and equally certain as to the event, and that this short life must issue either into rivers of pleasure for ever, or into an abyss of endless misery, can be doubtful a moment what to choose, and what to avoid? Yet it is

evident that vast numbers of men who are between two eternities, are indifferent and unconcerned into which their lot shall be determined. The enchanting world darkens the remembrance and damps the desire of heaven, and extinguishes the fear of hell. Transient thoughts of future things cannot excite and influence the affections, nor regulate the will and actions according as the moment of them requires. Moses despised the pomp and pleasures of the Egyptian court, and chose afflictions with the people of God, because he had an intent and fixed eye upon the future reward, Heb. xi. 26. Paul had a heavenly vision, the idea of which was always bright in his memory, and a heavenly conversation. Now faith supplies the want of vision, and, if its acts are not interrupted by earthly objects, will continually inspire us with suitable affections to eternal things. Above all other means let us fly to prayer, that the Holy Spirit, by his illuminating guidance, would direct our minds, and actuate our faith ; (We have received the Spirit that we may know the things given us of God, 1 Cor. ii. 12.) that the Spirit would be our remembrancer, and strongly impress eternal things upon us : without his influence our consideration will be cold and ineffectual.

Second. There is a justifying faith. The apostle declares, " Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," Rom. v. 1. This is very clearly opened in the gospel ; yet there have been lately published some contentious writings about it, mixed with such railleries and contumelies that have opened a scandalous scene, and exposed religion to the derision of libertines and profane spirits, and affected the godly with sorrowful impressions, and with

earnest longings after the kingdoms of light and love, where ignorance and strife are abolished for ever. Injurious language convinces none, but renders the minds of men more averse from instruction. We are not likely to discover the truth in a mist of passion; but when truth is calmly conveyed, the mind is more attentive to receive it, and its convincing and persuasive power insinuates into us. Christian love would lessen the number and allay the heat of our controversies.

I have discoursed elsewhere concerning justifying faith, and shall now very briefly glance at some things wherein its nature and purifying virtue consists.

Justification is an act of God as supreme Judge, invested with the relation of a Father, wherein his majesty and mercy are equally illustrious in pardoning our sins, and conferring upon us a right to eternal life for the satisfaction and merits of Christ's righteousness imputed to us and received by faith. Faith is the condition that qualifies us to have pardon applied to us, and its nature consists in receiving Christ upon the terms of the gospel, John i. 12. that is, our unfeigned accepting him as our Prince and Saviour, Acts v. 31. and entire reliance upon him. The general belief of the gospel is not justifying faith, but our regular trust in the pardoning grace of God necessarily includes our performing the condition of the promise; that is, a reliance on Christ joined with a sincere resolution to obey him. A particular persuasion that our sins are pardoned is not justifying faith; we are commanded to believe that we may be pardoned. Many sincere believers have distracting doubts about their pardon; the matter being of infinite

importance, they are fearful in the inquiries of their title to it. And others are deceived with presumption instead of faith in Christ, and security instead of peace with God. And by this we may understand from whence the purifying virtue of faith, as it justifies, proceeds; for it necessarily supposes us to be under the guilt of sin, and in desperate misery; that we are obnoxious to God's tribunal, who is a righteous and holy Judge, angry and incensed for our sins, and will be a revenging Judge to all that continue in their guilty state; and that our pardon and right to eternal life are to be entirely ascribed to the sovereign mercy of God, the original cause; and the blood of Christ, the meritorious cause of it, Rom. iii. 25. Now faith works by love, Gal. v. 6. the love of God to us apprehended by faith, and our love to him, which is the reflection of his beams shining in our hearts, and is the powerful principle of obedience to him. The well-grounded belief that God will save us, and bring us to eternal glory, does naturally and necessarily inspire the breast of a christian with a holy fear of sin that provokes him, and a constant care to please him in all things. Besides, God, in dispensing his pardoning mercy, requires our perseverance in a holy conversation. What our Saviour said to the man miraculously cured of his inveterate disease, "Behold thou art made whole, sin no more lest a worse thing come upon thee," John v. 14. is virtually said to every pardoned believer. When God speaks peace to his people, it is with this caution, "Let them not return any more to folly," Psa. lxxxv. 8. I shall under another head speak of faith as the effectual means of our sanctification, and now will proceed.

Faith in the disposal of all things by the infallible

providence of God, is one of those universal principles, those prime and great truths, rich in practical consequences, that are powerful to compose and calm our minds and hearts in the midst of the visible disorders and confusion of things in the present world. The heathens measured the Divine perfections by the compass of their narrow understandings. They could not conceive that one God was able to order all things, and formed a vast number of subordinate gods, to whom the care of particular things was committed. They blasphemed him in their imaginations, thinking him to be like mortal kings, insufficient to govern immediately several kingdoms and nations, divers in their customs and languages: who are constrained to manage their affairs by the number, variety, and order of officers: vice-roys to divide the government, counsellors to advise about occurrences of moment, secretaries to give commissions and make despatches, judges to dispense the laws, military officers to prevent tumults.

Others confined his presence and agency to the heavens, and sequestered him from the lower world the mutable sphere of the elements, and of men and their actions, leaving them under the dominion of fortune. Others thought that he was so content with his own felicity, that all things without him were distant from his thoughts and care, and that to regard and regulate the multitude of emergencies in this lower world would disturb his felicity. Thus the professors of wisdom, like the foolish Harpaste that Seneca speaks of, who, insensible of her own blindness, always complained the sun was down and the house dark, thought all things were left at random in loose disorder and confusion here below.

Nay some of the clearest spirits, and most virtuous among the heathen, could not reconcile the oppressions and infelicities of good men, and the prosperity of the wicked, with the rectitude and equity of the Divine providence; and expressed their discontents in the style and accent of their passions. Of this we have two eminent instances: Brutus, who with inviolable integrity had as a senator managed the public affairs, and with undecaying courage endeavoured to recover his country from ignominious bondage, when vanquished by the usurpers, broke out into a tragical complaint, "O virtue, I worship thee as a substantial good, a deity; but thou art an empty name, an idol." The emperor Titus, who was the delight of mankind for his goodness and benignity, surprised with death in his flourishing age, accused Heaven that his life was unjustly snatched from him. The ways and thoughts of God in the government of the world are above the ways and thoughts of men, as the heavens are higher than the earth, Isa. lv. 9. And if his wisdom had not descended from heaven, and discovered itself in the sanctuary, we should be foolish, and like the beasts that perish, Psa. lxxiii. 22.

But the word of God assures us that nothing happens in this tumultuous and tempestuous world without the knowledge, the will, either approving or permissive, and efficiency of God so far as to dispose the worst evils by his powerful providence subordinately to his main end, that is always good. Nothing is so high as to be exempted from the dominion, nor so low as to be excluded from the care of his providence.

1. We are assured that all things and persons are under the eye and inspection of his providence. No

silence, no solitude nor darkness, can hide the designs and actions of the wicked, nor the sufferings of his people from his perfect knowledge. How many millions of inhabitants are in the world, how different their conditions and circumstances, ebbing or flowing! but they are all actually and distinctly known to God. Without his universal and infallible knowledge, it were impossible that God should govern the world and judge it. Torquatus Manlius, a noble Roman, though blind through age, was chosen consul and general to rule the state and the army. But no arguments, no entreaties, could persuade him to consent to it; He answered, that it was absolutely absurd that the lives and estates of others should be committed to his providence and protection, who must manage all things by the eyes of others. The perfection of God's knowledge qualifies him to govern the world, and is the foundation of trust in him. He tells the number of the stars, that seem innumerable, Psa. cxlvii. 4. and from hence the psalmist encourages the church, that was then dispersed in captivity, that he could gather the out-casts of Israel, though scattered in strange countries, and build up Jerusalem, ver. 2. He not only numbers the stars, but the hairs of our heads, Matt. x. 30. that are of so small consideration. All creatures are supported in their beings and operations by his power, therefore it is impossible they should be without his knowledge, and that any thing should be done by them, or befall them, without his disposing will.

2. The providence of God is not merely theoretical, but active, and orders all things. He "rides upon the heavens," Deut. xxxiii. 26. that is,

regulates their motions as easily as a skilful rider manages a horse. The stars, that in the language of scripture are the armies of heaven, for their number, order, and actions, he calls by their names, Psa. cxlvii. 4. that is, absolutely commands them. For his call is always effectual and exactly accomplished. As in the creation, he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. So in the conservation and government of the world, his word is as powerful. "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth," Isa. xl. 26. He is not only the God of the hills, but of the valleys, 1 Kings xx. 28. There is nothing so inconsiderable but is under the immediate disposal of his providence. A sparrow worth but half a farthing does not fall to the ground, nor a hair of our heads, without his disposal, Matt. x. 30. All the casualties and contingencies in the world are ordered by him. The arrow shot at a venture was directed by an invisible eye and hand, to smite the king of Israel between the joints of his harness, and wound him to death, 1 Kings xxii. 34. The most arbitrary and free causes are under his determining influence. The hearts of kings are in his hands, and are turned by him as rivers of waters, which a gardener turns into several channels for to make his ground fruitful. Sin, that is directly contrary to his law, is not only permitted and restrained, but ordered as a means to illustrate his providence, justice, and goodness. Joseph's malicious brethren sold him into Egypt, but God sent him to make provision

for the family of Jacob in a time of extreme famine. He permitted the lying spirit to deceive Ahab, by inspiring his false prophets to encourage him to go to Ramoth-gilead that he might fall in battle. He gives riches and honour to his enemies, who presumptuously break his laws of the greatest consequence, and foresees they will abuse them, and prodigally perish.

It was an incredible conception to the heathen, that one God was able to govern the world; but his power and understanding are truly infinite, Psa. cxlvii. 5. and it is more easy to him than for a man to lift a feather. The accidents in this world are innumerable, but cannot distract an infinite eternal mind, nor cause weariness in the Almighty. Every agent must be united by active power with the objects upon which it immediately works. The power of God is his essence, not a separable quality; he is intimate and present with all things. One sun is sufficient to measure times, distinguish seasons, and to preserve an entire world of living creatures; the meanest worm or herb is cherished by its heat, as if all its influences were confined for their preserving. And is not an infinite God sufficient to support and dispose all things?

3. Divine providence is more special and tender towards God's peculiar people. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards him," 2 Chron. xvi. 9. His tender mercies (his extensive attribute) are over all his works; but more eminently exercised according to their degrees of goodness, and his propriety in them. Our Saviour infers by the clearest consequence that the Divine providence, that reaches to

the falling of a sparrow, is much more concerned for his people; and accordingly encourages his disciples, "Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows," Matt. x. 31. God is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe, 1 Tim. iv. 10. Now as when the reason of a command has a direct aspect upon us, it more strongly binds us to obey God; so when the reason of a promise has a peculiar respect to us, it engages God more strongly to preserve us. God has a right to all mankind by a general tenure, but a special interest in the godly. He is the King of nations, and the King of saints; it is his dearest title, above all the titles of majesty ascribed to him. They are precious in his esteem, his treasure, his jewels, the most valuable part of his treasure, the jewels of his crown, the most radiant and rich jewels, Exod. xix. 5. Zech. iii. 7. Mal. iii. 17. Proprietorship and preciousness engage his powerful and propitious providence for their good. They are exposed to many evils for their relation to him their heavenly Father, and for his image shining in them. "For thy sake we are killed all the day long," Rom. viii. 36. They are like a flock of sheep among wolves and tigers, unable to defend themselves. His compassionate love excites his power for their preservation. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this," Isa. xxxvii. 32. His love inclines him, and his promise engages him never to leave nor forsake them: when they are ready to despair, he is ready to deliver. Now the firm belief of the universal providence of God, and his special care for his people, is like a rudder to a ship, without which it is constrained to yield to every storm; but guided by it, sails with every wind to its designed port. When God entered into

a covenant with Abraham, he assures him, "I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect," Gen. xvii. 1. Every deviation from our duty proceeds either from the hope of obtaining some temporal good, or the fear of incurring some temporal evil: these passions are very forcible in men's breasts. We see how powerful they are in sensitive creatures; even in a greyhound's coursing a hare, hope adds wings to the feet of the one, and fear adds wings to the feet of the other. Men without faith in God, will break through his laws when temptations work on their hope or fear; for they are under the dominion of sense: but the belief of God's all-sufficiency, that he is a sun to supply us with all truly desirable good things, a shield to secure us from all destructive evils, confirms our dependence on him, and engages our obedience to him.

This conduces to our present peace and future blessedness. There are secret springs of providence that work sometimes in an extraordinary manner for the preserving his people. Joseph was raised from a prison to a principality. The poor prophet was fed by ravens, when the wicked king was like to starve in his palace. The malicious design of Haman to destroy the whole nation of the Jews was frustrated, and reflexively pernicious to himself, by a strange concurrence of circumstances ordered by Divine providence. The faithful companions of Daniel, who resigned themselves to his will and wisdom, were rescued from the furnace and fury of the proud king by an angel.

But many times the saints of God are involved in common calamities: inundations, earthquakes, the pestilential air, sword, famine, make no difference

between the innocent and the guilty: the sun rises upon the evil and the good, Matt. v. 45. the thunder falls on the good and evil. Nay, as our Saviour tells his disciples, they shall weep and lament when the world rejoices, John xvi. 20. But he comforts them with the assurance, that their sorrow shall be turned into joy. The apostle declares, "We know all things work together for good to them that love God," Rom. viii. 28. There are mysterious depths in the economy of Providence that the short line of our reason cannot sound; but we may rely upon the promise of God, who can bring light out of darkness, 2 Cor. iv. 6. We have an illustrious proof of his universal providence in the regular disposal of natural causes, superior, middle, and lowest, in such a union, that from the insuperable discord of natures, the insuperable concord of operations proceeds, for the preserving of the world. The afflictions of the saints are medicinal to prevent or recover them from sin. And what man of understanding does not esteem his physician, who prescribes bitter remedies for his health, before a cook that prepares things pleasant to his taste. Faith sees the love of a Father through a cloud of tears; and that he is as gracious when he corrects us for our transgressions, as when he encourages us in his service. In the sufferings of his people from the wickedness and wills of their enemies, his wisdom and power appear in ordering them for excellent effects; for the same things that increase the guilt and punishment of their enemies, increase the graces and reward of the saints. These light afflictions that are but for a moment, work out for them an exceeding eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17. When all the folds

of providence shall be opened, we shall clearly understand every dispensation was as it ought to be, and for the best.

The belief of this is the reason of those commands, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus," Phil. iv. 6, 7. An unbelieving heart anticipates future evils, exasperates present evils, and makes sharp reflections on past evils. It makes men dead with fear, drunk with sorrow, mad with oppression. Faith in the gracious providence of God frees us from vain fears, sad prognostics, and the miserable perplexities that torment the minds of men. Musing on our miseries is like chewing a bitter pill, that is readily swallowed by resignation to the blessed will of God, the rule of goodness. Faith enlightens us to consider things with a rectified judgment, and not with the partiality of the passions. In the church's extremity, when the conspiring enemies are great in numbers and power, faith raises the drooping spirits, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. When Antigonus was ready to engage in a sea-fight with Ptolemy's armada, and the pilot cried out, "How many are they more than we!" the courageous king replied, "It is true, if you count their numbers; but for how many do you value me?" One God is all-sufficient against all the combined forces of earth and hell. We are therefore commanded to cast all our care on him, for he cares for us, 1 Pet. v. 7. It is very dishonourable to God to distrust him in doing our duty; for it proceeds either from a jealousy of his goodness,

or low thoughts of his power ; as if he were unable and unwilling to save us. A prudent use of means is requisite, otherwise we do not trust but tempt his providence. There is a vicious carelessness and a virtuous care ; but diffident and anxious cares, as if all things run at random without the ordering of our heavenly Father, is not only fruitless but pernicious. The apostle tells the believing Hebrews, "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye may inherit the promise," Heb. x. 36. Some evils would admit of no consolation without the promise ("but the just shall live by faith," Hab. ii. 4.) of God's presence with them, to support and relieve them in their sorrows, and of a perfect and gracious deliverance out of them. God will shortly put an end to the malice of the wicked, and the patience of the saints. In the next state, when he has cleared our sight, we shall justify his wisdom, and discover that all events were divinely ordered, and are beautiful to admiration. Now in the church's distress we are apt to say with Gideon, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" Judg. vi. 13. But then we shall turn the current of our wonder upon our ignorance and unbelief ; that, notwithstanding the evidence of the word, and the experience of the saints, prove that God turns all temporal evils to their spiritual good, yet we are unbelieving.

CHAPTER VIII.

Love the leading affection. Men are distinguished by their wills rather than by their understandings. Holy love has the supremacy among other graces. The excellences of love specified. Love to God the first command in order and dignity. The causes and properties of it considered. The absolute and relative perfections of God the motives of our love. The benefits received from God in the order of nature; creation and preservation. The love of God appears in its full force in our redemption. We must learn of Christ how to love him. Love must descend from God to our neighbour. It is commended in scripture. The extent and qualifications of it. It must be sincere, pure, and fervent. The forgiving injuries, an excellent effect of love.

THE second particular grace that we should strive to increase, is love. It is the apostle's prayer for the Philippians, that their love may abound more and more in knowledge, and all understanding, Phil. i. 9. Love is the affection of union; of this we have an illustrious instance recorded in scripture, "That the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul," 1 Sam. xviii. 1. Love is to be directed to a double object, God and our neighbour.

I will consider the excellence of this sanctified affection, and its exercise and reference to the supreme and subordinate objects of it.

It is requisite to premise that love is the leading affection that draws the whole train with it; not only desire and joy, that are of near alliance with it, but anger and hatred, between which affections and love there is a repugnance and entire opposition, are inseparable from it; for aversion and flight from evil proceeds from the love of some good that the evil deprives us of. From hence it follows that it is a matter of the highest consequence, by wisdom discreet and severe, to direct our love to worthy objects. Love is the principle of all the passions, and either sanctifies and refines them from the relics of carnal infection, or seduces and corrupts them. The mind is so clouded by carnal love, and overruled by pleasant error, that it prefers sensual happiness before spiritual, that is suitable to the nature and dignity of the soul. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Matt. vi 23.

The angels of light are distinguished from the angels of darkness, not so much by knowledge and power as by love and holiness. The devils are immortal spirits, but under the tyrannical power of hatred and revenge, of envy and malice, which are their sins and torment.

Men are not distinguished so much by their understandings as their wills; not merely by knowledge, but love, the first act of the will, the faculty that rules in man, and obeys God. There may be knowledge of the Divine law, and an approving it by those who do not practise it; for the contemplation of its goodness and equity constrains the mind to assent to it. From hence we may infallibly infer, that the radical difference, and distinguishing character, between a saint and one in the

state of polluted nature, is the affection of love with respect to its objects and degrees. Love to God as our sovereign happiness, is the immediate cause of our conversion and reunion with him. Love to vicious objects, or when with an intemperate current it descends to things not deserving its ardent degrees, alienates the heart from God. Holiness is the order of love. The excellency of holy love will appear in the following considerations :

1. Love has the supremacy among all the graces of the Spirit. This, in the most proper sense, is the fire our Saviour came to kindle on the earth. The apostle declares that charity is greater than faith and hope, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. which are evangelical graces of eminent usefulness ; for,

(1.) It is the brightest part of the Divine image in us. "God is love," 1 John iv. 16. It is the most adequate notion of the Deity, and more significant of his blessed nature, than any other single attribute. The most proper and honourable conception we can form of the Deity, is love directed by infinite wisdom, and exercised by infinite power. Faith and hope cannot be ascribed to God ; they imply imperfection in their nature, and necessarily respect an absent object. Now all things are present to the knowledge of God, and in his power and possession. But love is his essential perfection ; the productive principle of all good. Love transforms us into his likeness, and infuses the divinest temper into the soul. In the acts of other graces we obey God ; in the acts of love we imitate him.

This may be illustrated by its contrary ; there are sins of various kinds and degrees, spiritual and carnal : spiritual, such are pride, malignant envy, irreconcilable enmity, delight in mischief, which

are the proper characters of the devil, and denominate men his own sons. Carnal sins, which the soul immersed in flesh indulges, all riotous excesses, intemperance, incontinence, and the like, of which a mere spirit is not capable, denominates men the captives and slaves of Satan. Now spiritual sins induce a greater guilt, and deeper pollution than carnal. The exacter resemblance of the evil one, makes sinful men more odious to God.

(2.) Love is more extensive in its influence than faith and hope; their operations are confined to the person in whom they are. The just lives by his own faith, and is saved by his own hope, without communicating life and salvation to others; but it is the spirit and perfection of love to be beneficial to all. Love comforts the afflicted, relieves the indigent, directs those who want counsel. It is the vital cement of mankind. In the universe, conversation and reciprocal kindness is the blood and spirits of society, and love makes the circulation.

(3.) Love gives value and acceptance to all other gifts and graces, and their operations. The apostle tells us, "Though I have the gift of prophecies, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; though I have all faith, and could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3. Without charity faith is but a dead assent; hope is like a tympany, the bigger it grows, the more dangerous it proves. The most diffusive beneficence without love, is but a sacrifice to vanity. It is not the richness of the gift, but the love of the giver, that makes it ac-

cepted and rewarded in heaven. The widow's two mites cast into the treasury of the temple were of more value, in our Saviour's account, than the rich offerings of others, Mark xii. 42. For she gave her heart, the most precious and comprehensive gift, with them. The giving our bodies to be burned for the truth and glory of the gospel, is the highest expression of obedience, which the angels are not capable of performing; yet without charity, martyrdom is but a vain-glorious blaze, and the sealing the truth with our blood is to seal our shame and folly. Sincere love, when it cannot express itself in suitable effects, has this privilege to be accepted in God's sight, as if it were exuberant and evident in outward actions; for God accepts the will for the deed: "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not," 2 Cor. viii. 12.

(4.) Love is the perfection of the law, the sum and substance of every precept. All particular duties, though distinguished in the matter, are united in love as their principle and centre. St. Austin observes, "That all other virtues, piety, prudence, humility, chastity, temperance, fortitude, are love diversified by other names. Liberal love gives supplies to the poor, patient love forgives injuries."

Love is the end and perfection of the gospel. "Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned," 1 Tim. i. 5. Some restrain the word commandment to the law, thinking that the gospel is only compounded of promises, but they misunderstand the difference between the two covenants.

It is not in that the one commands, and the other does not command, but in the nature of the duties commanded. The law commands to do for the obtaining of life, the gospel commands to believe for salvation. "This is the command of God, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23. 1 Tim. i. 18. 1 Thess. iv. 2. Acts xiv. 15. The word in the Greek is by the apostle used for the doctrine of the gospel; as the end of a science or art is the perfection of the understanding in those things which are the proper subject of the science. The end of philosophy is knowledge and moral virtue; the end of rhetoric is eloquence. Thus the end of the gospel, the Divine doctrine of our salvation, is love, a celestial perfection. Faith in the redeeming mercy of God, is the product of the gospel, not of the law, and love is the end of faith. Now the end is more excellent than the means to obtain it. In this respect love is greater than faith. Briefly, love is styled the bond of perfection, as it unites and consummates other graces; comprehends and fastens them. Love to God draws forth all the active powers of the soul in obedience. He that with a full and fervent will applies himself to his duty, will more easily, pleasantly, and exactly perform it. The love of God will form the soul into a more entire conformity to his nature, and obedience to his law, and raise it to a greater eminence of holiness than the clearest knowledge of all precepts and rules can do.

(5.) "Love never fails," 1 Cor. xiii. 8. The gifts and graces of the Spirit are dispensed and continued according to our different states. Some are necessary in the present state of the church, with respect to our sins and troubles, from which there is no

perfect freedom here. Repentance is a duty of constant revolution; for while we are clothed with frail flesh, "in many things we offend all," Jas. iii. 2. He is the best saint who seldom falls, and speedily rises. What Tertullian said of himself is applicable to all, "We are born for repentance." What is more becoming a christian, while so many defects and defilements cleave to him, than a mournful sense of them? This in our dying hours will make our Redeemer more precious to us, and our reliance upon his merits and mediation more comfortable. Repentance should accompany us to the gates of heaven; but repentance ceases for ever when there is entire innocence. Faith is as necessary as life, for we are justified by it from the condemnation of the law: but in the future state there is no use of it; for in heaven all sins are pardoned, and in hell no sins are forgiven. Faith gives us the prospect of heaven, hope waits for it, but love alone takes the possession. Faith resigns to fruition, hope vanishes in the enjoyment of our desired happiness, but love is in its exaltation. The graces requisite for our militant state, are spiritual armour: the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, and when our warfare is ended they are useless. But love, and peace, and joy, are robes suitable to our triumphant state.

It is true, there are some acts of love that suppose want and misery as acts of bounty and compassion, for there are no objects in heaven to whom they may be expressed. Perfect happiness excludes all evil. But love in its nature implies no imperfection, and is eternal as the soul, the subject in whom it reigns, and as God, and the blessed spirits, the objects upon whom it is conversant. In heaven it

is more pure and refined. Here the love of God takes its rise from the love of ourselves ; there it is principally for the amiable excellences inherent in himself. Here the love of the saints is not absolutely pure ; but in heaven, whatever is desirable in love is continued, and what is carnal and defiling is purged away. The smoky fire is changed into a spiritual flame. The acts of it are more intense, and the exercise is without interruption. In heaven the saints are enlightened with knowledge from the Father of lights, and inflamed with love from God, who is love ; the more fully he is enjoyed, the more fervently he is loved. Without love there can be no felicity in heaven ; for as desire without fruition is a torment, so possession without delight is stupidity.

The joy of heaven arises either from the direct fruition of God, or from the reflection upon the happiness communicated to the saints ; and love is the cause of that joy. Love to corporeal things often declines in our possessing them ; for curiosity is soon cloyed, and experience discovers the imperfections that were concealed, and according to the cooling of love is the blessing of joy. From hence proceeds distastes, and a fickle flight from one thing to another, without ever receiving any satisfaction. But the amiable perfections of God are truly infinite, and the more clear the vision, the more satisfying the fruition is. The brightness and influence of the Divine presence maintains equal love and joy in the blessed. According to the degrees of excellence in the object, and the vigorous exercise of the comprehensive faculties, the understanding and will, upon it, such is our felicity. When the beams of God's face are received into the

prepared soul, it is enraptured with unspeakable sweetness and security in his ever-satisfying goodness and beauty.

The perfect and mutual love of the saints causes a full overflowing joy in heaven. Sincere love is always benevolent, and according to its ardency, is the desire of the happiness of those who are the objects of it. From hence the delight of the saints above is redoubled, by the sense of their personal happiness, and the reflection upon the happiness of all that blessed society who are cemented by that dear affection. Sorrow is allayed by the sympathy of our friends, but joy is heightened by communication. Sorrow, like a stream divided in many channels, runs more shallow; but joy, like a sun-beam, reflects with more intense heat from the breast of one endeared to us by love. In heaven there is an eternal ecstasy of love and joy.

I shall now proceed to consider our love to God, which is the first and great command in order and dignity. It is the universal command that binds all persons, and in all times. Some precepts are particular, and respect the several relations of men, either natural, civil, or spiritual. Other commands, though general, yet are to be performed in special seasons. Prayer is a universal duty, for all are in a state of dependence upon God, and it is the appointed means to obtain his favour and benefits: it is a duty of daily revolution, for we continually stand in need of his tender and powerful providence to bestow good things, and avert evil; but this is not to be our perpetual exercise. For there are other duties to which we must attend, that require a great part of our time. If there be a disposition in the heart, an aptness for that holy

duty, though the season be distant, it is sufficient for our acceptance with God. But love in all periods of time must be in act; for obedience must ever be practised, and that is animated by the love of God, the spring and soul of it. The life of a christian is a continual exercise of humble, grateful, and dutiful love.

I will consider the causes and properties of this sanctified affection.

Love is an affection drawn forth by desire in the absence of its object, resting in complacency when the object is present. The attractive of it is goodness, which implies a convenience and agreement between the object and the faculty. The appetite is excited by the apprehension. In the sensitive nature, without perception and agreement, there can be no desire and delight. The eye is not pleased with the most exquisite music, being undiscernible and unsuitable to it. The ear, though exactly tempered, is not affected with light, the first and fairest of sensitive beauties; for every sense has its proper object to which it is confined, and cannot perceive or taste any pleasure in another.

And such is the frame of the human soul, the enlightened understanding instructs and excites the will to esteem and love, choose and embrace God as the supreme good, for his absolute inherent perfections, and his relative attributes, whereby he is infinitely the best and most amiable being in himself, and the most beneficial to us. The internal perfections of the Deity, though they are all the same Divine nature, for otherwise they could not be truly infinite, yet we may conceive as distinguished in a threefold order: either as natural, or intellectual, or moral. Natural perfections;

self-existence, eternity, immensity, omnipotence: intellectual perfections; knowledge, comprehensive of all things that are, and all things within the possibility of being, wisdom sufficient to govern and order innumerable worlds: moral perfections; holiness, goodness, justice, and truth. Now the union of these perfections in God, demands that we should glorify him with all the degrees of our understandings and wills, with the highest veneration and esteem, and the most ardent affections. If the weak and transient resemblance of some of the Divine excellences in the creatures from whom we neither receive nor expect any benefit, raise our esteem, and draw our love, how much more should the essential perfections of God fill us with admiration, and the dearest affections to him! His absolute perfections are not the objects of our desires, for he is entirely possessed of them, and can never be divested of them, but of our love and joy.

Consider God in his relative attributes to us, as our Maker, Preserver, and Benefactor; as our Redeemer who saves us from an everlasting hell, and has purchased and prepared eternal glory for us, and prepares us for it.

The eternity, omnipresence, and omnipotence of God, are awful attributes, and deserve our most humble adoration, for he that lives for ever can punish for ever, yet in conjunction with his propitious, beneficent attributes, goodness, clemency, and benignity, are amiable perfections, and deserve our singular and superlative love; for eternal power confers and maintains our happiness. "At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore," *Psa.* xvi. 11. The first rise of our love is from the sense of his benefits; but we must love him above

his benefits, and value his benefits for his sake, as they are the testimonies of his love. This inspired a holy heat in the psalmist's breast, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" Psa. cxvi. 12. That the impressions of his benefits may sink and settle into our hearts, I will consider the principle from whence they proceed, the greatness of them, and God's end in bestowing them.

The principle of all his benefits is, his most free and pure goodness. The psalmist declares, "Thou art good, and doest good," Psa. cxix. 68. It is true, his high perfections are very resplendent in his works, yet this induced no necessity upon God; for declarative glory, resulting from the exercise and effects of his attributes, was not necessary. He was from all eternity infinitely glorious and blessed in himself. Neither was there any motive or merit in us to determine his will either to create or redeem us. For antecedently to the first act of his goodness we had no being, and consequently no possibility or shadow of desert, and after our sin we were deservedly miserable.

Let us ponder his benefits that, if it were possible, we may not miss a grain of their weight.

In the order of nature, "He made us, and not we ourselves," Psa. c. 3. The human body, composed of as many miracles as members, was the design of his mind, the various art and work of his hands. He immediately formed the body of Adam of the virgin earth, and though in the course of nature our bodies are derived from our parents, yet he organizes them in that perfection, he disposes all the parts in that order and proportion as is requisite for comeliness and use. The psalmist speaks of this with those lively expressions, "I will

praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knows right well. I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written," Psa. cxxxix. 14—16. If one member had been defective, the eye, the hand, the tongue—if one sense had been wanting, what inconvenience, what deformity had ensued!

To a body of flesh the Divine Maker united an immortal soul, capable to know and love, to obey and enjoy him, who is the fountain of felicity; a soul incomparably more precious in the account of our Creator and Redeemer than all the world. It heightens the goodness of God, that he first prepared the world, reviewed it, and approved all as good, and then introduced man as his viceroy to possess and rule it. The great universe he did not make for the mere show of his power, but for the demonstration of his goodness unto man. The reflection upon these first benefits, our being reasonable creatures, which is the foundation of all other benefits, how should it engage us to love and serve our Maker with all our powers in their best capacities! Our obligation is founded in natural and Divine right. The law of consecrating the first fruits was figurative of this. Love is the first affection of the heart, the first fruit of the soul. If God did so strictly exact the payment of the first fruits, can we think he is less jealous of our love, and less severe in requiring it should be consecrated to him? The fruits of a young plant are not more pleasing to him than of an old tree; but he would

instruct us to give the first affections of our souls to him.

If we raise our thoughts, and distinctly consider creating goodness, our affections will be more inflamed in the sense of it. We were born in distant spaces of time, according to his eternal benevolent decree. Notwithstanding the different temporal circumstances of our coming into the world, we are all equally obliged to his eternal goodness. Let us consider that in the pure possibility of being, we were not distinguished from an infinite number that shall never be, for as his power is without any limits but his will, the possible production of men is without number, yet he was pleased to raise us into actual being. This was a most free favour, and by reflecting on it, unless we are dead as the grave, we shall find a warm lively sense of it in our hearts. If a prince exalt and enrich a favourite, his own interest is mixed with the honour and profit of the favourite; for he expects service from him: but God, whose happiness is infinite and indeficient, cannot receive any benefit from the service of the creature: his favours are above all desert, and beyond all requital.

If we consider God as our Preserver and Benefactor, our obligations to love and thankfulness are infinite. The first being and uninterrupted duration of the world is from the same powerful cause; for nothing can make itself when it is not, nor preserve itself when it is. Some have revived that erroneous opinion, that as a clock formed by an artificer, and the weights drawn up, regularly strikes the hours, and continues its motion and sound in the absence of the artificer; so the

perpetual concurrence of the Divine providence is not necessary for the support and operations of every creature, but nature may work of itself, and turn the wheels of all things within its compass. But the instance is defective, there being an extreme disparity between the work of an artificer in forming a clock, whose matter is independent upon him, and God's giving the first being to the creatures, with powers to act by his actual concurrence: for every creature is maintained by a successive continual production. To affect us, consider, the Preserver of men brought us safely into the world through the dark valley of death, where thousands are strangled in the birth. "We are borne by him from the belly, and carried from the womb," Isa. xlvi. 3. How compassionate was his goodness to us in our infancy, the state of wants and weakness, when we were absolutely incapable of procuring supplies, or securing ourselves from many dangers surrounding us! The preparing the milk for our nourishment is the work of the God of nature. The blood of the mother, by the secret channels of the veins, is transfused into the breasts, and is a living spring there. They are but two, because it is the ordinary law of nature to have not more than two children at a birth. They are planted near the heart, which is the forge of natural heat, and transforms the blood collected in the breasts into milk. And there is a mystery of love in it; for the mother in the same time nourishes her child with delight, regards and embraces it.

From infancy his mercy grows up with us, and never forsakes us. He is the God of our lives. He draws a curtain of protection and rest about us in the night, and repairs our faint faculties;

otherwise our bodies would soon decay into a dissolution. He spreads our table and fills our cup. He is the length of our days, Deut. xxx. 20. There is such a composition of contrarieties in the humours of the body, so many veins, and arteries, and nerves, which derive the vital and animal spirits from the heart and head to all the parts; we are exposed to so many destructive accidents, that, were not the tender providence of our true Father always watchful over us, we should presently fail and die.

“The Lord is a sun and a shield,” Psa. lxxxiv. 11. As the sun is a universal principle of life and motion, and pours forth his treasures of light and heat without any loss and impoverishing, thus God communicates his blessings to all the progeny of men. He is a shield, protecting us from innumerable evils, unforeseen and inevitable, without his preventing goodness. We might have been only kept alive, and might have sighed out our days in grief and pain, and our passage to the next state might have been through a barren wilderness, without any refreshing springs and showers; this were infinite mercy: for if we duly consider his greatness and our meanness, his holiness and justice and our sinfulness, it would cause us to look up to God with admiration, and down to ourselves with confusion, that our lives so frail, and so often forfeited, are preserved. The church in a desolate state acknowledges, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his mercies are renewed every morning,” Lam. iii. 22, 23. It is mercy upon mercy, all is mercy. Our Saviour, with respect to his humble state, says, “I am a worm, and no man,” Psa. xxii. 6. but we are serpents, and no worms: and as it is usual to destroy venom-

ous creatures in the egg, before they have done actual mischief, we that are children of wrath by nature, whose constitution is poison, might have been justly destroyed in the birth. This raised the psalmist into an ecstasy of wonder, whilst he contemplated the glorious lights of heaven, What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou shouldst regard and relieve him? Psa. viii. 4. He bestows innumerable and inestimable benefits upon a race of rebels that boldly break his laws, and abuse his favours: he not only suspends his judgments, but dispenses his blessings to those who infinitely provoke him. Now can we be unaffected with his indulgent clemency, his immense bounty, his condescending and compassionate goodness? Why does he load us with his benefits every day, but for his goodness' sake, and to endear himself to us? For he is always ready to open his bountiful hand, if we do not shut our breasts, and harden our hearts, not to receive his gifts. His mercy is like the widow's miraculous oil, that never ceased in pouring out while there was any vessel to receive it; then the flowing vein was stopped. How is it possible such rich and continued goodness should not insinuate itself into our souls, and engage our love to our blessed benefactor! Can we degenerate so far from human nature, nay below sensitive nature, (for the dull ox, and stupid ass, serve those that feed them,) as to be enemies to God? How prodigious and astonishing is this degeneracy!

The love of God appears in its full force and glory in our redemption. The eloquence of an angel would be very disproportioned to the dignity and greatness of this argument, much more the

weak expressions of men. That we may the more distinctly conceive it, I will briefly consider the greatness of the benefit, and the means of obtaining it.

Man in his state of unstained innocence was furnished with power to persevere, but left in the hand of his own counsel. He was drawn by a soft seducer to eat of the forbidden tree, and in that single instance was guilty of universal disobedience. He was engaged in a deep revolt with the apostate spirits, and incurred the sentence of a double death, both of the body and of the soul. Now where was the miraculous physician to be found who could save us from eternal death? Who could appease God, and abolish sin? God was affected with tender pity at the sight of our misery, and though the morning stars that fell from heaven are now wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved for ever, Jude 13. yet he was pleased to recover man from that desperate state in a way becoming his perfections. This was the product of his most free love. God's will and Christ's willingness were the springs of our redemption; for he might, with the same just severity, have dealt with us as with the rebellious angels. There was no legal constraint upon our Saviour to die for us; for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," Heb. vii. 26. There was no violent constraint; for he could with one word have destroyed his enemies. The depth of his wisdom, the strength of his power, the glory of his holiness and justice, were illustriously revealed in this great work, but love was the regent attribute that called forth the other into their distinct exercise and acts. Most wise, omnipotent, and

holy love saved us. What the psalmist speaks of the Divine perfections in making us, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," Psa. cxxxix. 14. is in a nobler sense verified in our salvation; we are fearfully and wonderfully redeemed by the concord of those seemingly irreconcilable attributes, vindictive justice and saving mercy. Our rebellion was to be expiated by the highest perfection of obedience; and thereby the honour of God's moral government to be repaired. For this end the Son of God disrobed himself of his glory, and put on the livery of our frail flesh, and in the form of a servant became obedient to the death of the cross, to rescue us from the curse of the law, Phil. ii. 7. He intercepted the heavy stroke of vengeance, that had sunk us into the centre of sorrows, and restored us to the favour and fruition of God.

Our misery was extreme, and without end. If misery, though intolerable, has a determined issue, the passing of every day lessens it: but if it be above all patience to endure, and without hope of remission or release, this thought strikes deadly inward. A brute has some memory of past pains, and a feeling of present, but no apprehension of future pains: it is the woful prerogative of the reasonable nature to exasperate the sense of misery by the foresight of its continuance, and to feel the weight of eternity every moment. Lost souls are dead to all the vital sweetness of being, to all sense of happiness, and alive to the quickest feeling of misery for ever.

Our rescue from this misery is more affecting, if we consider that without our Saviour's interposing, our state was desperate. To pass from death to life is a double life. We are translated from the

guilty, wretched state of rebels, into the blessed state of the children of God, and are heirs of eternal glory. The duration is as valuable as the felicity, and doubles the gift: immortality and immutability are inseparable in heaven. God has made all his goodness to pass before us in our salvation, *Exod. xxxiii. 19.* Goodness, how amiable, how attractive and endearing! To die for another is the most noble kind of love, but there are degrees in that kind: to die for an enemy, for a rebel, is the highest degree of that love. Now the Son of God assumed to the supreme excellences of the Divine nature, the tender infirmities of the human nature, that he might be a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. In this God commended his love to us, that when we were sinners he gave his Son to die for us, *Rom. iv. 8.* Astonishing love! it passes all understanding. The Jews asked our Saviour with wonder, How is it that thou, being a man, makest thyself God? *John x. 33.* We may imagine with equal wonder how, being the Son of God, he descended from the throne of majesty in heaven, and stooped so low as to become man? St. Peter, illuminated by Divine revelation, confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," *Matt. xvi. 16.* But presently after, when our Saviour foretold that he "must go to Jerusalem, and be killed there," Peter began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, this shall not come unto thee," *ver. 22.* He could not conceive how such distant and discordant extremes as the Son of the living God and death could meet in Christ; but his love to us united them. A love above all comparison, but with the love of his Father to us. In the sacrifice of Isaac

there was a faint resemblance of this. Abraham carried the knife and the fire, and Isaac carried the wood and himself the sacrifice, and with equal steps they ascended the mount. A type of the concurrent love of the Divine persons to us in the process of Christ's sufferings. The Father laid upon him the iniquity of us all: surely he has borne our griefs, and endured our sorrows, Isa. liii. 46. Admirable excess of love! The Father gave up his innocent and only Son, the bright image of his glory, to cruel sufferings. This immaculate lily was pierced with thorns. The Son gave such life for us as no creature can give, and suffered such a death for us as no creature can suffer. He descended to our lowest misery, to raise us to the highest degree of happiness. Who can resist the force of these reflections? It may seem that only the reprobates in hell, who have sinned beyond the intended virtue and application of his sufferings, can be unaffected with them.

From hence this corollary regularly follows, that it is our duty to consecrate our highest esteem and love to our Redeemer. Supreme love is due to supreme excellences, and for the greatest benefits. In our Saviour "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid," Col. ii. 3. and all the treasures of grace and mercy are opened to enrich us. What indignity, what ingratitude is it, to be coldly affected to him, who by the dearest titles infinitely deserves our love! How unreasonable and unnatural is it to look upon him with an indifferent eye, who died for us, and whom the angels continually behold in a double ecstasy of admiration and joy! It is most just that our love should ascend to him in thankfulness, as his descended

to us in benefits. But our poverty must excuse the not entire payment of our immense debt, and our fervent desires to love him better. If we content ourselves with lukewarm affections, it is most dishonourable to him: the coldness of love, as well as the heat of enmity, is very provoking to our Saviour.

It should be our constant practice, by discursive and reflexive meditation, to increase the holy heat of our affections to Christ. He requires a love of judgment and choice. The love of natural inclination is indeliberate, without counsel, and needs no excitations: the stream runs downward freely. But love to Christ is supernatural, both with respect to the object and the quality of the affection. The love of God is the principal obligation of the law, and the principal duty of the reasonable and renewed creature, the most just and amiable duty; yet so monstrous is the depravation of the human nature, that Divine grace is requisite to recover its life and liberty.

The preoccupying pleasures of sin possess the soul. We must therefore earnestly pray that the Holy Spirit would illuminate our minds, and direct us in the love of God, 2 Thess. iii. 5. that he will purify our affections, and raise them to heaven. The exercise of our thoughts is too weak and faint to make indelible impression of love in our hearts. Love is an eminent fruit of the Spirit. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the holy Spirit given to us, Rom. v. 5. There is a strong tide of sensual desires that carries us downward, which we cannot stem without the gales of the Spirit to make our way to Christ. But it is inconsistent with the wisdom and will of God for

men to expect an inspiration from heaven, and neglect the proper means, the considering the powerful incentives of love to our Redeemer, his alluring excellency, and invaluable benefits. St. Paul declares, "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they should live to him," 2 Cor. v. 14. If all be not cold and dead within, this will increase the sacred fire, and inflame the affections.

But as the light of the sun diffused in the air fires nothing, but the beams contracted in a glass kindle proper matter, so the considering of the common salvation will not be so affecting, nor so warm and soften the heart as the serious applicative thoughts of it to ourselves. The apostle expresses it, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. The appropriating by a clear faith, and serious thoughts, his dying love to the soul, will cause an irresistible affection to him, stronger than death.

We must learn of Christ how to love him. His love was expressed in the most real actions, and convincing evidence: it was an incarnate love, a beneficent love, productive of our salvation; our love must be productive of obedience. This is the surest trial of it, "If a man love me, he will keep my words," John xiv. 23. saith our Saviour "The frost of fear will hinder the breaking forth of carnal lusts into notorious acts, as the cold of winter binds the earth that noxious weeds cannot spring up: but the heat of love is productive of all the fruits of righteousness. Love to Christ will make every command pleasant, and the exactest obedience to be voluntary, liberal, and ingenuous. Fear may

enforce constancy for a time, but love is a vital principle, continually operative in all the transitions of this life. This secures obedience. Christ has fastened us to his service by a chain composed of his most precious benefits; by the pardon of our innumerable sins, and to whom much is forgiven, they love much, Luke vii. 47. Fear tries in vain to make an alliance between the flesh and spirit, obeys some commands, and transgresses others; but love respects all. Fear induces a desertion of our duty, when evils nearly threaten us; but love encounters them with such a character of assurance as becomes those who esteem it a favour and honour to suffer for Christ. Some are hardened against afflictions, and endure with courage persecutions for the cause of Christ, but yield to pleasant temptations; like the manna that would endure the fire, but melted in the heat of the sun: but love to Christ, by an overcoming delight, renders the pleasures of sin nauseous and insipid.

In short, the properties of natural love are united in the love of Christ. Love will transport us to heaven, and transform us into his likeness. Love will make us zealous in constant and excellent endeavours to be completely conformed to him. Resemblance is the common principle of all unions in nature: it is preparative to love, and the effect of it. Experience is a sensible demonstration of this. For the love of friends, if in a degree of eminence, causes a perfect sympathy, an exact correspondence in their tempers. The exercise of love in the most precious esteem of him, in burning desires after a propriety* in him, in the sweetest complacency in communion with him, are intimate and inseparable

* Peculiarity of possession.

qualities in all the lovers of Christ. Love to him is always joined with an irreconcilable hatred of sin, which cost him so dear to expiate its guilt. Our love entirely and intensely is due to him, and no lower degree is accepted. For it is a disparagement, and infinitely unworthy of him. To content ourselves with a less affection, is not only far distant from perfection, but from the first disposition of a saint. The tenderest and strongest affections in nature must be regulated and subordinate to the love of Christ. Our love to him must be singular and supreme. Briefly, his love to us is beneficent, ours is obedient. He values no love without obedience, and no obedience without love.

Love must descend from God to our neighbour.

This duty is so often commanded and commended in the gospel, that we may from thence understand its excellency. The beloved disciple that lay in the bosom of Christ, from that spring of love derived the streams that flow in his writings. He declares, that "God is love, and he that loves dwells in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 16. He makes it an evidence that we are born of God, of our renewed state, and that "we have passed from death to life," 1 John iii. 14. Our Saviour enjoins it with a note of eminency, as his new command, as the distinctive character of his disciples, as the special qualification of those at his right hand in the day of judgment, to recommend it to our love and obedience. He tells us that, to love our neighbour as ourselves is like the most divine precept of loving the Lord our God, Matt. xxii. 39. We read in that solemn proclamation of God's name, when his glory passed before Moses, that to the title of Lord God there was immediately annexed, "merciful and gracious,

abundant in goodness," Exod. xxxiv. 6. to signify that goodness is his dearest glory; and in the Divine law, next to piety to God, charity to our neighbour is commanded, to signify how pleasing it is to him. The gospel eclipses all other institutions by the precept of universal love, and inspiring a delightful disposition in christians to exercise it. This adorns the gospel, and recommends it to the esteem and affections of men. A person innocent and pure, but of a severe and harsh temper, condemns by his holy conversation the profane and scandalous; but a good man charms and captivates the hearts of others, that one would dare to die for him, Rom. v. 7. This duty is prescribed in the extent and qualifications of it.

In the extent it reaches to all within the compass of humanity; to strangers and enemies in all our dealings. "Let all things be done with charity," 1 Cor. xvi. 14. The relation of consanguinity is the natural cause of a benevolent affection to all men. The likeness of kind prevents mischief between the most fierce and hurtful creatures. We never heard that lions devour lions, or vipers bite vipers, and unless we add beneficence to innocence, we are but in the rank of brutes. The love of good-will is expressed by promoting their good, and preventing evils; by rejoicing in their prosperity, and relieving them in their afflictions.

This love is more rooted in the breasts of men, by considering the condition of nature wherein they are equal, whether the original happy state of their creation, or their miserable wretched state since their fall. Similitude, either in happiness or misery, unites men's affections. How low and despicable so great a part of mankind is at present.

yet the remembrance that all men were equal in their first honourable and happy condition, inhabitants of paradise, and, by deputation, lords of the world, will raise our esteem, and be an incentive of kind affections to them. And since the fall, the calamitous condition of mankind is a proper motive of mutual assistance to one another. Society in miseries endears the sufferers, and produces a tender sympathy between them. None are so merciful as those who by experience know what it is to be miserable. The consideration of the common evils, to which all are exposed in the present state, induces a strong obligation to the offices of love and kindness.

But the principal and divine cause of love, is the law of Christ, that enjoins us to do good to all, but especially to the household of faith, Gal. vi. 10. for the spiritual relation is more intimate and excellent than the natural: that we are the offspring of the same heavenly Father, united as members to the same glorious Head, renewed to a Divine life by the same Holy Spirit, incorporated into the same spiritual family. This affection proceeds from the upper springs of grace; the exercise of it is immediately terminated on men, but ultimately respects the glory of God, for whose sake it is performed. "To do good, and distribute, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," Heb. xiii. 16. In short, our love to God must be supreme, and for himself; our love to men, and other things, only in the degrees he allows, and not for themselves, but for God, who commands to love them as they bear his image, or are instrumental in the performance of our duty. Otherwise we are in danger of being alienated from the love of God,

when any person or thing becomes a temptation to us to do any thing, either to obtain or preserve them against his will. But if we love those only for His sake, we shall readily part with them as a snare, or offer them as a sacrifice, if his will requires it: as, if we love some particular meat because we deem it healthful, and not because it is pleasant, upon the first discovery that it is hurtful, we shall reject it.

The properties of this love are specified in the command.

Love must be sincere. The apostle directs, "Let love be without dissimulation," Rom. xii. 9. Love is essentially sincere; it is seated in the heart, and expressed in real actions; it is cordial and operative. There is an empty noise of love and respects that proceeds from a double heart, not entire and ingenuous. Some by fair promises work and wind men to obtain their ends, and then slip through them. How often are the sincere deceived by the liberal expressions of love untried and untrue, mistaking a shining counterfeit for a real ruby! But though the human eye cannot see through the disguise, he that commands sincere love, pierces into the heart, and if it be wanting there, his anger burns against the vain pretenders to it.

Some will seem to grace others with a flourish of words, that they may tax them more freely, and without suspicion. To praise without a ground of real worth, is sordid flattery; but to commend with a mischievous intent, is the worst treachery.

Some will assist the sick day and night, and seem to sympathize with them in their pains and sorrows; but their design is to obtain a rich

legacy ; they appear like mourning doves, but are real vultures, that smell a carcass to feed on.

There are others less guilty, who esteem empty compliments to be courtly decencies ; and though it is not their design to be injurious to those whom they caress, yet their love is only from the tongue, which in the apostle's expression, "is but a tinkling cymbal," 1 Cor. xiii. 1. Their pretended friendship is like leaf-gold, very extensive, but soon worn off for want of depth.

Others are mercenaries, that like the heathens, do good to those from whom they receive good ; their love degenerates into traffic, and does not proceed from a Divine principle. Ingenuous and christian spirits have not such crooked inclinations, always reflecting upon their own interest. It is true, christian love declares itself in alternate acts of kindness, but is also exercised where there are no such inducements. This is to imitate our heavenly Father, who does good to all, without any desert in the receivers, and beyond all requital.

Affliction is the furnace wherein sincere friends are tried, and discerned from the deceitful ; their afflictions are common ; their compassions and cordial assistance are common. This is the most certain and significant character of unfeigned love, not to fail in a calamitous season. Job aggravates his sorrows by this reflection, that his friends dealt deceitfully ; as brooks that run in a full stream in winter, when snow falls, and there is no want of refreshing waters, but when it is hot, they are dried up, and vanish. We may securely rely on their friendship who afford us undesired supplies in time of trouble.

The observation of the wise philosopher is

verified in every age, "That men in a flourishing condition are surrounded with friends, but in an afflicted are forsaken." This consideration should inflame us with a holy ambition of the friendship of God; for his sincere love is most tenderly expressed in our distress; the psalmist enforces his request by this motive, "Be not far off, for trouble is near," Psa. xxii. 11. It is often seen that men fly from their acquaintance, when the clearest trial is to be made of their affliction; but then the blessed God draws nearest to us, and affords relief and comfort.

Our love must be pure. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently," 1 Pet. i. 22. The purity of love either respects the cause of it, or the exercise and effects of it. The cause of pure love is the Divine command, and the Divine pattern set before us. The love of God to men is a leading rule to us; he loves them according to the resemblance of his imitable perfections in them; and consequently, the more holy and heavenly, the more righteous and gracious men are, the more they should be endeared to our affections. This is to love God in them, and according to their true loveliness; this is to love them by the impression of that love wherewith God loves himself. Our Saviour tells us, they that do his Father's will, are his brothers, sisters, and mothers, Mark iii. 35.

There is an impure love, that proceeds from the similitude of vicious affections, and is entertained by sinful society, that is fatally contagious. The tempter most forcibly allures when he is least sus-

pected. He conceals the serpent's sting in the tongue of a friend. The friendship of the world is contracted and cemented by sensual lusts; and the end of it will be the tormenting the corrupters and the corrupted together for ever.

The exercise and effects of pure love principally respect the soul, the more excellent, and immortal part of our friends. We are commanded to exhort one another, while it is called to-day, and to provoke one another to love and good works, Heb. iii. 13. x. 24. Exhortation includes instruction and admonition; the giving counsel how to preserve the purity, and secure the salvation of the soul; how to prevent sin, or to cure it by the conviction of conscience when ignorant of its duty, by the excitation of the affections when cold and sluggish, and direction to order the conversation aright. The performance of this duty is inseparable from pure and unfeigned love, and the neglect of it is an argument of deadly hatred. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, nor suffer sin to lie upon him, Lev. xix. 17. If you discovered any prognostic or symptom of a disease growing in a friend, that threatened his life, what a cruel neglect were it, not to advise and urge him to apply the best means for his preservation! much more are we obliged to rectify the errors in judgment, and miscarriages in conversation, which they are guilty of; especially since spiritual diseases are infinitely more dangerous, and are not so easily discerned and felt as bodily are. To suffer unconcernedly a friend to lie and languish in a course of sin, is soul-murder; and in murder there are no accessaries, every one is a principal. It is prophesied concerning the time of approaching judgment, that iniquity

shall abound, and the love of many wax cold, Matt. xxiv. 12. by not convincing sinners in order to reform them. This exercise of love must be frequent, "while it is called to-day;" and solemn without bitterness and contempt, or a seeming indifference of the success, that it may be evident it does not proceed from a censorious humour, or an impertinent curiosity, but from pure love. It must be attended with earnest prayer to the Father, and Physician of spirits, to give healing virtue to it; otherwise it is but moral counsel: and it must be received with meekness and gratitude. The rejection of holy counsel discovers a double leprosy; for the rise of it is from pride in the understanding, self-conceit; and pride in the will, perverse obstinacy. The mutual discharge of this duty, is the most precious, desirable, and advantageous benefit of friendship. We must perform it to all within the compass of our direction and warm influence: we must imitate the angels' earnest counsel to Lot, "Escape for thy life" out of Sodom; he was not to delay, that he might not be consumed, Gen. xix. 17. O that this angelical zeal and compassion possessed the breasts of christians.

It may justly cover with confusion many who profess entire friendship to others, and yet their conversation with them is directly opposite to the rules of friendship laid down by the wise and virtuous heathens. Scipio prescribed this first and inviolable rule of friendship; "That we never desire our friends to do acts of moral turpitude, nor do them though desired." Another as useful a rule is laid down by Lælius; "It is the inseparable property of sincere friendship, to give and receive admonition; to give it freely, not harshly;

to receive it meekly, not with recoil and reluctance." These virtuous heathens will rise in judgment against many, who by sordid and base acts, by filthy lusts and filthy lucre, foment and maintain their friendships; that count it the surest preservative of friendship, to nourish and foment the spring and stream of the sensual appetite, that will issue into the lake of fire.

Love must be fervent. The degree respects the inward affection, and the outward effects of it. There is such a union of affections between the saints, that one is as it were transfused into another; their afflictions are mutual, their compassions and assistance are mutual. This intenseness of love is signified by "Loving our neighbours as ourselves;" in similitude and likeness. How ardent are our desires, and earnest our endeavours for our temporal happiness, and principally (if we are enlightened) for our eternal happiness! accordingly we should be affected and diligent for procuring the present and future happiness of others. How vigilant and active are we to prevent imminent and destructive evils that threaten us here, but specially if we are serious and considering, to escape from the wrath to come! We should be proportionably careful to rescue others from temporal or spiritual evils to which they are obnoxious. How jealous are we of our own reputation! how unwilling to incur censure! to have our faults aggravated, and to bear the prints of infamy! love to our neighbours should make us tender of their good names, to conceal their faults, or to make a favourable construction of them, and not to expose them to shame; and to vindicate them, when their enemies would make them appear culpable by

calumnies. In short, our love must be so sincere, pure, and fervent to our brethren, that we may have a clear and comfortable evidence, that we are born of God, and that God dwells in us, and we in him. But among christians, how rare is christian love ! their love is excessive to themselves, and defective to others.

Also the forgiving injuries is an excellent effect of christian love. This implies an entire disposition and resolution to pardon all offences, declaring itself in real acts, when there is occasion. This duty is hard and distasteful to corrupt nature ; the apostle enjoins us, " See that none render evil for evil ; ever follow that which is good," 1 Thess. v. 15. The manner of the expression intimates our proneness to acts of revenge : for vicious self-love makes us more apt to retain the sense of injuries than of benefits. How many receive signal favours, and within a little while neglect their benefactors, withdraw grateful respects and converse with them ; as it is not usual to walk in a vineyard, when the vintage is past. But if an injury be once offered, it is provoking as if it were repeated every day, by the continual remembrance of it. But the command is strict and universal, and allows no freedom, but of voluntary obedience. To make us feel the weight of the duty, and to be more tenderly sensible of it, our Saviour tells us, " If you do not forgive, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses," Matt. vi. 15. An unforgiving temper is an invincible bar against our obtaining Divine mercy. We can neither receive pardon, nor have it continued, nor enjoy the comfortable sense of it, without pardoning others. It is a sin of such malignity, that it even poisons itself ; it actuates

the guilt of all other sins ; and seals the doom of the unrelenting and hardened against the offending brother. The servant that upon his humble request had ten thousand talents forgiven, yet upon his cruel exacting three hundred pence from his fellow-servant, his pardon was reversed, and he was delivered to the tormentors, till his debt was entirely paid. The lines of this duty are clearly drawn in the Divine pattern set before us. God pardons sins entirely, he blots them out as a thick cloud, Isa. xlv. 22. the saints in heaven are as accepted in his sight, as the angels that always obeyed his commands. He pardons frequently ; " In many things we offend all," James iii. 2. It would tire the hand of an angel to register the pardons issued from the throne of grace to rebellious sinners. He pardons sins of a very provoking nature : he makes our crimson sins to be as white as snow, and scarlet sins as white as wool, Isa. i. 18. The provocation begins on our part, the reconciliation begins on God's part. He beseeches us to be reconciled, as if it were his interest that we should not be destroyed by severe justice. God can destroy his enemies in the twinkling of the eye, in the beating of the pulse, yet he supports and comforts them every day. Our Saviour has set us the highest pattern of forgiving love ; when he was nailed to the cross, he prayed for his cruel murderers, " Father forgive them ; they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34. How persuasive should his pattern be ! shall we be so tenderly sensible of the hatred of an enemy, and so stupidly insensible of our Saviour's love ? Shall the resenting remembrance of injuries deface in us the dear memorial of his purchasing blessedness

for us? His precious blood appeased the just anger of God, and shall it not cool and calm our inflamed passions?

In imitation of God and Christ, we must abstain from all revenge of the greatest evils suffered by us: we must extinguish any inclination to revenge. Sin begins in the desire, and ends in the action. We must not take the least pleasure, that evil befalls one that has been injurious to us; for the root of it is devilish. Though the reparation of an injury may in some cases be necessary, yet revenge is absolutely forbidden. To retaliate an evil without any reparation of our losses, is to do mischief for mischief's sake, which is the property of Satan: As on the contrary, to do good for evil is such a Divine perfection, that the devil does not assume the resemblance of it, it is so contrary to his cursed disposition.

Some will conceal their anger for a time, waiting for an opportunity to take revenge without the appearance of passion: their malice, like slow poison, does not cause violent symptoms, but destroys life insensibly.

Some have such fierce passions, that strike fire out of the least provocation; their breasts are changed into a Tophet.

Some inflame their resentments, by considering every circumstance that will exasperate their spirits.

But the command is, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," Rom. xii. 21. The duty is so pleasant in its exercise, and attended with such comfortable consequences, that it is recommended to our reason, and our affections. "Love suffers long; love bears all things, endures all things," 1 Cor. xiii. 4. 7. And what is more

engaging than the delightful disposition of love? The doing good for evil often gains the heart of an enemy; if there be any vital spark of humanity, it cannot be resisted. There is an instance of it recorded in scripture: Saul the unrighteous and implacable enemy of David, yet being spared when he was entirely at his mercy, was moved and melted into tenderness; "Is this thy voice, my son David?" before, he in contempt called him the son of Jesse. "Thou art more righteous than I;" I will do thee no more evil, 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17.

How will some of the heathens condemn christians, both as to the rule and practice of this duty! for whereas it is esteemed to be the character of pusillanimity or stupidity to bear frequent and great injuries unrevenged. One of their poets mixed this counsel among other excellent rules of morality, "That man is arrived at an heroic degree of goodness, who is instructed in a dispassionate manner, to bear great injuries." And when Phocion, who had deserved so highly of the Athenians, was condemned unjustly to die, his son attending him to receive his last commands, immediately before his death, he charged him never to revenge it on the Athenians.

CHAPTER IX.

Divine hope has an eminent causality in the life of a christian. The nature of christian hope. It is the character of a saint. It is natural, congruous, and necessary to a saint in the present state. It is distinguished from carnal presumption by its purifying virtue. Fear considered in its nature and cleansing virtue. The attributes of God, the motives of holy fear. There is a fear of reverence, and of caution. It is consistent with faith, and the affections of love, hope, and joy. It is the fountain of fortitude.

DIVINE hope also has an eminent causality and influence in the life of a christian. St. John speaking of the glorious likeness of the saints to Christ in the Divine world, infers from it, "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3. Three things are observable in the words.

I. The character of a christian, by his hope: "Every man that has this hope in him."

II. The distinction of this hope from its counterfeit, by its inseparable effect, "Purifies himself."

III. The regulating of the effect by his pattern; "Even as he is pure."

Christian hope is a firm expectation of future happiness; it is distinguished from worldly hopes by the excellence of the object, and the stability of its foundation. The object is, an eternal state of glory and joy, wherein we shall be conformed to the Son of God. Worldly hopes are terminated on empty vanishing things, gilded over with the thin

appearance of good. The foundations of Divine hope are the unchangeable truth of God, and his Almighty power, that always seconds his word. God cannot lie, and consequently neither deceive our faith, nor disappoint our hopes; and he can do all things. The apostle declares the ground of his confidence; "I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. All the persons in the Deity are engaged for our assurance and comfort. Sometimes it is said, "That our hope may be in God," 1 Pet. i. 21. and, "Our Lord Jesus Christ our hope," 1 Tim. i. 1. and, "That we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13. Worldly hopes are always uncertain in this sphere of mutability; there is so much of impotence, or deceit, in all the means used to obtain human desires, that the success is doubtful: fear mixes with the desires, and often despair with fear. Young men are flush with hopes, and of bolder expectations than old men, who from experience of many unforeseen and inevitable difficulties, that have traversed their hopes, are inclined to fear. But experience encourages and fortifies the hopes of christians, which are attended with patience and joy, "If we hope, we with patience wait for it," Rom. viii. 25. Notwithstanding the distance of time, and intervening difficulties, before the accomplishment of what we expected, no undiscernible accidents can blast their assurance. The interval of a thousand years did not weaken Abraham's hope of the promised Messiah. Comfort is mixed with the patience of hope. The apostle saith, "That we through patience and comfort of

the scripture might have hope," Rom. xv. 4. The final security of the blessedness promised, is very joyful in an afflicted condition. This hope is the character by which a sincere christian is denominated and distinguished from heathens, who are without God, without Christ, and without hope, Eph. ii. 12. For God is the object of it, as our sovereign good; and Christ is the means whereby we obtain and enjoy him. This grace is most natural, congruous, and necessary to a christian in the present state.

1. Natural. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you," 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. The supernatural birth entitles to the supernatural inheritance, "If sons, then heirs," Rom. viii. 17. and the hope of heaven is a consequent affection. As in the natural life, the most early exercise of reason excites desires and hopes to obtain what may supply the wants of it: so in the spiritual life, when faith discovers to us celestial blessedness revealed in the gospel, it produces earnest inclinations and hopes of partaking of it.

2. It is very congruous to our present state. Love in its perfection is the grace of heaven, where God exhibits his brightness and beauty, without a veil, to the saints: this is above our conception and capacity here. Fear sometimes degenerates, and has a servile aspect on punishment, which is consistent with the love of sin. Hope of the happiness to which we aspire, is not so elevated as love, nor so low as fear; but very becoming the breast of a

christian. We are now in a state of expectancy; in a middle state between the two worlds. Hope is the proper grace to be exercised here: this gives us the foretaste of the fruits of paradise. It is of no use to those who are possessed of happiness, and those are incapable of it who are miserable without remedy. As shadows vanish at mid-day, and at dark night, so hope ceases in heaven, for it is accomplished in full fruition: it never enters into hell, for it is extinguished in despair. In the glorious light above, the perfection of hope is obtained: the blackness of darkness below excludes the least glimmering of hope to refresh the horrors of the place.

3. It is a necessary grace in our present state of trial. We are surrounded here with many temptations, some inviting and alluring, some forcible and terrifying: the pleasures of sin, and the terrors of the persecuting world, to make us desert our duty, and be unfaithful to God and our souls. Now hope is our helmet and breast-plate, the principal parts of defensive armour, to preserve us invulnerable in the heat of battle. It is the anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, that enters within the veil, Heb. vi. 19. and is fixed on the immortal shore: though we are liable to storms, it secures us from shipwreck. It gives cordial spirits and celestial vigour to a christian. The apostle, who had seen the glory of heaven, and had suffered the rage of the perverted world, in combination with Satan, to extinguish the light of the gospel, declares, "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18. The hope of the reward was so comfortable to St. Peter, he

slept securely when condemned to die next day: the brightness of an angel could not wake him without a blow on the side. It sweetens all the sharp and bitter accidents that befall us, and mixes reviving drops with our deepest sorrows. "We rejoice in the hope of glory," Rom. v. 2. Joy is the affection of prosperity; hope, of all the joyful affections, is consistent with the most afflicting evils, and makes us happy here. Our Saviour pronounces, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you; rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven," Matt. v. 11, 12. This changed the persecutions of the martyrs into pleasures. Those who are encouraged by this blessed hope, no loss can make poor, no disease can make sick, no disgrace can make contemptible, no misery can make miserable. It has a sovereign strength to support us under all the evils malice can do, and innocence suffer. Now if the hope of heaven can make all the evils of this world tractable and easy, much more will it make all its good things despicable; for we are far more capable of afflicting impressions than of joyful. Set the beam right, and put into one scale all the treasures, and honours, and delights of the present world, and in the other the lively hope of heaven; they are of no more value or moment in comparison, than feathers in one scale against talents of gold in another. It is true carnal men feel not the attractive force of the blessed rewards above, for it is spiritual and future; but when they shall be released from the narrow confinement of flesh, and shall understand things by another way than the report of the senses, their enlightened active spirit will tear and torment them for pre-

ferring vanishing shadows before substantial and eternal blessedness: the sense of it will cause extreme sorrow for their loss of heaven, and indignation for others' obtaining it. Our Saviour tells the infidel Jews, "When ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Luke xiii. 28.

In short, hope is of excellent use to encourage our faint languishing affections, when we are assaulted with evils, and to compose and order the impetuous passions when they are strongly excited by the temptations of what is pleasant to the fleshly lusts.

II. Divine hope is distinguished from carnal presumption by its inseparable effect, our purifying. Hope is an exciting principle that draws forth all the active powers for the obtaining a desired good. It is the inward spring of fervent desires and reviving joys, and consequently of zealous endeavours; We are begotten to a lively hope, I Pet. i. 3. it is a substantial vigorous grace: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," saith the apostle, Phil. iii. 14. Vain and groundless hopes are inspirations of wind, loose and ineffective. The principal effect of Christian hope is specified, he purifies himself. I shall but glance upon this, having largely discoursed of it already. He purifies himself by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, from whom the spiritual life and all the operations of it proceed. The extent of this purifying is comprehensive of the outward and inward man, from sinful inclinations and vicious acts, from carnality and hypocrisy. The continuance of this purifying must be till we are cleansed from every spot, and

become glorious in holiness, Eph. v. 27. We are contracting defilements every day, and need the constant influence of Divine grace to preserve and restore our purity. Our Saviour tells Peter, "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit, and ye are clean, but not all." John xiii. 10. It is an allusion to the custom in the eastern countries, where they travelled in sandals, and had their feet soiled with the dust or sand, that required washing upon their coming into a house. In the renovation of a sinner, all the faculties are purified though not perfectly, and it is requisite he should daily cleanse himself from the relics of sin.

1. The regular hope of heaven has a cleansing efficacy, from the quality of the object, the enjoyment of the holy God. Now whoever has a prospect of a desirable good in future expectation, will endeavour, if possible, to have present possession; and consequently he that hopes to be entirely like to Christ in heaven, will strive to be as like him as he is capable in this life. If we did expect a paradise of sensual pleasures, we might, without contradiction, by an impure indulgence gratify our carnal appetites: but the state of future blessedness is signified by the apostle, that God shall be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 28. The communication of God to the blessed, may in some degree be conceived by those titles that are attributed to him, indistinctly to the persons. He is styled love and light. Love signifies his communicative goodness, the inclination of his nature and will to make his people happy, and his complacency in their happiness. He will give grace and glory, he will rejoice over them with singing, Psa. lxxxiv. 11.

Zeph. iii. 17. Now God being an infinite good, and of infinite goodness, we are sure his will and power are correspondent in making them happy. God is styled light, which implies his most clear and perfect knowledge; for light discovers all things. His unspotted holiness; for light can never be stained or sullied by shining on a dunghill. His sovereign joy; for light, joined with vital heat, inspires universal nature with joy. In heaven God enlightens the understandings of the saints with the knowledge of his glorious nature, of his wise counsels that are now sealed in his eternal mind, and of his admirable works, wherein the clear impressions of his perfections appear. He draws his image upon them in all the celestial colours that give final perfection to it. And from hence results that joy which is unspeakable and glorious, and is eternally exuberant in high and solemn praises of God. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee," Psa. lxxxiv. 4. Now can an unholy soul delight in these emanations of the Divine presence, and the exercise of the saints above? Can those who feed without fear, and revel without restraint of their brutish lusts, taste how good the Lord is? Psa. xxxiv. 8.

Suppose the sovereignty of God should dispense with obedience to his law, and by an act of power an unrenewed person were translated to heaven, can the place make him happy? You may as reasonably imagine that a swine, whose inseparable quality is to love wallowing in the mire, can delight in a clean room, adorned with beautiful pictures. If the tongue be depraved with a foul humour, and the disease is in the taster, the most relishing food is insipid: till the palate be cleansed and recover its

true temper, it cannot judge aright. It is equally impossible that an unholy creature can enjoy communion with the holy God. Till we are purified in our minds and affections, the Divine presence cannot be heaven to us. The truth is, carnal men do not love and desire the heaven revealed in the gospel, but fear the hell threatened, because fire and brimstone are terrible to sense.

2. The hope of heaven purifies us from the condition of the promises that are clear and explicit, in requiring holiness in all that shall possess it. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God," Matt. v. 8. "Follow holiness, without which no man can see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. The promise is infallible to those who are qualified, and the exclusion is peremptory and universal of those who are unprepared. These are not conditions prescribed by ministers of a preciser strain, but by the Saviour of the world, who with great solemnity declares, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. The sovereign Dispenser of his own favours may by his unaccountable will appoint what terms he pleases in bestowing them, to which it is our duty to consent with humble thankfulness: but the vital qualifications required in order to our admission into the glory of heaven, are not a mere arbitrary constitution, but founded in the unchangeable nature of God. If there were any defect and irregularity in the architecture of the visible world, in the frame and order of its parts, it were less dishonourable than if there were no connexion between a holy life and blessedness; for the first would only reflect upon his wisdom and power, but the other would asperse his holiness

and justice, the most Divine perfections of the Deity.

3. Christian hope purifies, by the frequent and serious thoughts of the heavenly glory. The object of hope fills the mind and memory, and gives order and vigour to our endeavours. If riches or honour be the object of our expectation, the soul will entertain itself with the pleasant thoughts of them, and contriving how to obtain them. Love and hope are fixed upon the same objects, and have the same efficacy: they transport the soul to their distant objects, and transform them into their likeness. The object is spiritual and divine, and the frequent contemplation of it has a warm influence into the affections, purifies and raises them from the earth. When our thoughts are often conversant upon the state of future glory, we feel its attractive force more strongly working in us; as in a chase, if there be a cold scent, it is but coldly pursued; but when the game is in view, it is eagerly prosecuted. When heaven is seldom thought of, our desires and endeavours are cooled towards it; but when it is in the view of our understandings, and near us, our inclinations and endeavours are more fervent and zealous. The apostle saith, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Lord Jesus," Phil. iii. 20.

4. The hope of heaven purifies us from a principle of thankfulness to God, who is the Donor of it. St. John breaks into an ecstasy of wonder, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" 1 John iii. 1. The angels, those comprehensive spirits, are astonished that worthless rebels should be taken into a relation so high and near to God,

who deserve to be irrevocably banished from his kingdom. The apostle observes the various degrees of this happiness: "Now we are the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be," ver. 2. Now we are adopted, but the height of our felicity, when we shall be crowned, is a secret; but we are assured, we shall be like the Son of God, the glorious Original of all perfection. Now the confirmed hope of this transcendent happiness, inflames a believer with sincere and supreme love to God, that will make us zealous to please him, by entire obedience to his precepts, and a likeness to his nature.

III. The purity of a christian consists in a conformity to Christ. The Son of God incarnate is both the Author of our holiness, and the Pattern of it. As the sun is the first fountain of light, and a crystal globe filled with light may be a secondary fountain, transmitting the beams unto us; so the Deity is the original cause of all created holiness; but it is transmitted through the Mediator. In his life on earth there was a globe of precepts, a perfect model of holiness. All the active and suffering graces appeared in their exaltation in his practice.

1. Our relation to him infers our likeness: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren," Rom. viii. 29. The image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream had the head of fine gold, the breast and the arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet part of iron, part of clay. But Christ united to his church are not such an irregular composition; as the Head is holy, so are all the vital members.

From hence we are informed how to judge of our

hopes, whether they are saving, and will attend us to the gates of heaven. If they purify us, they will certainly be accomplished in heavenly blessedness. If we be like our Saviour in grace, we shall be like him in glory ; but carnal and loose hopes will issue in disappointment.

Our Saviour tells us, that every visible christian, in a spiritual sense, is a builder, and raises a fabric of hope that may appear fair to the eye ; but there is a time of trial a coming that will discover how firm it is. It is our wisdom to descend to the foundation of our hope, that we may understand whether it be a rock that cannot be shaken, or the quicksand that cannot bear the weight of it. Those who hear the words of Christ and do them, Matt. vii. 24. build upon a foundation more stable than the centre ; the perfect veracity of God is engaged in his promises : but those who hear without doing, build upon the sinking sand. Carnal men will pretend they hope for salvation, only for the infinite mercies of God and merits of Christ. It is true, these are eternal foundations ; but to secure a building, the superstructure must be strongly fastened to the foundation, or it cannot resist a storm. If we are not united to Christ by the sanctifying Spirit, and a purifying faith, our hopes will deceive us. When sin has dominion, which is certainly discovered by the habitual course of men's lives, when there is a remanent affection to it in men's hearts, which is known by their reflections upon past sins with pleasure, and the prospect of future sins with desire, their hope is like a spider's web that can bear no stress. Hope is subordinate to faith, and faith is regulated by the promise. Some believe without hope ; they are convinced of the

reality of the future state, of the eternal judgment, and the consequence of it, but are careless and desperate in their wickedness: others hope to be well hereafter without belief of the gospel. Indeed, there is none can bear up under despairing thoughts, when they are raging in the breast. He that is absolutely and with consideration hopeless, falls upon his own sword. The tempter deals with sinners according to their conditions: if they are swimming in prosperity, he stupifies conscience, and induces them to be secure; if they are sinking in deep distress, he is so skilful in all the arts of aggravation, that he plunges them into despair: and both temptations are fatal; but the most perish by fallacious hopes. It is strange, that the greatest number of professors are now more unwilling to suspect the goodness and safety of their condition, than to mistake and be deceived for ever. But they are so strongly allured by worldly objects, that though in their lives there are the visible marks exclusive of salvation, they are unconcerned. They are satisfied with carnal vain hopes, which are the seed of all evils committed, and the spring of all evils suffered. Hope that should encourage holiness emboldens wickedness; and that which should lead men to heaven, precipitates them into hell.

How great will their fall be from a conceited heaven into a real hell! Hope, of all the passions, is the most calm and quiet; but when utterly disappointed in a matter of high concernment, it is most turbulent; for the consequent passions, despair, impatience, sorrow, rage, are the cruel tormentors of the minds of men. Now what will become of the hope of the hypocrite when God shall take away his soul? Job xxvii. 8. He may

feed and cherish it while he lives, but in the fatal moment, when he dies, his blazing presumption will expire, not to be revived for ever.

But the righteous has hope in his death, Psa. xiv. 32. The sanctifying Spirit inspires and preserves life in it, till it is consummated in that blessedness which exceeds all our desires, and excludes all our fears for ever.

2. The hope of glory should be a constant and commanding motive to purify ourselves. Hope is the great spring of actions in this world; it enters into all our designs, and mixes with all our endeavours. The husbandman ploughs in all the frosts and snows to which he is exposed, in hope of a fruitful harvest. The mariner sails through dangerous seas, often enraged with storms and tempests, and among rocks and sands, for a hopeful venture. How much more should the hope of heaven make us active and ardent in seeking for it; considering we have infinitely greater security of obtaining it, the word of God, and the object is above all comparison with the things of this world! Here the wisest and most diligent are uncertain to obtain their ends, the trifles which they earnestly expect, and are certain after a while to lose them: but if we in the first place seek the kingdom of God, we shall certainly obtain it, and it is unforfeitable for ever. I will conclude with the efficacy of this argument declared by the apostle; "The grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared unto all men; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Tit. ii. 11—13.

This will keep us "stedfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58.

The fear of God also is a grace of excellent efficacy to perfect holiness in us. It is the apostle's direction, "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The Divine wisdom has annexed rewards and punishments to strengthen the authority of the law, to work upon hope and fear, which are the secret springs of human actions; and for the honour of his goodness and justice, that are principally exercised in his moral government. That hope may be a powerful motive to do our duty, and fear a strong bridle to restrain from sin, the reward must exceed all the temptations of profit, or pleasure, or honour, that can accrue by transgressing the law, and the penalty of all the evils that may be inflicted for obedience to it. From hence it is, that Divine hope and godly fear have such a commanding conquering power in the hearts of true believers, and are so operative in their lives, that they will not neglect their duty to avoid the greatest evil, nor commit a sin to obtain the greatest good.

The grace of fear I have discoursed of in another place, and shall be the shorter in the account of its nature, and cleansing virtue here. Fear introduces serious religion, preserves and improves it. It is the principle of conversion to God, and knocks at the door of the soul that Divine love may have admission into it. It arises from the conviction of guilt, and the apprehension of judgment that follows. When Paul discoursed of "righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled," Acts xxiv. 25. the prisoner, with the assistance of conscience, made the judge tremble. This fear has

more torment than reverence. According to the greatness and nearness of an evil, and the apprehensions of it, the stronger is the fear. In the turning of sinners, the impressions of it are different. Stronger degrees are requisite to rouse the obdurate, and to make them fly from the wrath to come. The jailer, surprised with terrors, cries out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. It is said, the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, ver. 14. as with an oiled key; but an earthquake was necessary to open the jailer's. Till there is felt something more tormenting than carnal sweets are pleasing, men will not mortify their lusts. One will not suffer a part of his body to be cut off, unless an incurable gangrene threatens speedy death. The world is present and sensible, and continually diverts men from the consideration of their souls, unless eternal things are by a strong application impressed on their minds. Till urged by the terrors of everlasting death, they will reject the offers of everlasting life. While carnal men are in prosperity, they hate instruction to prevent sin, and despise reproof to correct sin; they slight the fearful report of thunder, and do no more tremble at the torments of hell, threatened in the word of God, than at squibs and crackers, the sport of boys. But in sharp afflictions, and the approaches of death, when conscience draws near to God's tribunal, it becomes bold, and resumes the government, and calls them to an account for all their rebellions, and forces them to confess what they would fain conceal, their fears of eternal judgment.

Holy fear preserves and increases religion. This may be considered as it includes reverence of God, with circumspection and caution. The fear of

reverence is an inseparable affection and character of a saint; "Hear the prayers of thy servants who desire to fear thy name," Neh. i. 11. The desires include the sincerity of this grace, in opposition to hypocrisy and pretences, for they are the unfeigned issues of the soul; and the freeness of the affection in opposition to violence and constraint. The name of God implies his excellent attributes, the proper motives of holy fear. His Majesty is adored by the angels in their humble posture before his high throne, Isa. vi. 2. His purity, wherein God does so excel, and we are so defective, excites the most awful respects of him. "Who shall not fear thee, for thou art holy? Holy and reverend is his name," Rev. xv. 4. Psa. cxi. 9. His goodness to a holy ingenuous soul is a motive of fear; they shall fear "the Lord and his goodness," Hos. iii. 5. If fear declines and slumbers, there is present danger of losing the purest sweetness of love and joy that proceed from intercourse and communion with God. His omniscience, and the recompenses of his justice and power keep the soul cautious, lest we should offend him. What stupidity, what fury, to provoke so dreadful an adversary, who can dispatch a sinner to the grave and hell in a moment! Some object, that it is unsuitable to the gracious dispensation of the gospel, for the children of God to reflect upon his terrible attributes. But are they wiser than God, who uses this discipline as medicinal, either to prevent sin, or to correct them into their duty. Are they more evangelical than our Saviour, who counselled his disciples, "I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forwarn you whom you shall

fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, Fear him," Luke xii. 4, 5. Are they more spiritual than St. Paul, who from the consideration of our being accountable for all things done in the body, before the enlightened tribunal of Christ, infers, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," 2 Cor. v. 11. This influenced him to a zealous discharge of his duty.

It may seem very difficult to reconcile the exercise of holy fear, with faith, and the sanctified affections of love, hope, and joy. But it will appear that they are very consistent.

1. Fear is the product of faith; and assurance of God's favour is preserved by the fear of his displeasure. Fear is not contrary to faith, but to presumption; "Be not high-minded, but fear," Rom. xi. 20. A jealousy of ourselves, lest we should provoke God, is joined with a more entire and pure trust in his grace and mercy.

2. The love and fear of God, have a mutual causality on each other. The love of God excites thoughts of his continual presence and perfections, that cause an awful esteem of him, by which love is maintained. Desires proceed from love, and it is expressed in the forecited place, "Thy servants who desire to fear thy name," Neh. i. 11. The fear of the Lord is their treasure, not their torment, Isa. xxxiii. 6. for their fear to offend him is from their pure love to please him. Indeed servile fear that is merely from the consideration of his anger and power, is consistent with the love of sin, and inconsistent with the love of God: it is a judicial and violent impression on conscience, that carnal men would fain deface, that they might freely enjoy

their desired objects, and it is by fits, for God sometimes thunders in the conscience as well as in the air. But filial fear is the habitual constitution of a saint, he is voluntary and active to preserve it in continual exercise.

3. The fear of God, and hope, are joined in scripture, and in the hearts of believers. The Lord delights in those that fear him, and hope in his mercy, Psa. cxlvii. 11. Fear and hope counterpoise each other; fear without hope is slavish, and hope without fear is secure. As the growth of things in nature, flowers and fruits, is from the heat of the days, and the cold moisture of the nights, so growth in grace is by the warm encouragements of hope, and the chilling influence of fear. A regular hope in the promises, is joined with an humble fear and subjection to his commands.

4. Holy fear is mixed with joy. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling," Psa. ii. 11. Carnal joy, and carnal fear and sorrow, are contrary extremes that proceed from contrary causes. A prosperous state in this world, and the satisfaction of the sensual desires, is the root from whence carnal joy springs, and is nourished; and the being deprived of temporal good things, disabled by sickness to enjoy them, or the prospect of some imminent disaster, are the cause of fear and guilt. But the exercise of spiritual joy and holy fear are consistent at the same time; for the serious reflection on the Divine attributes, excites both those affections. We read that when Mary Magdalen, with the other Mary, came to the sepulchre of Christ, at the bright appearance of an angel that declared his resurrection, they went away "with fear and great joy,"

Matt. xxviii. 8. Sinful affections are opposite to grace, but gracious affections are inseparable. The fear of offending God is a preservative of our joy in him : as a hedge of thorns is a fence to a garden of roses. In the kingdom of love and joy, the reverent fear of God is in its exaltation.

Also there is a fear of caution, that is always joined with the other, and excites us to walk circumspectly and exactly, that we may be always approved and accepted of God. "The fear of the Lord is clean," effectively, Psa. xix. 9. This will prevent secret sins, which are only known to God. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor lay a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God," Lev. xix. 14. Fear is an internal guardian, that keeps the heart pure, of which God is the Inspector and Judge. It will not suffer us to sin freely in thought, nor foully in act. When fear draws the lines of our duty, our steps will be regular. Fear keeps us close to God, by the persuasion of his all-seeing eye, and is opposed to the forgetfulness of God, the cause of all the errors of our lives. Holy fear will make us to perform our duty in those degrees that are commanded, to please God. It is the principle of perseverance : thus God assures his people, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii. 40. The causes of backsliding are allurements and terrors : pleasant temptations sometimes so strongly insinuate into the affections, that love calls in fear to its assistance to repel them : for strong fear and delight are inconsistent. If terrors are objected to drive us from our duty, the greater fear will overrule the less ; the fear of God will expel the fearfulness of man ; for the most flaming anger

of men is more tolerable, than a spark of his displeasure.

From hence it is evident, that the fear of God is the fountain of heroic courage, and fortifies the spirit, that the threatenings of men cannot supplant our constancy. If our residence were perpetual in this world, it were a point of wisdom to secure the favour of men; but since we must shortly die, as surely as we live, it is extreme folly, by compliance and low respects to men, to lose our interest in God, and provoke him, with whom we must be either in his favourable and felicitating presence, or in his terrible presence for ever. The rage of man cannot reach beyond the grave, but the wrath of God extends to eternity. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31. who lives for ever, and can punish for ever.

Let us therefore be exhorted to "pass the time of our sojourning in fear," 1 Pet. i. 17. Temptations are frequent, and we are frail, and are never safe without circumspection. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom," Psa. cxi. 10. the principal part of it. Wisdom is not employed about trivial things, but affairs of moment. Now what is there of such consequence in the world, as the directing the soul to eternal blessedness? how to escape the most imminent and destructive evil, and to obtain the most desirable good.

Indeed the passion of fear, when exorbitant and overwhelming, causes a wretched neglect of the means of salvation. If a ship springs a leak, and the waters pour faster into it than the mariners can pump it out, and they see nothing but the sea ready to swallow them up, their hearts and hands faint, and they give over all labour. If men are despe-

rate, they will be disobedient: but we can never raise our fears of God too high, if we retain a firm belief of his mercy, that rejoices over judgment, Jam. ii. 13. This will not infringe our liberty, but enlarge it; for it is the most ignominious slavery to be under the dominion of sin, and the just apprehensions of its terrible consequences.

The fear of God engages him to be our Friend, and rescues us from all the perplexities to which we are liable in this open state. Many sins are committed for the fear of the anger of men, and presumption of the mercy of God; but it is often found that a religious constancy gains more friends than carnal obsequiousness. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him," Prov. xvi 7.

Especially in all acts of worship, this grace should be in its highest exercise. It is the apostle's direction, Let us draw near "with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 28, 29. We must solemnly consider the greatness of God, who dwells in light inaccessible, 1 Tim. vi. 16. and is a consuming fire to all that disparage him by slight and careless addresses. "Shall not his excellency make us afraid?" Job xiii. 11. In prayer let us draw near to his throne in the deepest sense of our meanness and unworthiness; and tremble at the hearing of his word. This disposition will make us acceptable in his eyes. The Lord saith, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; to him will I look, who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word," Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.

And in times of temptation, when pleasing lusts are imperious and violent, then it is necessary to

control them by the fearful remembrance, that for all these things God will bring us to judgment, Eccl. xi. 9. This will clear the mind from the eclipses and clouds of the carnal passions, and keep the senses under the dominion of the superior and surer faculties.

Blessed is the man that fears always, Prov. xxviii. 14. that is continually vigilant in secret and society; who considers that God's eyes are always upon him, in order to judgment, and whose eyes are always upon God, in order to acceptance.

CHAPTER X.

The promise that God will be our Father, a powerful inducement to strive after the perfection of holiness. The dignity and happiness of the relation. The pardon of sin, an adoptive freedom in prayer, an interest in the eternal inheritance, are the privileges of God's children. The influence of this relation to make us entirely holy considered. An inquiry whether we are proceeding to perfection. The vanquishing sin, an indication of the power of grace. The habitual frame of the heart, and fixed regularity of the life, discovers our progress in holiness. According to our love to God, and things that have the nearest resemblance to him, we may judge of our spirituality. The spiritual law of God, the spiritual worship of God, the spiritual image of God in the saints, are the principal objects of the love of the spiritually-minded. To preserve an equal temper of mind in the changes of the present state, discovers excellent degrees of holiness.

I AM now come to the third general head, the motives to enforce the duty of striving after pure and perfect holiness; the promises specified in the antecedent chapter, that the Lord Almighty will receive us, and we shall be his sons and daughters; that he will dwell in us, his living temples, and walk in us, ver. 16. 18. This Divine relation and communion the consequent of it, should keep the state of perfection always in our design and

view, and inspire us with unchangeable resolutions to endeavour the obtaining it. I will consider the dignity and happiness of this relation.

I. The dignity. Secular nobility that is transfused from the veins of progenitors into the veins of their progeny, derives its lustre from flesh and blood; and the glory of the flesh is like the flower of the grass, 1 Pet. i. 24. so despicably mean and fading. A family that is distinguished by an illustrious lineage, if not qualified with internal virtuous dispositions becoming their extraction, is of no value, but in the vain fancies of men: but the relation to God as our Father, confers an honour substantial and durable, in comparison whereof all the magnificent titles in this world are but shadows, and smoke, and dreams. We are in a state of union with the incarnate Son of God, and in that respect dignified above the angels; for their Lord is our Brother, Heb. ii. 16, 17. We are made partakers of the life and likeness of God, and heirs of his kingdom. This dignity is truly divine, and of more value than sovereignty over the principalities and powers of darkness. Our Saviour speaks to his disciples, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven," Luke x. 20.

II. The happiness of this relation will appear in the privileges that are consequent, and comprehensive of all blessings.

I. The title of a Son has annexed to it the promise of the pardon of sin. This is declared by God himself, "I will spare them as a father spares his son that serves him," Mal. iii. 17. There are spots in the best of God's children. It is equally impossible there should be absolutely pure virtues in the

state of grace, as unmixed elements in the state of nature. But our frailties lamented and striven against, rather move his compassion than severe displeasure. Sins of a heinous nature presumptuously committed, retracted by repentance, are not excepted from his pardoning mercy. Of this there is the most comfortable assurance in David's case; for after his complicated sin, when he was melted in tears of contrition, God sealed his pardon, and sent the notice of it by Nathan the prophet. God was so entirely reconciled to him, that after his death he gave this testimony of him, "That David did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and turned not from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah," 1 Kings xv. 5. He would not name that sin of so high a provocation.

The pardon of sin is attended with all the most excellent blessings, the testimonies of his favour. Guilt seals the fountain, and stops the current of mercies; it exposes us to the terrors of the Lord. If sin be pardoned, peace of conscience is a rainbow of tranquillity in the storms of outward evils. If guilt be not abolished, a sinner in the most shining prosperity has fearful darkness within.

2. This relation gives us an adoptive freedom, and joyful access to God in prayer. God, upon his throne of glory, or his throne of judgment, strikes us with terror; but upon the throne of grace, as our Father, invites our addresses. The apostle encourages us to come with boldness to the throne of grace, or grace upon the throne, dispensing grace and mercy in time of need, Heb. iv. 16. We stand in need of mercy to pardon, and grace to preserve us from sin, of counsel and comfort in our

various exigencies, and our heavenly Father is able and ready to grant our requests.

It is the law of Heaven, that blessings are to be obtained by prayer; for that is the homage due to God's eternal greatness; it is the acknowledgment of his all-sufficiency, that he can supply all our wants, satisfy our desires, allay our sorrows, subdue our fears; it is the glorifying his mercy that inclines him to relieve the miserable and unworthy of his benefits. The whole Trinity affords encouragement to our faith in humble prayer. The mercy of the Father who receives them, the merits of the Son who presents them, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit who indites them. If we come jealous as strangers, or fearful as slaves, and not with a filial freedom and reliance, we disparage his love and power. A regular trust of benignity in the Giver, and distant from all presumption of merits in the receiver, is very honourable to God, and beneficial to us. Our Saviour confirms our hope by a powerful argument: "If you that are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?" Matt. vii. 11. The deduction is with convincing force and evidence. If the natural love of a father be so deeply planted in his heart, that it is a prodigy if any deny necessary support to their children, can you suspect that God will not supply the wants of his children? An earthly parent may be unnatural, or unable to relieve a child, but in our heavenly Father love and power are truly infinite. The stedfast belief of this, is the sovereign cure of piercing cares, the great composer of our distracted passions. It is the apostle's counsel, "Be careful for nothing, but

in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts," Phil. iv. 6, 7. There is no blessing so great, no evil so small, but we may pray in faith to God to bestow the one, and remove the other. Invaluable privilege! He protects them from dangers, relieves them in their troubles, and releases them out of troubles. His eye is intent upon the righteous; his ear is open, and inclined to hear their cry; his hand is as ready as powerful to deliver them from death. David saith, "I have set the Lord always before me: he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved," Psa. xvi. 8. In all his combats God appeared as his second. When his dangers were extreme, the sorrows of death encompassed him, Psa. cxvi. 3. he despatches a prayer to heaven for speedy relief, and God appeared in arms for his defence.

I shall add for our direction and comfort, that the love and providence of God is often as visible to the enlightened mind, in denying some petitions of his children, as in granting others. Sometimes they pray for temporal things, unbecoming their alliance with God, and their interest in his special favour. It is recorded of that wise Theban, Epaminondas, that when a friend, greatly in his esteem, requested his favour to release a mean fellow, imprisoned for a crime, he denied him; and afterward released him at the desire of a despicable person; and gave this reason, "That was not a favour in proportion to the dignity of Pelopidas, but suitable to the quality of the other petitioner." Thus the children of this world, who believe no other happiness but the enjoyment of temporal things, some-

times obtain their desires ; but the children of light are not heard in their prayers for them, they being unsuitable to their heavenly dignity, and not the sure signs of God's favour.

Sometimes, by mistake, they pray for things prejudicial to their salvation ; and it would be a severe judgment if God should bestow them. We read of the possessed person in the gospel, that the evil spirit made use of his tongue to request our Saviour that he would not torment him, Mark v. 7. that is, not expel him from his habitation. Thus the carnal part, incensed by the tempter, is often clamorous to obtain as a benefit that which would be hurtful to the soul, and God is merciful in the denial. We know not what to ask, but our heavenly Father knows what to give.

Sometimes God bestows equivalent or better blessings than what his children pray for. If God gives contentment with poverty, it is equivalent to riches ; if patience with sickness, it is better than health ; if eternal life in heaven, it is infinitely better than a long life on earth. He did not preserve the martyrs from the flames, nor forsake them in the flames, but in those fiery chariots conveyed them to heaven.

Briefly, God never denies or delays to grant the petitions of his children, but for a greater good to them. He always hears their main desires ; that is, bestows such blessings as are most conducive for his glory, and their good. This is the principal petition of the saints, in conformity to Christ in his exigency ; he prayed to be saved from the approaching hour of his terrible sufferings, Matt. xxvi. 39. but subordinately to a higher request, " Father glorify thy name," John xii. 28.

Lastly, the relation of children to God is not an empty title, but includes an interest in the eternal inheritance. The apostle infers, "If sons, then heirs, heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ," Rom viii. 17. The sons of earthly parents cannot all inherit. The eldest is the heir to maintain the splendour and state of the family; and the younger sons have often but thin provision. If a kingdom be the inheritance, it is appropriated to one: the throne is incommunicable. When Pharaoh made Joseph viceroy of Egypt, he reserved the throne to himself: "In the throne I will be greater than thou," Gen. xli. 40. But all the saints are kings. Our Saviour comforts his disciples, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. and his power is equal to his pleasure. They are the children of the King and kingdom of heaven. The kingdom, with a note of excellency: in comparison of it, all the kingdoms of this world in their blazing glory are but a faint figure and a foil. Transcendent privilege! Infinite bounty! All the conceptions we can form of happiness are eminently in God. He is the glory, the joy, the perfection, the satisfaction of intelligent creatures. He alone can fill the capacity of comprehensive immortal spirits. He is their eternal and entire inheritance, possessed equally by all, without diminution to any. As the light of the world is enjoyed by all without prejudice to any, according to the apostle's expression, "The inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12. The eternal enjoyment of God excludes all fears of losing it: there is a perpetual security from all change and separation; and excludes all possible desires of a better state. Without Divine revelation we could

never have had any discovery of this supernatural blessedness. The apostle prays for the Ephesians, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, Eph. i. 17, 18. God is infinitely rich in his perfections, in mercy, in wisdom, and power; and as the father said to his son in the gospel, "Son, all that I have is thine," Luke xv. 31. so all his attributes are exercised for the happiness of his children.

The difference is observable between an earthly inheritance, and the heavenly. For estates and honours conveyed by descent, are not possessed till the death of the fathers, but we partake of the heavenly inheritance because our Father lives; and we must die that we may enjoy it, For "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."—What manner of love is it, that we should be the sons of God? 1 Cor. xv. 50. 1 John iii. 1. When Pharaoh's daughter compassionately preserved Moses, an exposed infant, and adopted him to be her son, it was rare and wonderful goodness. The privilege was so high, that the self-denial of Moses is recorded with this illustrious proof of it, that "he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," Heb. xi. 24. But she had no son of her own. Adoption is a legal supply, for the want of natural progeny. But God had an eternal Son, the heir of his love and glory, the adequate object of his complacency, yet he raised us to so near an alliance. Men adopt sons for their support and comfort, and usually those in whom some praiseworthy qualities

appear. God did not want a son, but we wanted a Father. "In thee the fatherless find mercy," Hos. xiv. 3. There was nothing in us but sin and misery, an occasion of his mercy.

It is added by the apostle, "We are co-heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. This may seem to be a usurpation upon his prerogative, who is invested with the supremacy of heaven. But this is easily cleared, by considering that Christ has a double title to the inheritance. 1. A natural title as the Son of God, in a transcendent and peculiar manner. From eternity there was a mutual possession of the Father and the Son, wherein their blessedness consists. This title is singular and incommunicable. 2. An acquired title by his meritorious obedience and sufferings. Therefore God has exalted him "above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that to come," Eph. i. 21. And such is his astonishing love, he associates us with him in this title: he communicates a right to us in his kingdom, by the merits of his death, and introduces us into possession by his mediation. His glory is consistent with ours, and inseparable from ours; for when the Head is crowned, the members reign. The saints sit down with him in his throne, as he is set down on his Father's throne, Rev. iii. 21.

Let us now consider how influential this privilege is, to make us entirely holy.

(1.) It is most worthy of observation, that God, who might, by mere empire and authority, command us to do our duty, is pleased by gracious inducements to endear our duty to us. He might by dominion and power constrain us, but he is pleased

by the sweetest affections to allure us. A wise prince, according to the rules of true policy, will rather govern by love than fear; for his safety and tranquillity is more preserved by it. Fear may secure him from open rebellions and assaults; but love from secret underminings, from treachery and poison. It is true, there is no such motive inclines God to allure our love, but his design is to gain our hearts to obey him, that he may crown our obedience. Fear restrains us from provoking him, but love makes us active and cheerful to please him. Now what can be a more powerful obligation to love him, than the receiving us into the high and dear relation of his children? If we look up to God, and down upon ourselves, we shall be struck with equal admiration and confusion. There is a rare and most affecting example of humble thankfulness recorded in scripture, when David said to Mephibosheth, "Fear not; for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually;" he bowed himself and said, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look on such a dead dog as I am?" 2 Sam. ix. 7, 8. Mephibosheth was of royal extraction, and the son of Jonathan, who greatly deserved of David, yet how has he vilify himself to magnify the king's favour! What an extreme disparity is there between the kindness of David and the condescending compassionate love of God! He is the high and holy One; we were enemies to him, and had our portion with dragons, yet he has received us into his family, and adopted us into the line of heaven.

(2.) Consider, the promises so exceeding great

and precious, so stable and sure, are conditional, and not to be obtained without consent to the terms specified in them. The promises of the gospel are most free in their original and rise, the love of God; but their performance is suspended upon such terms as the bountiful God requires of us. It is true, his grace assists us to perform them, and the performance is for the full and final glory of his grace; but the conditions are indispensably required. The terms of the gospel are as strictly enjoined to our obtaining salvation, as the terms of the law were to preserve the happy life of man in paradise. It is not within the compass of Omnipotence to admit us to partake of adoption and communion with God, without our being cleansed from sin, and being changed into the image of God. It would disparage the unspotted holiness of God to take one into sonship, and to manifest his complacential love in him, that continues in the state of polluted nature. While men are alienated from the life of God, they cannot have a filial relation to him, neither can there be communion with him; for God cannot deny himself. We are directed to draw near to God, and he will draw near to us; but we must cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts, Jas. iv. 8. St. John declares the heavenly privilege of christians, "Truly our communion is with the Father, and with Jesus Christ;" and he declares the terms of it, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another," 1 John i. 3. 7. Communion implies freedom and fruition, a mutual intercourse of mercies and duties; the soul ascends to God by acts of faith and love, and God descends into the soul by excitations of grace and influences of joy. There can be no love

without likeness, nor fellowship without love. According to the degrees of our holiness, the more exact is our resemblance to God, and the more clear and comfortable is the evidence of our filial relation to him. Fire is more clearly discovered by flame than by a little heat ; so grace is most conspicuous in the view of conscience by its radiant operations.

The Spirit of adoption is the Spirit of regeneration. It is from his testimony with our spirits that we have the comfortable assurance, that we are the children of God, Rom. viii. 16. The Spirit first works before he witnesses, and his testimony is always in conformity to the rule of the word, wherein the infallible characters of the children of God are laid down. The testimony is argumentative and declarative from those Divine dispositions that constitute the children of God.

God is terrible to the conscience, and distasteful to the affections of the unholy. The bright and serene face of the heavens is pleasant to the sight, but a black cloud charged with thunderbolts, and that threatens storms, is looked on with fear. The countenance of God is a refreshing light to his obedient children, but is a tormenting fire to the un-sanctified. They are averse from the society of the saints in the ordinances, because God is peculiarly present with them. They are unwilling to retire from the vanities and business of the world, lest conscience, God's deputy, should remember them of their neglected duties to God ; and above all things they are afraid to die, because then the spirit returns to God that gave it, Eccl. xii. 7.

Now if the paternal relation of God be the ground of his most dear and beneficent affection to us, shall it not be the motive of our dutiful affection to him ?

“If I be a Father, where is my honour?” Mal. i. 6. We are commanded to follow God as dear children, Eph. v. 1. The obligation is clearly natural, from our heavenly original and end. We are excited by our relation: “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he who has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation,” 1 Pet. i. 14, 15. And we are exhorted to be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, shining as lights in the world, Phil. ii. 15. If we are cold and careless in our duty, how justly may we be upbraided with that question of confusion, “Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is he not thy Father, that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee?” Deut. xxxii. 6. Is any thing more contrary to natural conscience and supernatural grace, than for those who are in title and relation the children of God, to renounce that relation by a course of life directly opposite to it? To be called a child of God, is a title of the highest honour; and what a vile degeneracy is it, what a stain and infamy is it, for such to mind earthly things, to set their affections on perishing vanities, that defile and debase them! It is a title of the most perfect liberty; “If the Son make you free, ye are free indeed,” John viii. 36. What a disparagement is it to believers to be fastened by the chains and charms of their lusts in a most ignominious slavish bondage! It is a title of consecration; holiness to the Lord is engraven in their foreheads, the visible profession of christians. Now can they conform themselves according to the custom of this world, which lies in wickedness, unless

all filial affections to God be dead, or very languishing in their breasts? A sacred ambition, an active zeal to adorn the gospel, to live becoming the dignity and purity of our Divine relation, is the great duty incumbent on us.

To conclude this part, there may be sincere grace in a person, but through neglect of improving it to degrees of eminence, a child of light may walk in darkness, and be deprived of the sense of God's present love, and the joyful hope of future happiness: he may fear that in every affliction here there is anger without any mixture of favour, and in the approaches to eternity be in distracting doubts about his future state, and an anxious expectation of an uncertain sentence. It is our interest, as well as duty, to strive to excel in holiness.

I shall now apply this doctrine: **First.** By inquiring whether we are proceeding to perfection. **Second.** Propound directions how we should follow it.

I shall lay down some rules whereby we may discern whether we are proceeding to perfection. It is requisite to premise, there may be an easy mistake in the judgment about the truth and strength of grace in men's souls. Indeed, there are clear and plain rules in scripture to judge of our spiritual state, but the dark and crooked hearts of men misapply them. Carnal men are apt to mistake presumption for faith, and think the bolder they are in presuming without a promise, the stronger they are in believing. They mistake a fruitless sorrow for sin to be repentance. They sin and repent, and after repentance they sin; and walking in a circle of repentings and relapsings,

take not one step towards heaven. But real saints are often complaining of their want of grace, and condemning themselves for their not improving the means of grace. Their desires are ardent and ascending to perfection, and they judge of their defects by that measure. He that sails before the wind in a river, and sees men walking on the shore, to his eye they seem to stand still, because of the swift motion of the boat. Thus the saints judge of their imperfections, by the swiftness of their desires after complete holiness. I shall lay down some general rules of trial, concerning growth in grace; and proceed to particular discoveries.

I. The vanquishing of sin is a certain indication of the power of grace. During the present life, from its first rise to its last fall, the corruption of nature in some degrees remains in the saints. The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, that we cannot do the things we would, Gal. v. 17. Now the strength of sin is discovered by the readiness of the heart to a temptation. Some are entangled at the first sight of a pleasant object. The tempter needs not raise a battery against them, for the treacherous party within opens the gates of the senses to receive his temptations. Others, though unrenewed by sanctifying grace, yet there is in them such a resistance between the law of the mind, and the law of the members, Rom. vii. 23. such a conflict between conviction and corruption, that they resolve to forsake sin, and by restraining grace, are in some instances kept from doing it: but ordinarily, when temptations are very inviting, they consent and commit sin. Nay, the saints are sometimes surprised and foiled by the tempter. David, by a

sudden glance, was overcome, and fell into a sin of a very foul nature. Peter, at the challenge of a servant, denied his Master, and was almost frozen to death with fear, till the compassionate eye of our Saviour warmed and melted him into tears of repentance.

To prevent mistakes, it must be considered, that the ceasing from the acts of sin, does not always proceed from victorious grace. In the absence of alluring objects there is a ceasing from the vicious acts, but the sinful affections may be then most intense; as hunger is more sharp in a time of famine, when there is no food to satisfy it; and thirst in a wilderness, where there are no springs or fruits to refresh it, is more burning and tormenting. Sometimes through impotence or age, men are disabled from doing the sin they still love. As a disease causes such a distaste of pleasing meats and drinks, that an intemperate person is forced to abstain from them. Sometimes a man from his constitution may be averse from a particular lust without a spiritual change in the heart. Some are frightened from sin by the terrors of conscience, they dare not drink the pleasant wines from an abhorrence of the dregs at the bottom, and others are allured from a sin by a new temptation. But spiritual mortification consists in this, the carnal affections are spiritualized; sensual love is fastened upon the beauty of holiness, covetous desires change their objects, and are ardent after the treasures of heaven, and the dearest lusts are killed.

Now the more easy, frequent, and clear the victory over sin is, in proportion grace is advanced in the soul, and its power is seen. Every renewed person is a soldier under the illuminating conduct and empire of the Spirit, and acquires new strength

by every new victory over the carnal part. Sometimes the carnal appetite so strongly solicits the will to consent to a proposal, that it is wavering, and although the inclination does not proceed to the act of sin, and the conception be abortive, the victory is then imperfect, and obtained with difficulty. There are lingering inclinations still working in our hearts towards present and sensible things, but when grace is in the throne, it enables a man freely and readily to resist those enticing objects that ravish the carnal affections. We have an admirable instance of this in Joseph, when tempted to sin by his mistress, he presently and constantly rejected her importunity, and repeated solicitations; and as Paul easily shook the viper from his hand into the fire without hurt, so he preserved his purity untainted. This argued the dominion grace had over the sensual appetite.

The more frequent our prevalency over temptations is, argues the strength of sin is broken, and the firmer radication* and vigour of the Divine nature. As the house of Saul grew weaker every day, the house of David grew stronger, 2 Sam. iii. 1. As the old man decays, the new man increases in strength.

The more complete the victory is over sin, the more clear indication we have of the power of grace. The completeness either implies the extent of the victory over the whole body of sin, all the lusts of the desiring and angry appetites, when no sin is indulged, though pleasant and profitable, and though it may seem ever so small; for the command of God is strict and severe against every sin, as it was against the Amalekites—all must be destroyed.

* Deep rooting.

Indeed, no sin is truly subdued, but all are in some degrees mortified. Or the completeness of the victory implies not only the abstaining from the outward act, but the mortifying of the inward affections, the first seeds of sin.

In short, the excellent degree of grace is most evident in destroying the select and superior lust, that leads and animates many other; as the honour and greatness of a victory is from the strength of the enemy that is vanquished. And the power of grace is discovered in securing us from being foiled by sudden unexpected temptations. We read of the tempter, He came to our Saviour, but found nothing in him, and could not fasten any impression on him, John xiv. 30. It is true, it is morally impossible to attain to this perfection, to be always watchful in this state of frail flesh; then militant holiness would be triumphant: but it should be our earnest endeavour to be so fortified with holy resolutions, and so vigilant, that though we are surrounded by innumerable enemies, we may not be surprised by them. The present reward of subduing carnal lusts, exceeds all carnal satisfaction. What sweeter reflection can there be of conscience, the only true and internal comforter, than upon innocence and victory?

II. The discovery of our progress in holiness, is made by the habitual frame of the heart, and the fixed regularity of the life. There cannot be a true judgment of a christian, either when he is best disposed, or when he is worst disposed. One that has less grace, may sometimes in the use of the ordinances, feel high and holy affections in an unusual manner: an excellent saint, in time of temptation, may feel the power of corruption strangely great. A strong man in a fainting fit is weaker than an

other; a weak man in a fever is stronger than two. But we may judge of the degrees of grace by the spiritual frame of the heart, and the actions flowing from it. The character and denomination of men in scripture is from two principles, the flesh and Spirit. The apostle tells us, that "they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 5. Those who are not distinguished from the carnal in the resurrection of grace, shall not be separated from them in the resurrection of glory.

The carnal are under the prevalent influences of the outward senses; their minds and wills, their imaginations and affections, their discourses and actions, are all pointed on the earth; their weak eyes are dazzled with the false lustre of worldly things: their hearts are enraptured with them. With what an accent and emphasis do they express their desires, "Who will show us any good?" Psa. iv. 6. The world is the principal object of their esteem and love; they labour continually; they sweat and freeze, and move in a circle of toilsome employments; their desires are incessant and unsatisfied without obtaining it; and their acquiring one thing, kindles desires after another. But how slow and slack are their endeavours after eternal things! They use God to enjoy the world.

But the saints are spiritual in their principles, objects, and ends. God is a pure Spirit, and the more we are spiritualized, the more we partake of the Divine nature, and are pleasing in his sight. This discovers itself by our esteem, affections, and conversations. When the mind is purified from carnal prejudices and passions, then the beauty and

goodness of God, all his amiable excellences, appear and powerfully attract the thoughts and affections. The christian who can say with the spirit of the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee," Psa. lxxiii. 25. and join in the expression of the church, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul," Lam. iii. 24. is spiritually-minded. He places his happiness in the favour and fruition of God: his temporal affairs are subordinate to his main design: he prosecutes with the greatest resolution, diligence, and delight, his blessed end: he uses the world to enjoy God: riches are principally valued by him, as he sees God's love in them, and shows his glory by them. Now it is an infallible rule, as we are affected towards God, and those things that have the nearest resemblance to him, accordingly we may judge of the degrees of our spirituality.

More particularly,

1. The Divine law is a clear glass, wherein the wisdom, the rectitude, the goodness and holiness of God are evident; and consequently, according to our valuations and love to it, there is a sure sign of a Divine temper, and its prevalency in the soul. David, the man after God's own heart, declares it to be his incomparable treasure, his dearest enjoyment, Psa. cxix. It was the pleasing object of his mind and will. It was his meditation all the day. He expresses his love to it in the highest degree by intimating it is inexpressible. "O how I love thy law!" he loved it, because it was pure. The holiness of God so conspicuously shone in its precepts, that it was as strong an engagement to his affections, as the majesty of God, by its sanction obliged his conscience to obey it.

2. When the worship of God, in its purity and simplicity, is the object of our esteem and love, it is the effect of a spiritual frame of soul. During the Levitical dispensation, the service of God was performed with pomp and lustre, suitable to the church in its minority, when faith needed the assistance of the senses; but now the church is come to a mature age, and brought to nearer communion with God, the gaudy allurements of sense are taken away. Men are naturally under the dominion of sense; of this there is the most clear and palpable proof in the heathen world, that would rather worship visible idols, than the true invisible God. It is a certain indication of men's carnal minds, that they are pleased with carnal service, that lavishly runs out in formalities, which by sympathy works upon them. This affects the eye, and is far more easy than spiritual inward worship, that issues from the strength of the soul, and is performed with attention and ardency. This is very disparaging to the nature of God; for it proceeds from the conceiving of him to be like themselves, who are not heavenly and spiritual, pleased with an earthly bodily service. The introducing theatrical ceremonies into the service of God, is directly opposite to the simplicity of the gospel. Whatever pretences are made, that they set a gloss upon the plainness of christian worship, and make it more amiable and venerable, they are like the artificial painting of natural beauty, that corrupts and does not commend it. The productions of human minds are imperfect at first, and are polished, and arrive to perfection by degrees; but Divine institutions are complete in their kind at first, and the more they recede from their original, they lose of their purity and perfection.

How acceptable those parts of worship are, not chosen and commanded by God,) we may clearly understand by considering, that the enjoying such new rites, is a tacit presumption that the reason of man knows better how God should be honoured than himself does; and how unprofitable they are to us, is evident; for being used without his warrant and promise, we cannot expect the conveyance of his grace, and obtaining his favour by them. Only spiritual religion, the inward reality, is of value in his esteem. When the understanding is spiritually enlightened, it esteems the simplicity of gospel-worship to be its true beauty; it is like the nakedness of paradise, the indication of the unstained purity of our first parents in that state.

It is true, in the worship of God, we are to glorify him with our bodies, to behave ourselves in such a manner, as may express reverence, and excite affection; but the joining human devices upon that pretence, is the snare of conscience, and has been fatal to the peace of the church.

3. The mind, when spiritually illuminated, sees the true worth of the saints, though in an obscure condition, and accordingly honours and loves them. It is the character of one that shall dwell in the holy hill of God, that "in his eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honours them that fear the Lord," Psa. xv. 4. Carnal men are struck with outward splendour, but inward beauty is not within their prospect. They despise the holy, who are poor and mean in their outward circumstances. But the spiritual man looks upon those who are lofty and lawless, with contempt, as beneath men, in an ignominious bondage to their lusts: but the

godly, who are dignified with the glorious titles of the saints, and sons of God, are most precious and dear to him. It is easy to know a picture well drawn, if we are acquainted with the person whom it represents; those who know what holiness is in God, know what it is in men. Holiness is the essential purity of his nature, whereby he is infinitely opposite to all moral evil. Accordingly, those who are undefiled with sinful evils, are certainly his children. David styles them, "The excellent in whom is all his delight," Psa. xvi. 3. It argues a clearer spirit, and more sacred temper, to discover the shining excellences of the saints, notwithstanding their eclipse by the interposing medium of their afflictions. The apostle tells us of some that wandered in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, confined to dens and caves, of whom the world was not worthy, Heb. xi. 37, 38.

The Divine image is renewed in the saints, and shines in their lives, and makes them amiable in God's eyes, and so dear to him, that he gives them in charge to the angels, the armies of light, those bright and vigilant guardians, to secure them from evil. They are glorious within, though often disguised and shaded by poverty, and afflictions. Without an internal light their value is not known.

III. To preserve an equal temper of mind, and tenour of conversation, in the various turns and changes of the present state, argues an excellent degree of holiness. The condition of men in this world, is like the sea, the theatre of inconstancy. Their affections are like the wind: some are turbid, others serene and cheerful; some warm and comforting, others cold and sharp; some placid and

gentle, others stormy and furious; and it is as difficult to regulate the affections, as to order those discordant spirits in the air. They are the most depraved faculties in man: there are some sparks of light and purity in the natural conscience, but the passions are the fountains of sin and folly. By their unruly insurrection, the understanding is deposed, and men are brought into a brutish servitude. They are sometimes jealous to rage, sad to despair, dead with fear, drunk with joy and fond hopes of conceited happiness. To free us from their vanity and tyranny, is the most noble effect of grace.

Now these dark powers are never more unruly and turbulent, than in the change of conditions, whether prosperous or calamitous. The observation of Hippocrates, that the change of seasons breeds diseases in the body, is equally true in the change of men's conditions with respect to the distempers of the mind; especially if two circumstances are joined, that the changes be great and sudden; as it is an insufferable violence to nature to pass immediately from one extreme to another. It is argued on both sides whether sudden and great calamities do more disorder the mind by despair, or sudden and great prosperity, by vain presumption. This may be said, that afflictions are more apt to restore reason that was lost in prosperity, as is visible by frequent experience: and in sudden prosperity many have lost the understanding they had in a low condition.

It is a point of high and holy wisdom, little understood and less practised, to manage prosperity with humility and discretion, and bear adversity with patience, to possess the soul, and guide it by

clear and steady rules becoming every condition. St. Paul declares, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content; I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need," Phil. iv. 11, 12. In prosperity he was lowly and temperate, ready to resign all at the first call of the Giver. In adversity he was content, as if he had a secret treasure, a concealed fountain issuing from within, he was rich in his deep poverty; for it is not acquiring possessions, but the retrenching our desires, that makes us truly rich. All the gold and silver of the West Indies, and the pearls and jewels of the East, cannot truly enrich the soul. This lesson he had learnt in the school of Heaven, and by experience and exercise made it familiar to him, as our Saviour learnt obedience by his sufferings, Heb. v. 8.

This is a duty as difficult as excellent; therefore a wise and holy man either conscious of his own weakness, or suspicious of his strength, so earnestly deprecated the extremes; "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain," Prov. xxx. 8, 9. He was not without doubt or danger, lest he should be corrupted by prosperity, or foiled by adversity. There is great hazard in either, but more in fulness than in want, as was touched on before. He that rows in a shallop near the shore, needs not the skill and courage of a pilot that directs a ship through tempestuous seas, and with his ill-governed ship must sink to the bottom. The temptations of

prosperity are more numerous ; a swarm of flies come to sweet things ; and are very grateful to the sensual appetites ; the temptations of adversity are troublesome and grievous, and at their appearance nature recoils from them ; and accordingly the tempter manages them ; he insinuates into the heart, like a serpent, by pleasures, and transfuses his poison indiscernibly, but like a roaring lion he pursues the afflicted. Experience instructs us that many have made an easy forfeiture of their integrity, when prosperous, and in sharp afflictions have been recovered. But in heavy calamities, we are apt either to be fired with discontent, and constructively to dispute with God about the righteousness of his proceedings ; or to faint and languish by bleeding inwardly. Vexation and immoderate sorrow hinder the free exercise of reason and religion, and men's sufferings occasionally increase their sins. As when physic does not work well, it increases the disease, and brings death more speedily and painfully.

Now it is rare to a wonder to see a person wisely manage these wide extremes so that there is not a variation of scenes in the passions according to external accidents. If the sun should make a search, it would discover but few among the numberless number of christians, that enjoy prosperity without insolence, or suffer adversity without impatience, or such dejection as exceeds the rule of the passions. To endure the burning line and frozen pole, without distempering the blood and humours, proceeds from a sound and firm constitution. To receive no hurtful impressions by great changes of condition, discovers a habit of excellent grace and virtue in the soul. Thus when

a person retains an humble mind with rising honour, when affability, modesty, and condescension are joined with courtly dignity, it is the effect of great virtue and victory over the natural passions. It is said by the psalmist, "The sun knows its going down," Psa. civ. 19. when arrived at the meridian circle, and shining in his richest beams, the revolution is certain, and he sets in the evening. So when those who are in their highest elevation of honour, understand themselves, and with sober and sad thoughts consider they must shortly decline, and set in the dark grave, it is the effect of excellent virtue. When those who from a mean condition, come to abound in riches, do not set their hearts on them, Psa. lxii. 10. remembering they often take wings and fly to the heavens, and the possessors must shortly fall to the earth; when they do not furnish provisions for their lusts and licentiousness, but use them with discretion; when they employ them for sacred and merciful uses, considering they are not proprietors but stewards; when they consider their receipts and expenses, and the strict account they must give of all:—this adorns the gospel.

And in the sudden fall from a prosperous, into a calamitous condition, when men look upward to the sovereign Disposer of all events, with meek submission, and resign themselves to the will and wisdom of God, whose end is to refine, not consume them, by a fiery trial, when they are more solicitous to have their affliction sanctified than removed, and bless God for taking, as well as giving his benefits; this is the effect of excellent grace, and has a rich reward attending it.

CHAPTER XI.

Strictness in judging ourselves, and candour in judging others, a sign of excellent holiness. Preferring the testimony of an unrepublishing conscience before the praise of men, an argument of excellent grace. The serious performance of religious duties in secret, a sign of a heavenly spirit. The forgiving injuries, and overcoming evil with good, the effect of eminent grace. The more receptive persons are of spiritual admonition, to prevent or recover them from sin, the more holy. The deliberate desire of death, that we may be perfectly holy, argues an excellent degree of holiness. Directions to follow holiness in our early age, with zeal with alacrity, and unfeigning perseverance. The answer to objections against striving after perfect holiness—That it is impossible to obtain it—That the duty is extremely difficult—That it is unnecessary. Other arguments propounded to excite us to this duty. The gospel the perfect rule of holiness. Examples of perfection to raise us to the best height. The example of our heavenly Father, of our Redeemer, of the angels, of excellent saints, propounded. Our present peace, and future glory, are increased by our excelling in holiness.

IV. To be strict and severe in judging ourselves, to be candid and favourable to others, argues a man to be a proficient in practical religion. The Divine nature planted in the saints is as contrary to sin, as life is to death; and according as grace is more lively in them, there is a quicker percep-

tion, a more feeling sense of sin, and a stronger detestation of it. For the clearer apprehensions we have of the majesty and purity of the Law-giver, the more extensive understanding of the perfection of the law, the rule of our duty and judgment, the more intimate and exact inspection of our hearts and actions, the more deeply we are affected with our defects and defilements. How does Agur (whose wisdom and holiness appears in his choice of a mediocrity before riches) vilify himself! "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man; I neither learned wisdom nor have the understanding of the holy," Prov. xxx. 2, 3. With what an emphasis does he express it! "Surely I have not;" it was not a superficial acknowledgment, but proceeded from the depth of his soul. How does the psalmist aggravate his being surprised by a strong temptation! So foolish was I, and so like a beast before thee, Psa. lxxiii. 22. The prophet Isaiah, after his vision of God upon a high throne, and all the sanctities of heaven about him in a posture of reverence, how does he break forth in perplexity! "Wo is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell with a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts," Isa. vi. 5. St. Paul, though the most exact observer and example of the duty of christians, who never shed a tear for his sufferings, how passionately does he complain of the remains of sin! "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24. A scratch in a piece of canvass is hardly discovered; but if a picture be drawn upon it, it is very visible. When the image of God is drawn in the soul, the least sins are observed.

But with what allays does the apostle speak of the fierce zeal of the Jews against the doctrine of the gospel, and the professors of it? "I bear them record, they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge," Rom. x. 2. He distinguishes between the sincerity of their zeal, and the error of it in the mistaken object. But he detests his own persecuting the church, (though capable of the same allays,) as fury and madness. If there be any mitigating circumstance, as involuntary ignorance, sudden surprise, or a strong temptation, (as in Peter's case, his mind was so intent upon avoiding the present danger, that he did not consider his duty to his Master; and this qualified his sin to be an infirmity, and not treacherous infidelity,) if there be no designed depravedness, and pestilent perverseness of mind, charity will make an indulgent allowance for it. It is the inseparable property and excellency of that grace, "It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things," 1 Cor. xiii. 7. so far as is consistent with wisdom and discretion. He that hates nothing in a sinner but his sin, has made a good progress to perfection.

There are many that dilate and disperse their sight to discover the faults of others, but do not contract it to look inward, and see their own. They are sharp in observing and aggravating other men's sins, to be esteemed zealous; and sometimes hypocrisy is spun so fine, as to seem to be uncounterfeit holiness; but they cannot conceal themselves from God and conscience. The sincere christian sees his own spots, and the sense of them inclines him to be favourable to those who are overtaken with a fault, Gal. vi. 1. To overcome our own passions,

and meekly to bear the passions of others, is the effect of victorious grace. The deep shadow of humility sets a lustre upon all other graces, and makes them amiable in God's sight.

V. To prefer the testimony of an unrepublishing conscience in the sight of God, before the esteem and praise of men, is an argument of excellent grace. There are many whose virtue had never appeared so bright in public view, and gone so far, had not vanity attended it : for the relish of praise they will do praise-worthy things. Their goodness is defective in the principle ; and when the spring is down, their religion is at an end. Their works appear in their true colours to the enlightened conscience ; for no man can deliberately deceive himself. Now in many instances it is evident that the judgment of God, and of the world, are opposite : "That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in God's sight," Luke xvi. 15. and what is pleasing to God, is despised by men. Now when a person with religious constancy proceeds in the way of holiness, and of his universal duty, though he is exposed to the imputation of folly, and consequently the scorn of the world, and will not neglect his duty to preserve his fame, but fully and finally perseveres in his obedience to God, he is a confirmed saint ; for it is evident he loves goodness for its own sake, without mercenary mixtures, and despises all temporal respects that are inconsistent with it. The apostle declares, "It is a small thing with me to be judged by man's judgment," 1 Cor. iv. 3. His ambitious labour was to be accepted of the Lord, whose favourable testimony of his fidelity would be his eternal honour, before the glorious and immense theatre of angels and men at

the great day. He chose to be among God's treasures, though despised as the off-scouring of the world. The inward testimony of conscience, which is the sweetest friend or sorest enemy, is incomparably more valuable, and to be preferred before all the painted air, the vain applause of this world. It was Job's resolution, when his undiscerning and severe friends taxed him for hypocrisy, "My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live," Job xxvii. 6. There is such a convincing evidence of this rule to judge men by, that the Roman philosopher says, "Whoever despises the fame and reputation of a good man to preserve his conscience inviolate, has attained to an heroic degree of goodness."

VI. The serious, constant, and delightful performance of religious duties in secret, is a sure testimony of a holy and heavenly spirit. The duties of prayer and praise in society, are performed many times from custom, and false respects to the eyes of men; and are done from fashion, without the exercise of holy affections, the life of those duties. Our Saviour tells us, that "the light of the body is the eye: if thine eye be evil, thy whole body is full of darkness," Matt. vi. 22, 23. Without purity of intention, our religion, though varnished with a specious appearance, is vain. But the exercise of religion concealed from public view, is not liable to the temptations of vanity. Our Saviour commands us to pray in secret, and he that sees in secret shall reward us openly, Matt. vi. 6. The secrecy contributes to the free exercise of holy affections in that duty. The prophet Jeremiah tells the obstinate Jews, "If ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried

away into captivity," Jer. xiii. 17. His sorrow was not counterfeit or shallow, but eyes and heart were engaged ; the privacy contributed to the measure.

It is true, there may be formality in secret duties ; a prayer may be repeated in the closet without reverence and solemnity, without a holy heat of desires, as if the bodily service were accepted : but such worship, instead of propitiating God, provokes his displeasure. Heaven is brass to all cold petitioners ; their prayers cannot pierce through it. It is observable, that secrecy is a counsellor and incentive to a vicious person to do evil : he chooses the silent and dark night as the fittest season ; when he is secure no ray of light can discover what is done, he is effectually tempted to satisfy his lusts. On the contrary, a real saint chooses to serve God in secret ; for then he glorifies him as God, the Inspector and Judge of the heart, and the privacy of his worship, is to his conscience an evidence of his sincerity, and of an excellent degree of grace. Constancy is requisite in the performance of religious duties in secret. Many, when they feel present pain, or fear imminent dangers, will address their requests to God in secret ; but when freed from trouble, they neglect their duty. But prayer is a duty of daily revolution ; the natural life may be as well preserved without breathing, as the spiritual without prayer. And since we have always peculiar wants, and are often surprised with new necessities, which are not fit to be discovered to others, we should esteem the precept to be our privilege, to present ourselves to our heavenly Father, and to pour forth our souls into his bosom, with an assurance of his graciously hearing our request.

Some by the constraint of natural conscience dare

not omit secret devotion : but they are brought to it as a troublesome task, and are glad when it is done. These are in the state of carnal nature. But when there is a sympathy between the heart and the duty, and the sweetness of paradise is tasted in communion with God, it is an evidence the Divine nature is prevalent. Those happy souls are in heaven already ; for in heaven there is an everlasting tenour of serving and praising God. In short, internal religion is the immediate and unfeigned issue of the soul, whose praise is not of men ; that cannot by their most searching sight dive into the heart, but of God, who is the Maker and Searcher of the heart. Briefly, as between friends, conversation increases love, and love increases conversation ; so between God and a saint, communion increases love, and love communion.

VII. To forgive injuries, and overcome evil with good, discovers a christian to be divinely excellent. Love is the brightest beam of the Divine beauty, wherein God doth most delight and excel. The returning good for evil is the noblest effect of love, wherein our nearest resemblance of God consists. We have the example of it in the highest degree of perfection in our suffering Saviour. If ever any one had a right to revenge injuries, our Saviour had. His innocence was entire ; nay, his beneficent goodness to his enemy was infinitely obliging ; the miseries he suffered were extreme, a death equally ignominious and cruel. The dignity of his person was truly infinite. Yet in the extremity of his sufferings, when the sense of injuries is most quick and exasperating, in the midst of their scornful insultings, he earnestly prayed for their pardon : " Father, forgive them, they know not what they

do," Luke xxiii. 34. He might have called upon the righteous Judge of the world, the Revenger of oppressed innocence, to have destroyed them by fire from heaven: but he addresses his request by that title which was most endearing, "Father, forgive them, it is the desire of thy Son, dying in obedience to thy will, they know not the greatness of their guilt." Now the more we are conformed to our meek and forgiving Saviour, the more we approach to perfection. And the more the corrupt nature in us is provoked and fierce upon revenge, the doing good for evil is the more sure proof of excellent virtue and clear victory over ourselves.

VIII. The more receptive persons are of spiritual counsel and admonition, for the preventing or recovery from sin, they are the more holy. It is David's desire, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head," Psa. cxli. 5. There is no counsel so truly valuable as that which proceeds from wisdom and love in matters of importance. If a friend discovers by indications and symptoms, a disease that insensibly has seized on us, does not his compassionate advice endear him to us? How much rather should we meekly and thankfully receive a prudent and seasonable reproof of a spiritual friend, for the healing our souls, whose diseases are far more dangerous, and less discernible than those of the body. It is the most sacred and beneficial office of friendship, and like the compassionate love of the angel to Lot, in leading him out of Sodom. And as the most excellent metal, gold, is most pliant and easily wrought on, so the most excellent tempers are most receptive of holy counsels.

Yet the natural man is very averse from a meek submission to reproof for sin. A vicious self-love, of which pride is the production, makes us overvalue our reputation. Now to reprove, implies a superiority, which occasions impatience and disdain. Though the duty be performed with prudence and tenderness, and respective modesty, yet it is usually very unacceptable. Men will excuse and extenuate, and sometimes defend their sins; nay, sometimes recoil with indignation upon a faithful reprover. It is as dangerous to give an admonition to some proud spirits, as it is to take a thorn out of a lion's foot. It is therefore evident, that when a just reproof is received with meekness and acceptance, there is a great love of holiness, as when one takes a very unpleasant medicine, it argues an earnest desire of health. He is an excellent saint who, when conscience has not by its directive office prevented his falling into sin, and a sincere friend endeavours to restore him, is not angry at the reproof, but sorry that he deserves it.

IX. The deliberate desire of death, that we may arrive at the state of perfect holiness, is the effect of excellent grace. There is no desire more natural and strong than that of the enjoyment and continuance of life: there is no fear more insuperable, than of certain and inevitable death. Those who do not fear it at a distance, are struck with terrors at the aspect and approaches of it. Carnal men, whose heaven is here, at the fearful apprehensions and foresight of it, are ready to sink into despair. Nay, holy men, who have the prospect of celestial happiness beyond death, and believe that the pangs of death are throws for their deliverance to eternal life, are apt to shrink at the thoughts of their disso-

lution. If the change from an earthly to a heavenly state were not by our being unclothed, but to be clothed upon with glory, 2 Cor. v. 4. which St. Paul declares to be the desire of nature, the hopes of seeing Christ in his glory, and being transformed into his likeness, would so inflame their affections, that they would be impatient of being absent from him. But the necessity of dying, that we may ascend into his reviving presence, is so bitter, that Divine grace is requisite to induce us to consent to it. St. Peter was an ardent lover of Christ, and appeals to our Saviour's omniscience for a testimony of it,—Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee, John xxi. 17. yet our Saviour immediately tells him, "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch out thy hands, and another shall carry thee where thou wouldst not," ver. 18. signifying his death. The circumstance, "when thou art old," implies an unwillingness to die, when the natural term of life was near expiring. Yet Peter had been a spectator of our Saviour's glorious transfiguration, and of his triumphant ascent to heaven from Mount Olivet. The best of us have reason to join in the language and desire of the spouse, "Draw us to thy blessed presence, and we will run after thee," Cant. i. 4. So strong is the band of natural love, that fastens the soul and body, and such a reluctancy there is against a dissolution. But St. Paul declares, "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better," Phil. i. 23. He was contented to live for the service of Christ, but desirous to die to enjoy his presence in the sanctuary of life above. This was his fixed and unsatisfied desire. How few are arrived to such a height of spirituality! This desire is the fruit of

faith, with respect to the reality and glory of the eternal state, and our interest in it. According as the revelation of the invisible kingdom is in our minds, such is its attractive power in our hearts. It is the effect of Divine love in a degree of eminence. To vanquish the terrors of death, that are insuperable to human resolutions, and with a clear and cheerful spirit to leave the body in the grave, that we may for ever be freed from sin, and made like to Christ in purity and glory, is the effect of love stronger than death.

A second use is, to excite us to follow holiness ; to make it the great design, study, and endeavour of our lives to grow in grace. It is true the beginning, the prosecution, and perfection of holiness is from God ; but it is by the subordinate concurrence of the renewed mind and will, the leading faculties, that we are advancing towards perfection. God gives virtue to the seeds, temper to the seasons, and form to the fruits ; but men are to plant and water the fruits of the earth. Without God our endeavours are weak and ineffectual, but by his blessing are successful. I will, I. Set down directions how we should follow holiness : II. Answer the carnal allegations against our striving after perfection : III. Proceed to add other motives to enforce the duty : IV. Propound the means that may be effectual for this excellent end.

I. Directions how we should follow holiness.

1. We must in our early age follow holiness. Men commonly deceive conscience, and elude their duty by delays. They are unwilling to be holy too soon and in an excellent degree. They presume there will be time enough hereafter to reform themselves ; after their voluptuous affections are

satisfied, after their worldly acquisitions, they will forsake their sins, and become holy. But this is unaccountable folly, rather a delirium than discourse. There are innumerable contradictions, of which the lives of men are compounded; they complain as if time were intolerably short, and waste it as if it were intolerably long. They use all arts, that months may seem as hours, and years pass as days. But in no instance is this folly more visible, than in neglecting the working out their own salvation, (Phil. ii. 12.) till time and grace are passed, when no person can assure himself of the next minute. They presume upon such a remote possibility, that after the best of their days are spent in the vanities and business of the world, there will be time to do the one thing necessary. How many are despatched to the grave and hell in the midst of their hopes of long life, and their resolutions of future repentance! Death often steals upon men unobserved, and sometimes unfelt. Now since time is so short and slippery, and life is dying every day, it is astonishing that so many are careless of securing future blessedness.

But suppose their time is lengthened out, how is the difficulty increased of their being renewed, and reformed in their hearts and conversations! The natural vicious inclinations by custom in sin are confirmed habits; their passions are more violent, the power and liberty of the mind is broken, and cannot reduce them under the empire of reason. Men think there will be an ebbing and retiring of their carnal affections in age, when the sensitive faculties are disabled from the gross acts of sin; but vicious desires are not cured by impotence. The love to sin increases by the repeated pleasure

of it: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil," Jer. xiii. 23. By custom men's lusts are more rebellious to reason, more untractable to discipline, more averse from holy counsel.

The good or the evil habits of one age, are with their virtues and vices transfused to the next. It is extraordinary when an evil child becomes a sober modest youth, or a dissolute youth becomes a religious man. Childhood is as the seed, in whose virtue the tree of life is contained. The characters that are cut in the bark, when the tree grows, deeply and visibly remain. It is as painful as death to change a sinful life of many years, and begin a contrary course of actions. There are two branches of folly visible in the world; men will not do when they can, and afterwards cannot do when they would.

Besides, the Holy Spirit is grieved and quenched by their resisting his pure motions; and if he be withdrawn, it is impossible they should be renewed by a serious repentance. It is as reasonable to expect, that the sun should cross the order of nature, and rise in the west, as that the Sun of righteousness should arise with healing in his wings (Mal. iv. 2.) upon an habitual obstinate sinner in the hour of death. They are usually left to hardness and stupidity, to presumption or to despair. Some are as insensible; some presume to obtain an easy entrance into the kingdom of life, and their disappointment exceedingly exasperates their sad exclusion; others who were fearless of the last enemy when afar off, in his approaches they remember what they have been, and apprehend what they must be without a miraculous change, and

conscience, like a pulse, beats quick and faint, the prognostic of eternal death. The consideration they are come to the end of their days, and shall lose the end of their desires and hopes, eternal happiness, cuts them more terribly than the pangs of death. The reflection on their wasting the treasure of time, without any improvement for their souls, is a pricking thorn in their eyes, and forces out just but unprofitable tears. How doleful is the separation of soul and body here, and how woful will their union be at the last day! "O that men were wise to consider their latter end," Deut. xxxii. 29. that they would call death to counsel; with what evidence and efficacy would it convince them of the necessity of a timely preparation for eternity! It is too late to go to buy oil when the bridegroom is coming.

2. Let us follow holiness zealously. Desires without consequent endeavours are pretences; ineffectual resolutions contradict themselves. What fire, vigour, and activity does the apostle express! "If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. iii. 11—14. I follow, as the huntsman pursues the game, with full speed. It should excite compassion and indignation, to see the love of this vain perishing world to be more active and zealous than the love of the blessed eternal world. That the tempter with such wretched wages, the trifles of time, should

induce men to be his slaves; and God with the glorious reward of an everlasting kingdom, should not persuade them to be his sons, to be like him in holiness. That men should so violently run down the hill to the earth, and be so remiss and slow in their motion upward to heaven. The vain-glorious, excited by the edge of ambition, will venture on present death with fond hopes of future fame. Strange purchase! The covetous, with the most eager application of means, strive to heap up uncertain riches. The voluptuous, with vehement affections, follow pleasures. But to obtain the highest honour, celestial treasure, to enjoy the purest delights, men think lazy formality and slack endeavours sufficient. Whereas the most serious thoughts, ardent desires, steady resolutions, and all possible industry, are requisite in our holy calling, that we may have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God.

3. Let us follow holiness with alacrity and cheerfulness. Our Saviour tells us that it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will, John iv. 34. The practice of holiness is vital and nourishing, and pleasant to the taste. There is a high relish in victory of any kind, but especially over our most dangerous enemies; it replenishes with cordial contentment. What joy arises from subduing unruly passions! Suppose anger has often foiled me, and, like an unmanaged and unbridled horse, has hurried me into dangers; if by Divine grace, by circumspection and care, by resolution and striving, I finally overcome it, and all its former victories, what a spring of joy rushes into the soul! If the graces of the Spirit are more radiant and vigorous in their exercise, the reward is such a clear

serenity of mind, as is the reflection of paradise, a heaven upon earth. Prosperity in a calling makes men to be diligent and delighted in it. But when the practice of religion is constrained and tedious, God receives no honour, and man receives no praise, nor joy as the reward of it.

4. Let us with unfainting perseverance strive after perfect holiness. There are tinctures of original sin cleaving to the best saints' defects in their graces and best duties. There are many degrees of ascent before we come to the highest point of perfection. Let us strive with our utmost possibility to anticipate heaven. We must not be satisfied with some attainments, and presume we are perfect. We must be contending, till our conquest over sin be clear and complete. The reflection upon our progress will give new spirits to proceed to new work. To him that continues in well-doing, glory and immortality is the reward, Rom. ii. 7. Perseverance is the crown of christianity.

II. I now come to answer the allegations that are brought to discourage men from endeavours after perfect holiness. I have in the preface answered some of the principal objections; I will consider some others, to remove the most plausible pretences.

1. The first objection against the Divine command, of being perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, is the impossibility of obeying it. How can sinful dust and ashes be perfect as the holy God is? To this a clear answer may be given.

(1.) It is true, if a law be absolutely impossible it cancels itself: for there can be no authority in a superior to command, nor obligation on a subject to obey, in a matter that is not capable of his choice.

Absolute impossibility quenches desire, and causes despair; and that enervates the strength of the soul, and cuts the sinews of industry. Now we cannot suppose that God, whose wisdom, rectitude, and goodness are essential and unchangeable, should command reasonable creatures any thing utterly impossible; for then the cause of their sin and misery would not rise from themselves, but they would be fatally lost and undone for ever.

(2.) The command signifies not a resemblance of equality, for in that sense there is none holy as the Lord, but of analogy and conformity to his holy nature, of which intellectual creatures are capable.

(3.) In the present state our conformity is not entire, our graces are not pure, our virtues not refined without alloy; but this is from our culpable impotence. And it cannot be imagined that God should reverse this law, and dissolve the obligation of it, because we have contracted a sinful inability to perform it. Besides, God is pleased to offer Divine assistance to enable us to be like God in the kind of holiness, though not in the perfection of degrees. And though we cannot attain to perfection here, we may be ascending to it. The apostle exhorts christians to strive for the comprehension of the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ, that passes knowledge, Eph. iii. 18, 19. that is, we must be adding new degrees of light in our minds. We cannot know as we are known, till we come to the full enlightened state above; and we cannot be holy as God is holy, till we come to his transforming presence in heaven; but we must be aspiring to it. We have the most excellent encouragement to this duty; for if we are

zealous in our desires and endeavours, God will pardon our imperfections, and accept us as if they were perfect; but those who are settled in their defects, and lie still in their laziness, will be justly condemned.

2. It is objected, that this duty is at least extremely difficult. To this I answer :

(1.) Difficulty is an unreasonable pretence in matters of indispensable duty, and infinite consequence. Our Saviour commands us to strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate and narrow is the way, (it is hard to find, and hard to keep,) but that only leads to eternal life, Luke xiii. 24. Matt. vii. 13. The kingdom of heaven is to be taken by violence, and the wrath to come escaped by flight, Matt. xi. 12. iii. 7. It is better to take pains than to suffer pains; the cords of duty are more easy than the chains of darkness.

(2.) There is nothing in religion insuperable to the love of God, and of our souls. Love is not cold and idle, but ardent and active in pursuit of its object. There are many instances that resolved diligence will overcome great obstacles to the designs of men. Demosthenes the Athenian was the most unqualified for an orator of a thousand; his breath was so short, that he could not speak out a full sentence; his voice and pronunciation was so harsh, and his action so ungrateful and offensive to the most delicate senses, the eye and ear, that the first time he spake in the public assembly, he was entertained with derision, and the second with disdain by the people; yet, by unwearied industry and exercise, he corrected his defects, and became the most eloquent and perfect orator that ever flourished in Greece. Now can there be any so

difficult height in religion, but a strong resolution, joined with consequent endeavours, and the supernatural assistance of the Holy Spirit, will gradually attain to?

To mere nature, the commands of plucking out the right eye, and cutting off the right hand, Matt. xviii. 8, 9. are extremely hard: carnal men pretend they can as easily stop the circulation of the blood, as mortify their sensual inclinations. But by the grace of God it is not only possible, but pleasant to "abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11. "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me," saith the apostle, Phil. iv. 13. the word implies, I can easily. St. John declares, "his commands are not grievous," 1 John v. 3. The yoke of Christ is a gracious yoke, Matt. xi. 30. The impotence of men to obey Christ, consists in their obstinacy. They are not infected by fate, nor determined by destiny, and constrained by strict necessity to follow their sinful courses, but are chained to their alluring vicious objects by the consent of their own wills.

I will, to convince those who are christians only in title and profession, and pretend invincible impediments against performing their duty, propound the moral excellences that shone in some heathens in regulating the angry and desiring appetites. Socrates, who had a fiery nature, that inclined him to sudden anger, yet attained to such a constant equal temper, that when provoked by injuries, his countenance was more placid and serene, his voice more temperate, his words more kind and obliging. Plato, surprised with passion for a great fault of his servant, took a staff to beat him, and having lift up his hand for a stroke, stopped suddenly;

and a friend coming in, and wondering to see him in that posture, Plato said, "I chastise an angry man;" reflecting with shame upon himself; thus he disarmed his passion. When Alexander had conquered Darius, and taken his queen, a woman of exquisite beauty, he would not have her brought into his presence, that his virtue might not be violated by the sight of her. Scipio having taken a town in Spain, and among them a noble virgin very beautiful, resigned her untouched, with her ransom of great value, to the prince to whom she was contracted. If it be said, that vanity assisted virtue in these persons, and one carnal passion vanquished another, the desire of praise, the pride of life, the lust of the flesh; but shall not Divine grace be more powerful than human motives? The impotence of carnal christians is not from the defect of assisting grace, but their culpable neglect of using it. But for the entire conviction of carnalists that are under the tyranny of the voluptuous appetites, and pretend they cannot resist the attractiveness, and unbind the charms that fasten them to the objects of their impure desires; let it be considered, that a little contempt, or coldness of the person by whom they are charmed, a favourable aspect upon a competitor, will turn their love into disdain, and break all society between them. And shall one carnal passion vanquish another, and the terrors of the Lord, the torments of an everlasting hell, be ineffectual to restrain them? the remembrance of this will cover them with eternal confusion in the next world. The traveller complained of the roughness of the way, when a thorn in his foot made it uneasy. Carnal men complain that it is

a sad task to obey the gospel, but their lusts make it so.

3. It is alleged, that the striving after perfect holiness is unnecessary; by the covenant of grace a man may be saved without it.

Before I discover the falseness of this pretence, I shall observe that carnal men, that they may live easily, endeavour to make their principles correspondent with their practices; they bend the rule to their depraved appetites, and will not order their life by the holy rule. The cursed and crafty serpent will assist them in drawing false conclusions from true premises, and in opposing the grace of the gospel to its precepts. When the carnal affections corrupt the judgment, the mind will give license to the affections; the case of such is dangerous, if not desperate. Thus the loose opinion, "That men may be saved without absolute perfection, therefore striving after it is unnecessary," makes men remiss in religion, and produces vain delusive hopes, that end in fearful disappointments. To undeceive men, the following considerations may be effectual.

(1.) It is true, we must distinguish between the preceptive moral part of the covenant of works and of grace, and the federal. They agree in the former, and differ in the latter. The gospel enjoins perfect obedience as well as the law; but the first makes it the condition of the covenant, whereas the second makes provision for our imperfections. According to the tenour of the first, the transgression of one command was a violation of the covenant, and death was the unavoidable consequence of sin; for entire obedience was the condition of it. Adam

sinned once, and must die for ever; but to sin against the command of the gospel and the covenant is not the same; the Mediator interposes between the righteous Judge and the sinner; and faith in him, notwithstanding the killing law, and the accusing conscience, secures us from avenging justice. Only final impenitence and unbelief cut off from the benefit of the gospel.

(2.) Though the gospel allays the severity and rigour of the law, and pardons our defects, yet it as strictly requires our sincere earnest endeavours after perfection, as the law required exact obedience. We are commanded to grow in grace, 2 Pet. iii. 18. it is direct matter of duty, we are obliged to be holy, as God is holy, in all manner of conversation: the rule is inflexible, and none can by dispensation or privilege be exempted from serious and constant endeavours to be entirely like God. Those who are pleased with the pretence, that perfect holiness is unattainable here, and indulge their imperfections, are in the state of unrenewed nature. They are sure they shall be bad always, and therefore will not labour to be better. But the consideration that we cannot attain to the highest pitch of holiness, is a spur and incitement to the saints to greater diligence, as appears by the example of St. Paul before cited.

It is true there are different ages of the children of God; some are as new born babes, in a state of infancy and infirmity, others in their minority, others are arrived to more maturity: and as the crying of an infant discovers life as well as active mirth, so mourning for our imperfections discovers the truth of grace. And saints of different degrees are received into glory; but none are who did not

aim and endeavour to cleanse themselves from all pollutions of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness, 2 Cor. vii. 1. For without sincerity we are not capable of the present favour of God, nor future blessedness, and sincerity is inconsistent with the wilful neglect of our duty.

Grace is a plant of heaven, productive of fruits suitable to its quality, and it is proper to its nature to be tending to perfection. A tree that ceases to grow before it is come to its perfection, and brings not forth fruit in its season, withers and dies. A christian who is unfruitful has no life, but is exposed to the just threatening of excision and the fire. He that limits himself in religion, is in a state of death. I have insisted the longer upon this matter, that by clearness and conviction, men may be disenchanted from that pernicious persuasion, that without using sincere endeavours to be perfectly holy, they may safely go to heaven.

III. I shall add to what has been discoursed of before, some other arguments and motives to excite us to be intente to this great work. I shall first consider the perfection of the rule laid down in the gospel.

1. The moral law in its purity and perfection, forbids sin in every kind and degree, "Thou shalt not covet," Exod. xx. 17. and commands holiness in the most spiritual sublimeness, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy mind, heart, soul, and strength," Deut. vi. 5. is the rule of our duty prescribed in the gospel. It is true, that personal perfect obedience as the condition of life, is abolished, as was before observed: if that lives, we must die for ever. But the command binds without relaxation. There is no permission of the least sin by

the gospel. The looking to the brazen serpent did not alter the deadly quality of the poison of the fiery serpent, but stopped its deadly operation: faith in Christ does not change the nature of sin to make it lawful, but hinders its deadly malignity in working. Our Saviour tells us, he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. And that heaven and earth should pass away, before one tittle of it shall fail, Matt. v. 17, 18. that is, lose its binding authority. It is as unalterable as the Lawgiver, whose purity it represents.

Not only the mysterious and supernatural doctrines, the objects of faith, but moral duties, the matters of practice, are fully revealed only in the gospel. The human understanding was darkness to supernatural truths, and dim with respect to the rules of life. Our Saviour has cleared the law from the false glosses of the pharisees, who by favourable explications, and correctives of its strictness, instead of curbing their lusts, did cherish and foment them. But the oracle speaks without ambiguity: the interpretation of our Saviour is clear and decisive, that the purifying the heart, as well as the cleansing the hand, is an indispensable duty. Holiness must be so pure, that we must not only abstain from polluting acts, but quench all polluting thoughts and desires; we must not only pardon externally the most provoking injuries, but internally quench all inclinations to revenge; now it will require our noblest care, and most excellent endeavours to practise these high rules.

If there were an extract of the corrupt morals in the philosophy of the heathens, it would be visible how defective it is to restore man to his primitive holiness. They were idolaters, not merely by

temptation, but by principle and resolution: it was their maxim that wise men should conform to the worship practised in the places where they lived. Their moral philosophy ascended no higher than to instruct us how to act as men; for it considers in them only human qualities, and directs their actions in a respective order to natural felicity. To do justly, to die generously, to allay the fiery agitations of the passions, that make men miserable in themselves, and vexatious to others, is the highest pitch to which this heathen philosophy pretends. They had some glimmering confused notions of their duty towards God, but like the thin appearance of some stars in a dark night, without efficacy.

But the gospel reveals our duty so that it may be clearly known, and strongly impressed on us. There are various duties in the compass of a christian's practice, and it is an advantage to have them reduced to some comprehensive heads, that may bring them often to our minds. The apostle gives us the bright sum of our duty; "The grace of God that brings salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. There is no rule more extensive and influential into the life of a christian, than to walk worthy of God, Col. i. 10. becoming our relation to him as our heavenly Father, and our union with his Son as our spiritual Head, and the supernatural happiness revealed in his word. We are commanded to walk circumspectly and exactly, not as fools, but as wise. Sometimes there is a particular enumeration of our duties; "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, what-

soever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things," Phil. iv. 8.

From what has been said of the obligation of the evangelical rule, it is evident how destructive the doctrine of the church of Rome is, that many things prescribed in the gospel, are counsels of perfection, not universal laws. A doctrine fatally fruitful of many pernicious consequences; of spiritual pride, the poison of the soul. They depress the Divine law, while they assert a more excellent holiness in uncommanded works, and they exceed the rule in matters of supererogation. It induces slothfulness: for they securely allow themselves in the neglect of their duty, and not only contradict the gospel in their practices, but supplant it in their principles. And as they relax our obligation to the precepts of the law, so by other doctrines they release men from the fear of the sanction and penalty; for the doctrine of purgatory takes away the fear of hell, and the doctrine of indulgences the fear of purgatory.

2. The gospel propounds to us examples of perfection to raise us to the best height.

(1.) We are commanded to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, Matt. v. 48. There are some attributes of God, that are not the object of our desires and imitation, but of our highest reverence and veneration. Such are his eternity, immensity, omnipotence, immutability. There are other attributes, his moral perfections, that are imitable; holiness, goodness, justice, truth; which are purely and fully declared in his law, and visibly in the works of Providence. This command, as was before explained, is to be understood, not of an

equality, but resemblance. He is essentially, transcendently, and unchangeably holy, the original of holiness in understanding creatures. There is a greater disproportion between the holiness of God and the unspotted holiness of the angels, than between the celerity of the motion of the sun in the heavens, and the slow motion of the shadow upon the dial that is regulated by it. It should be our utmost aim, our most earnest endeavour, to imitate the Divine perfection. As wax is to the seal, so is the spirit of man to his end, the same characters are engraved in it. The soul is Godlike, when the principal leading powers, the understanding and will, are influenced by him.

The heathen deities were distinguished by their vices; intemperance, impurity, and cruelty, and their idolaters sinned boldly under their patronage. The true God commands us to be holy, as God is holy, 1 Pet. i. 16. to be followers of him as dear children, Eph. v. 1. For love produces desires and endeavours of likeness.

(2.) The life of Christ is a globe of precepts, a model of perfection, set before us for our imitation. This in some respect is more proportionable to us; for in him were united the perfections of God, with the infirmities of a man. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," Heb. vii. 26. His purity was absolute, and every grace in the most Divine degree was expressed in his actions. His life and death were a compounded miracle of obedience to God, and love to men. Whatever his Father ordered him to undertake, or undergo, he entirely consented to; he willingly took on him the form of a servant, Phil. ii. 7. it was not put upon him by compulsion. In his life,

humility towards men, infinite descents below him, self-denial, zeal for the honour of God, ardent desires for the salvation and welfare of men, were as visible as the flame discovers fire. In his sufferings, obedience and sacrifice were united. The willingness of his spirit was victorious over the repugnance of the natural will in the garden; "Not my will but thine be done," Luke xxii. 42. was his unalterable choice. His patience was insuperable to all injuries: he was betrayed by a disciple for a vile price, and a murderer was preferred before him. He was scorned as a false prophet, as a feigned king, and deceitful Saviour; he was spit on, scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified; and in the height of his sufferings never expressed a spark of anger against his enemies, nor the least degree of impatience, that might lessen the value of his obedience. Now consider, it was one principal reason of his obedience, to instruct and oblige us to conform to his pattern, the certain and constant rule of our duty. We may not securely follow the best saints, who sometimes through ignorance and infirmity, deviate from the narrow way; but our Saviour "is the way, the truth, and the life," John xiv. 6. What he said after his washing the disciples' feet, (an action wherein there was such an admirable mixture of humility and love, that it is not possible to conceive which excelled; for they were both in the highest perfection,) "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you," John xiii. 15. is applicable to all the kinds of virtues and graces exhibited in his practice. He instructs us to do by his doings, and to suffer by his sufferings. "He suffered for us, leaving an example, that we

may follow his steps," 1 Pet. ii. 21. He levels the way, and makes it like a carpet, by going before us. Those duties which are very harsh to sensible nature, he instructs us in, by his preaching and by his passion. How can we decline them, when performed by him, in whom the glorious Deity was personally united to the tender humanity? his life was a continual lecture of mortification. It is the observation of the natural historian, that the tender providence of nature is admirable, in preparing medicines for us in beautiful fragrant flowers, that we might not refuse the remedy, as more distasteful than our diseases. But how astonishing is the love of God, who sent his Son for our redemption from eternal death, and in his example has sweetened those remedies that are requisite for the cure of our distempered passions! the taking up the cross, submitting to poverty and persecution, are made tolerable, by considering that in enduring them, we follow our Redeemer. Can any motive more engage and encourage our obedience, than the persuasive pattern, and commanding example of our Sovereign and Saviour? Can we be averse from our duty, when our Lawgiver teaches us obedience by his own practice? Can any invitation be more attractive, than to do that for love to him, which he did for love to us and our salvation? We are his subjects by the dearest titles, and our own consent; we are dedicated to his honour; and as the apostle tells the Galatians, If ye are circumcised, you are debtors to keep the whole law, Gal. v. 3. by the same reason, if we are baptized, we are obliged to obey the law of faith; to order our lives according to the doctrine and example of Christ. An unholy christian is a contradiction so direct

and palpable, that one word destroys another ; as if one should say, a living carcass. We must adorn the gospel of Christ by the sacred splendour of our actions. An innocent life from gross notorious sins, is a poor perfection ; we must show forth the virtues of him, who has called us to his kingdom of glory, 1 Thess. ii. 12. Men usually observe what is eminently better, or extremely worse, in any kind : the excellent goodness of christians recommends the goodness of the gospel, and convinces infidels, that it came from the fountain of goodness.

The primitive christians endured the fiery trial with insuperable constancy ; and the most powerful argument that inspired their courage, despising life and death, was, that Christ was their Leader in those terrible conflicts ; he was their spectator, when they encountered fierce beasts, and fiercer tyrants, for the defence of his truth, and glory of his name ; and while they were suffering for him, he was preparing immortal crowns for them. This, St. Cyprian, in his pastoral letters to the christians in Africa, represents with such powerful eloquence, that kindled in their breasts a love to Christ stronger than death.

(3) The angels also are propounded to us as a pattern for our imitation. Our Saviour directs our desires, that the will of God may be done in earth, as it is done in heaven, Matt. vi. 10. The will of God is either decretive or preceptive : the decretive extends to all events ; nothing falls out at random, nothing by rash chance and casualty, but all things come to pass according to the counsel of his will, Eph. i. 11. by his efficiency or permission. The preceptive will of God is the rule of our duty ;

“This is the will of God, even your sanctification,” 1 Thess. iv. 3. This is intended here; for it is to be performed in conformity to the obedience of the angels. But it is comprehensive of our resigned submission to the will and wisdom of God in the disposals of providence, as well as to our active subjection to his commands; we are equally obliged to acknowledge and honour his sovereignty and dominion in ordering all things, as to yield obedience to his sovereignty declared in his laws. The psalmist addresses himself to the angels, as our pattern; “Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word,” Psa. ciii. 20. The angels are the eldest offspring of God’s power, glorious, heavenly, and immortal spirits. The title of angels signifies their office; their nature we do not fully know. We can tell what they are not, not flesh nor blood; but negatives do not afford knowledge. It is not knowledge to declare what things are not, but what they are. Their excellence is discovered in scripture, in that the highest degree of our perfection is expressed by likeness to the angels. The perfection of beauty in Stephen is set forth, “They saw his face, as the face of an angel,” Acts vi. 15. Excellent wisdom in David; “My lord the king is wise as an angel of God,” 2 Sam. xiv. 20. Perfect eloquence; “Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels,” 1 Cor. xiii. 1. And the apostle, in asserting the infinite dignity of the Mediator, proves it by this argument that he is above the angels; “To which of the angels did he say, Thou art my Son,” Heb. i. 5. that is, in a high and peculiar manner: now if they had not been in the highest order of creatures, the argument had not

been conclusive; yet they are infinite descents below God. The heavens are not clean in his sight, the stars are not pure before him, Job xv. 15. The seraphims veil their faces and their feet in his glorious presence, and cry one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts: the whole earth is full of thy glory," Isa. vi. 2, 3. His separate and transcendent attributes are the foundation of their humility and subjection.

They received their being from his mere pleasure. This most free favour infinitely binds them to his service. A derived being has dependent operations.

They are confirmed in their state of ever-flourishing felicity, by peculiar grace. In the morning of the creation heaven shone with innumerable stars, the angels of light, of whom a vast number are by their rebellion, become wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, Jude 13. How dreadful was their fall! from what felicity into what woe! now the good angels are in a supernatural state, without the least danger of change and separation from the blessed presence of God. The grace of confirmation renews their obligation to the Divine goodness; they are not safe in themselves, but their fidelity is secured by the continual influence of the Holy Spirit. In them is perfect light, and perfect love, the fountains of their obedience. The matter wherein their obedience is exercised is secret to us; the laws and admirable order in heaven, are not fully discovered: but we are assured, they continually magnify and celebrate the perfections of God. In this lower world, they are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, Heb. i. 14. the adopted children of God.

The highest angels are not exempted from this service, nor the lowest saints excluded from the benefit of it. How many unforeseen and inevitable dangers, as to human prevention, do they prevent! the evil angels would destroy the saints, from a principle of revenge and despite against the high and everlasting Judge, but are hindered by the interposing of the good angels. Michael overcame the devil, in the contention about the body of Moses, Jude 9. The devils have totally lost their moral excellence, and their natural excellence, their lustre and power are lessened. But of what power they have to do mischief, there are terrible proofs recorded in scripture: they raised the storm that overthrew the house, wherein Job's children were suddenly destroyed; and struck his body with loathsome and tormenting boils.

The good angels inspire holy thoughts, and excite holy affections in the saints; for certainly they have an inspiring faculty for good, as the devils have for evil. Satan put it into Judas's heart to betray Christ. They execute vengeance upon the wicked. The angel of the Lord destroyed in one night, a hundred fourscore and five thousand of the Assyrian army, 2 Kings xix. 35. When the saints leave the world, the angels guard them through the air, the dominions of Satan, and secure them from the spiritual Pharaoh, who pursues them in their passage to the celestial Canaan.

At the last day they shall gather the elect from all the quarters of the world, Matt. xxiv. 31. before the tribunal of Christ; and after the judgment is past, they shall cast the wicked into everlasting fire, Matt. xiii. 49, 50.

The perfection of their obedience is signified,

they obey God readily without delay or reluctance. Delay is a virtual denial of obedience. The angel told Zacharias, "I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God," Luke i. 19. It implies his prepared disposition to receive and perform all his commands. It is said that they hearken to the voice of his word, Psa. ciii. 20. the first signification of his will puts them in motion. They entirely obey him; there is no alloy, no mixture of contraries in their principles, nothing suspends or breaks the entireness of their activity in God's service. They obey him with all their powers, and the utmost efficacy of them. It is said, he makes his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire, Psa. civ. 4. to signify their celerity and vigour in doing God's will. They fly like the wind, to rescue the saints from imminent destructive evils; and like a flame of fire, are quick and terrible to consume the wicked. They fully perform his commands; the two angels that were sent to preserve Lot, from the destruction of Sodom, while he lingered they took him by the hand, and brought him out of the city, and would not destroy it till he was safe. They freely and cheerfully obey God, esteeming his service their glory and felicity. They are styled thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, Col. i. 16. but they are more pleased in the title of his angels; that is, messengers, and in the relation of his servants. They esteem it their highest exaltation and happiness to obey God. They with as much diligence and delight watch over the meanest saints, though ever so obscure and despicable in the world, as those who are in royal dignity; because they in it obey the orders of God. They are steady and uniform in their duty, above

all temptations from hopes or fears that may slacken their endeavours, and unstring the bent of their resolutions in his service. There is an eternal constancy in their obedience.

It may be said, this example is above our level in the present state: our wings are broke, we flag, and cannot reach so high a flight. We sometimes conceive more clearly, sometimes more darkly of our duty; we are sometimes declining, sometimes reviving and returning to our duty; we do not practise obedience with that degree of diligence as it is commanded. The weakness of the flesh controls the willingness of the spirit. How should it upbraid us that we fall so short in the imitation of angelical obedience, who are under equal, nay peculiar obligations to please God! The grace of God in our redemption, is more illustriously visible than in their creation; the goodness of God was most free in making the angels; but it is merciful in saving man from extreme misery, the desert of his disobedience. The Divine power made the angels; but men are redeemed by the dearest price, the blood of the Son of God. In this God commended his love to us, that when we were sinners, he gave his Son to die for us, Rom. v. 8. Now beneficence is magnified by the principle and motive of it; gifts are endeared by the affection of the giver, and ingenuous thankfulness chiefly respects it. All the precious benefits, and vital influences, that we receive, are from the dearest love of God; supposing the angels receive as great favours from his bountiful hand, yet there is a clearer discovery of his heart, his tender and compassionate love in our salvation. How should this consideration inspire our prayers with a holy heat, that God would

enlighten our minds to know his holy, acceptable, and perfect will, and incline our wills to choose it, and enable us to do it, as the angels, the most illuminate and zealous servants of God?

(4.) The scripture has lighted up excellent examples of holiness in the lives of the saints upon earth for our direction and imitation. There is a great advantage by looking on examples; they are more instructive than bare precepts, and more clearly convey the knowledge of our duty. A work done in our sight by another, directs us better in the practice of it, is more acceptable, and of more powerful efficacy to reform us, than counsel and admonition by words. A reproof, if spoken with an imperious air, wherein vanity has a visible ascendancy, is heard with distaste, and often with disdain; but an excellent example is a silent reproof, not directed immediately to irregular persons, but discovers what ought to be done, and leaves the application to themselves, and the impression is more quick and penetrating than of words. In difficult precepts, no argument is more effectual than examples; for the possibility of doing them is confirmed by instances in others; and the pretence of infirmity is taken away. The command binds us to our duty, examples encourage us to performance. The pattern of the angels, who are pure spirits, is not so influential upon us as the pattern of the saints, that is more correspondent and proportionate to our present state; as the light of the stars, that are so vastly distant, is not so useful in managing our affairs as the light of a candle that is near us. The saints are nearly allied to us; they were clothed with the same frail garment of flesh; they had like passions, and were in the same

contagious world, yet they were holy and heavenly in their affections and actions; they lived in civil conversation with men, and spiritual communion with God. This will take away the pretence of infirmity; for we have the same word of grace, and Spirit of grace, to strengthen us.

The practice of holiness is regular and uniform, wherein the saints resemble one another; yet there is a conspicuous singularity of active or suffering graces in some saints, that eminently distinguishes them from others; and these we should especially regard. "Enoch walked with God," Gen. v. 24. His life was a continual regard of God, therefore he was translated into his glorious presence. Abraham's faith was illustrious, in that without reluctance he addressed himself to offer up his beloved son; a command so heavy, that God would not permit his performing it. Moses's self-denial was truly admirable, in choosing to live in a solitary desert, rather than in the Egyptian court, wherein was the height of pomp, and the centre of pleasure. Job's patience was unparalleled, when encompassed with the sharpest affliction. Daniel preferred a den of lions to Darius's palace, rather than neglect one day his desired duty of prayer to God. Whom would it not inflame, to read the narrative of the trials of the excellent saints recorded in the eleventh of the Hebrews? They were persecuted and patient, afflicted and resigned; they were victorious over the blandishments of the alluring world, and the terrors of the enraged world. From those instances the apostle exhorts us to run our race with patience, "looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 1, 2. The knowledge that is in our view from the practice of others, will make

obedience more easy, and best lead us to practice. These excellent examples should make us blush with shame, and bleed with grief, that notwithstanding there is a more copious communication of grace by the gospel than under the law, and a more clear revelation of the glorious reward, we are so many degrees below them. Nothing will convince us more of our negligence than comparative and exemplary instruction. There is an envious emulation among those that are in public places; it is not so pleasing to see many below them, as it is uneasy and grievous to see any above them. This seems to be one of those plants that in its native soil is poisonous, but transplanted into another climate, and under another heaven, is not only innocent, but healthful. It is a noble emulation worthy the breast of a saint, to strive to excel others in holiness.

(5.) Our present joy and future glory are improved according as we rise to perfection here. The life of a saint may be compared to the labour of the bees, who all the day either fly from their hives to the flowers, or from the flowers to their hives; and all their heart and exercise is where there is fragrance or sweetness. In Divine worship the soul ascends to God, by holy thoughts and ardent desires, and God descends into the soul by the communication of grace and comfort.

It is true, the carnal man cannot see nor taste the Divine delight that a saint has real experience of; for a lower nature is incapable of the perceptions and enjoyments of a higher. A plant cannot apprehend the pleasures of sensé, nor a beast the pleasures of reason; and reason must be prepared and elevated to enjoy the pleasures of holiness,

which makes all the charming contents of this world insipid and nauseous: for according to the excellence of the objects, and the capacity and vigour of the faculties exercised upon them, such is the delight that results from their union. The holy soul is a heaven enlightened with the beams of the Sun of righteousness, a paradise planted with immortal fruits, the graces of the sanctifying Spirit; and God walks in it, communicating the sense of his love.

Are not life, and light, and liberty, productive and preservative of joy? And consequently, as the natural life, the more lively and vigorous, the more pleasant it is, so the spiritual. The more we are like God, the more we are loved of him, and the more clear revelations of his love are communicated to us. The more we are freed from the chains of sin, and bondage of Satan, the more joyful and glorious is our liberty. Indeed, the saints are sometimes in darkness, but their sorrows are from their defects in holiness; from their not improving the means of grace, whereby they might rise to perfection. For as when sadness oppresses us, the vital spirits retire to the heart, and are shut up in their springs, that nature does not perform its operations with delight; so when the Holy Spirit, the eternal Comforter, is grieved by our quenching his pure motions, he withdraws his comforting influences, and the soul is left desolate. The experience of all the saints is a demonstration, that religion, the more it fastens us to our duty and to God by the bands of love, the happier we are; and that the state of a renewed christian is so far from being gloomy and melancholy, that it is the joyful beginning of heaven.

By excelling in holiness, our future glory will be

increased. The life and order of government consists in the dispensing rewards and punishments. God will recompense the wicked according to the rule of justice, and their desert; and the future happiness of the saints will be in degrees according to the degrees of their holiness. Not as if there were any merit in our works to procure the eternal reward, which is the gift of his most free love; but his love rewards us according to his promise, that they who sow bountifully, shall reap bountifully, 2 Cor. ix. 6. and in proportion as the graces of the saints are exercised here, their glory will be in heaven. In this the goodness of God is admirable; he works all in us, and rewards his own work. His service is the best; for he that commands, works; and he that obeys, reigns. If we respect the glory of God, and our own, let us endeavour to be complete in holiness.

It is true, God bestows his favours, as a free lord and liberal benefactor, variously; but he distributes rewards in the next life as a governor, according to the inviolate rule established by his wisdom in his word. As the quality of the reward is according to the kind of our works, so the degrees are according to the measure of them. To imagine that a carnal man may be saved without holiness, is as unreasonable as to think that a man may be made miserable without sin. It is to attribute an irregular clemency to him. We must distinguish between the desert of the reward, and the order of dispensing it. There is no possibility or shadow of merit; for the grace of obedience is antecedent to the grace of the reward.

CHAPTER XII.

The effectual means to rise to perfection in holiness, Unfeigned faith in our Saviour, who is the efficient and exemplary cause of inherent holiness. Prayer a means to obtain an increase of holiness. Frequent and attentive hearing, reading, and meditation of the word, a means of growth in grace. The word must be mixed with faith, and an earnest desire to improve grace by it. It must be laid up in the mind and memory. It must be sincerely received. The religious use of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, an excellent means to increase grace. Repentance, faith, and love, are improved by it. The renewing our covenant with Christ in that ordinance, is of great use for the advancing of grace. The religious observation of the Lord's day makes us more holy. The frequent discussion of conscience is very instrumental to increase holiness. It must be distinct in comparing our actions with the rule, serious and sincere as previous to Divine judgment, with resolution to reform what is amiss, and frequent.

IV. I WILL now proceed to declare the means that are effectual for our obtaining holiness in degrees of eminence.

1. Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the meritorious, efficient, and exemplary cause of inherent holiness, and actions flowing from it. The death of Christ was our ransom, not only

to release us from the curse of the law, but the dominion of sin. These were inseparable in the design of our Redeemer; and are in the accomplishment of it. None are pardoned, but they are sanctified. If the reimpression of the image of God in us had been only requisite for the restoring us to his favour, our Saviour's dying had been unnecessary; his instruction and example, with the sanctifying Spirit's operations, had been sufficient: but till our guilt was expiated, the fountain was sealed, no emanations of Divine grace flowed forth. "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14.

Christ is the efficient cause of our holiness. We receive from God, the Author of nature, the natural life with all its faculties; and by the concurrence previous and concomitant of his powerful providence, we act in the order of nature: but the supernatural life is conveyed to us from the Son of God, the Mediator: "Of his fulness we receive grace for grace," John i. 16. Our increase is from our Head, the fountain of spiritual sense and action. The Holy Spirit, who inspires us with the Divine life, and who confirms and improves it, was purchased by his sufferings, and is conferred in his exaltation. As in the operation of the sensitive faculties, though the eye be clear and qualified for sight, yet it is necessary there be a supervenient light to irradiate the air, and actuate the visive spirits, that there may be a discovery of objects: thus, after the soul is renewed by habitual grace, there is necessary the exciting assisting grace of the Spirit, to draw it forth into exercise every hour. The sun is the heart of the world, from which all vital cherishing

influences are derived: thus from the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings, continual influences proceed, Mal. iv. 2. without which the life of grace would languish and decay. In this there is a disparity between the visible sun and the spiritual; though the fruitfulness of every plant is from his vital heat and descending influences, yet the quality and kinds of the fruits is from the sap that distinguishes them. Grapes are from the vine, and peaches and apples are from several trees; but every grace in the saints is from the descending influences of Christ. Now faith is the means by which we receive the emanations of grace from Christ. The apostle tells us, "The life that I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God," Gal. ii. 20. The first plantation of holiness, and the highest perfection of it attainable in the present life, is by faith, that unites us to Christ. A sincere reliance on him for continual supplies of grace, gives virtue and efficacy to the means prescribed in the word. We are commanded to grow in grace, and in the experimental knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. iii. 18. the effectual means to obtain it.

Contemplate our Saviour as the exemplary cause of our holiness. His pattern is not only a powerful one, (which is considered before,) but means to bring us to perfection. We are directed to look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, that we may run the race set before us, Heb. xii. 1, 2. till we come to its period and perfection. In the gospel there is a Divine representation of the obedience and sufferings of our Saviour, wherein every grace that adorns the children of God, is exactly represented, and all the afflictions and tender trials,

wherewith God exercises them in order to their glory, were consecrated by his example. This is not a dead object proposed to our view, but has a vital efficacy to transform us into his likeness; as the sight of the brazen serpent conveyed a healing virtue to the wounded Israelites. The apostle tells us that, "we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18. The gospel is the glass, wherein there is a permanent image of Christ in his life and death, a full manifestation of all his virtues; and this sight, by the operation of the Spirit, changes us into his likeness, from glory to glory; that is, by several degrees of grace to a full conformity to him in glory. As a painter often fixes his eye upon the object, to form in his imagination the idea, that guides his hand in the designing and colouring the face, that the copy may resemble the truth of nature in the original; so we should consider the holiness and perfection of our Saviour's actions, and draw the first lines of resolution to imitate him, and every day endeavour to fill and complete them in actions, till Christ be formed in us. Let us often compare our lives with the life of Christ, that we may see our imperfections in his excellences, which will discover them, and how to correct them.

Now, because particulars are most instructive, I will consider two examples of our Saviour for our imitation in duties of difficult practice. The first is, the duty of admonition, wherein great prudence is requisite, mixed with tender love, lest the reproof be taken for a reproach, and the person be provoked, and not reformed; and with zeal that may give

efficacy to our counsel. A reproof must be managed like binding of a wounded part, which must be neither too strait nor too slack, lest it should oppress and exasperate the wound, or lest there be not a close application of the medicine. Of this mixture of affections we have a clear discovery in our Saviour's carriage towards his enemies. It is related in the gospel, Mark iii. 1—5. that a man with a withered hand was present in the synagogue; and some watched whether our Saviour would heal him on the sabbath-day, that they might accuse him of profaning it: and when he propounded the question, whether it were lawful to do good or evil on the sabbath-day? they maliciously held their peace, which occasioned his looking on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. This exact pattern we should follow, joining mild severity with melting compassion in reproving offenders.

The other instance is, how to compose our spirits and resign our wills to God, in the approaches of very afflicting evils. Our Saviour, in the apprehension of his impending suffering, expressed a great perplexity: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" The fearful expectation of the just and heavy punishment due for our sins, perplexed his holy and human nature: he addressed a request to God, "Father save me from this hour," but it was with a revocation, "but for this cause came I to this hour:" it was subordinate to his main desire, "Father, glorify thy name," John xii. 27, 28. When he was seized by his bloody enemies, and Peter struck with his sword one of them, he repressed his rash zeal with that consideration, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not

drink it?" He regarded his sovereign will in giving it, and with submission drank off the dregs of it. How instructive is this to us, to take the hottest and bitterest potion that God our Father and Physician prepares for us!

2. Prayer is an effectual means to obtain an increase of spiritual blessings. It is the law of Heaven that blessings are to be obtained by prayer; for this is most honourable to God, and beneficial to us. It is the supreme act of religious worship, discovered by the light of nature to the heathens. Prayer is the homage due to his eternal greatness, the most glorious acknowledgment of his all-sufficiency; that he is able and willing to relieve our poverty from his immense treasures, notwithstanding our unworthiness; for we are less than the least of his mercies, and deserve the severe inflictions of his justice. It is the setting our seal to his truth, that he is a God hearing prayer. It is very beneficial to us, for it engages us to receive his benefits with adoration and thankfulness, and prepares us to receive new favours; and by our obtaining blessings in this way, we have a more clear and comfortable sense of his love, that gives the sweetest tincture and relish to them.

It is true, prayer is not required to inform God, or to incline him to be gracious, and sometimes from his exuberant goodness he prevents our desires, but we cannot regularly expect his blessings without the sense of our wants, and prayer to supply them.

Now all blessings are originally from God, but some are immediately from him; as the sun enlightens the world by its presence in the day, and the moon and stars enlighten it in the night, by

light borrowed from the sun. St James tells us, "Every good and perfect gift descends from above, from the Father of lights," Jas. i. 17. All blessings in the order of nature, the qualities of the body, beauty, strength, health; or the endowments of the mind, knowledge, wit, eloquence, are his gifts; all temporary talents, riches, power, dignity, are from him, by the mediation of second causes: but there are more precious and perfect gifts that come from him immediately as the Father of lights, sanctifying graces, and spiritual comforts, by the illumination and infusion of the Holy Spirit.

The first sort of blessings we are not to pray for absolutely, for they may be pernicious by our abuse of them, to our souls, and are often bestowed upon reprobate sinners. But the other kind, saving graces, deserve our most ardent desires. As the hart pants after the water-brooks, Psa. xlii. 1. our souls should seek after the favour of God; and sanctifying grace, the infallible testimony and effect of it. We must pray for them unsatisfiedly, not content with any thing else, nor without excellent degrees of them. David breaks out his ardent desires, "O that my ways were directed according to thy statutes," Psa. cxix. 5. O that my soul may be baptized with the Holy Ghost as with fire, to purify and refine me from all my dross; that as gold taken from a vein of earth receives such a lustre from the fire, as if it were the sole product of fire, so my renovation by the Spirit may be so entire that all carnality may be abolished.

Our prayers should be for our perseverance in well-doing. Perseverance is a most free gift of God, a new grace superadded to what we have received; without it we shall forsake God every

hour. God promises to give the sanctifying Spirit as a permanent principle of holiness in his people, to cause them to walk in his statutes, and declares, "For this I will be inquired of by the house of Israel," Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. 29. 37. We must imitate Jacob, who wrestled with the angel, and would not let him go till he had blessed him, Gen. xxxii. 26. This is an emblem of fervent prayer, wherein we strive with the strength and sinews of our souls, and, as it were, offer violence to the King of heaven to bestow spiritual blessings upon us.

Carnal men are intemperate, greedy, and passionate in their desires of temporal blessings. Though reason, religion, and experience of their vanity, should regulate them, they are impatient and insatiable, and will bear no denial nor delay but with regret and reluctance. But how remiss and cold are their desires for spiritual and eternal blessings! they invite a denial. Their prayers are defective in the principle, they do not understand the value, and their want of them. Divine grace, the gift of God's saving mercy, the dear purchase of the sufferings of Christ, the precious fruit of his Holy Spirit, are of little price in their esteem. Our Saviour tells the Samaritan woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water," John iv. 10.

We are encouraged to be earnest and resolved suppliants for the graces of God's Spirit, because we are assured he is most willing to bestow them. Our Saviour sometimes encourages us from the resemblance of a father, who cannot so unnaturalize

himself, and divest his tender affections, as to renounce his own offspring, to deny a child necessary food for his subsistence: "Will he give him a stone for bread? or a serpent for a fish? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 11—13. Sometimes he excites us to pray, and not to faint, from the parable of an uncompassionate stranger, a judge who was overcome by importunity to afford relief to one in distress. God delights to hear and answer those prayers that are for his best blessings. When Solomon prayed for wisdom to rule his people, God was so pleased that he gave him wisdom in an eminent degree, and, as an addition, riches and honour. If we imitate Solomon in his prayer, we shall have his acceptance. St. James directs us, If any man want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids no man, Jam. i. 5. the wisdom to manage afflictions, that may be for his glory, and our spiritual advantage. He gives liberally, which either respects the affection of the Giver, or the measure of the gift, or the repeated acts of giving; and upbraids not, either as to their unworthiness, or the frequency of their addresses. Liberality among men is a costly virtue, and but few have a natural generosity or christian mercy, and means to express and exercise it. The necessities of others do not affect men with so quick a sense as the parting with their money to relieve them: as the balsam tree does not drop its healing liquor till the bark is cut. Sometimes the great number of suitors is a pretence to excuse from the exercise of bounty. None of these can

be conceived of God. There is nothing more Divine in the Deity, and becoming his nature, than his inclination to do good. As the mother with equal pleasure nourishes the child with her milk, as the child draws it. God much more rejoices in doing good than we in receiving it.

We are also assured of obtaining spiritual blessings by the intercession of the Mediator. The dignity of his person, who is higher than the heavens, the Son of his love, the merits of his obedience and sufferings assure us of his power with God. He takes us by the hand, and brings us to the Father; perfumes and presents our requests to obtain a favourable reception. When we are under impressions of fear, that God will deny our prayers for spiritual blessings, it is as if there were no love in the Mediator, nor prevalency in his mediation.

Besides, the Spirit of holiness is plenteously conveyed under the dispensation of the gospel. The gift of the Spirit, in the richest degrees, was reserved as an honour to Christ in his ascension.

It is said, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified," John vii. 39. The blood of Christ was liberally shed, that the Spirit might be liberally poured forth. But the bestowing of the Spirit, was at the triumphant ascension of Christ. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: and received gifts for men," Psa. lxxviii. 18. that is, from the Father, as the reward of his victory, that he might dispense them to men. The principal gift is the Holy Ghost, comprehensive of all good things. The promise is performed under the gospel, "I will pour out my

Spirit," the Spirit of grace and supplication, "upon all flesh," Joel ii. 28. There were some sprinklings of it under the law, and confined to a separate nation, but now showers are poured down upon all nations to purify them, and make them fruitful in good works. The apostle declares the admirable efficacy of the gospel, "The law of the Spirit of life has freed me from the law of sin and death," Rom. viii. 2. The Spirit of the fiery law, so called with respect to its original and operations, convinced of sin, and constrained conscience to inflict tormenting impressions on the soul, the presages of future judgment: but afforded no spiritual grace to obey it. Therefore it is said to be weak and unprofitable, Heb. vii. 18, 19. But the gospel conveys supernatural strength to obtain supernatural happiness. It is foretold concerning the state of the church in the times of the gospel, "He that is feeble among them shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them," Zech. xii. 8. And further the Holy Spirit directs our desires, and God knows the mind of the Spirit, who makes intercession for us according to the will of God, Rom. viii. 27. Christ is our Advocate in heaven, and the Spirit in our hearts, by inflaming our affections, and exciting in us filial trust in the Divine mercy. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," Isa. xl. 31. If we are impotent in resisting temptations, and in doing the will of God, when Divine assistance is ready upon our desires to confirm us, our impotence is voluntary, and does not excuse us from consequent sin, but is an antecedent sin. The sharpest reproof we read from our Saviour to his disciples was for their guilty impotence: "Jesus answered

and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" Matt. xvii. 17. He had given them power to heal diseases, and expel evil spirits, but they had not used the means of prayer and fasting that was requisite for the exercise of that power. How justly do we deserve that stinging reproach, who, notwithstanding the gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, do not by continual fervent prayer apply ourselves to God, to partake of a rich abundance of grace from the Holy Spirit!

I shall only add, that as prayer is a means to obtain more grace, so by the exercise of grace in prayer it is increased. Frequent prayer has a cleansing virtue, in that as those who often come into the king's presence to speak to him, are careful to be in decent habits, that they may not be disparaged in his sight; so those who draw near to God will cleanse themselves from sin, that they may be prepared to appear before his holy Majesty. Humility, faith, reverence, love, zeal, resignation to the Divine will, compassion to the afflicted, and other excellent graces, are exercised in prayer, as the sphere of their activity; and as acquired habits so infused, are improved by exercise. Frequent shooting not only makes persons more skilful in directing the arrow to the mark, but more able to draw a stronger bow. None are more holy in conversation than those who give themselves to prayer. Our Saviour prayed himself into heaven, and a Divine lustre appeared in his countenance. By our drawing near to God the beauty of holiness will be impressed upon us, and brighten our conversations. Briefly, according to the raised operations of grace in prayer, we shall obtain more

excellent degrees of it from heaven ; for in bestowing the first grace God is a pure Giver, but in dispensing new degrees of grace he is a Rewarder, according to the promise, "To him that hath shall be given."

3. Frequent and attentive hearing and reading the word, and serious meditation of it, is a means appointed by the Divine wisdom and goodness, for our growth in grace. The conception and propagation, the sustaining and increasing the spiritual life, is by the word of truth ; it is therefore compared to those things that are the productive and preserving causes of the natural life ; it is the incorruptible seed and food, to beget and nourish the spiritual life ; it is milk for babes, wine for the faint, and strong meat to confirm those of maturer age. There is an objective virtue in it, whereby it is apt and sufficient to regenerate us, and to increase the vigour and activity of the new life. The apostle calls it, the power of God to our salvation. The word of grace is able to build us up to an inheritance among them that are sanctified, Acts xx. 32. It is a kind of miracle in nature, that a scion of a good tree grafted into a sour stock, draws the vital moisture from the root, and converts it for the producing generous and pleasant fruit. The engrafted word being a Divine doctrine, overrules the carnal nature, and makes the mind, will, affections, and actions, holy and heavenly, answerable to its quality. The commands of it are clear and pure, directing us in our universal duty : the promises are precious, encouraging us by the prospect of the reward ; the threatenings terrible, to preserve us from sin. There is an instrumental fitness in the word preached to perfect the image of God in us ; for the

manner of conveying the revelation to us, has a congruity to work upon the subject to whom it is revealed. The first insinuation of sin was by the ear; the first inspiration of grace is by it. Through the ear was the entrance of death; it is now the gate of life. In heaven we shall know God by sight, now by hearing. When a minister of the gospel is enlightened from heaven, and zealous for the salvation of souls, he is fitter for this work than if an angel were a ministering spirit in this sense, and employed in this holy office; for he that preaches has the same interest in the doctrine declared by him; his everlasting happiness is nearly concerned; and therefore is most likely to affect others. When a holy fire is kindled in the breast, it will inflame the lips; the mind convinces the mind, and the heart persuades the heart. But we must consider, that as the instrument cannot effect that for which it is made, unless it is directed and applied for that end; so without a superior influence of the Holy Spirit, that gives vital power to the preaching of the word, it is without efficacy. What our Saviour speaks of the natural life, is applicable to the spiritual, "Man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth," Matt. iv. 4. A minister, with all his reason and rhetoric, cannot turn a soul from sin to holiness, without the omnipotent operation of the Spirit. The apostle tells the Thessalonians, that the gospel came not to them in word only, "but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost," 1 Thess. i. 5. The gospel then comes only in word when it pierces no further than the ear, that is the sense to try words, and distinguish different sounds and voices: but the truth of God, directed and animated by the

Spirit, doth not stop at the ear, the door of the soul, but passes into the understanding and the heart, that makes a change so real and great in the qualities of men, as is expressed by substantial productions. It is therefore said, "We are begotten and born again by the incorruptible seed of the word," 1 Pet. i. 23.

The word becomes effectual for the increase of holiness when it is mixed with faith, which binds the conscience to entire obedience. It is the word of God, our King, Law-giver, and Judge; the rule of our present duty, and of future judgment, in the great day of decision. The Divine law is universal and unchangeable, and the duties of it are not necessary for some, and needless for others, but must be obeyed without partiality, notwithstanding the repugnance of the carnal passions. When it is seriously believed and considered, the hearers are induced to receive it with preparation and resolution of yielding to it. There is no truth more evident nor injured than this, that perfect obedience is due to the will of God, declared in his word. This all profess in the general, but contradict in particulars, when a temptation crosses the precept. Now the first act of obedience to the truth, is the believing it with so stedfast an assent wrought by the Spirit, that it purifies the heart, and reforms the whole man.

With faith there must be joined an earnest desire to grow in holiness. This is declared by St. Peter, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2. In the natural life there is an inseparable appetite of food to maintain it; the inward sense of its necessities, causes a hunger and thirst after suitable supplies to preserve and improve it. This is ex

perienced in every one that is born of the Spirit; they attend and apply the word of God to them, not merely to prevent the sharp reflections of conscience, for the impious neglect of their duty, (for that proceeds from fear, not from desire,) but to grow in knowledge and holiness; not in an airy flashy knowledge, that is only fruitful to increase guilt and punishment, but substantial and saving knowledge, that is influential upon practice. Hearing is in order to doing, and doing is the way to happiness. It is not the forgetful hearer, but the doer of the word shall be blessed in his deed, Jas. i. 25. The bare knowledge of evil does no hurt, and the bare knowledge of our duty without practice, does no good. Feeding, without digesting the food, and turning it into blood and spirits, affords no nourishment nor strength. The most diligent hearing, and comprehensive knowledge of our duty, without practice, is not profitable. The enemy of our souls is content that Divine truths should be in our understandings, if he can intercept their passage into our hearts and conversations. He practises over continually the first temptation, to induce us by guile to choose the tree of knowledge before the tree of life. We are therefore commanded to be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving our own souls, Jam. i. 22.

That the spiritual life may be increased by the word, it must be laid up in the mind and memory, and hid in the heart. David says, "I have hid thy word in my heart, that I may not sin against thee," Psa. cxix. 11. His affection to the word caused his continual meditation of it, that it might be a living root of the fruits of holiness in their season. If there were the same care and diligence

in remembering and observing the rules of life prescribed by the wisdom of God in the scriptures, as men use in remembering and practising rules for the recovery of the health of their bodies, and it is justly requisite there should be more, (since the life of the soul infinitely excels the life of the body,) how holy and blessed would they be!

The advice of the Roman physician that is conducive for the health of the body, is applicable to the soul—After a full meal abstain from laborious actions, that the heat of the spirits may be concentrated in the stomach for digestion; otherwise, if divested and employed in labour, the stomach will be filled with crudities. Thus after hearing the word, our thoughts should not be scattered in the world; but we should recollect and revolve it in our minds, that it may be digested into practice. It is said of the virgin Mary, she “kept these sayings, and pondered them in her heart,” Luke ii. 19.

There are powerful motives to engage us to a conscientious attendance upon this duty. Our Saviour tells us, “He that hears me,” that is, with subjection of soul, “hath eternal life,” John v. 24. And in one instance he has declared, how much approved and acceptable it was to him: for when Martha was employed about entertaining him, and Mary was attentive to receive his instructions, he said, “Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her,” Luke x. 42. His feeding Mary was more pleasing to him, than to be fed by Martha. But how many neglect and despise this duty! Some pretend they know enough; such, if they do not want instructors, want remembrancers of their duty. Others are infected with pride, and a worse leprosy than Naaman’s, of whom we read,

that when the prophet sent him a message, that he should go and wash in Jordan seven times, and he should be clean; he was wroth, and said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than the rivers of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" 2 Kings v. 10—12. So there are some, who, being directed to wash themselves often in the waters of life, the scriptures of Divine inspiration, are apt to think, Are not the rivers of Greece and Rome, the eloquent discourses of philosophers, better, more perfective of their minds and actions, than the plain rules of the word? but this proceeds from affected ignorance, and wilful perverseness; for not only supernatural doctrines, necessary to be believed, are only revealed in the scripture, but the rules of moral duties, necessary for practice, are clearly and completely laid down only in it.

Besides, as every thing in nature has its virtue by the appointment of God, and works for that end for which it was ordained; so the preaching of the gospel was appointed to begin and maintain the life of the soul, and powerfully works to that end. The attendance upon it has a blessing annexed, and the neglect exposes to Divine displeasure; "He that withdraws his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination," Prov. xxviii. 9. And let it be seriously pondered, there is a time coming, when only prayer can relieve them.

I shall add, that the serious reading the scripture, that there may be an impression of the characters of its purity on the soul, is a duty of daily revolution. We are commanded, that the word of God should dwell richly in us, in all wisdom, Col. iii. 16. As the soul quickens the body by its residence, and directs it in all its motions; so the

word should be in the soul an inward principle of life, to direct and excite, and enable it for the performance of every duty. This advice of the apostle is comprehensive of all other precepts, and the effectual means of obtaining perfection. Our reading must be with observation, and applying the word for our good. There is a great difference between sailing on the water for pleasure, and diving in it for pearls; some read the scriptures to please their minds in the history of the creation, and the wonders of God's powerful providence, and the various events in the kingdoms of the world, recorded in them. But there must be diligent inquiry for spiritual treasures to enrich the soul.

How careless are the most of this duty! There are above eight thousand hours in a year, and how few are employed in reading the scriptures, that direct us in the everlasting way! the common pretence is necessary business: but all excuses are vain against the command of God. Is the working out our salvation an indifferent idle matter? Must the principal affair of our life be subordinate to lower concerns? The arduous business of governing a kingdom, is no exemption to princes from reading the word of God; for the command is to him that sits on the throne, to read the law of God all the days of his life, that he may fear the Lord, and do his statutes, Deut. xvii. 18, 19.

The word must be sincerely received as it is sincerely delivered. The rule is, "to lay aside all superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, that is able to save our souls," Jas. i. 21. There is no food more easily turned into blood than milk; but if the stomach be foul, it sours and

corrupts, and is hurtful to the body. The word of grace, if received into a sincere heart, is very nutritive, it confirms and comforts the soul : but if there be false principles, carnal habits, sensual affections, it proves dangerous. A carnal man will set the grace of the gospel against the precepts, and apply the promises without regarding the conditions of them, and from holy premises draw sinful conclusions.

Briefly, hearing the word is not an arbitrary but an indispensable duty. The psalmist puts the question, "He that planteth the ear, shall not he hear?" Psa. xciv. 9. and it may be said with the same conviction, "He that gives us the faculty of hearing, shall not he be heard?" But we must not rest in the bare hearing, for it is an introductory preparing duty in order to practice. There may be an increase in knowledge, some convictions like a flash of lightning, some melting of the affections, like a dash of rain, soon over ; some resolutions of obedience, but without sincere practice the man is a hearer only, and deceives himself, Jas. i. 22. Every sermon that he hears will, notwithstanding his vain hopes, be an argument against him at the day of judgment. The residence of the practical truths is rather in the heart than in the head ; if they are only in the head, they are kept in unrighteousness, Rom. i. 18. yet there is no deceit more common. Men think they are enriched with the ideas and notions of Divine truths in their minds, without the habits of graces in their hearts. Briefly, the end and work of the evangelical ministry is the perfection of the saints ; as the apostle declares, "We warn every man, and teach every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus,"

Col. i. 28. This testimony is given of Epaphras, a servant of Christ, that he always laboured fervently in prayer, that the Colossians might be perfect and complete in all the will of God, Col. iv. 12.

4. The religious use of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, is an excellent means for the increase of grace. The state of grace is represented under the similitude of a new man, born from heaven, and partaker of a spiritual life that consists in holiness and joy. This spiritual life supposes a spiritual nourishment to preserve it, and a spiritual appetite, and that a spiritual eating and drinking. Our Saviour denominates himself by the character of life: "I am the way, the truth, and the life," John xiv. 6. he being the principle and preserver of the spiritual life. In the sacrament he is the Bread of Life; there are the sacred memorials of his crucifixion, of his body and blood, which are meat indeed, and are drink indeed, John vi. 55. that afford a more substantial and excellent nourishment for the life of the soul than the perishing food that supports the body. Our Saviour tells the Jews, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead," John vi. 49. The bread of angels could not preserve them from death, but the bread of God is the principle of eternal life. He is pleased to deal familiarly with us, suitably to our composition and capacity, and humbles himself in a sacramental union with the elements, that sight may assist faith.

This is a positive institution, that derives its authority and goodness from the precept of our Sovereign and Saviour. It was his dying charge to his disciples, to which a special and most reverent

observance is due. It is revocable in its nature, but not to cease without the will of the Legislator, either expressly declared, or virtually by the ceasing of the end of it. As the ceremonial law is abolished by the same authority that ordained it, the end of the institution being obtained. But this ordinance is by our Saviour commanded to continue till his second coming in glory, the end of it being the revival of the memory of his death.

I will not insist upon the several conformities between the natural food and the spiritual; for the principal comparison and resemblance is in the end for which food is necessary and appointed, without which there can be no subsisting life; but consider how the life of the soul is strengthened in this ordinance, which is not a bare sign of his sufferings for us, but the seal of the covenant of grace, and wherein our Saviour, though his bodily presence be confined to heaven, yet does really and spiritually exhibit himself with all his saving benefits to sincere believers. Consider how repentance, faith, and love, are increased by this ordinance.

(1.) Repentance is a vital operative grace, not only in mortifying sin, but in bringing forth many excellent fruits suitable to it. All the terrors at Mount Sinai in giving the law, cannot make such an impression on the conscience of the righteous and fearful anger of God for sin, as the infliction of wrath upon our dying Saviour. He received into his breast the arrows of the Almighty, that drank up his blood and spirits, though in himself he was perfectly holy. "Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his

stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 4, 5. We read that Nathan was sent from God to David, when insensible of his guilt of murder and adultery, to awaken him to review his sin: he for that end used a very moving parable of a rich man that had many flocks, yet to entertain a stranger, robbed a poor man of his only lamb, and dressed it for him. This David so resented, that he threatened the severest revenge for such an unrighteous and unmerciful action. And when Nathan turned the point of the parable against his breast, charging him, "Thou art the man," 2 Sam. xii. 7. in what agonies and confusion was he surprised, as his mournful complaint declares. When we read in the narrative of our Saviour's sufferings of the treachery of Judas, the malice of the priests, the fury of the people, the cowardice of Pilate, and the cruelty of the soldiers, how apt are we to conceive indignation against his murderers! But when conscience, like the true prophet, shall with a piercing reproach charge us that our sins condemned and crucified him, how will this open the springs of godly sorrow, and looking on him whom we have pierced, cause us to mourn, as those that mourn for a first-born! Zech. xii. 10. How will the contemplation of Him in his sufferings excite indignation with zeal and revenge against ourselves for our choosing and committing those sins that were the meritorious cause of his sufferings! Since he bore our sins, it is just we should sympathize in his sorrows. How instructive and exemplary was insensible nature, as if capable of knowledge and affection in the time of his sufferings! It was disordered in the heavens, and sympathized in the elements. The sun was obscured against all possibility of nature; for the moon was opposite, and in

the full, and in the twinkling of an eye passed half the circle of the heavens; and being empty of light towards the earth, by its interposition, hid the body of the sun behind it. The air was as dark at mid-day as at midnight. The earth trembled; the rocks rent. Have the rocks softer bowels than obdurate sinners? It is a greater prodigy that those whose sins made his death necessary are unaffected with it, than that nature seemed to have changed its principles and properties to signify his resentment of it. God's anger darkens the sun, and shakes the earth; and shall sinful men be unrelenting?

If by faith and consideration we transport ourselves to Mount Calvary, and with the blessed virgin stand at the foot of the cross when our Saviour was dying, we shall feel the working of her affections, when a sword pierced through her soul, Luke ii. 35. Now in the sacrament there is a representation of Christ crucified before our eyes, which is the most powerful motive of godly sorrow, and the inseparable consequent of it, the destructive hatred of sin; and of holy resolutions, that as he died for sin, we will die to it.

(2.) Faith, that is the root from whence other graces spring and flourish, is increased and confirmed by the use of this ordinance. As by the looking on the mysterious brazen serpent, there was an antidote conveyed to heal the Israelites stung by the fiery serpents; so by the looking on Jesus in his sufferings, our wounded spirits are healed. The dignity of his person, the depth of his sufferings, and his voluntary yielding of himself to them, are the supports of faith. The sin offerings under the law were entirely consumed in their

consecration to Divine justice, and no part was reserved to be eaten by the offerers: to signify their imperfection and inefficacy to reconcile God to sinners, and to pacify their accusing consciences. The beasts by substitution suffered death for those who offered them, but could not purchase life for them. Our Saviour is as truly given to us to communicate life, as he was given for us in his death. When he offered himself the most solemn sacrifice on the cross, he was not consumed. His body and blood are the feast of love upon his sacrifice, the clearest assuring sign of God's being reconciled to us. The blood of the Lamb, the true wine, has rejoiced the heart of God and man. Our High Priest continually presents his Father, in the celestial sanctuary, his bloody sacrifice, of which there is a commemoration on the holy table. If God remember our sins, we remember his anointed Priest to expiate them. If the timorous conscience be in anxiety for the number and heinousness of sins, and the number of sinners who must perish for ever without this miracle of mercy, as if one sacrifice were not sufficient to abolish their guilt; let it be considered that his death is of infinite value; and what is infinite cannot be divided; he was entirely offered for every penitent unfeigned believer. The weakest has as full an interest and benefit in it as if it had been offered solely for him, and may apply and appropriate it to himself with as true solid comfort as if he had been present at our Saviour's crucifixion, and heard him speaking the words of life, "I give myself for thee." His blood cleanses from all sin, and is a propitiation for the sins of the world, 1 John i. 7. ii. 2. These are no fictions of fancy, but the real operations of the Holy Spirit, who

brings to our remembrance the death of Christ in that lively sacramental representation, and seals the pardoning mercy of God to our souls, and conveys all the precious fruits of it to us. A lively faith on our suffering Saviour, makes him ours by an intimate and inseparable union and fruition. We dwell in him, and he in us, John vi. 56. How many drooping souls have been raised, how many wounded spirits have been healed, how many cloudy souls have been enlightened in that ordinance! Here the comforting Spirit breathes, our Saviour shows his reviving countenance, God speaks peace to his people. A believer tastes the hidden manna, and the love of Christ, that is sweeter than wine. The bruised reed becomes a strong pillar in the temple of God, the smoking flax is cherished into a purer and more pleasant light than springs from the sun in its brightness.

(3.) Love to Christ is increased by partaking of this ordinance, wherein his bloody death is represented. Greater love could not be expressed than in his dying for us, and lesser love could not have saved us from perishing for ever. He died not only to satisfy his Father's justice, but his own love to us. It is said by the prophet, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied," Isa. liii. 11. The travail of his soul implies his affection and affliction, the strength of his love, and his immense sorrows. Now nothing is more repugnant to the principle so deeply engraven in human nature than not to return love for love. Our Saviour, by the dearest titles, deserves our love; not only for his high perfections, but his deep sufferings. He was without form and comeliness in the eyes of the carnal world, then disfigured by his sufferings, Isa. liii. 2. But can he

be less lovely in his sufferings, wherein he declared his dearest love? Astonishing love appeared in his dying countenance, flamed in his quenched eyes, flowed from his pierced side. To a spiritual eye he is as amiable with his crown of thorns, as with his crown of glory.

Our love to Christ, like fire out of its sphere, must be preserved by renewing its fuel, or it will decline. Now there is nothing more proper to feed it than Christ's love to us, and in this ordinance the sacred fire is maintained: the eye affects the heart. The mournings, the longings, and delights of love, are most sensible in spiritual communion with our Saviour at this feast. The inflamed spouse, in a rapture of admiration and complacency, breaks forth, "I am my beloved's, and he is mine," Cant. vi. 3. St. Paul, who was rapt up to the third heavens, and heard unspeakable things, declares Christ crucified to be the most excellent object of his knowledge, his most precious treasure, and dearest joy.

It is true, the carnal receiver of the elements is a stranger to this love and joy, that is only felt by faith and experience. There are many christians in title who never felt any vital emanations from Christ in this ordinance. They most content themselves with sacramental communion without spiritual, and feel no correspondent affections to his extreme sufferings for us. But if there be a spark of life in the soul, if all be not cold and dead within, the remembrance of Christ's bleeding and dying love will inexpressibly endear him to us.

Now our sanctification was a principal end of his death. The apostle declares, that "Christ loved his church, and gave himself for it, that he might

sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish," Eph. v. 25—27. Can we allow any sin in our hearts and lives, and defeat the design of his love, and disparage the virtue of his sufferings? Can we endure any sin to reign in us that was the cause of his death, so full of ignominy and torment? He has declared how precious our sanctification is in his esteem; it is one of the richest veins in the whole mine of grace—and can we slight it? Can we imagine that his death obtained for us an impure indulgence for our lusts, when the end of it was our absolute purity? Can we content ourselves with low degrees of holiness, when he paid so dear a price for our perfection? The comfortable assurance that he was crucified for us, arises from our being crucified with him, to all the vanities of the world. Indeed, the external receiving this ordinance is not beneficial to an unbeliever any more than the setting a feast before a dead body that is incapable of feeding and nourishment. Men must believe before they can receive spiritual nourishment by it; and have the life of grace before they can feed on the Bread of life: but the unfeigned believer finds his inward man renewed by it.

I will add to what has been said, that in this ordinance the covenant of the gospel is sealed by the contracting parties; God ratifies his promise of grace, and we seal our duty of obedience. It is true, we are bound by an antecedent right, and higher obligation than our own consent; the command of God binds us to take this covenant, and to

keep it. We are bought with a price, and are not our own, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Now if the blood of the Son of God be our ransom from the bondage of sin and death, and we in the sacrament partake of his blood, and by that solemn right dedicate ourselves to him, that whether we live, we live to the Lord; or whether we die, we die to him, Rom. xiv. 8. how constraining is this to make us diligent in accomplishing the sacred ends of Christ's institution! How just is it that, since he died for our salvation, we should live to his glory! And when we renew our right in the blessings of the covenant, we should sincerely renew our obligations to the duties of it. If after our holy engagement we renounce our allegiance to our Prince and Saviour by entertaining his enemies, the lusts of the flesh, we incur a double guilt, not only by transgressing the law of God, but by violating our oath of fidelity; and double guilt will bring double damnation.

That the renewing our covenant at the Lord's supper may be more effectual, let us consider—

[1.] That holy resolutions and engagements are the immediate principle of obedience. Till the convictions of our duty are wrought into resolutions, they are of no efficacy.

[2.] They must proceed from the deliberate judgment, and determined will. The apostle declares, "The love of Christ constrains us; we thus judge, if one died for all, then were all dead;" and the consequence is strong, that we should live to him who died for us, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Empty wishes are no volitions; faint and wavering purposes have no force. Believers are exhorted with full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord, Acts xi. 23.

[3.] The renewing our holy engagements are very necessary for perseverance in our duty. Our hearts are false and foolish, and apt to fly from God; they are as changeable as the weather, and as temptations are presented, apt to be fired with carnal desires, or frozen with carnal fears, and to desert our duty; therefore it is necessary to fix them by repeated vows of obedience. We are directed to arm ourselves with the same minds, 1 Pet. iv. 1. that is, with firm resolutions to cease from sin. The girdle of truth is a principal part of our spiritual armour, that fastens it upon us. Steadfast engagements to obey God are powerful to excite every grace in its season, to rise up in defiance against our spiritual enemies. David says, "I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy precepts," Psa. cxix. 106. By the solemn and frequent renewing our vows of obedience, the tempter is discouraged, and flies from us. Let us every morning next our hearts resolve to walk with God all the day.

[4.] God is well pleased with our sincere resolutions to keep close to him. Who is it that engages his heart to close with men? He is the Inspector and Judge of our hearts, and notwithstanding our infirmities, accepts our sincerity.

[5.] There are peculiar circumstances that enforce the inviolable observation of our sacramental vows. Our original and permanent obligation that we contracted in our baptism, in the presence of the church, when we were enlisted under our Redeemer's colours to oppose his enemies and ours, Satan in combination with the flesh and the world, should have a strong and constant influence into our lives. Our understanding and voluntary renewings of this

at the Lord's supper, make it more binding. It is mentioned before that God is pleased, by an admirable condescension, to be a party in the covenant, and binds himself to bestow his most free favours, and takes pleasure in performing what is promised. It is becoming his wisdom to glorify his moral perfections in his transactions with man; not only his mercy, but his truth, in saving us. "The Lord thy God he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments," Deut. vii. 9. The attribute of faithfulness is set next the Deity, as very dear and pleasing to him. He engages himself partly for our comfort, to dispel the clouds of fear, that are apt to rise in our bosoms from the sense of our many and mighty sins; therefore his mercy is secured to us by a covenant, and that covenant, established by an oath, the sure evidence it is irrevocable, and sealed by the blood of the Mediator; and partly to instruct us by his example, to maintain our integrity, which we engage in sealing our part of the covenant.

It is said of God, that he cannot lie, from the veracity of his nature, and the unchangeableness of his will; and he reckons of his people they will not lie, from that divine disposition that is proper to them. Now that God is pleased in that ordinance to give us the clearest and strongest assurance of his pardoning mercy, should make us very observant and exact in performing the condition of it. What our Saviour said to the man, healed miraculously of his lameness, is virtually signified in every pardon we receive: Go away, sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you, John v. 14. Sin is extremely aggravated when perfidiousness and ingratitude are

mixed with disobedience. Our resolutions against sin are preventing physic, but in breaking them the remedy increases the disease, and accelerates death more painfully and suddenly. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; he will speak peace to his people, but let them not return to folly," Psa. lxxxv. 8. To sin against the law is a high provocation, but to sin against special love, grieves the Holy Spirit, and deeply wounds our spirits.

Now since our hearts are deceitful above all things, Jer. xvii. 9. and since our resolutions are fleet and fading, let us earnestly pray for Divine grace to establish them, and entirely depend upon it. It is more easy to raise a fortification in time of peace, than to defend it in time of war. In the absence of a temptation we readily purpose to abstain from sin, but when they assault us, how often are we surprised and vanquished! David resolves, "I will keep thy statutes," Psa. cxix. 8. but to keep his resolution inviolate, he prays, "O forsake me not utterly." He promises, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth as with a bridle," Psa. xxxix. 1. but he addresses himself to God for assistance: "Set a watch before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips," Psa. cxli. 3. Our resolutions are light and feathery, soon scattered by a storm of fear; it is as dangerous to trust in a heart of flesh as in an arm of flesh. Nothing is more unstable than water, but when poured into a strong cistern it is as sure as that which contains it. Thus Divine grace preserves our unstable heart from slipping.

5. The religious observation of the Lord's day is an excellent means for the increase of holiness. It

is worthy of our serious observing, that the fourth commandment is enforced with a note of excitation, "Remember thou keep holy the sabbath-day," to impress the sense of our duty upon conscience, and to confine our transgressing nature, that is so apt to alienate that time which is sacred to God, and the interest of our souls, to carnal and profane uses. It is sanctified and set apart by the Lord of our persons and time, for the celebrating the most excellent works of his power and goodness in creation and redemption; He that gave us our beings, and raised us from the dust to an honour little lower than the angels, those heavenly spirits, and has ransomed us from our woful bondage; he that dignified us with the impression of his own image, and the assumption of ours. The morality of the command is perpetual that one day of seven be consecrated and separated for Divine worship; but the designation of the day to the Jews was in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt; and to christians, in remembrance of our deliverance from the tyranny of the spiritual Pharaoh, Satan and his infernal army, benefits exceeding those of creation, and rescuing from the bondage of Egypt. Indeed, every day we should redeem time from business and pleasures for the immediate service of God: but on the Lord's day, we must be entirely conversant in holy duties, public and private, and abstain from common works, unless of necessity and mercy. The religious rest of the fourth commandment is to be observed by christians so far as it is requisite for our attendance on the service of God. It is not only our duty, but our heavenly privilege that, being tired with the dust and toil of the world, we have a freedom, and are called to draw near to God, with

the promise that he will draw near to us, that when we pay our homage we shall receive infinite blessings ; for then in the communion of saints we present our requests with a filial freedom to God, and we receive his precepts for the ordering our lives to please him ; and by a temporal holy rest, are prepared for an eternal glorious rest.

The observing this command enables us to do the rest ; for the duties of it are Divine and spiritual, and have a powerful influence in the souls of men ; for the exercise of grace, by a proper efficacy, increases it ; and in their sanctifying that day, God sanctifies them, and liberally bestows the treasures of grace and joy, the consequent blessing of the Divine institution.

The profaners of that holy time do virtually renounce their allegiance to the Creator and Redeemer ; they will not attend upon his oracles, but despise the persons and office of the ministers of Christ, and their contempt reflects upon him. They make the sabbath their delight in another sense than the commandment intends ; they make it a play-day. Others who are called and counted christians, who are good in every thing but wherein they should be best ; they are just and merciful, temperate and chaste, affable and obliging to men, but wretchedly neglect the duties of piety to God, and the sanctifying his day. That precious and dear interval to a saint from the business of the world, is a galling restraint to carnal men from their secular employments. It is true, they will go to the public worship either for secular respects, custom, or the coercion of the laws, or the impulse of conscience, that will not be quiet without some religion, but they are glad when it is done, and by vain discourses dash

out of their minds the instructions of the word of God. They spend a great part of the day as if it were unsanctified time, in curious dressing, in luxurious feasting, in complimentary visits, in idleness, and sometimes in actions worse than idleness. The certain cause of this profaneness is, they are not partakers of the Divine nature that inclines the soul to God, and raises our esteem of communion with him as a heaven upon earth; and from hence it follows, that they come and go from the public ordinances neither cleansed from sin, nor changed into the Divine image. But those who conscientiously employ that day in duties proper to it, in prayer and hearing, and reading the scriptures and spiritual books, in holy conference, whereby light and heat is mutually communicated among the saints, and in the meditation of eternal things, whereby faith removes the veil and looks into the sanctuary of life and glory; as Moses by conversing with God in the mount came down with a shining countenance, so a Divine lustre will appear in their conversations in the following week.

6. The frequent discussion of conscience, and review of our ways, is an effectual means of rising to perfection in holiness. This duty is difficult and distasteful to carnal persons; for sense is prevalent, and fastens their thoughts upon external objects, that they are unfit for reflecting upon themselves, for the proper and most excellent operations of the reasonable soul, wherein they are raised to the rank of angelical spirits, and to a resemblance of the Deity, who eternally contemplates with infinite delight the perfections of his nature, and the copy of them in his works. They are insensible of the nobility of their nature, and cannot sequester

themselves from worldly things, and enter into the retirements of their souls. They are afraid and unwilling to look into their hearts, lest they should be convinced and overargued by conscience of their woful condition. Home is too hot for them. Their study is to charm their cares, and not to be disturbed in their security.

But the duty required of us is indispensable. We are commanded to stand in awe, and sin not, and commune with our own hearts, Psa. iv. 4. to search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord, Lam. iii. 40. to prove our own work, Gal. vi. 4. The benefit resulting from it is worth our care, and should make us to digest all difficulties in the performance. David declares, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies," Psa. cxix. 59. He first reflected on his ways, and then reformed them. Conscience must be awakened by grace, or judgment to self-reflection.

The examinations of conscience either regard our spiritual state, or our actions in their moral qualities of good and evil. The first is of infinite moment, that we may understand whether we are in the state of polluted nature, or in a renewed state; and consequently, whether in the present favour of God, or under his displeasure; and accordingly, what we may expect in the next world, a blessed or miserable eternity.

But, as was before observed, men are very averse from the severe trial of their state, for fear the issue will be perplexing; the exact inquiry into their lives is like the torment on the rack: or if sometimes they turn their thoughts inward to consider themselves, they do it slightly, not with sincere judgment; and though their spiritual state be

uncertain, or apparently evil, yet they are resolved not to doubt of it. This neglect is fatal to many who comfort themselves with their company, because the most are in no better condition than they are.

This I shall not insist on, but consider the survey of men's actions. Conscience is the centre of the soul, to which all moral good and evil has a tendency; it is an internal supervisor and guardian, which a man always carries in his bosom. To perform its office, it must,—1. Be enlightened with the clear knowledge of the Divine law in its precepts; for duties unknown cannot be practised, and sins unknown and unconsidered cannot be loathed and forsaken. The law, like a clear and equal glass, (that reflects the beams according to their incidence,) discovers the beauties and spots of the soul. There are contained in it general rules that respect all, and particular precepts that concern the several relations of men. 2. The discussion of conscience that it may be effectual, must in the manner of it be regulated by the matter of the discussion; that is, good and evil actions, which are of eternal consequence: and the end of it, the making us better. Accordingly it must be,

(1.) Distinct in comparing our actions with the rule, that we may understand the defects of our best duties, and the aggravations of our sins. The law enjoins the substance and circumstances of our duties, and forbids all kinds and degrees of sin. The more particular the discussion is, the more perfect.

(2.) It must be serious, and with sincere judgment, as previous to our trial at God's tribunal. This consideration will excite the conscience, which is the directive and applicative mind, to be vigilant

and impartial in sifting ourselves, that no sin of omission or commission may be passed over; for what a high strain of folly is it to be subtle to conceal any sin from ourselves, which is open to the all-seeing eyes of God! Men are apt to be insensible of sins of omission, but there is no mere sin of omission: for it proceeds from a dislike of the commanded duty, which exposes to judgment. The more the mind is mended and renewed, it discovers sins that were undiscerned.

(3.) There must be a fixed resolution to reform our lives, wherein we have been culpable. The soul can never recover its lapse from above, but by returning thither; that is, by a real performance of the duties of the law, that fully represent the Lawgiver's will and sovereignty. Now the reflecting upon our hearts and lives, to improve the good, and correct the evil in them, is very useful for that end.

(4.) It must be frequent, lest we become ignorant and forgetful of ourselves. Some of the wiser heathens made a scrutiny of their actions every day. It is related of Sextius, a philosopher, that in the end of the day he thoroughly examined the actions of it, "What evil have I cured? What vice have I resisted? In what am I become better?" Seneca tells us it was his daily practice to give an account of his actions before the judicatory of conscience. The author of the golden verses gives counsel in order to proficiency in virtue, to revise in our thoughts at night, "Wherein have I transgressed? what have I done? what have I omitted?" In doing this we shall preserve conscience more tender and sensible; for continuance in sin hardens it. This will be a preventive medicine; for if the sting

of remorse follows our omissions of good, and commissions of evil, and a Divine joy is felt in remembrance of our progress in holiness, this will be a constant motive to restrain us from disorderly actions, and to form us to perfection. Besides, there is a great difference between the habits of the body and of the mind; the first wear and decay by continual use, the habits of the mind by frequent practice, whether vicious or virtuous, increase and are confirmed. And since in the most excellent saints there remain sins of unavoidable weakness, the renewing our repentance every day is necessary to obtain the pardon of our sins, which is promised to all that mourn and strive against sin. We are commanded not to let the sun go down on our wrath, Eph. iv. 26. much less on God's.

In short, let us every morning consider the duty of the day, which is a valuable part of our lives, and the proper seasons of doing it, and charge our souls with a diligent regard to it. It is prudent advice how to make slothful servants industrious; in the morning to prescribe their work, in the evening to require an account what is done, or left undone, and to commend or censure, to reward or punish, according to their diligence or neglect. There are rarely found servants of so depraved a temper, so rebellious to authority and reason, so untractable, but they will mend by this managing. If this duty be constantly practised in a due manner, it will be of infinite profit to us. We read in the process of the creation, that God revised the works of every day, and saw they were good, and in the end saw they were very good, and ordained a sabbath, a sign of his complacence in his works. Thus, if in the review of our actions we find our conversation has

been in godly sincerity, that we have been faithful to God and our souls in striving after perfection, this reflection will produce rest and joy unspeakable ; joy that centres in the heart, and is united to the substance of the soul ; joy that will flourish in adversity, when carnal joy withers ; a joy that will not leave us at death, but pass with us into the eternal world. This oil of gladness will make us more active and cheerful in our universal duty ; but if we have been slack and careless in religion, if sins have been easily entertained, and easily excused, the remembrance will imbitter sin, and make us more vigilant for the future.

To make this duty more profitable, we should compare ourselves with ourselves, and with others.

With ourselves, that we may understand whether we are advancing towards perfection. Sometimes there is a gradual declension in the saints themselves, not observed. When Samson had lost his mysterious hair, upon the preserving of which his strength depended, and the Philistines had seized him, he awoke out of his sleep and said, " I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself ; and he wist not that the Lord was departed from him," Jud. xvi. 20. Thus many decline in their valuations and affections to things spiritual, and are less circumspect in their conversations, less fervent in their desires of grace, and faithful in the improvement of it than formerly ; and this deserves heart-breaking sorrow.

Besides, the comparing ourselves with others who have excelled us in holiness, and have been more watchful to abstain from sin, and more zealous in doing good, is very useful. This will wash off the colour of the common excuse, that without the

holiness of an angel it is impossible to be preserved undefiled in the midst of sensual temptations. But as the philosopher demonstrated the possibility of motion by walking before a captious caviller that denied it, so when many saints that have the same frail natures, and are surrounded with the same temptations, keep themselves pure in their dispositions and actions, when they are regular in duties of civil conversation with men, and in holy communion with God, and we that have the same Spirit of grace and word of grace to instruct and assist us, fall so short of their attainments, how will the comparison upbraid us, and cover us with confusion!

I shall add, that the deceitfulness of the heart is discovered in this, men are very apt to please themselves in the comparison with those who are notoriously worse, but averse from considering those who are eminently better. But this will be of no avail in the day of judgment; for the law of God is the rule to which we must conform, not the examples of others. Besides, how can any expect, that the wickedness of others should excuse them in judgment, and not fear that the holiness of others shall accuse and condemn them?

CHAPTER XIII.

Continual watchfulness requisite for our advancing to perfection. This respects the preventing evil, and doing good. The malice, the craft, the diligence, and numbers of our spiritual enemies. We are very receptive of temptations. Watchfulness respects our doing good in its season, and with its proper circumstances. A due regard to the duties of our several relations is necessary in order to the perfecting of holiness. Domestic, sacred, and civil relations considered. The last counsel—Let our progress towards heaven be with the same zeal as at our first entrance into it, and the same seriousness as when we come to the end of it.

VII. CONTINUAL watchfulness is requisite, that we may be rising towards perfection in holiness. The state of sin in scripture is represented by a deep sleep, that is the true image of death; "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," Eph. v. 14. The spiritual sleep is understood by comparison with the natural. In the natural, the instruments of sense and motion are bound up; the apprehensive faculties that discover dangers, and the active powers that resist or avoid them, are suspended from their exercise. Now spiritual security is called a sleep, as it implies ignorance of dangers that threaten the soul, and unpreparedness to prevent them. Accordingly, in opposition to carnal security, watchfulness consists in two things; in the foresight of approaching evils, and furnishing ourselves with means, and using

them for our safety. There is the life of grace in every regenerate person, but watchfulness implies the lively exercise and activity of grace. In the present state, the spirit of slumber is apt to steal upon us; even the wise virgins slumbered and slept. The three disciples at Christ's transfiguration in the mount, when it might be imagined there could be no inclination in them, and no temptation to sleep, for that the glorious Light would powerfully excite and actuate the visive spirits, yet fell asleep; and at his private passion in the garden, when there was the greatest cause of their sorrow and sympathy, yet were seized with unwelcome heaviness; for which our meek Redeemer so gently reprov'd them, "Could ye not watch with me thus one hour?" The best are liable to relapses into security, till they shall be awakened and raised by the omnipotent voice of the Son of God at the last day to immortality and perfection.

Watchfulness may be considered either with respect to preventing evil, or doing good. With respect to preventing evil, there are such motives as should make us very circumspect, lest we be overtaken and overcome by temptations.

1. If we consider the subtilty and strength, the malice and diligence, with the mighty numbers of our spiritual enemies, there is great reason we should not only be awake, but watchful to oppose them.

The tempter is surprisingly subtle, and understands all the arts of circumventing and corrupting us. He knows the several characters of men's dispositions, the commixture of their humours, all the radical causes of their different inclinations, and of those lusts that have dominion in them. He

knows the various impressions of nature, from the sex, the age, the country; from inherent or external causes: from health or sickness, nobility, obscurity, riches, poverty, prosperity, adversity: he tempts to sensuality in youth, and covetousness in old age; like the possessed person in the gospel, that was sometimes cast into the fire, and sometimes into the water. Men often exchange their lusts, and deceive themselves; as if a dead palsy were the cure of a burning fever. Sometimes he will try to cool the zeal of the saints, who are serious in working out their salvation, by suggesting that their diligence is not necessary: but if he cannot recall them to their former security, by the allurements of sense, he will discourage their hopes, and represent God as irreconcilable, and damp their resolutions in seeking his favour, and doing their duty. Thus by stratagem and ambush, or by open assault, he attempts to ruin their souls.

His strength is superior to ours. Evil spirits are styled principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses, Eph. vi. 12. We are frail flesh and blood: but we are encouraged, that by our vigilancy, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we shall be preserved against his utmost power and cruelty: for greater is he that is in the saints, than he that is in the world, 1 John iv. 4.

His malice is deadly. Nothing can allay his torment, but the involving men under his judgment and misery.

His activity and diligence are equal to his malice. The spirits of darkness never slumber nor sleep: they are not capable of weakness or weariness, as our faint flesh is. He is restless in following his pernicious designs. What is recorded of Martellus,

the Roman general, is applicable to Satan, "If he obtains a victory, he fiercely insults and pursues it; if he be repulsed, he returns afresh." His spite is never spent. He tempted our Saviour with distrust of God's providence, with presumption and vain glory; and being foiled in all attempts, it is said, he departed for a season, Luke iv. 13. and afterward made use of Peter as his instrument, to tempt him to decline his sufferings for the salvation of men.

He has a mighty number of principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickednesses, Eph. vi. 12. under his commands. There was a legion in one man. St. Peter earnestly excites us to watchfulness; for our adversary the devil, with innumerable infernal spirits, goes about seeking whom he may devour, 1 Pet. v. 8. He is the most formidable and least feared enemy in the world: we are surrounded with invisible enemies, sooner felt than seen, and usually not discerned but by the wounds they give us; and yet the senses of men are unguarded, and all the gates are open, to give them an easy entrance into their souls. And though their operations in destroying souls are secret, yet the deadly effects of their hatred are visible; for how few are there in whom the signs of the spiritual life appear!

2. The world is the store-house of his temptations; the men of the world to allure us to sin, or terrify us from our duty. The things of the world are suitable to our vicious appetites, and foment them; like food that is pleasant, but unwholesome, and feeds the disease. He puts a gloss and flattering colours upon earthly things, to give them a lustre in our imaginations.

3. In our depraved state we are very receptive of his temptations. The innocence of the first Adam did not secure him from seduction. The carnal affections are like gunpowder—a spark sets all a fire; and we cannot easily quench the unruly flame when it is inspired by the tempter. It is true, he cannot immediately act upon the soul: but as in paradise, he made use of the serpent to deceive the woman, and of the woman, by her blandishments, to allure Adam, so he makes use of the carnal part in every one, which proves as fatal as the serpent and the woman were. All the corrupt appetites and disordered affections are managed by him, and draw men with unforced consent to yield to him. He knows the insidious party within us that will admit his temptations. When the heart is dejected and sorrowful, he sends in terrors and griefs, knowing that his faction within are ready to receive them. When it is cheerful and lively, he sends in vain thoughts, excites the carnal affections, which are ready to comply with his design, and betray the soul to folly and security. Now, considering our enemies without, and the deceitful heart as the traitor within, that keeps correspondence with the tempter, our danger is infinite. We are not by privilege exempted from temptations, nor invulnerable in our encounters with the powers of darkness; but by vigilance, and managing the armour of God, we are victorious. There is no saint on earth but may fall as foully as David did, without a constant jealousy over his heart and ways. It is said, "While the husbandman slept, the enemy sowed tares," Matt. xiii. 25. He did not by force enter into the field. It is not so much from impotence as carelessness that temptations are let into

the heart, and corruptions break out. It is not so much the stock of habitual grace that secures us, but grace in its vigorous exercise. Surely David in his youth had seen as exquisite beauties as Bathsheba, and was preserved by watchfulness; but the neglect of his duty was fatal to his purity and peace. Therefore the duty is so often inculcated upon us.

We must be watchful to fly from temptations. He that prays, "Lead me not into temptation," and leads himself into it, mocks God, despises the danger, plays upon the hole of the asp, and walks upon the brink of a precipice. He provokes God justly to desert him. If a general commands a soldier to fight a single combat with an enemy, he will furnish him with armour of proof, and secure him from treachery; but if one be fool-hardy, and engages himself, he may dearly pay for his rashness. If, by the order of providence, one be brought into tempting circumstances, he may pray in faith for Divine assistance, that the Lord will be at his right hand, and he shall not be moved, Psa. xvi. 8. but if one ventures into temptation, he will hardly escape.

We are directed to be sober and vigilant against our spiritual enemies. Vigilance discovers the temptations, and temperance substracts the materials of them. Adam by intemperance stained his innocence, and forfeited his felicity.

We must be clad with the armour of light to oppose the powers of darkness, Rom. xiii. 12. Strange armour, that is transparent and may be seen through. The graces of the Spirit are armour and ornament, the strength and beauty of the soul. They are called, the armour of God; for he furnishes

us with them, and teaches us to use them, and makes them victorious. We must not only watch, but pray against temptations. We are preserved by the intercession of Christ in heaven, and the Spirit's illumination and protection in our spiritual warfare. There are some things that directly strengthen our enemies—all tempting objects that excite and influence fleshly lusts that war against the soul. Some things indirectly strengthen them; whatever diverts us from prayer, and other holy ordinances, disarms us; whatever distracts the mind, and dissolves the firmness of the will, exposes us more easily to be overcome. To be careless and secure, as if we were in a safe sea, when there are so many visible shipwrecks, is unaccountable folly.

It is our duty and wisdom to keep a jealous watch over our hearts, to suppress the fixed inclinations to sin; (thoughts and desires are the seeds of action;) and to guard our senses, that we may not be suddenly corrupted. Lot's wife, by a lingering look after Sodom, was turned into a pillar of salt, to make us fearful by her example of the occasions of sin. Especially we must direct our care to prevent our being surprised against the sins that so easily encompass us, and whereby we have been often foiled. If a besieged city has one part of the walls weaker, and more liable to be taken, care will be taken to strengthen it, and to double the guards there.

Let us be watchful against small sins, if we desire to be preserved from greater; for we are trained on by sins of weaker evidence to sins of greater guilt. Some are so confirmed in holiness, that the devil does not tempt them to transgress the law in a

notorious manner, but lays snares for them in things of lesser moment. Besides, there are sinners of different degrees, yet they all finally perish. Some with a full career throw themselves headlong into hell. Others go slowly, step by step, but certainly drop into it.

To conclude, if we desire to be preserved from sin, let us avoid engaging company: many persons would resist the force of natural inclination, but when that is excited by the examples of others, they are easily vanquished. A pure stream passing through a sink will run thick and muddy. On the contrary, society with the saints is a happy advantage to make us like them; as waters that pass through medicinal minerals, derive a healing tincture from them. In short, the present world is a continual temptation, and we should always be employed in those things, either in our general or particular callings, that either directly or virtually may preserve us from its contagion. We are in a state of warfare; though not always in fight, yet always in the field exposed to our spiritual enemies that war against our souls; and our vigilance and care should be accordingly.

The duty of watchfulness also respects the doing good in its season, and with the circumstances proper to it. "To him that orders his conversation aright, I will show the salvation of God," Psa. l. 23. Order in an army contributes to victory more than numbers. The acceptable performance of a duty must depend upon its season: the beauty of it is impaired when done out of its proper time. I will instance in one duty very influential unto a holy life. We are commanded to watch unto prayer, 1 Pet. iv. 7. that is, to preserve a holy frame of

spirit suitable to this duty: and to redeem time, Eph. v. 16. from the vanity and business of the world for prayer. This duty is as necessary for the spiritual life, as breathing for the natural; and it is a part of wisdom so to order our affairs, that we may have chosen hours for communion with God. And we are to watch in prayer against distraction and indevotion. We are commanded to draw near to God with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire to those who disparage his majesty by coldness and carelessness in his service, Heb. xii. 28, 29. There must be a strict guard to prevent the excursion of our thoughts in Divine worship. The soul should ascend to God on wings of fire, with all possible ardency of affections. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much," Jas. v. 16. Watchfulness respects both the time and degrees of our duties. We are commanded, as we have opportunity, to do good unto all men, especially to the household of faith, Gal. vi. 10. and to show mercy with cheerfulness, Rom. xii. 8. We should not lose the golden opportunity of relieving the objects of charity, and be diligent in our business, and to cut off superfluous expenses, that we may be liberal. We should be careful to keep every grace in its vigorous exercise. In short, the soul is a principle of life to the body, from its first being to its last breath, guides its motions, prevents the dangers to which it is liable, provides for its welfare. How much more reasonable is it, that it should be a soul to itself, vigilant and active, to improve every advantage for its happiness and perfection.

VIII. A due regard to the duties of our several relations is very necessary in order to our perfecting of holiness. Relations may be considered under three

general heads: domestic, sacred, civil. Domestic, between husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants. There is a general duty that binds all relations, and particular relative to their several states. There is superiority in a husband, sovereignty in parents, authority in masters, but it must be tempered with discretion, indulgence, and humanity, in the exercise of it. The mutual duty of husband and wife is love, wherein the society, sweetness, and felicity of marriage consists. In this is included the bearing with the infirmities of one another, that allays the fierce passions, that are the cause of strife, and makes the patient party better. The exercise of this affection is distinguished; the love of the husband is counselling and comforting, providing and protecting; the love of the wife obsequious and assisting. His superiority and her subjection must be sweetened with love. The husband must not be bitter, nor the wife sour. The husband must govern the wife, as the soul does the body, with wisdom and tenderness. There is a servile subjection, from fear of punishment, or hope of gain, a liberal subjection, full of freedom, from love; and this is of wives to husbands, and of children to parents. The wife, though inferior, is a fellow-ruler with him over children and servants. She is subject as his vicegerent, always preserving love and reverence in affection, and expressing meekness and obedience in actions. She, as his deputy, is to dispose things for his credit and profit. Prudence is requisite in both, that they may deposit their cares in each other's bosoms, and trust their secret thoughts as securely as in their own hearts. The principal duty of husbands and wives is, a tender care for the good of each other's souls. The husband should lead her in the way to eternal life,

by his counsel and example ; and the wife by her humble and holy conversation, recommend religion to his mind and affections.

The sovereignty of parents over children must be mixed with tender affections, not with rigour. We are commanded, "Parents provoke not your children to wrath, lest they be discouraged." Col. iii. 21. The duty of children, is to reverence and obey their parents in all things that are pleasing to God. There can be no dutiful love without fear, nor paternal authority without love. The religious and secular government of the family is in the husband and wife, who are like the two great luminaries in the heavens—the one rules in the absence of the other. But it is principally in the husband. This testimony is given of Abraham, that so endeared him to the favour and friendship of God as to reveal his secret counsels to him: "I know Abraham, that he will command his children, and servants, and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord," Gen. xviii. 19.

The master must not be imperious, austere, and fierce, but manage his power with that condescension and lenity, with that exact performance of what is due to his servants, as becomes one that is accountable to the universal Master, before whom he must stand in an equal line, and with whom there is no respect of persons, 2 Chron. xix. 7. Servants must be humble, incorrupt, diligent, and faithful. Our Saviour inquires, "Who is that wise and faithful servant?" Matt. xxiv. 45. And the master calling his servants to an account, says, "Well done, good and faithful servant," Matt. xxv. 21. The wisdom and goodness of a servant consists in his fidelity. In short, the neglect of prayer, holy instruction, and setting a pattern of holiness

to the family, the not watching for the souls of children and servants to restrain them from evil, and excite them to good, will be a terrible accusation against many parents and masters at the day of judgment.

The provision for the family is an indispensable duty upon the master of it. There is a Divine alliance between the precepts of the law—they are all to be obeyed in their season. The duties of the first table do not supersede our obedience to the duties of the second. If an eagle should only gaze on the brightness of the sun, and suffer its young ones to starve in the nest, it were prodigiously unnatural. He that by a pretence of serving God in acts of immediate worship, neglects to provide for his family, is worse than an infidel. But how will those, who, by wasting their estates, or idleness, ruin their families, appear before the judgment-seat of God?

The superiors in the family must preserve order and tranquillity in it. The fire of discord turns a house into a little hell, full of the tormenting passions, sorrow and anguish, disdain and despite, malice and envy, that blast the most flourishing families. But when religion, that is pure and peaceable, governs the house, it turns it into a paradise, where the God of peace dwells, and delights, and dispenses the most precious fruits of his favour. Wisdom and watchfulness are requisite to maintain an harmonious agreement in families wherein are persons of different and contrary tempers. Some are of such unnatural dispositions, that they love jars and dissensions, as some plants thrive on the top of the Alps, where they are continually exposed to storms. There is such an irregularity in the dispositions of some, that between

those persons there is fierce hatred, where entire love is due : the discord between brothers is deeply wounding, and hardly curable. The reason of it is evident, for where by the law of nature the dearest love is required and expected, the not obtaining it is so injurious and provoking, that the hatred in one is equal to the love to which the other does not correspond. The Spartan magistrates, celebrated for their wisdom and justice, being informed of frequent quarrels between two brothers, likely to end in bloody contentions, they sent for their father and punished him, as more culpable and guilty in not timely correcting them. Ruling wisdom in the father of the family, so as to conciliate love with respect, severity mixed with sweetness, (which rarely meet,) are necessary to prevent or compose dissensions in those little commonwealths.

In order to this, the prime care must be to quench the first sparks that appear, that are seeds pregnant with fire : if they are blown up, and fed with materials, they break forth into a sudden flame. And in the second place, to observe and employ every one in the family in what is proper for them. As the stones in an arch must be so cut and formed that they may point one against another, and support one another : thus there are variety of tempers and talents in a family, and it is the wisdom of superiors to observe and employ the several persons for the good of the whole.

In short, authority is accepted with more easy submission in the title of a father than of a master. Therefore, as Seneca observes, the Romans, that they might prevent envy towards masters, and contempt of the servants, called the master, "The father of the family."

There is a sacred relation between pastor and people. I shall but glance on the duties belonging to them. Evangelical pastors are compared to the luminaries of heaven, that by their light, heat, and influences, are so beneficial to the lower world. If they are clouded with ignorance, or eclipsed by the interposition of earthly things, they are useless. There are divers degrees of substantial learning and spiritual skill, but a sufficiency of knowledge for the great work of saving souls is requisite in all. Zeal united with knowledge is an indispensable qualification. When the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost, descending in the significant emblem of fiery tongues, of what admirable efficacy was their preaching! The first sermon converted three thousand, that were murderers of our Saviour, and had the stains of his blood fresh upon them. Tongues of flesh are without vigour, and make no lasting impression on the hearers, but tongues of fire have a Divine force and operation to dispel the errors of men's minds, and quicken their affections, to refine and purify their conversations. They must be diligent and watchful for the souls of their people, as those who must give an account to the supreme Pastor and Redeemer of souls, Heb. xiii. 17. And as they must teach what they learn from the gospel, so they must live as they teach. If they are sensual and worldly, how can their prayers ascend with acceptance to God, and descend with a blessing to the people? There should be a singularity of holiness, distinguishing those who are consecrated to instruct and govern the church. Their sins are aggravated from the quality of their persons: this is signified in the Levitical law, that appointed the expiatory sacri-

fice for the sin of the priest, should be as costly as for the sin of the whole congregation. So if the tenour of their lives be not correspondent to their sermons, it will destroy the force of the most inflaming eloquence, and render the doctrines of the greatest purity without efficacy. O that all who are engaged in this holy and (without their personal holiness) dreadful office, would duly consider the account they must give of their managing of it to the great Shepherd at his appearance! 1 Tim. v. 17. Heb. xiii. 7. 17.

The duty of the people is to obey, to imitate, to honour their faithful pastors: otherwise, every sermon they hear will be an accusation and argument against them in the day of judgment.

The civil relation between the magistrates and people binds them to the respective duties of their different states. Magistrates, supreme and subordinate, in the scale of government, are the ministers of God for the good of the people. They derive their authority from him, and are styled gods, by an analogy and deputation which necessarily infers they must rule for his glory. The end of the magistracy should be the end of the magistrates in the exercise of government, that their subjects may lead a peaceable and quiet life, in all godliness and honesty, 1 Tim. ii. 2. The prince, as the natural head, has the supremacy in place and dignity over all the parts of the body, and is vigilant for their preservation; so being the political head, highly exalted above all degrees in the kingdom, he must be provident and solicitous for the temporal interest, and the eternal benefit of his subjects. He must make laws holy, just, and good, as becomes his lieutenancy to Christ, and

command the execution of them. He is to consider that the actions of kings are examples, and their examples rules, more influential unto the lives of their subjects than their laws.

Those who are in the seat of judicature must dispense judgment with a clear serenity, with calm tranquillity of mind, without partiality and passions; they must not honour the rich, nor favour the poor, but be true to their light and integrity.

All that are concerned in their several stations, should dispense a vigorous influence for the suppression of vice, and encouragement of virtue: and according to the apostle's rule, should be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to those who do well, 1 Pet. ii. 14. Especially they should be clothed with zeal in punishing offenders, who do not hide their horrid abominations, but commit them without fear of the light of the sun, or of nature, and out-dare Satan: while impudence, and incontinence, and intemperance, triumph in the ruins of modesty, chastity, and sobriety. Seneca tells of some in old Rome, that were not ashamed of the foulest sins, but when described and represented on the theatre, gloried in their shame. This height of villainy was not limited to the age of Nero, but to this extremity vice is arrived in our times. If by just severity such public and crying wickedness be not suppressed, what reason is there to fear that the righteous Judge of the world will make the nation a spectacle of visible vengeance, and vindicate the honour of his despised Deity! How will magistrates, that are careless in the execution of the laws, appear before the impartial tribunal above, when, besides the guilt of

their sins by personal commission, they shall be charged with the sins committed by their connivance! Such heaped damnation will sink them into the lowest hell.

The duty of subjects is the highest reverence of the sacred authority wherewith princes are invested. They must pay tribute for the support of the government. They must obey for God, as princes must rule for God. But in sinful things, as princes have no power to command, so the subjects are under no obligation to obey.

IX. To conclude this argument, there is no counsel more directive and profitable for our arriving to an excellent degree of holiness than this—Let our progress in the way to heaven be with the same zeal as we felt in our first entrance into it, and with the same seriousness as when we shall come to the end of it. The first and last actions of the saints are usually the most excellent. David's first and last ways were most excellent: see his Divine frame near his end; "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: this is all my desire, although he make it not to grow," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. New converts, when called out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel, are more zealous in their opposition to sin, 1 Pet. ii. 9. and more active and cheerful in the service of God. The bitterness of repentance before reconciliation, causes an abhorrence of sin. They remember the prayers and tears, the anxieties of conscience, the restless hours that sin cost them: as one that is saved from fire that was ready to devour him, retains so strong an impression of the danger that makes him fearful ever after. They

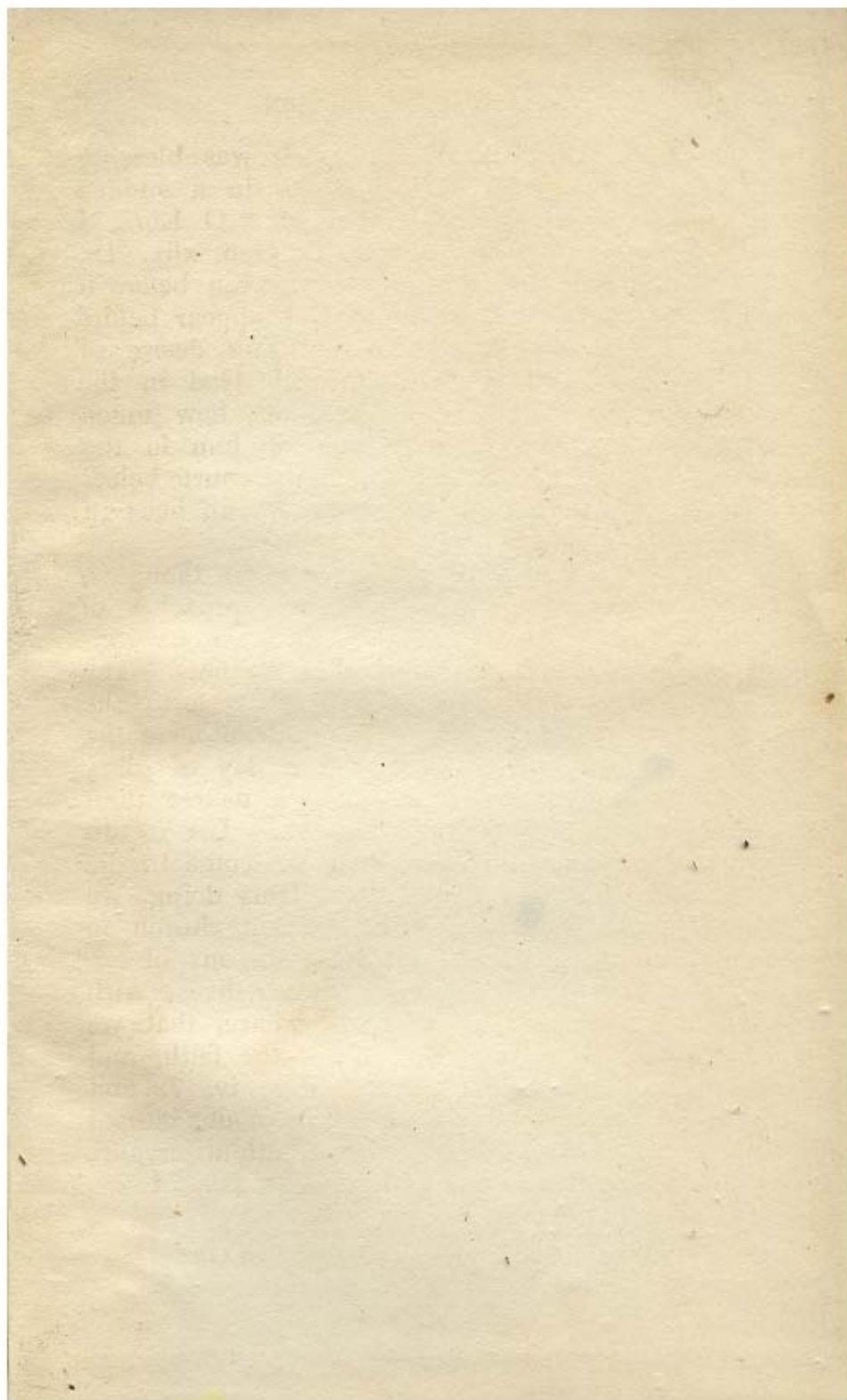
are filled with the affections of love and thankfulness to God, and glorify mercy that spared them, when justice might have destroyed them. When no eye had compassion, and no relief was afforded in their extreme misery: when they loathed themselves, frightened with the image of Satan printed on their soul, then God did regard them with tender affection: when they fled from him, then he did overtake them by preventing and prevailing grace. They have the quickest sense of their obligations to the Redeemer, and the most sensible relishes of his love in communion with him. We read of the lame man from his birth, that upon his miraculous healing, when he felt a new current of spirits in his nerves, and his feet and arms were strengthened, that he entered with the apostles into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God, Acts iii. 8. This is a resemblance of the zealous affections of new converts, when they feel such an admirable change in them: they run in the ways of God's commandments with enlarged hearts, Psa. cxix. 32. they have such flashes of illumination, and raptures of joy, that engage them in a course of obedience. The Holy Spirit inspires them with new desires, and affords new pleasures to endear religion to them. It is not only their work, but recreation and reward. But, alas! how often are the first heats allayed, and stronger resolutions decline to remissness. Our Saviour tells the church of Ephesus, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love: remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works," Rev. ii. 4, 5. It is said of Jehoshaphat, that he walked in the first ways of his father

David, 2 Chron. xvii. 3. intimating, there was a visible declension in his zeal. He was not so accurate in his conversation afterward. The converted are many times not so frequent and fervent in God's service, and though by the constraining judgment of conscience duties are not totally omitted, yet they are not performed with that reverence and delight as at first. They are more venturous to engage themselves in temptations, and more ready to comply with them. They are tired with the length of their travel, and the difficulties of their way, and drive on heavily. We should with tears of confusion remember the disparity between our zealous beginnings, and slack prosecution in religion; we should blush with shame, and tremble with fear, at the strange decay of grace, and recollect ourselves, and reinforce our will to proceed with vigorous constancy. And when the saints are ready to enter into the unchangeable state, when the spirit is to return to God that gave it, Eccl. xii. 7. how entire and intent are they to finish the work of their salvation! How spiritual and heavenly are their dispositions! With what solemnity do they prepare for the Divine presence! How exactly do they dress their souls for eternity, and trim their lamps, that they may be admitted into the joys of the bridegroom. How is the world vilified in their esteem, and unsavoury to their desires! The Lord is exalted in that day.

The nearer they approach to heaven, the more its attractive force is felt. When the crown of glory is in their view, and they hear the music of heaven, and are refreshed with the fragrancy of paradise, what a blaze of holy affec-

tion breaks forth! When Jacob was blessing his sons upon his death-bed, he in a sudden rapture addresses himself to God, "O Lord, I have waited for thy salvation!" Gen. xlix. 18. As if his soul had ascended to heaven before it left the body. "O when shall I appear before God!" Psa. xliii. 2. was the fainting desire of the psalmist. If communion with God in the earthly tabernacle was so precious, how much more is the immediate fruition of him in the celestial temple! If one day in the courts below be worth a thousand, Psa. lxxxiv. 10. an hour in the courts above is worth ten thousand.

Let us therefore, by our serious thoughts, often represent to ourselves the approaches of death and judgment. This will make us contrive and contend for perfection in holiness. The apostle exhorts the Romans to show forth the power of godliness, from the consideration of the day of grace they enjoy, and the day of glory they expect; for now is salvation nearer than when you believed, Rom. xiii. 11. Let us do those things now, which when we come to die we shall wish we had done. Thus doing, we shall be transmitted from the militant church to the triumphant, with a solemn testimony of our having adorned the gospel in our lives, with the victorious testimony of conscience, that we have fought the good fight, kept the faith, and have finished our course, 2 Tim. iv. 7. and received with the glorious testimony of our blessed Rewarder, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord," Matt. xxv. 21.



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