

THE
WORKS
OF

Mr WILLIAM GUTHRIE,
Minister of the Gospel at New-Kilmarnock,

CONTAINING,

I. The CHRISTIAN'S GREAT INTEREST:

IN TWO PARTS,

1. The Trial of a Saving INTEREST in
CHRIST.

2. The Way how to attain it.

To which is prefixed,

A large Account of his Life, &c. by Way of Introduction, by the late Rev. Mr. WILLIAM DUNLOP; And a Preface, by the late Rev. Mr. TRAIL, with some account of the Author from Mr. WODROW'S History.

II. Five SERMONS on particular occasions.

III. A Treatise on RULING ELDERS and DEACONS; in which these things which belong to the understanding of their office are clearly set down.

Wherefore the rather, brethren. give diligence to make your calling and election sure, 2 Pet. i. 10.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownelves: Know ye not your ownelves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

G L A S G O W:

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M, DCC, LXXI.

MEMMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

Mr. WILLIAM GUTHRIE.

THERE is no treatise of this kind that hath been more powerfully recommended to the publick esteem and approbation of this church, both by the excellency of its compofure, and its uncommon success, and extensive usefulness among persons of all ranks, than this performance of the worthy Mr. Guthrie: But tho', upon this account, it hath been frequently reprinted; yet most of the editions hitherto published have been very defective, as to the goodness of the paper, the beauty and neatness of the character, or the correctness and accuracy of the printing, which are circumstances that have no small influence on the pleasure, and sometimes on the profit of reading any compofure.

These inconveniencies, joined with the high value which was justly entertained for this excellent treatise, were the reasons which determined the publisher of this edition to be at some pains in furnishing the world with copies of it, that should have some tolerable measure of exactness and beauty. For which purpose the greatest care was taken to correct this edition by that copy which the author himself published, *anno* 1659. Besides which, the scriptures quoted by him are now transcribed at full length; whereas in that, and all other editions, the chapter and verse are only referred to; which was a mighty inconvenience to the reader,

who must be put to a great deal of trouble, if he searched out all the passages in his Bible, and could not but lose the very design of the quotations, if he did it not: And consequently this present edition may, upon this account, be read with more pleasure, and to better advantage than those which have preceded it. An orderly division of the whole treatise into chapters, and a distinction of the several periods by new lines conveniently disposed, which are another improvement of the present impression, do also contribute an additional ornament and advantage to this edition.

In the latter editions of this treatise, especially such as were printed in England, there is one considerable defect; several words and phrases used by the author have been changed, because it was thought they would not be easily understood by the generality of English readers, and others of a more modern dress placed in their stead: But besides that, this is too great a freedom to be used by the editor of any author's performances, and detracts from their genuine purity; the persons, who assumed that liberty in the present case, have had the misfortune not to understand the *scottisms* themselves: And therefore have imposed a sense upon some passages, very different from the design and meaning of the writer. Now that also is remedied in this edition, where every thing is restored to its original purity.

It is hoped it will not be unacceptable to the reader, that we now give some account of the author of so valuable a treatise; and make a few observations upon the performance itself: Fortho' the reverend Mr Trail hath already in some measure prevented us by his preface to the London edition, *anno* 1705, yet a very worthy minister of this church, and a near relation of Mr Guthrie's, having provided us with a great many additional materials for this purpose; we are thereby enabled to afford a more distinct and particular information concerning the excellent author, than Mr Trail could do.

Mr William Guthrie was eldest son to the laird of Pitforthly in the shire of Angus, a cadet of the old family

ly of Guthrie; and by the mother's side descended from the ancient house of Easter-Ogle, of which she was a daughter: whereby he enjoyed such advantages of birth, as at least raised him above the contempt of those who give the highest value to nobleness of blood, and dote most fondly on the antiquity of families. God blessed his parents with a numerous offspring, so that he had three sisters german, and four brothers, all of which except one, dedicated themselves to the service of God in the gospel of his son: *Namely*, Robert who was licensed to preach, but never ordained to a parochial charge, his tender constitution and numerous infirmities rendering him unequal for so laborious an office, and bringing him soon to an end of his days.. Alexander, who became minister of the parish of Strickathrow, in the presbytery of Brechin in Angus, about the year 1645, where he continued a pious and useful labourer in the work of the gospel, till the introduction of Prelacy; which unhappy change of our constitution affected him in the tenderest manner, and is thought to have shortned his days, and contributed to his death, *anno* 1661. And John the youngest son, minister of Torbolton in the shire of Air, in which post he remained till he was turned out at the restoration, for non-conformity, and had his share of the violence and cruelty which then reigned; till in the year 1669 he was removed to the better world of peace and joy. And as it was a very distinguished honour to this family, that of five sons, four of them should have devoted themselves to the noblest employment of human nature, the ministry of reconciliation, and the promoting the eternal happiness of perishing souls; so no doubt it was one of the most pleasing circumstances in the life of our author, and could not but mightily heighten the endearments of a natural relation to his brothers, that they were at the same time brethren in the ministry, and united in the peculiar service of their common Lord.

He was born at Pitforthly in the year 1620, and no sooner got beyond the bloom of infancy, but he gave proofs of his capacity and genius, by very quick and

considerable advances in the Latin and Greek tongues. After which he was sent to the university of St. Andrews, where he studied philosophy under the memorable Mr James Guthrie, who was afterwards minister at Stirling; and became so famous by his uncommon zeal for the religion and liberty of his country, and by his being made one of the earliest sacrifices to the growing tyranny of King Charles II's reign. The scholar being the master's relation, was entitled to his peculiar care, lodged when at the college, in the same chamber with him, and had thereby the principles of learning infused into him with more accuracy and advantage than his class-fellows, in conjunction with a constant regard to God and religion, and early impressions of piety; and no doubt this happy situation contributed not a little to the unusual progress he made in all the parts of university studies.

Having taken the degree of master of arts, he applied himself for some years to the study of divinity, under the direction of Mr Samuel Rutherford. After which, being entred upon trials, which he underwent with great applause, he was licensed to preach the gospel in August 1642. And according to Mr Trail's account, he not only happily improved in theological learning, under Mr Rutherford as professor of divinity, but the ministry of that good man, so justly celebrated for his affecting and lively preaching, and holy life, was, by the blessing of God, made the instrument, if not of his conversion, which his early piety gives us ground to believe was sooner effected, at least of great advances in a religious life, which was so endeared to his soul, that he resolved to devote himself to the immediate service of God in the office of the holy ministry: And in consequence of that pious resolution, he gave an uncommon instance of mortification to the world, and with how ardent a zeal he designed to give himself wholly to the work of the gospel, in quitting his paternal estate to the only brother of the five who was not engaged in the sacred office, that thereby he himself might be perfectly disentangled from the affairs of this life, and entirely

tirely employed in those of the eternal world. Soon after his being licensed he left St. Andrews, accompanied with the high esteem and approbation of the professors of that university, which they gave proof of, by a commendation conceived in terms so full and strong, that they bore the character of an inward regard and value, more than the form of a customary testimonial. After this, he became governor to my lord Mauchlin, eldest son to the earl of Loudon, chancellor of Scotland; in which station he continued till he entered upon a parochial charge, of which this was the occasion.

He was employed to preach in Galstoun upon a preparation-day, before the celebration of the Lord's supper, and where several members of the new erected parish of Finwick being present, they were so much edified by his sermon, and conceived so just a value for him, that they immediately resolved to make choice of him for their minister; and in consequence hereof gave him a very harmonious call, which Mr Guthrie having complied with, he was ordained to the sacred office in that parish, November 7th, 1644. In this place he had peculiar difficulties to struggle with, and many circumstances of his ministry extremely discouraging; and yet, through the divine blessing, the gospel preached by him had surprising success, and became, in an eminent manner, the wisdom and power of God to the salvation of lost souls.

As this was a new erected parish, and Mr Guthrie the first pastor of it; the people had been very much neglected, and had not enjoyed the means of grace with that ease and advantage which others were favoured with: The melancholy effects whereof were evidently discernable in the rudeness and gross ignorance of many of them; and consequently in a too general neglect of God and religion.

But under all these disadvantages, that heavenly zeal for the glory of his great Master which animated the labours of this excellent minister, his fervent love to the souls of men dying in their sins, and his holy wisdom and diligence in reclaiming and instructing them, were

so honoured by God, and accompanied with the powerful influences of his holy Spirit, that in a little time a noble change was wrought upon a barbarous multitude: They were almost all persuaded to attend the public ordinances, to set up and maintain the stated worship of God in their families; and scarce was there a house in the whole parish, that did not bring forth some fruits of his ministry, and afford some real converts to a religious life. And thus he was made the instrument of many notable triumphs of victorious grace, which Jesus Christ leads over the souls of obstinate transgressors, when he turns them from their ways, and subdues the people under him. And what can be more worthy of everlasting remembrance, than such glorious achievements in the spiritual warfare, and successful battles with the implacable enemy of the happiness of mankind, and the kingdom of their Maker; which will one day shine with an eternal lustre, and be celebrated with louder and more lasting acclamations of an endless world, than the fading honour of an earthly diadem, or the bravest actions and most finished victory of any of the heroes of war, who make now such noise and bustle upon the stage? And how little needed the man we are now speaking of, to envy the dazzling pomp and shew of this earth, or to be desirous of its richest treasures? He possessed another portion, since almost every family in his parish however little and obscure, afforded a shining ornament for that divine crown of glory and rejoicing, which shall be beautified with the lustre of an eternal excellency, and be, by the triumphant King of the church, bestowed upon all those who have turned many unto righteousness.

Mr. Guthrie was possessed of all these qualities which became a minister of the gospel, and being accompanied by the powerful influences of divine grace, gave a happy prospect of uncommon success: for, besides his excellent endowments which were discovered in the pulpit, he was eminently fitted to improve, for the edification of his people, the ministerial duties of visiting and catechizing; in performing whereof he joined an indefatigable

fatigable diligence to a holy skill, knew how to embrace every opportunity of discoursing upon the most important and awful subjects, in a plain and familiar manner, and of recommending religion to the consciences of every one in the way which their special circumstances called for. And it was his peculiar care to endear the ways of God to the youth of his parish, and give them early impressions of an eternal world, before the Devil and their lusts had seized upon their hearts, and enslaved them: and the seed of grace that was thus sown during the spring of life, was, through the divine blessing preserved in many as they advanced in years, and brought forth much fruit. Nor did Mr. Guthrie neglect, in visiting poor families, to join works of charity to his instructions, and imitate his great master, in shewing compassion both to the bodies and souls of men. By all which winning methods he engaged their esteem and affections, which could not fail to add a mighty force to his exhortation and reproofs.

He excelled also in that unusual mean of knowledge, catechizing, and avoided those mistakes in the management of this exercise, which frequently lessen the advantage thereof: his questions were mostly confined to such truths of the doctrine according to godliness, as were recommended by their great importance, and extensive influence upon practical religion: herein conforming himself to the apostolical injunction, by insisting upon these things which were good and profitable unto men, and avoiding foolish and trifling questions that were vain and useless; and knowing that it was his business to feed the meanest and weakest of the christian flock with wholesome instruction, he adapted these exercises to the lowest capacities, begun with the most easy and obvious truths of religion, and so prepared the way for those which required a more enlightened understanding. He was careful not to expose the ignorant, so as to beget a distaste in them of the means of knowledge, nor to confound the modest and bashful; but by his meekness and condescension he encouraged and engaged them; whereby catechizing became a pleasure to them, and he had

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the joy to see useful and solid knowledge spreading itself among a people whom he found grossly ignorant.

His own experience in the ways of God, and the great depths of troubles and sorrows, doubts and fears, whereby awakned consciences are exercised, into which he himself was often plunged, eminently qualified him for assisting and comforting others in the like circumstances, for strengthening the weak hands, and confirming the feeble knees; and could not miss to beget in him that affectionate concern for poor souls, those bowels of tenderness and sympathy, which can never be found with any but such, who themselves have had a feeling acquaintance with the methods of the spiritual life, and the work of the holy spirit in their own hearts and lives. And it were easy to enlarge upon the uncommon dexterity which this excellent person had in improving sickness, and the approaches of the king of terrors, to the advantage of those who were exposed to them: So that though instances of a death-bed repentance rarely happen, and it be indeed infinite madness to delay to the last hour that work which is of eternal consequence; yet there wanted not evidences of the divine blessing upon his endeavours to reclaim sinners, and call them to God even in the last hour.

It would be justly blameable if we neglected to mention one other noble quality of Mr. Guthrie's; the state of his health made it necessary for him to use frequent and vigorous exercises, and this made him choose fishing and fowling for his common recreations: but as he was always animated by a flaming zeal for the glory of his Blessed Master, and a tender compassion to the souls of men, and as it was the principal thing made him desire life and health, that he might employ them in propagating the kingdom of God, and turning transgressors from their ways; so the very hours of recreation were dedicated to this purpose which was so endeared to him, and he knew how to make his diversions subservient to the nobler ends of his ministry, he made them the occasions of familiarizing his people to him, and introducing himself to their affections;

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and, in the disguise of a sportsman, he gained some to a religious life, whom he could have little influence upon in a minister's gown; of which there happened several memorable examples.

Some of the parish were so extremely rude and barbarous, that they never attended upon divine worship, and knew not so much as the face of their pastor; to such every thing that regarded religion was a distasteful, a minister would have been enough to have frightened them, nor could he have access either to visit or catechize them: but what Mr. Guthrie might have almost otherwise despaired of, he effectuated by his diversions; in the habit which he then wore, he conciliated the esteem and love even of these ignorant creatures, made use of their curiosity, as well as of nobler arguments, to bring them to the church, and enter them into the paths of salvation; so that the pulpit was the first place which discovered to them that it was their minister himself who had allured them thither; and so condescending a method of gaining them procured a constant attendance upon publick ordinances, and was at length accompanied by the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ unto the praise of God. Thus, in imitation of the great apostle, being crafty he caught them with guile. And thus heavenly wisdom and dexterity will be one day celebrated with juster applauses by the assembly of the first-born, than the cunningest stratagems, or the bravest attempts which raise the character of princes and generals, whose fame flies now swiftest and widest through the world.

Thus his eminent abilities and unwearied diligence in the work of the ministry continued to exert themselves with distinguished success; they procured the universal love of his parish; and he lived for one and twenty years in such perfect harmony with his session, that during all that time, there happened not the smallest difference betwixt them.

His family-affairs were also very easy and comfortable to him. August 1645. he was happily married to Agnes Campbel, daughter to David Campbel of Skel-

don, in the shire of Air, a remote branch of the family of Loudon; a gentlewoman endowed with all these qualities that could render her a blessing to her husband, having joined to a handsome shape and comely features; good sense and good breeding, sweetned by a modest cheerfulness of temper; and what endeared her to Mr. Guthrie beyond every thing else, sincere piety: so that they lived a little more than twenty years, in the most complete friendship, and with a constant mutual satisfaction, founded upon the noblest principle, one faith, one hope, one baptism, and a sovereign love to Jesus Christ which zealously inspired them both. By her he had six children, two of whom only outlived him, both daughters, who were eminent for their sincere piety, and endeavoured to follow the example of their excellent parents. One of them was married to Miller of Glenlee, a gentleman in the shire of Air; and the other was married to the reverend Mr. Patrick Warner, December 1681, when the tyranny and cruelty of the times were growing to their height, and so she soon became a companion to him in tribulation, imprisonment and banishment for the truth's sake; till the glorious revolution, when Mr. Warner was settled minister of the gospel at Irvine. Both he and she are yet living, full of years, waiting till their change come. Their children are, William Warner of Ardeir, in the shire of Air; and Margaret Warner, married to Mr. Robert Wodrow minister of the gospel at Eastwood, to whom we are obliged for the materials, from which this account of Mr. Guthrie's life is composed.

We have given a short account of Mr. Guthrie's eminent ministerial endowments, as they appeared in the discharge of the pastoral office among his own people, and of the glorious successes wherewith God blessed his zealous love and unwearied diligence: but this was not the sole character which he excelled in; for in every other capacity he gave equal proofs of his superior accomplishments.

He was distinguished in the judicatures of the church, from which he never allowed himself to be absent, by a
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thorow knowledge of our constitution, an heroic courage and firmness whenever the cause of truth and holiness was concerned; and that modest regard for others, and affection to his brethren, which endeared him to them, and qualified him for the business and duties of society.

When that unhappy distinction betwixt the publick resolutioners and protesters found place in the church, Mr. Guthrie thought it his duty to be of the last denomination: yet he took care that his angry passions did not embitter his zeal, which he tempered with a constant moderation, and sweetned with an ardent love to peace. He preached with his brethren of different sentiments; and warmly entertained every thing that had a tendency to union, and could give a prospect of an accommodation. The power of divine grace, and his native genius and temper, with united force engaging him to healing measures, and inspiring him with an abhorrence for such as were factious and divisive; so that during a season of so great difficulties and hazards, he avoided every extreme, and became a bright example of a zealous moderation, whereby he was of more than ordinary usefulness to the church on all publick occasions.

In the year 1645, when a young man, he was appointed by the assembly to attend the army; a happy conjunction of all the endowments which could qualify a person for that station soon determining the church to make him their choice. Being newly married, he was then in such circumstances, as, under the Mosaical œconomy, would have afforded him a dispensation from that service: and his affectionate wife was not a little frightened at the dangers he might be exposed to; which increased her aversion to such a degree, that her reluctant affection struggled with her duty; but the voice of providence soon gave the last principle the superiority. When he was preparing for his departure, a violent fit of the gravel reduced him to the greatest extremity of pain and danger: his religious spouse understood and improved the divine chastisement; she saw how ea-

fully God could put an end to a life he was too apprehensive about; and this wrought her up to a fixed resolution never to oppose her inclinations to his entering upon any employment whereby he might honour his Master, how formidable soever were the hazards which attended it while he was with the army, he was in a remarkable manner preserved when in very dangerous circumstances, upon a defeat of a party which he was then with. He ever after retained a grateful sense of the divine goodness; and, after his return to the parish, was animated thereby to a more vigorous diligence in the work of the ministry, and propagating the kingdom of the Son of God, both among his own people, and all who were round about him, his publick preaching, especially at the administration of the Lord's supper, and his private conversation conspiring for those noble purposes.

And indeed in other respects also, his shining piety, wisdom, and good breeding made him universally useful in the country where he lived. The just value which the nobility and gentry in the neighbourhood had for him, and the interest which this gave him with them, enabled him to improve successfully frequent opportunities he had to do good offices to particular persons, to compose differences, and remove feuds which were ready enough to prevail in the country; and to assist the judicatures of the church, by procuring the consent and support concerned, in planting vacant congregations with men worthy of the sacred character.

The prevailing of the English Sectarians under Oliver Cromwel, and the variety of attempts which they made, while in Scotland, upon the constitution and discipline of the church, was one of the difficulties which the ministry had then to struggle with; and it, among others, gave a discovery of the excellent qualities of Mr Guthrie. His pleasant facetious conversation, and masterly reasoning, procured him an universal respect from the company. While at the same time his courage and constancy did not fail him in the cause of his great master, and were often useful to curb the extravagancies of the Secta-

Sectarians, and maintain order and regularity. One instance hereof happened at the sacrament of the Lord's supper celebrated at Glasgow by Mr Andrew Gray. Several of the English officers had formed a design to put in execution the disorderly principle of a promiscuous admission to the Lord's table, by coming to it themselves without acquainting the minister, or being in a due manner found worthy of that privilege. Mr Guthrie, to whose share it fell to dispense the sacrament at that table, spoke to them, when they were leaving their pews in order to make their attempt, with such gravity, resolution and zeal, that they were quite confounded, and sat down again without occasioning any further disturbance.

The Quakers also endeavoured about this time to sow tares in Mr Guthrie's parish, improving for this end his absence for some weeks, during which he was detained in Angus about his private affairs. But he returned before the poison had sunk deep, recovered some that were in hazard of being tainted by its fatal influences; and in conference so confounded those hereticks, that they despaired of ever attacking with success a flock guarded by so watchful and skilful a shepherd, whereas they had made too many profelytes to their wild delusions in Kilbride, and some other neighbouring parishes.

It may be easily imagined, that the eminent gifts and graces of this excellent person would engage parishes of greater character and importance than Finwick to desire his ministry, and earnestly labour for success in their attempts to obtain it; and indeed his people and himself were frequently exposed to the troubles of processes of transportation, and vexed with fears as to the issue of them, Renfrew, Linlithgow, Stirling, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, having all of them called him. But beside the indifferent opinion he entertained of the method of supplying vacancies by transportations in general, and that the air and diversions of a country-life were of use to him in maintaining a healthy constitution; his love to his flock was so warm and constant, that he put an invincible obstinacy against all designs of separating him
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from them. A relation is indeed founded on the noblest bottom, and sinks deepest into the soul, when it is animated by the principle of the spiritual life; and therefore it must in the highest degree endear a minister to his people, and engage their affection and esteem by the most powerful tye, when his labours have been successful in reclaiming them from sin, their ruin, and persuading them to enter upon a religious life; and so they owe to him, as far as they can do to an instrument in the hand of God, the salvation of their immortal souls, which is the incomparably strongest obligation that one man can have to another, and the most flowing source of gratitude: And on the other hand, a minister can scarce miss to have a peculiar tenderness and warmth of divine affection for those, whose father he is after the Spirit, and hath been honoured by God in bringing them to the kingdom of his Son, and begetting them through the gospel, whose heavenly birth is now the highest pleasure and brightest triumph of his life, and will be one day his crown of glory and rejoicing. A friendship that had such a life, and was invigorated by a spirit so pure and active, made Mr Guthrie prefer Finwick, a poor obscure parish, to the most considerable charges in the nation; which was a proof of his mortification to the world, and that he was moved by views superior to temporal interests.

Thus Mr Guthrie continued with his old parish, till the great alteration, which the restoration of king Charles II. made in publick affairs. The first discovery that the measures of the court gave of a design to overturn the government of the church, affected the worthy Mr Guthrie in the most sensible part; nor could any thing afford him satisfaction, while she was in trouble, and about to be laid desolate: Nor did he let any occasion slip of shewing his concern for that which was dearer to him than his other interests. At the synod of Glasgow, held April 1661, after long reasoning about proper measures for the security of religion, the matter was referred to a committee: Mr Guthrie presented the draught of an address to the parliament, wherein a faithful testimony

timony was given to the purity of our reformation in worship, doctrine, discipline and government, in terms equally remarkable for their prudence and their courage. Every body approved of it, and it was transmitted to the synod: But some worthy ministers of the side of the publick resolutioners, being doubtful of the seasonableness of such a representation, considering the difficulties of the times, gave an opportunity to those who designed to comply with Prelacy, to procure a delay, and so to crush it; which did not prevent its being serviceable to the end of our now mentioning it, *namely*, affording a proof of the zealous honesty and firmness of Mr Guthrie.

Another instance whereof was, the resolution he took to wait upon his worthy friend Mr James Guthrie at his execution, notwithstanding the apparent hazards he must thereby have exposed himself to. But his session prevailed upon him, though not without difficulty, by their earnest intreaties, to lay aside a design that could not miss to deprive them immediately of his ministry, which, by the goodness of God, they enjoyed some years after his brethren were ejected.

Next to the protection of a kind providence and the fervent prayers of his own people, and of many others, unto which he always attributed this distinguished favour in the first place; Mr Guthrie's being connived at for some time, was principally owing to the favour of some great men in the government, particularly the Earls of Eglington and Glencairn, the last of whom had a regard for him which was heightned by a conjunction of esteem and gratitude, Mr Guthrie having had occasion to oblige him when imprisoned for his loyalty, before the restoration, which that noble lord never forgot, and when he was chancellor, contributed what he could to his preservation, by which means he enjoyed the peaceable possession of his church till the year 1664.

As God had designed and prepared him for eminent and extensive services, during this period, his excellent accomplishments now exerted themselves with the greatest efficacy, and his usefulness was more universally dif-

fused through the whole country, which was in a great measure deprived of their pastors. Many then hungered after the word of the Lord, and this made them with more eagerness embrace the advantage which a merciful providence afforded them, of Mr Guthrie's ministry. Great multitudes resorted to him from all the parts of the west country; his large church was crowded with hearers from Glasgow, Paisley, Lanerk, Hamilton, and other distant places, and his strong and clear voice enabled him to extend the profit of his discourses to the many hundreds who were obliged to keep without doors.

An extraordinary zeal then enlivened the souls of sincere christians; they were animated by a warm affection to the truth, and an uncommon delight in hearing the joyful sound; and this made them despise the difficulties that lay in their way, and bear cheerfully with many inconveniencies, which attendance upon the sacred ordinances was then accompanied with; so that we are assured by several worthy persons who enjoyed Mr Guthrie's ministry at that time, that it was their usual practice to come to Finwick upon Saturday, spend the greatest part of that night in prayer to God, and conversation about the great concerns of their souls, attend on the publick worship on the Sabbath, dedicate the remainder of that holy day to religious exercise, and then on the Monday go home ten, twelve, or twenty miles, without grudging the fatigue of so long a way, and the want of sleep and other refreshments, or finding themselves less prepared for any business throughout the week, so much was their heart engaged in the attendance they gave to the sacred ministrations. A remarkable blessing accompanied ordinances that were dispensed to people who came with such a disposition of soul: great numbers were converted unto the truth, and many were built up in their most holy faith a divine power animated the gospel that was preached, and exerted itself in a holy warmth of sanctified affections, a ravishing pleasure in divine fellowship, and a noble joy and triumph in their King and Saviour, which were to be visibly discerned

cerned in the hearers; many were confirmed in the good ways of the Lord, strengthened and comforted against temporal fears and discouragements; and the fruits of righteousness discovering their beauty and excellency in a holy conversation, were a glorious proof of the sincerity of their profession, and the wonderful success of Mr Guthrie's ministry. And there are some of those yet alive, of whose conversion to a religious life God honoured him to be the instrument, who are ready to attest much more than hath been now said, and can never think, without an exultation of soul, and emotion of revived affections, upon the memory of their spiritual father, and the power of that victorious grace, which in those days triumphed so gloriously.

During these few years, while Mr Guthrie was connived at, the dangers of the time never frightened him from his duty: but, with a becoming boldness, fortified his people in a zealous adherence to the purity of our reformation, warned them of the defection that was then made by the introduction of prelacy, and instructed them in the duties of so difficult a season; while he recommended by his own steadiness what he taught from the pulpit, he constantly maintaining fellowship with his ejected brethren, and never making the least compliance with the prelatick schemes. And yet in his sermons he governed his courage and faithfulness by christian prudence; and, with reference to civil affairs, confined himself so much to the language of the sacred oracles, and expressed himself with such a just regard to lawful authority, that his enemies could find no occasion against him.

The extraordinary reputation and usefulness of Mr Guthrie, who was admired and followed by all the country, provoked the jealous and angry passions of the prelates; and his excellent merit became one of the causes of his being attacked. Intercessions were indeed made in his behalf, but without success. Particularly by the earl of Glancairn then chancellor, who made a visit to the archbishop of Glasgow, at his house there, and at parting, asked it as a particular favour from him, that

Mr Guthrie might be overlooked, he knowing him to be an excellent man, and well affected to the civil government: but the bishop not only refused him, but did it with a haughty and disdainful air, telling him, *that cannot be done, it shall not, he is a ringleader and keeper up of schism in my diocese*; and then pretty abruptly left the chancellor. Rowallan, Cuninghamehead, and some other presbyterian gentlemen, who were waiting on him, observing the chancellor discomposed when he left the archbishop, presumed to ask what the matter might be. To which the earl answered, *we have set up these men, and they will tread us under their feet*. In consequence of this resolution of the inexorable archbishop Burnet, upon the 24th of July 1664 Mr Guthrie was, by a commission from him, suspended, discharged the exercise of his ministry, and his church declared vacant, and he himself by an armed force obliged to remove from it: a large account of which will be given by the reverend Mr Wodrow, in that useful and much desired work, *the history of the sufferings of the church of Scotland*, which will shortly be published * he was notwithstanding allowed to live in his manse, at Finwick, where he continued some more than a year; during which he was exceeding useful to his people in a private character.

His brother to whom he had made over his paternal estate of Pitforthly, dying in the summer 1665. Mr Guthrie's presence there was necessary for ordering private affairs, which made him and his wife take journey for Angus about that time. He had not been long in that country, till he was seized by a complication of distempers, the gravel, with which he had been frequently tortured, the gout, and a violent heart-burning, at once attacking him with great fury: the agonies which those three terrible engines of pain occasioned, were almost insupportable; and were therefore a scene prepared for a brighter appearance of the constancy, patience and resignation of this worthy minister. In the midst of his
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* These memoirs of the life of Mr William Guthrie were wrote by Mr Wodrow, before his *History* was published.

heavy afflictions, he still adored the measures of divine providence, tho' at the same time he longed for his dissolution, and expressed the satisfaction and joy with which he would make the grave his dwelling-place, when God should think fit to give him rest there: His compassionate Master at last indulged the pious breathings of his soul; after eight or ten days illness he was gathered to his fathers, and died in the house of his brother-in-law, Mr Lewis Skinner minister at Brechin, upon Wednesday the tenth of October 1665, afternoon, in the 45th year of his age, and was buried in the church of Brechin, under Pitforthys desk. And as he himself died in the full assurance of faith, as to his own interest in the covenant of God, and under the pleasing hopes that God would return in glory to the church of Scotland; so we have no doubt that his better part, his soul was carried by angels to those peaceful regions, not one of the inhabitants whereof ever says that he is sick; and is now shining amidst the dazzling glories of those superior orbs, which are destined for the heroes of Christianity, who have turned many unto righteousness, and have born a distinguished part in the battles and triumphs of the King of saints.

During his sickness he was visited by the bishop of Brechin, and several episcopal ministers, his relations and acquaintances; who all had an high value for him, notwithstanding he, with an ingenuous freedom, expressed to them his sorrow for their compliance with the corrupt establishment in ecclesiastical affairs, which was then made.

This short and imperfect account of his life may, in some measure, let the reader into the character of this excellent person: But we hope it will not be unacceptable, if without repeating what hath been already represented, we, in a very plain and simple manner, give some further account of his character, as we have it from persons of undoubted reputation, who were themselves well acquainted with him.

His person was stately and well shaped, and his features comely and handsome. And while he was raised

above an effeminate delicacy, which was unworthy the dignity of the ministerial character, he abhorred a slovenly meanness, as very far below it, and was therefore neat and cleanly in his apparel: And in his whole behaviour, as well as in his dress, there was nothing that could give the least disgust to gentlemen of the politest education and nicest taste. An awful gravity dwelt upon his countenance, and never gave way to levity in conversation, or those freedoms which were unbecoming his sacred office, however allowable they might be to persons of a different order: But he knew how to sweeten and manage his temper, so as never to degenerate into an affected solemnity, or inconversible austerity; but was usually extremely cheerful and facetious in his conversation, which made it universally agreeable, and added to the esteem of a minister the endearments of a friend and comrade: Tho' indeed, which is generally the case of great spirits, there was in his temper an intermixture of thoughtfulness and melancholy, which sometimes gained the superiority, when the publick interests were endangered, and the enemies of Zion, which was his favourite concern, prevailed.

He used the innocent recreations and exercises which then prevailed, fishing, fowling, and playing upon the lute, which at the same time contributed to preserve a vigorous health, and while in frequent conversation with the best of the neighbouring gentry, as these occasions gave him access, to bear in upon them reproofs and instructions with an inoffensive familiarity.

His strong, clear and melodious voice, join'd to a good ear, gave him a great pleasure in musick, in the theory and practice of which he had a more than ordinary dexterity: And he failed not with mighty joy and satisfaction, to employ frequently his voice for the noblest use of it, the praises of his Maker and Saviour; in which part of divine worship, his soul and body acted with an united and unwearied vigour.

All the other amiable qualities that can give a lustre to a man or a Christian, recommended this excellent person: His generosity, hospitality, and charitable disposition,

position, were on all proper occasions conspicuous, and his modest humility gave a loveliness to his other virtues. Few men had greater temptations offered to pride and vanity, his natural and acquired abilities, great success, established reputation, and the applauses of the whole country who admired him, were all dangerous flatterers, apt to beguile a man into a fond conceit of himself; but his lowliness of mind was proof against these pleasing seducers, nor could they charm him into self-sufficiency and esteem, for he had not so learned Christ, and knew that he possessed nothing, but what he had freely received.

He excelled in another noble part of religion, as well as humanity, an affectionate sympathy with such as were exposed either to outward afflictions, or the heavier troubles of a disquieted soul; for such he had always a melting tenderness, and embraced every occasion of succouring and relieving them: His own experience filled him with pity for those who were in like circumstances, gave him, in some measure, what his great Master hath always in an incomparably more exalted degree for poor sinners, a fellow-feeling of their infirmities, and enabled as well as stirred him up to comfort them with the consolations whereby God had refreshed and solaced his own soul; and he was ever sending up fervent prayers to the throne of grace in their behalf.

We have in the former part of this account of Mr Guthrie. mentioned several of those eminent ministerial qualifications which he possessed, and made his character as a minister equal to that which he so justly enjoyed as a man and a Christian.

In his youth he had been a hard student, and this gave him a value for all the branches of learning, and an acquaintance with them: But above all his favourite employment was the study of the holy scriptures, which he read often in the original languages; and out of this divine treasure of spiritual knowledge he brought out, as our Saviour speaks, things new and old, which were of the highest advantage to him when he came to the pulpit. As a thorough acquaintance with the Bible is

the best way to make a good preacher; so this was one mean of that excellency in discourses from the pulpit, for which Mr Guthrie was so much celebrated: And indeed his sermons had all the advantages which could be given them, by a clear explication of the text, observations and enlargements that were important and suitable to the subject, allusions and illustrations adapted to the meanest capacities of his people, and at the same time to the dignity of the pulpit, and the honour of religion, which required a very uncommon talent; and then a lively and affecting application of the doctrines which he taught, to the consciences of his hearers, with an admirable mixture of light and heat, calculated to instruct the ignorant, awaken the secure, and enliven the whole soul in the ways of God: And to conclude, sermons so excellent in their composition, were delivered with a clear, strong and well turned voice, a graceful and vehement action, and eyes flowing with tears, which were circumstances of no little advantage.

In prayer to God Mr Guthrie equall'd, if not exceeded himself as a preacher: The highest seriousness and fervency, an awe of the great God on his soul, and a lively faith in his fatherly goodness and care, together with an inward feeling of what he spoke, all remarkably accompanying his addresses to the throne of grace in such a degree, that many who heard him were usually melted into tears of affection, and exceedingly edified.

And to conclude, all his eminent qualities were sanctified by the grace of God, and heightened by an unaffected piety, and delightful fellowship with God through Christ; under the shinings of whose countenance he habitually lived, and attained to a very uncommon degree of spiritual-mindedness, of a heavenly frame and temper, and of joy and peace in believing, while both lived and died in full assurance of faith.

We shall put an end to this imperfect account of the life and character of so eminent a person, by the testimonies of Mr John Livingstone minister at Ancrum, and Mr Matthew Crawford minister at Eastwood, both his contemporaries, concerning him. The first, in a ma-
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manuscript account which he wrote of the ministers of his own time, hath what follows. *Mr William Guthrie minister at Finwick, was a man of a most ready gift and plentiful invention, with most apposite comparisons, fit both to awaken and pacify consciences; straight and stedfast in the publick cause of Christ; He was a great light in the West of Scotland. He was much and often troubled with the gravel, whereof he died. In another place he says, In his doctrine Mr William Guthrie was as full and free as any man in Scotland had ever been, which, together with the excellency of his preaching gift, did so recommend him to the affections of people, that they turned the cornfield of his glebe to a little town; every one building a house for his family upon it; that they might live under the drop of his ministry.*

The other, Mr Matthew Crawford, in his manuscript history of the Church of Scotland, hath these words; *Mr William Guthrie was a burning and shining light, kept in after many others, by the favour of the old earl of Eglington, the chancellor's father in law. He converted and confirmed many thousand souls, and was esteemed the greatest practical preacher in Scotland.*

Mr Rutherford in his letters hath some passages concerning Mr Guthrie; but these being already published, it would be needless to transcribe any thing from them, nor shall we detain the reader by the character which Mr Trail gives of Mr Guthrie from his own knowledge of him, since it may be found with more advantage in the preface which that worthy minister prefixed to the edition of this treatise published at London 1705, and since reprinted at Edinburgh.

Though few people have been in all respects better qualified to write upon practical subjects, yet the modest and diffident sentiment which Mr Guthrie always entertained of himself, deprived the world of the great advantage they would have reaped from his sermons, and other compositions of this nature, had he thought fit to make them publick. But, to the no small loss of the church, this excellent treatise is the only genuine performance of Mr Guthrie which hath seen the light, the

publication whereof was owing to another cause rather than to the inclination of the author, which was plainly enough forced, upon this occasion. Some unknown person came by a copy of a few imperfect notes of some sermons that Mr Guthrie had preached upon the 55th of Isaiah, with a relation to personal covenanting; and without the smallest intimation of his design made to him, printed them in a small pamphlet of 61 pages 12mo, under this title, *A clear, attractive, warming beam of light, from Christ the sun of life, leading to himself; wherein is held forth a clear, sound and easy way of a soul's particular closing with God, in the covenant of free grace, to the full ending and clearing all debates thereon: Printed at Aberdeen by J. B. 1657.* The book indeed was anonymous, but Mr Guthrie was reputed the author of it by the whole country, and so obliged to take notice of it: He was equally displeas'd at the vanity of the title, and the gross defects of the work itself, which consisted of some broken notes of his sermons, confusedly huddled together by an injudicious hand; and when he saw that it was the only remedy, he felt himself under a necessity, however uneasy to him, to review his sermons, from which he soon compos'd this admirable treatise.

There were indeed, after the restoration, some sermons of Mr Guthrie's, upon Hof. xiii. 9. and a few other texts, printed from very imperfect notes taken by a hearer, by some obscure person who wanted to make a little gain: But as those could in no just sense be accounted the work of Mr Guthrie, being both extremely corrupt and defective, and were very injurious to his memory; Mrs Guthrie his widow printed an advertisement, and spread it as far as she could, to guard the publick from being impos'd upon by those spurious sermons, which in a great measure put a stop to so unfair a practice; and should in reason have prevented the disingenuous extracts of some coarse unguarded expressions from them, which are to be met with in some prelatical pamphlets, whereby they endeavour calumniously to expose

expose the presbyterian interest, from the falsely alledged failures of one of its eminent guides and supporters.

This small treatise, *The Christian's great Interest*, the only genuine work of Mr Guthrie, hath been blessed by God with wonderful success in our own country, it was published very seasonably, a little before the introduction of Prelacy at the restoration; nor is the conduct of a merciful providence to be overlooked in affording so useful a help to multitudes of the people of God, when their worthy pastors were torn from them. Several have owed their conversion unto a religious life, to the reading of the treatise: And many thousands have been thereby mightily edified and built up in the most holy faith.

Nor hath it less regard paid it abroad; in England, its author and itself were highly esteemed by the greatest and best men there; and that there could not be a greater honour done it, than by the character given thereof by Dr Owen, will appear to all who are acquainted with the incomparable learning and worth of that excellent scholar and divine; as we have the story from a reverend minister of this church yet alive, who had the doctor's sentiments from his own mouth. One day in conversation with him, the doctor speaking of Scotland, said to our informer, *You have truly men of great spirits in Scotland, there is for a gentleman Mr Bailie of Jerviswood, a person of the greatest abilities I ever almost met with. And for divines, said he, pulling out of his pocket a little guilded copy of this treatise of Mr Guthrie's, That author I take to have been one of the greatest divines that ever wrote; it is my vade mecum, and I carry it, and the Sedan New Testament still about with me; I have written several folios, but there is more divinity in it than in them all.* Tho' the great modesty of this admirable divine, made him give a very unequal character of his own excellent performances; yet this does not hinder such an account of Mr Guthrie's book, given by so masterly a judge, from being as much for its reputation as any thing of that nature can be.

Nor was the usefulness of this pious treatise confined,
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either to the author's own country or language: Foreigners also valued it, translated it, and were eminently profited thereby. It was translated into Low Dutch by the reverend and pious Mr. Koelman, and was highly esteemed in Holland, so that Mrs. Guthrie and one of her daughters met with uncommon civilities and kindness, when their relation to its author was known. It is also translated into French and High Dutch; and we are informed, that it was also translated into one of the Eastern tongues, at the charges of that noble pattern of religion, learning and charity, the honourable Robert Boyle.

After what hath been said of the intrinsic excellency of this useful book, it might perhaps appear both needless and assuming for us to pretend to give any further character of it, or recommend it to the esteem and use of the publick.

THUS far the very learned and excellent author of this preface had proceeded in it, when it pleased his Lord and Master to call him to the everlasting reward of his labours, to his own unspeakable advantage, but to the great loss of the church, and inexpressible grief of all his surviving friends.

But he having proposed at his entering upon this preface, not only to give some account of the author, which is all death has permitted him to do, but also to make some observations upon the work itself: Some thought the preface would be imperfect, if this likewise were not done. It is therefore here essayed, though with very unequal abilities.

This excellent treatise, (which has been already so often published, translated into foreign languages, and passed the course of more than sixty years with universal applause) hath already its praises in the churches of Christ; and its just and universal esteem so well settled, as to need no letters of commendation from any man, especially from so obscure a hand as mine: Yet to give some account of the reasons for which it has been so highly valued to those who have never read it, to clear
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and confirm the grounds upon which is founded the just esteem of others who have already perused it, to prevent the prejudices that may be entertained by some, and a little to lay open the spirit of the author and its doctrine, that this treatise may be read with the more extensive advantage by all; will, we hope, not be unacceptable to any, but grateful and edifying to those who are desirous that the church and their own souls should reap all possible advantage by such books as are published.

The observations that may be made upon this treatise, are either such as concern the stile of it, or the doctrine contained in it, or else the author's way and manner of managing his subject, and the several branches of it.

As to the stile, that would need but little apology, though the book were appearing now for the first time in the world: For, bating some few expressions, and these too occurring but seldom, that are now become somewhat obsolete, the words and phrases used are just and grave, clear and significant, level to the capacity of the meanest, and yet not below that of the greatest. But considering that this treatise was written near 70 years ago, since which time our language has suffered great changes, the stile of it deserves not only our acceptance, but even our high esteem. It is plain, and yet decent, and adorned with all needful beauty; clear, and yet concise and comprehensive; few books written in this country about that time are so pure in their stile: And this will be the more valued, if we remember what the author says in his preface, That in this work he has mainly, if not only, consulted the advantage of the rude and ignorant; for while he teaches these in a plain stile, he entertains even the learned, that are serious, agreeably. So that whoever nauseates this book for its stile, shews himself more of a critical than of a Christian spirit.

The beauty of the stile is exceeded, and even eclipsed by the excellency of the matter which it contains: Upon which many observations might be made, very
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useful and necessary to be remembered in these giddy times. The subject which he handles, is, of all others, of the greatest importance and moment to every man: It is the Christian's great interest, his greatest interest indeed, his union with Christ the blessed Redeemer, and his title to the invaluable and glorious blessings of his purchase. The two parts of this great subject which he treats of, are these which most nearly touch every Christian, and which he is most called to bring to a clear and satisfying issue; how a person may try his interest in Christ, and, how he may attain to it, and secure it? Happy that man who can satisfy himself as to these.

In managing these heads of his discourse, it is evident to every one who reads this treatise, that the author founds his doctrine upon the principles of that system, which asserts free grace as the cause of our salvation, and of all that leads to it, these principles which were at first delivered to the saints in the holy scriptures, restored again with the scriptures at the glorious reformation from Popery, received into almost all the Confessions of Faith of the reformed churches, and fully asserted by the synod of Dort, in opposition to Pelagian and Semipelagian errors. Upon this system is founded the doctrine of this treatise, in which the author asserts or supposes particular election, effectual grace, man's natural inability to do what is spiritually good, Christ's satisfying for the elect only, and the perseverance of the saints: These principles plainly run through the whole work, and it is bottomed upon them.

Yet at the same time nothing is omitted, that naturally could fall within such a work, to inculcate the necessity of holiness, and universal obedience to God's holy law. The freedom and fulness of the grace of Christ in the gospel is so taught, as not to jostle out the necessity of our own utmost diligence, and care to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; it was not the author's business, in so small and so practical a treatise, to shew explicitly the consistency of these two together; he knew this was not sufficiently done in books of

a controversial nature: But holding to the doctrine of our excellent Westminster Confession, he so exalts free grace as not to invalidate the obligations of the Moral Law, he so asserts our natural corruption as not to loosen our obligations to gospel-obedience, and equally discourages free-will and merit on the one hand, and slothfulness and security on the other; and this not by direct assertions upon these heads, which are consequentially overturned by contrary doctrines laid down in other places, as is done in some late books of modern divinity, but by asserting the principles upon which they depend.

Thus he does not, with some, exclude the word *condition* from the new covenant, as if there were a hazard of making God's own terms of his covenant too necessary, and some danger of binding them fast upon the souls of his people: But, with our Larger Catechism, he frequently makes use of that word throughout the whole book, without apprehending any danger from it; and asserts oftner than once in the plainest and strongest terms, that faith is the condition of the new covenant.

This faith he does not place, as some have done, in a firm persuasion that Christ died for us: nay, he refutes this as a most dangerous and absurd notion: But in the stating of the heart upon God in Christ, as a full blessing and satisfying portion, in the soul's acquiescence in the way of salvation by Christ; it is to accept of, and close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, held forth in the gospel; and to close with Christ in his kingly office. as he is anointed to be a King to rule over a man in all things. A notion of faith, which, as it exalts free-grace, so it excludes the presumption of hypocrites; and is fitted to prevent discouragements and despondency in the truly godly, and to excite to holiness, by causing the soul to go forth towards God in Christ, and to follow hard after him as its chief good and happiness; whereas the other groundless notion of it leads to the very reverse of all these.

This pious and judicious author makes assurance of
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our interest in Christ to be attainable, and that too more easily than many serious Christians do imagine; yet he will by no means allow it to be the essence of justifying faith, or inseparable from it: On the contrary he teaches, in the most express terms, that many are truly gracious, and have a good title to eternal life, who do not know so much.

He asserts the freedom and universal extent of the gospel-offer in the fullest terms, declaring, That peace and salvation is offered to all without exception, that a man is not to question God's willingness to receive men who go to Christ honestly: But does not think it necessary, for laying a foundation for this offer, to affirm, that Christ died for all men, as some others have imagined; nor torture himself to find out the ground of this general offer, till he has almost wrought himself into the Arminian scheme. With him it was for the sins of the elect that Christ satisfied, and this restriction of Christ's satisfaction, he did not judge inconsistent with an universal offer: But, with other orthodox divines, he judged, that the universal offer was the means for applying Christ's satisfaction to the persons for whom it was specially made; and that his glorious end of converting an elect world, together with God's extensive command to his servants, Matth. xxviii. 19. was sufficient ground to preach the gospel to every man, without perplexing matters with new schemes, which, as it often happens, involves matters instead of explaining them.

Another thing observable in this excellent author, is his particular regard, throughout his whole treatise, unto God's holy law. As the promoting of holiness, and a thorough conversion in Christians, appears to be the great design of his work; so he does throughout the whole of it, maintain an inviolable respect for God's law, which is the rule and measure of it. He does not lay out himself (as some innovating writers on the same subject have done) to find out subtle distinctions of the meaning of the word *law*, till he has almost distinguished away the obligation of it. He makes the law a schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ; but then he does

not lay it aside, as an almanck out of date, when it has brought us to him. Nay, he makes it one of the first breathing of the new nature, *To acknowledge the law to be good, holy, just, and spiritual; to accept of Christ's whole yoke without exception; and to become a servant of righteousness unto God: He makes the genuine fruit of the new life to be faith working by love, which is the fulfilling of the law; and tells us, That the promises are made to faith followed with holiness, which is the same with obedience to it.*

Agreeably to this binding force of God's law, he every where excites and encourages Christians, to exert their most earnest and vehement endeavours in the work of their salvation: He not only encourages believers, whose powers are by their conversion, made active to diligence and industry; but he calls even unconverted sinners, who are dead in trespasses and sins, to essay their duty, and diligently to apply themselves to the practice of it, and gives them great encouragement to do so. He tells us, *That tho' no words will take effect till God pour out his Spirit; yet ministers must still press mens duty upon them, and charge them that they give the Lord no rest till he send out that Spirit, which he will give to them that ask it.*

He teaches, *That tho' none do cordially close with God in Christ Jesus, and acquiesce in that ransom found out by God, except only such as are elected, and whose hearts the Lord, doth sovereignly determine to that blessed choice: Yet the Lord hath left it as a duty upon people who hear this gospel, to close with his offer of salvation, as if it were in their power to do it: And that the Lord, through these commands and exhortations, doth convey life and strength, and the new heart to the elect; and that it is his mind, in these commands and invitations, to put people to some duty, with which he uses to concur for accomplishing that business between him and them.*

Yea further, answering the objection taken from our own impotency to close with Christ, he positively affirms, *That if we essay to close with Christ, and rest on him for the offered salvation, God will not be wanting on*

his part, and that it shall not fail on his part, if we have a mind to the business. Thus he always takes care to keep an harmony betwixt the freedom and power of grace on the one hand, and the necessity and usefulness of our own endeavours on the other; and while he owns our outter inability to do any thing that is spiritually good, he gives all encouragement that can be desired to our own most earnest endeavours.

To this same purpose it may be observed, That he formally exhorts to personal covenanting with God, and largely directs the management of it as a matter of great importance. He did not fear, as some, it seems, now do, that the soul should be guilty of presumption in dedicating itself with all solemnity to God in Christ, and in embracing the offered priviledge of sealing a sure covenant with him: He doubted not but that particular persons might do that acceptably, which bodies of men had so often done with great success, and glorious tokens of God's presence with them in holy scripture.

Thus it were easy to enlarge in making many observations upon the excellency and foundness of this author's doctrine; but it is now time to conclude with taking notice briefly, of this excellent author's way and manner of managing his subject, and delivering his doctrine. It is obvious to every one who reads him with attention, that he speaks with a full understanding of his subject; he appears to have meditated deeply upon it, and to have digested fully the several particulars of it: All he says is of a piece and consistent, he seems to have had the last words, and all the intermediate parts of it in view when he wrote the first. He does not write, as some others upon the same subject have done, loosely and incoherently: Nor has he made up his book, as they have done theirs, of gathered scraps put together with little connexion, and as little consistency; nay, he speaks every where like one that is master of his subject. Yet he writes always with the utmost modesty and caution; he does not impose his own experiences in religion, as absolutely necessary to others, but allows a latitude for God's various ways of dealing with different persons:

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How carefully does he guard his reader against mistakes upon the several heads which he handles? He does not, as some have done, lay down crude and unguarded assertions in one place, and trust to the attention and judgment of his reader for correcting them by others laid down elsewhere: Nay, he was sensible that not to mislead is much better than to bring back those who have wandred, not to poison than to administer an antidote; and therefore under every head he pointedly guards and circumscribes every subject.

He writes from his own experience: One may easily perceive the heart speaking out its own experience almost in every line, and the author feeling, as well as understanding, his matter. At the same time he discovers the greatest judgment and solidity in distinguishing things doubtful, from things certain; and things essential to the Christian life, from things extrinsick and circumstantial to it; founding nothing upon Christian experience, but what has the countenance of holy scripture.

Thus we have in this little book, a treatise upon that subject, which of all others is of the greatest importance to a Christian, written in such a manner as equally exalts free grace, and encourages gospel-holiness; and guarded with the greatest exactness against the opposite extremes of presumption and despondency: A treatise written with the utmost plainness, and yet with great solidity and judgment, with all the depth of a knowing and judicious divine, and the feeling of an experienced Christian. How happy had it been for the church, if none had undertaken to write practical treatises without these and the like qualities of this excellent author? How much for the growth of true religion in mens hearts and lives, if such a plain and useful treatise as this, were as warmly recommended, and as carefully studied, as others of a different character? This treatise of practical christianity, as ancient as the scriptures, should be found more useful than many *marrows of modern divinity*. It is in this edition attended with all the advantages that the publisher could think of, to make it both useful and agreeable to the reader. The Lord himself

grant it may further answer its noble end of converting and confirming souls, and in all respects yield much fruit to his honour.

The following account of the reverend Mr WILLIAM GUTHRIE is faithfully transcribed from that laborious and worthy divine Mr ROBERT WODROW, in his history of the sufferings of the Church of Scotland, and is as follows:

MR William Guthrie, minister at Finwick, in the shire of Air, used the greatest of freedom and sincerity in his sermons at this time. I am too nearly concerned in this great man, to say much about him, and therefore choose to give this in the words of a worthy minister, his contemporary, in his character of him. "In his doctrine, Mr William Guthrie was as full and free as any man in Scotland had ever been; which, together with the excellency of his preaching-gift, did so recommend him to the affections of people, that they turned the cornfield of his glebe to a little town, every one building a house for his family upon it, that they might live under the drop of his ordinances and ministry." Indeed the Lord gave him an opportunity to bear a longer testimony against the defections of this time, than most of his brethren; till at length the malice of the archbishop of Glasgow turned him out in the year 1664, as we may hear.

Congregational fasts kept.

A good many ministers kept congregational fasts; and that was all almost they could do, since now there was scarce any opportunities of presbyterial or synodical appointments of this nature; and in some places where there were disaffected persons to delate them, ministers suffered not a little for this practice, and the plainness of their doctrine.

The other instance I promised as to the sufferings of old ministers this year, is that of the reverend, and singularly useful Mr William Guthrie, minister of the gos-

pel at Finwick. This extraordinary person I have particular opportunities to have certain and distinct accounts of. I heartily wish some proper hand would give the publick a just narrative of this great man's life, which might, I persuade myself, be very useful. The broken hints we have, before the last edition of his excellent *Saving Interest*, at London 1705, are lame and indistinct, and were writ without the knowledge of his remaining relations, who could have given more just and larger accounts: I shall therefore here give the more particular history of his sufferings at the time, and his being forced to part with his dear flock.

He continues longer at his work than many others.

By the interest of several noblemen and others, to whom Mr Guthrie was very dear, he enjoyed a connivance, and was overlooked for a considerable time, when he continued at his Master's work, tho' in his sermons he was more than ordinarily free and plain.

When bishop Burnet comes to Glasgow, he and some other ministers are attacked.

But soon after Dr Alexander Burnet was brought from the see of Aberdeen to that of Glasgow, he and the few remaining ministers about him were attacked; such as, Mr Livingstone at Biggar, Mr M'Kail at Bothwell, Mr Gabriel Maxwell at Dundonal, Mr Gabriel Cunningham at Dunlop, and Mr Andrew Hutcheson and Mr William Castlelaw, ministers at Stewartoun; and perhaps the chancellor's death about this time, helped to pave the way for the greater severity against these worthy persons.

Nothing prevails with the archbishop to spare Mr Guthrie:

The archbishop had been addressed by some of the greatest in the kingdom, in behalf of Mr Guthrie, and treated them very indiscreetly: By no importunity would he suffer himself to be prevailed upon to spare him any longer. When means and intercessions could not prevail, Mr Guthrie was warned of the archbishop's design against him, and advised by persons of note, his friends, to suffer no resistance to be made to his dispossession of the church and manse; since his enemies wanted only

this for a handle to prosecute him criminally for his zeal and faithfulness in the former times: such was their spite against this useful man of God,

Wednesday, July 20th kept as a congregational fast with his people.

Under the prospect of parting with his beloved people, Wednesday the 20th of July this year, was set apart by him for fasting and prayer with his congregation. The text he preached from was, Hof. xiii. 9. *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself.* His sermon was afterwards printed very unfairly and indistinctly, from an uncorrect copy. From that scripture, with great plainness and affection, he laid before them their sins, and those of the land, and of that age; and indeed the place was a Bochim.

He preaches next Lord's day early in the morning, and takes leave of his people.

At the close of that day's works, he gave intimation of sermon upon the next Lord's day very early, and his own people and many others met him at the church of Finwick betwixt four and five in the morning, where he preached twice to them from the close of his last text, *But in me is thine help.* And as he used upon ordinary Sabbaths, he had two sermons and a short interval betwixt them, and dismissed the people before nine in the morning. Upon this melancholy occasion, he directed them unto the great fountain of help, when the gospel and ministers were taken from them; and took his leave of them, commending them to this great God, who was able to build them up, and help them in the time of their need.

No violence used against the party who came to dispossess him.

His people would willingly have sacrificed all that was dear to them, in defence of the gospel, and adhering to him. Indeed Mr Guthrie had some difficulty to get their affection to him so far moderated, as to keep them from violent proceedings against the party who came to dispossess him; they would have effectually prevented the church its being declared vacant. and were ready to have resisted even to blood, striving against sin,

if they had been permitted. But Mr Guthrie's peaceable disposition, his great regard to lawful civil authority, which his prudent foresight of the consequences of such a procedure, both as to the interests of the gospel, his people, and himself, made him lay himself out, and use the interests he had in the people, which was very great, to keep the peace; and there was no disturbance which could be made a handle of by adversaries.

With much difficulty the archbishop gets one to intimate his sentence against Mr Guthrie.

When the archbishop of Glasgow resolved upon dispossessing him, he dealt with several of his curates, to intimate his sentence against Mr Guthrie, and as many refused it. There was an awe upon their spirits, which scared them from meddling with this great man; besides, they very well knew it was an Action would render them for ever odious to the West country, and they feared the consequences. At last he prevailed with one who was curate of Calder, as I am told, and promised him five pounds sterling for his reward: but poor man! it was the price of blood, the blood of souls, and neither he nor his had much satisfaction in it.

The curate of Calder intimates it. July 24. in the church of Finwick.

Upon the 24th of July, this man came with a party of twelve soldiers to Finwick church on the Lord's day, and, by commission from the archbishop, discharged Mr Guthrie to preach any more at Finwick, declared the church vacant, and suspended him from the exercise of his ministry.

And to himself in the manse.

The commanders of the party and the curate, leaving the soldiers without, came into the manse, or minister's house. The best account I can at this distance give of what passed in the house, is by inserting a short minute of this left amongst the small remains of a valuable collection of papers belonging to Mr Guthrie; which were taken away, as we shall afterwards hear, some years after this, by violence, and against all the rules of equity, from his widow, and fell into the hands of the bishops.

The paper was drawn up at the time to keep up the remembrance of this affair, without any design of it being published, and I give it in its own native and plain dress.

The sum of the curate's discourse when he came and intimated Mr William Guthrie his sentence of suspension, with Mr Guthrie's answer to him.

An account of what passed in the manse.

“THE Curate shewed, that the Bishop and committee, after much lenity shewn to him for a long time, were constrained to pass the sentence of suspension against him for not keeping of presbyteries and synods with his brethren, and his unpeaceableness in the church; of which sentence he was appointed to make publick intimation to him, for which he read his commission under the Archbishop of Glasgow his hand.”

Mr Guthrie answered, “I judge it not convenient to say much in answer to what you have spoken: only, whereas you alledge there hath been much lenity used towards me, be it known unto you that I take the Lord for party in that, and thank him for it; yea, I look upon it as a door which God opened to me for preaching this gospel, which neither you nor any man else was able to shut, till it was given you of God. And as to that sentence passed against me, I declare before those gentlemen (the officers of the party) that I lay no weight upon it, as it comes from you, or those who sent you; though I do respect the civil authority, who by their law laid the ground for this sentence; and were it not for the reverence I owe to the civil magistrate, I would not surcease from the exercise of my ministry for all that sentence. And as to the crimes I am charged with, I did keep presbyteries and synods with my brethren; but I do not judge those who now sit in these to be my brethren, but men who have made defection from the truth and cause of God; nor do I judge those to be free or lawful courts of Christ, that are now sitting. And as to my unpeaceableness, I know I am bidden follow peace with all men, but I know also I am bidden follow it with
ho-

holiness; and since I could not obtain peace without prejudice to holiness, I thought myself obliged to let it go. And as for your commission, sir, to intimate this sentence, I here declare I think myself called by the Lord to the work of the ministry, and did forsake my nearest relations in the world, and give up myself to the service of the gospel in this place, having received an unanimous call from this parish, and being tried and ordained by the presbytery; and I bless the Lord he hath given me some success, and a seal of my ministry upon the souls and consciences of not a few that are gone to heaven, and of some that are yet in the way to it. And now, sir, if you will take it upon you to interrupt my work among this people, as I shall with the Lord may forgive you the guilt of it, so I cannot but leave all the bad consequences that follow upon it, betwixt God and your own conscience. And here I do further declare before these gentlemen, that I am suspended from my ministry for adhering to the covenants and work of God, from which you and others have apostatiz'd.

Here the Curate interrupting him, said, "That the Lord had a work before that covenant had a being, and that he judged them apostates who adhered to that covenant; and that he wished that not only the Lord would forgive him (Mr. Guthrie) but, if it were lawful to pray for the dead, (at which expression the soldiers did laugh) that the Lord would forgive the sin of this church these hundred years past.

"It is true," answered Mr. Guthrie, "the Lord had a work before that covenant had a being; but it is as true that it hath been more glorious since that covenant, and it is a small thing for us to be judged of you in adhering to that covenant, who have so deeply corrupted your ways, and seem to reflect on the whole work of reformation from Popery these hundred years past, by intimating that the church had need of pardon for the same.

"As for you, gentlemen," added he, directing himself to the soldiers, "I wish the Lord may pardon you for countenancing of this man in this business." One of
them

them scoffingly replied, " I wish we never do a greater fault. Well, " said Mr. Guthrie, " a little sin may dama a man's soul "

Mr. Guthrie's civilities to the soldiers.

When this had passed, Mr. Guthrie called for a glass of ale, and craving a blessing himself, drank to the commander of the soldiers, and after they had been civilly entertained by him, they left the house. I have it confidently reported, that Mr. Guthrie at parting did signify to the Curate, that he apprehended some evident mark of the Lord's displeasure was abiding him, for what he was now a doing, and seriously warned him to prepare for some stroke a coming upon him very soon.

The Curate died a little after.

Mr. Guthrie's relations, and a worthy old minister yet alive when I write this, who was that day at Finwick with him, from whom I have part of this account, do not mind to have heard any thing of this denunciation; but it might have been without their hearing, since none of them were present at parting. Whatever be in this, I am well assured the Curate never preached more after he left Finwick. He came into Glasgow, and whether he reached Calder, but four miles from it, I know not; but in a few days he died in great torment of an illiack passion, and his wife and children died all in a year, or thereby; and none belonging to him were left: So hazardous a thing it is to meddle with Christ's sent servants.

The kirk declared vacant.

When they left the manse, the Curate went into the church of Finwick with the soldiers his guard, and now his hearers, and preached to them not a quarter of an hour, and intimated from the pulpit the Bishop's sentence against Mr. Guthrie. No body came to hear him, but the party who came with him, and a few children and boys, who created him some disturbance, but were chased off by the soldiers.

Mr. Guthrie continues in the parish till October 1665, when he died in Angus.

Mr. Guthrie continued in the parish, but preached no
more

more in the church, where, as far as I can learn, there was no Curate ever settled. Upon the 10th of October next year, this excellent person died in Angus, whither he went to settle some affairs relating to his estate of Pitforthly there. Thus by the malice of the Prelates, this bright and eminent light of the West of Scotland was put under a bushel, yea extinguished.

Mr. William Guthrie dies, October 10.

By this time many of the old Presbyterian ministers, who had seen the glory of the former temple, were got to their rest. The 10th day of October this year, brought the reverend Mr. William Guthrie to his Father's house: I shall only add the remark made upon his lamented death, by the worthy minister his contemporary, whom I cited before, when I spoke of him. "This year the Presbyterians in Scotland lost one of their pillars, Mr. William Guthrie minister of the gospel at Fenwick, one of the most eloquent, successful, popular preachers, that ever was in Scotland. He died a sufferer, for he was deposed by the Bishop, but in hopes that one day the Lord would deliver Scotland from her thralldom." Many others of the old ministers of this church died about this time in peace, being taken away from the evil to come, which was fast coming on in great measures, and departed under the solid and firm hope of a glorious deliverance coming to this poor church.

*A Recommendatory PREFACE by the late Rev. Mr.
ROBERT TRAIL.*

THIS little book, having past so many impressions, both in Scotland and England, within the last fifty years, (for it is near that time since it first was printed) and being commended by the acceptance of the saints, needeth nothing more, especially from so obscure a hand, to recommend it. But having known the author, I would willingly acquaint the world with somewhat of his character, after one hint about this book. It is to this author we owe the first motion of
personal

personal covenanting with God. We have heard more, far more, of making national covenants for reformation, and of church-covenants for mutual gospel-fellowship, than we have seen of the keeping of them. But Mr. Guthrie first wrote of personal covenanting, as far as ever I can learn. And that, not till he had consulted many both ministers and Christians. He having opened the door, several have followed, but *non passibus equis*; and by the length and artificial method in their schemes of such covenants, have put the practisers thereof in no small danger of running the matter into a dry formality, the bane of all holy things. But it is plain that this author design'd nothing in his short form of words but to close the act of saving faith in Christ, in such expressions as suit the experience of every believer.

Mr. William Guthrie was the eldest son of a country-gentleman in the shire of Angus in Scotland, of a good family, and of a competent estate. After he had past his course of philosophy at the University of St. Andrews, he went to the New College there, where theology and Hebrew are taught by several professors. And it was then no rare thing, for young gentlemen that had no design of engaging themselves in any of the three learned professions, of law, physic, or divinity, to spend some time at that College. Then, and there, it pleased the Lord, who had separated him from his mother's womb, to call him by his grace, by the ministry of excellent Mr. Samuel Rutherford, and this young gentleman became one of the first-fruits of his ministry at St. Andrews. His conversion was begun with great terrors of God on his soul, and was completed with that joy and peace in believing, that did accompany him thro' his life. Upon this blessed change wrought in him, he did immediately resolve to obey the call of God, to serve him in the ministry of the gospel, which was given him with the Lord's calling him effectually to grace and glory. And he did for this end so dispose of his outward estate (of which he was born heir) as not to be entangled with the affairs of this life. After some time spent in study, he was called to preach, and quickly
after

after was settled in a congregation in the West of Scotland, and did shine in that place, till a few months before his death, that he was driven away by persecution, in 1665. In this place he laboured with great diligence, and with no less success, as himself owned to the Lord's praise, when he said that there was hardly any under his charge, but were brought to make a fair profession of godliness, and had the worship of God in their families: And it was well known, that many of them were sincere, and not a few of them eminent Christians. The love he had to his people, made him stily refuse all calls and invitations to Glasgow or Edinburgh, or Stirling, (where his own cousin, grave Mr. James Guthrie was minister, afterwards Christ's faithful martyr, whom I saw die in and for the Lord, at Edinburgh, June 1st, 1661.) and pleaded much in a General Assembly, that he might have his ministry in that city, which was malignant and profane at that time: But all to no purpose. In this place, though an obscure one, but by his ministry, he spent all his few days. I have heard several judicious ministers and Christians observe this of him, that, whereas many worthy ministers have out-lived their zeal, the vigour of their gifts, and their acceptance with the godly, this blessed man rather increased in all these to the last.

His stature was tall and slender, his aspect grave. His natural temper was cheerful, witty and facetious, yet tempered with gravity becoming a minister of Christ. I have seen somewhat of this rare mixture in him myself, and have heard from many who have had a great intimacy with him, that they have admired this in him, that immediately after his recreations, and singular sallies of wit and innocent mirth, when called to pray, he would speak to God with that holy awe, and faith, and love, and life, as if he had come down from the mount.

His gifts were great, strong natural parts, a clear head, and a sound heart. His voice was of the best sort; loud and yet managed with charming cadencies and elevations. His oratory singular, and by it he was master of the passions of his hearers. His action in
preaching

though painful, pursuit, by proposing the chiefest of interests, even the Christian's great Interest, to be seriously pondered and constantly pursued by thee. Thou mayest think it strange to see any thing in print from my pen, as indeed it is a surprize to myself: But necessity hath made me for this once to offer so much violence to my own inclination, in regard that some, without my knowledge, have lately published some imperfect notes of a few of my sermons, most confusedly cast together, prefixing withal this vain title, as displeasing to myself as the publishing of the thing, A clear attractive warming beam, &c. Upon this occasion was I prevailed with to publish this little piece, wherein I have purposely used a most homely and plain stile, lest otherwise (though when I have stretched myself to the utmost, I am below the judicious and more understanding) I should be above the reach of the rude and ignorant, whose advantage I have mainly, if not only, consulted: I have likewise studied brevity in every thing, so far as I have conceived it to be consistent with plainness and perspicuity; knowing that the persons to whom I address myself herein, have neither much money to spend upon books, nor much time to spare upon reading. If thou be a rigid critic, I know thou mayest meet with several things to carp at, yet assure thyself I had no design to offend thee, neither will thy simple approbation satisfy me; it is thy edification I intend, together with the incitements of some others more expert and experienced in this excellent subject, to handle the same at greater length, which I have more briefly hinted at, who am,

Thy servant in the

work of the gospel,

WILLIAM GUTHRIE.

THE
CHRISTIANS'S
GREAT INTEREST.

THE
INTRODUCTION.

SINCE there be so many people, living under the ordinances, pretending without ground to a special interest in Christ, and to his favour and salvation, as is clear, Mat. vii. 22, 23. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.* Mat. xxv. 11, 12. *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us: But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.* Luke xiii. 24. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* And since many who have good ground of claim to Christ, are

A not

not established in the confidence of his favour, but remain in the dark, without comfort, hesitating concerning the reality of godliness in themselves, and speaking little to the commendation of religion to others, especially in the time of their straits; I shall speak a little to two things of greatest concernment. The one is, How a person shall know if he hath a true and special interest in Christ, and whether he doth lay just claim to God's favour and salvation? The other is, In case a person fall short in the foresaid trial, what course he shall take for making sure God's friendship and salvation to himself?

P A R T

P A R T I.

The TRIAL of a SAVING
INTEREST in CHRIST.

How shall a man know if he hath a true and special interest in Christ, and whether he hath, or may lay claim justly to God's favour and salvation?

C H A P. I.

A man's interest in Christ may be known:

It is a matter of the highest importance, and is to be determined by scripture.

BEFORE we speak directly to the question, we shall premise some things to make way for the answer.

First, That a man's interest in Christ, or his gracious state, may be known, and that with more certainty than people do conjecture; yea, and the knowledge of it may be more easily attained unto than many do imagine: For, not only hath the Lord commanded men to know their interest in him, as a thing attainable, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether ye*
A 2 *be*

be in the faith, &c. 2 Pet. i. 10. *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure, &c.* But many of the saints have attained unto the clear persuasion of their interest in Christ, and in God as their own God; how often do they call him their *God* and their *Portion*, and how persuaded is Paul, *That nothing can separate him from the love of God?* Rom. viii. 38, 39. Therefore the knowledge of a man's gracious state is attainable.

And this knowledge of it, which may be attained, is no fancy or bare conceit, but it is most sure; *Doubtless thou art our Father*, saith the prophet in name of the church, Isa. lxiii. 16. It is clear thus, I. That can be no fancy, but a very sure knowledge, which doth yield to a rational man comfort in most real straits; but so doth this, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. *When the people spake of stoning David, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* Psal. iii. 6. he saith there, *He will not be afraid of ten thousands that rise against him.* Compare these words with ver. 3. of that Psalm, *But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me my glory, and the lifter up of mine head,* Psal. xxvii. 1, 3. *The Lord is my light, and my salvation. whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.* II. That is a sure knowledge of a thing which maketh a wise merchant sell all he hath, that he may keep it sure; that maketh a man forego children, lands, life, and
suffer

suffer the spoiling of all joyfully: But so doth this, Mat. xiii. 44. Mark x. 28, 29. Heb. x. 34. Rom. v. 3. Acts v. 41. III. That must be a sure and certain knowledge, and no fancy, whereupon a man voluntarily and freely doth adventure his soul, when he is stepping in into eternity with this word in his mouth, *This is all my desire*: But such a knowledge is this, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

And again, not only may a godly man come to the sure knowledge of his gracious state, but it is more easily attainable than many do apprehend: For, supposing what shall be afterwards proved, That a man may know the gracious work of God's Spirit in himself; if he will but argue rationally from thence, he shall be forced to conclude his interest in Christ, unless he deny clear scripture-truths. I shall only make use of one here, because we are to speak more directly to this afterwards. A godly man may argue thus, Whosoever receiveth Christ, are justly reputed the children of God, John i. 12. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*; But I have received Christ all the ways which the word there can import; for I please the device of salvation by Christ, I agree to the terms, I welcome the offer of Christ in all his offices. as a King to rule over me, a Priest to offer and intercede for me, a Prophet to teach me; I lay out my heart for him and towards him, resting on him as I am able: What else can be meant by the word *receiving*? Therefore may I say and conclude

plainly and warrantably, I am justly to reckon myself God's child according to the foresaid scripture which cannot fail.

The second thing to be premised, is, That a man be savingly in covenant with God, is a matter of highest importance, *It is his life*, Deut. xxxii. 47. And yet very few have or seek after a saving interest in the covenant, and many foolishly think they have such a thing without any solid ground, Mat. vii. 14. *Few find or walk in the narrow way.* This should alarm people to be serious about the matter, since it is of so great consequence to be in Christ; and since there be but few that may lay just claim to him: And yet many do foolishly fancy an interest in him, who are deceived by a false confidence, as the foolish virgins do, Mat. xxv.

The third thing to be premised, is, men must resolve to be determined by scripture in this matter of their interest in Christ. The Spirit speaking in the scripture is judge of all controversies, Isa. viii. 20. *To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;* and of this also, Whether a man be savingly in covenant with God or not. Therefore do not mock God whilst you seem to search after such a thing. If we prove from scripture, which is the uncontroverted rule, that you are gracious, and have stricken covenant savingly with God; then resolve to grant so much, and to acquiesce in it: And if the contrary appear, let there be a determination of the controversy, else you do but *mock*
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the Lord and so *your bands shall be made strong*, Isa. xxviii. 22. For, *a jot of his word cannot fail*, Mat. v. 18. Therefore seek eye-salve from Christ to judge of things according as the word of God shall discover them to be.

CHAPTER II.

Reasons why so few come to the clear knowledge of their Interest in Christ.

THE fourth thing to be premised, is, Although the matter of a man's interest in Christ be of so great importance, and the way to attain to the knowledge of it, so plainly held forth in the scriptures; yet there be but few who reach the distinct knowledge of it: And that this may not discourage any person from attempting it, I shall hint some few reasons, why so few come to the clear knowledge of it; which will also prepare the way for what is to be spoken afterwards.

The first thing which doth hinder many from the knowledge of their interest in Christ, is their ignorance of some special principles of religion: As, I. That it was free love in God's bosom, and nothing in man that moved him to lend a Saviour to perfect the work of redemption. John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.* Men are still seeking some ground for that business in themselves, which leads away from suitable and high apprehensions

of the first spring and rise of God's covenant-favour to his people, which hath no reason, cause, or motive in us; and so they cannot come to the knowledge of their interest.

II. They are ignorant how that love doth effectually discover itself to a man's heart, so as he hath ground to lay claim to it, viz. That ordinarily it doth first discover his broken state in himself because of sin and corruption defiling the whole man, and any thing in him that might be called a righteousness; *all these things are loss and dung*, Phil. iii. 6, 7, 8. *Secondly* It discovereth Christ as the full and satisfying treasure above all things; *The man finds a treasure, for which, with joy he selleth all, &c.* Mat. xiii. 44, 46. *Thirdly*, It determineth the heart, and causeth it to approach unto a living God in the ordinances, Psal. lxxv. 4. *Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts.* And causeth the heart to wait upon him, and him alone, Psal. lxxii. 5. *My soul, wait thou only upon God.* Thus having dropped in the seed of God in the heart, and formed Christ there, Gal. iv. 19. The heart is changed and made new in the foresaid work, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. And God's law is so stamped upon the heart in that change, Jer. xxxi. 33. that the whole yoke of Christ is commended to the man without exception, Rom. vii. 12, 16. *The law is acknowledged good, holy, just, and spiritual.* Upon all which, from that new principle of life. there flow out acts of a new life, Gal. v. 6. *Faith worketh by love*, Rom.

vi 18, 22. And the man becometh a *servant of righteousness, and unto God*: Which doth effectually appear in the spirituality of worship, John iv. 24. Rom. vii. 6. Men then *serve God in spirit and truth; and in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter*; and tenderness in all manner of conversation; the man then *exerciseth himself how to keep a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man*, Acts xxiv. 16. Now. this way doth the love of God discover itself unto man and acteth on him, so as he hath ground of laying some good claim to it; so as he may justly think, that the love which sent a Saviour; had respect to such a man as hath found these things made out unto him. Surely ignorance in this doth hinder many from the knowlege of their interest in Christ; for if a man know not how God worketh with a person, so as he may justly lay claim to his love, which was from eternity, he will wander in the dark, and not come to the knowledge of an interest in him.

III. Many are also ignorant of this, That God alone is the hope of his people: He is called *the hope of Israel*, Jer. xiv. 8. Although inherent qualifications are evidences of it, yet the staying of the heart upon him as a full blessing and satisfying portion, is faith, 1 Pet. i. 21. *The faith and hope must be in God*; and the only proper condition which giveth right to the saving blessings of the covenant, Rom. iv. 5. *To him that worketh, not but believeth--faith is counted for righteousness*. Indeed if any person take liberty

berty here and turn grace into wantonness, there is without doubt, in so far, a delusion; since *there is mercy with him, upon condition that it conciliate fear to him*, Psal. cxxx. 4. Yea, hardly can any man, who hath found the foresaid expressions of God's love made out upon him, make a cloke of the covenant for sinful liberty, without some measure of a spiritual conflict; in this respect, *He that is born of God doth not sin; and, he that doth so sin, hath not seen God*, 1 John iii. 6, 9. I say, God is the hope of his people, and not their own holiness. If they intend honesty, and long seriously to be like unto him; many failings should not weaken their hope and confidence, for it is in him *who changeth not*, Mal. iii. 6. *And if any man sinneth, he hath an Advocate*, 1 John ii. 1. Now, when men place their hope in any other thing beside the Lord, it is no wonder they be kept in a staggering condition, according to the changes of the thing which they make the ground of their hope, since they give not to God the glory due to his name, and which he will not give to another: Compare Psal. ix. 10. *They who know thy name, will put their trust in thee*, with Isa. xlii. 8. *My glory will I not give to another: I am the Lord, that is my name*.

IV. Many are ignorant of the different ways and degrees of God's working with his people, and this doth much darken their knowledge and reflex acts of their interest in him. This ignorance runs mainly on three heads. I. They are ignorant of the different degrees and ways of
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that law-work, which ordinarily dealeth with men, and of the different ways how the Lord bringeth home people at first to Christ. They consider not that the jaylor is not kept an hour in bondage, Acts xvi. Paul is kept in suspense three days, Acts ix. Zaccheus not one moment, Luke xix. II. They are ignorant of, at least they do not consider, how different the degrees of sanctification are in the saints, and the honourable appearings thereof before men in some; and the sad blemishing thereof in others: Some are very blameless and more free of gross out-breakings, adorning their profession much, as Job, Job i. and Zechariah, Luke i. These are said to be *perfect and upright, fearing God, and eschewing evil; righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless*: Others were subject to very gross and sad evils, as Solomon, Aha, &c. III. They are ignorant of the different communications of God's face, and expressions of his presence: Some do walk much in the light of God's countenance, and are much in sensible fellowship with him, as David was; others are *all their days kept in bondage through fear of death*, Heb. ii. 15. Surely the ignorance of the different ways of God's working and dealing with his people, doth very much darken the knowledge of their interest in him, whilst they usually stint the Lord to one way of working, which he doth not keep, as we have shewed in the former examples.

The second thing which doth darken men
about

about their interest in Christ, is, There is one thing or other, wherein their heart, in some respect, doth condemn them, as dealing deceitfully with God: It is not to be expected, that these can come to clearness about their interest, whose heart doth condemn them for keeping up some known transgressions against the Lord, which they will not let go, neither are using the means which they know to be appointed by God for delivering them from it: Neither can these come to clearness, who know some positive duty commanded them in their stations, which they deceitfully shift and shun, not closing cheerfully with it, or not willing to be led into it; these are also in some respect, condemned of their own heart, as the former sort; and in that case it is difficult to come to a distinct knowledge of their state. 1 John iii. 21. *If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* It is supposed there, that a self-condemning heart maketh void a man's confidence proportionally before God.

I do not deny but that men may, on good grounds, plead an interest in Christ, in the case of prevailing iniquity, Psal. lxxv. 3. *Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away,* Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25. *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members: O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord; so*
then

then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin. But it is hard to be attained, if at all attainable, when the heart is dealing deceitfully, and entertaining known guilt in a particular: Therefore let people clear themselves of the particular which they know too well. It is the thing which doth meet them, marring their confidence and access in all their approaches unto God; see Judges x. 10—13. The idolatries of the people are cast up to them by the Lord, and their suit rejected thereupon. That which draweth away the heart first in the morning, and last at night, like *an oven heated at night, and it burneth as a flaming fire in the morning*, spoken of the wicked, Hosea vii. 6. and taketh up their thoughts often on their bed; as it is said of some, Psal. xxxvi. 4. *He deviseth mischief upon his bed, &c.* That which doth lead away the heart in time of religious duty ordinarily, and the remembrance of which hath power to enliven and quicken the spirits, more than the remembrance of God, so as *their heart is after the heart of some detestable thing*, Ezek. xi. 21. That which withstandeth men when they would grip the promise, as God casteth up mens sins to them who are meddling with his covenant, Psal. l. 16, 17. *What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth, &c?* That is the thing which doth mar the knowledge of a gracious state; let it go, and it will be more easy to reach the knowledge of an interest in Christ.

The third thing which hindreth the knowledge of an interest in Christ, is a spirit of sloth, and careless negligence in many: They complain that they know not whether they be in Christ or not: But, as few take pains to be in him; so few take pains to try if they be in him. It is a work and business which cannot be done sleeping, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: Know ye not your own selves, &c?* The several words used there, viz. *Examine, prove, know*, say that there is a labour in it; *Diligence must be used to make our calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. It is a business above flesh and blood; the *holy anointing, which teacheth all things*, 1 John ii. 20, 27. *must make us know the things freely given us of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. Shall the Lord impart a business of so great concernment, and not so much *as be enquired after to do it for men?* Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Be ashamed, you who spend so much time in reading romances, in adorning your persons, in hawking and hunting, in consulting the law anent your outward state in the world, and it may be in worse things than these: Be ashamed that you spend so little time in the search of this, Whether you be an heir of glory or not; whether you be in the way that leadeth to heaven, or that way which will land you in darkness for ever. You who judge this below you, and unworthy of your pains, any part or minute of your time; it is like, in God's account, you have judged yourselves *unworthy of everlasting*

ing life, so as you shall have no lot with God's people in this matter.

The fourth thing that doth darken the knowledge of an interest in Christ, is, men do not condescend upon what would satisfy them; they complain that God will not shew unto them what he is about to do with them; but cannot yet say they know what would satisfy anent his purpose. This is a sad thing. Shall we think those are serious who have never, as yet, pitched on what would satisfy them, nor are making earnest enquiry after what should satisfy? If the Lord had left us in the dark in that matter, we were less inexcusable: But since the grounds of satisfaction and the true marks of an interest in Christ, are so clear and frequent in scripture, and so *many things written, that our joy may be full, 1 John i. 14. And that those who believe may know that they have eternal life, 1 John v. 13. And since he that believeth hath a witness of it in himself, 1 John v. 10.* None can pretend excuse here: We may not here insist to shew what may and should satisfy anent our interest, since we are to speak directly to it afterwards.

The fifth thing that helpeth much to keep men in the dark anent their interest in Christ, is, they pitch upon some mutable grounds, which are not so apposite proofs of the truth of an interest in Christ, as of the comfortable state of a triumphing soul sailing before the wind; and marks, which I grant are precious in themselves, and do make out an interest clearly where they are; yet they are such, as without which an interest

terest in Christ may be, and be known also in a good measure: We shall touch a few of them,

I. Some think that all who have a true interest in him, are above the prevailing power of every sin; but this is contrary to that of Psal. lxxv. 3. *Iniquities prevail against me, as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.* Where we find that holy man laying just claim to pardon, in the case of prevailing iniquity: And that of Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25. Where Paul thanketh God through Christ, as freed from the condemnation of the law, even whilst a law in his members leadeth captive unto sin.

II. Some think that all true saints have constantly access unto God in prayer, and sensible returns of prayer at all times; but this is contrary to the many sad exercises of his people, complaining often that they are not heard nor regarded of God, Psal. xiii. 1. *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? Psal. xxii. 1, 2. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season, and am not silent.*

III. Some think that all who have any true interest in him, have God witnessing the same unto them by a high operation of that *witnessing Spirit* of his spoken of Rom. viii. 6. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God.* Whereof afterwards: And so they still suspect their own interest in
Christ,

Christ, because of the want of this; but they do not remember that they must first believe and give credit to that *Record, which God hath given of the Son, that there is life enough in him for men, 1 John v. 10, 11.* And then look for the seal and witness of the Spirit, *Eph. i. 13. In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, &c.* As long as people hold fast these principles and the like, they can hardly come to the knowledge of their gracious state, which God hath warranted people to prove and clear up to themselves, otherways than by these forefaid things.

C H A P. III.

Some mistakes concerning an interest in Christ removed.

THE fifth thing to be premised, is, The removal of some mistakes whereinto people may readily run themselves, when they are about to prove their interest in Christ.

As, I. It is a mistake to think, that every one who is in Christ, doth know that he is in him; for many are truly gracious, and have a good title to eternal life, who do not know so much, until it be made out afterwards, *1 John v. 13. These things are written to believers, that they may know they have a true title to eternal life; that is, that they may know they are*

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believers, and so it is supposed they knew it not before.

II. It is a mistake to think, that all who come to the knowledge of their interest in Christ do attain an equal certainty about the same: One may say, *He is persuaded nothing present or to come can separate him from the love of God*, Rom. viii. 38. Another cometh but this length, *I believe, help my unbelief*, Mark ix. 24.

III. It is a mistake to think, that every one who attaineth a strong persuasion of his interest, doth always hold there; for he who to day may say of the Lord, *He is his refuge*, Psal. xci. 2. and *his portion*, cxix. 57. will at another time say, *He is cut off*, Psal. xxxi. 22. and will ask if the truth of God's promise doth fail for evermore? Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9.

IV. It is also a mistake to think, that every one who doth attain a good knowledge of their gracious state, can formally answer all objections made to the contrary; but yet they may hold fast the conclusion, and say, *I know whom I have believed*, 2 Tim. i. 12. There be few grounds of the Christian religion, whereof many people are so persuaded, as that they are able to maintain them formally against all arguments brought to the contrary, and yet they may and will hold the conclusion stedfastly and justly: So it is in this case in hand.

V. It is no less a mistake to imagine, that the vain, groundless confidence, which many profane ignorant Atheists do maintain, is this knowledge of an interest in Christ, which we plead
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for; many do falsely avow him *to be their Father*, John viii. 41. and many look for heaven, who will be beguiled with those *foolish virgins*; Mat. xxv. 12. yet we must not think because of this, that all knowledge of an interest is a delusion and fancy, although these fools be deceived; for whilst thousands are deluded, some can say on good and solid grounds, *We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness*, 1 John v. 19.

C H A P. IV.

The ways by which the Lord draweth some to Christ without a sensible preparatory law-work.

HAVING premised these things, it now followeth that we give some marks by which a man may know if he be savingly in covenant with God, and hath a special interest in Christ so as he may warrantably lay claim to God's favour and salvation. We shall only pitch upon two great and principal marks, not willing to trouble people with many.

But before we fall upon these, we will speak of a preparatory work of the law, whereof the Lord doth ordinarily make use to prepare his own way in mens souls. This may have its own weight, as a mark with some persons. It is called, The work of the law, or, the work of humiliation. It hath some proportion to that *spirit of bondage*, Rom. viii. 15. And doth now under

the New Testament answer unto it, and usually leadeth on to the *spirit of adoption*.

Only here let it be remembered, 1. That we are not to speak of this preparatory work of the law, as a negative mark of a true interest in Christ, as if none might lay claim to God's favour, who hath not had this preparatory work in the several steps of it, as we are to speak of it; for, as we shall hear, the Lord doth not always keep that path with men. 2. The great reason why we speak of it, is, because the Lord dealeth with many, whom he doth effectually call, by some such preparatory work: And to those, who have been so dealt with, it may prove strengthening, and will confirm them in laying the more weight on the marks which follow. 3. It may help to encourage others, who are under such bondage of spirit, as a good prognostick of a gracious work to follow: For, as we shall circumstantiate it, it will be rarely found to miscarry and fail of a gracious issue. 4. Where God useth such a preparatory work, he doth not keep one way or measure in it, as we shall hear.

For the more distinct handling of this preparatory work, we shall shortly hint the most ordinary ways, by which the Lord leadeth people in unto the covenant savingly, and draweth them unto Christ.

First. There are some called from the womb, as *John the Baptist* was, Luke i. 41, 44. in their very young years, before they can be deeply engaged actively in Satan's ways, as *Timothy*, 2 Tim. iii. 15 It cannot be supposed that those

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have such a preparatory work as we are to speak of: And because some persons may pretend to this way of effectual calling we offer these marks of it, whereby those who have been so called may be confirmed.

I. Such use from their childhood to be kept free of ordinary pollutions, wherewith children usually are defiled; as swearing, lying, mocking of religion and religious persons, &c. Those whom God calleth effectually, he sanctifieth them from the time of that effectual calling: *Sin cannot have dominion over them, as over others, because they are under grace, Rom. vi. 14.*

II. Religion is, as it were, natural to them; I mean, they need not be much pressed to religious duties, even when they are but children; they run willingly that way, because there is an inward principle of *love constraining them, 2 Cor. v. 14.* so as they *yield themselves servants of righteousness, without outward constraint, Rom. vi. 16.*

III. Although such know not when they were first acquainted with God, yet they have afterwards such exercises of spirit befalling, as the saints in scripture, of whose first conversion we hear not, do speak of. They are shut out from God, upon some occasion now and then, and are admitted to come nearer again to their apprehension: Their heart is also further broken up by the ordinances, as is said of Lydia, Acts xvi. 14. And ordinarily they do remember, when some special bit of religion and duty, or when some sin, of which they were not taking notice

before, was discovered to them. They who can apply these things to themselves, have much to say for their effectual calling from their youth.

Secondly. Some are brought in to Christ in a sovereign gospel-way, when the Lord, by some few words of love swallowing up any law-work, quickly taketh a person prisoner at the first, as he did Zaccheus, Luke 19. and others, who upon a word spoken by Christ, did leave all and follow him; and we hear no noise of a law-work dealing with them before they close with Christ Jesus.

And because some may pretend to this way of calling, we shall touch some things most remarkable in that transaction with Zaccheus, for their clearing and confirmation. 1. He had some desire to see Christ, and such a desire, as made him wave that which some would have judged prudence and discretion, whilst he climbeth up upon a tree that he might see him. 2. Christ spake to his heart, and that word took such hold upon him, that presently with joy he did accept of Christ's offer, and closeth with Christ as Lord, whilst few of any note were following him. 3. Upon this his heart doth open to the poor, although, it seems, he was a covetous man before. 4. He hath a due impression of his former ways, evidencing his respect to Moses his law, and this he doth signify before all the company then present, not caring to shame himself in such things as probably were notour to the world. 5. Upon all these things, Christ confirmeth and ratifieth the bargain by his word; recommend-

ing to him that oneness of interest, which behoved to be between him and the saints, and the thoughts of his own lost condition, if Christ had not come and sought him, and found him: All which are clear, Luke xix. 3.—10.

We grant the Lord calleth some so and if any can lay claim to the special things we have now hinted, they have a good confirmation of God's dealing with them, from that scripture; neither are they to vex themselves because of the want of a distinct preparatory law-work, if their heart hath yielded unto Christ; for a law work is not desirable, except for this end. Therefore Christ doth offer himself directly in the scripture, and people are invited to come to him: And although many will not come to him who is the cautioner, until the spirit of bondage distresses them for their debt; yet if any, upon the knowledge of their lost estate, would flee and yield to Christ, none might warrantably press a law work upon them.

As for others, whom Christ persuaded by a word to follow him; whatsoever he did, or whatsoever he spake to them at his first meeting with them we must rationally suppose, that then he discovered so much of their own necessity, and his own fulness and excellency to them as made them quit all and run after him: And if he do so to any, we crave no more, since there is room enough there for the physician.

So that from all this, as some may be confirmed and strengthened, with whom God hath so dealt; so there is no ground nor occasion for deluded souls to flatter themselves in their conditi-

on, who remain ignorant and senseless of their own miseries and Christ's all-sufficiency, and hold fast deceit.

Thirdly, There are some brought in to Christ in a way yet more declarative of his free grace; and this is, when he effectually calleth men at the hour of death. We find somewhat recorded of this way in that pregnant example of the *thief on the cross*, Luke xxiii. 39—43. Although this seems not very pertinent for the purpose in hand; yet we shall speak a little of it, that on the one hand men may be sparing to judge and pass sentence upon either themselves or others, before the last gasp. And we shall so circumstantiate it, that on the other hand none may dare to delay so great a business to the last hour of their life.

We find these things remarkable in that business between Christ and the thief. 1. The man falleth at odds with his former companion. 2. He dareth not speak a wrong word of God, whose hand is on him, but justifieth him in all that is befallen him. 3. He now seeth Jesus Christ persecuted by the world, without a cause, and most injuriously. 4. He discovereth Christ to be a Lord and a King, whilst enemies seem to have him at under. 5. He believeth a being of glory after death so really, that he preferreth a portion of it to the present safety of his bodily life, which he knew Christ was able to grant to him at that time, and he might have chosen that with the other thief. 6. Although he was much abased in himself, and so humbled, that he plead-

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ed but that Christ would remember him, yet he was nobly daring to throw himself upon the covenant, on life and death; and he had so much faith of Christ's all-sufficiency, that he judged a simple remembrance from Christ, would satisfyingly do his business. 7. He acquiesced sweetly in the word which Christ spake to him, for the ground of his comfort. All which are very clear in the case of that poor dying man, and do prove a very real work of God upon his heart.

As this example may encourage some to wait for good from God, who cannot as yet lay clear claim to any gracious work of his Spirit; so we obtest all, as they love their souls, not to delay their soul-business, hoping for such a cast of Christ's hand in the end, as too many do; this being a rare miracle of mercy, with the glory whereof Christ did honourably triumph over the ignominy of his cross; a parallel of which we shall hardly find in all the scripture beside. Yea, as there be few at all saved, Mat. xx. : 6. *Many be called, but few chosen*; and most few saved this way; so the Lord hath peremptorily threatened to laugh at their calamity, and not to hear the cry of such as mocked formerly at his reproof, and would not hear when he called to them. Prov. i. 24, 25, 26. *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.* Which scripture, although it doth not shut mercy's door upon any,

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who at the hour of death do sincerely judge themselves, and flee to Christ, as this penitent thief did; yet it is certain, it implieth that very few, who sit the offer until then, are honoured with repentance as he was; and so their cry, as not being sincere and of the right stamp, shall not be heard.

C H A P. V.

The work of the law by which the Lord prepares his way into mens souls; which is either more violent and sudden, or more calm and gradual.

THE fourth and most ordinary way by which many are brought in to Christ, is by a clear and discernible work of the law, and humiliation, which we ordinarily call *the spirit of bondage*, as was hinted before. We do not mean that every one, whose conscience is wakened with sin and fear of wrath, doth really close with Christ; the contrary doth appear in Cain, Saul, Judas, &c. But there is a conviction of sin, a wakening of conscience, and work of humiliation, which, as we shall circumstantiate it, doth rarely miscarry or fail of a gracious issue, but ordinarily doth resolve into the *spirit of adoption*, and a gracious work of God's Spirit. And because the Lord dealeth with many sinners this way, and we find that many are much puzzled about the giving judgment of this law-work, we shall speak of it particularly.

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This work is either more violent and suddenly expedite, or it is more sober and lent, protracted through a greater length of time, and so as the steps of it are very discernible. It is more violent in some, as in the Jaylor, Paul, and some other converts in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, on whom Christ did break in at an instant, and fell on them as with fire and sword, and led them captive terribly; and because some great legal shakings are deceitful, and turn to nothing, if not worse; we shall point at some things remarkable in these converts spoken of before, which did prove the work of the law on them, to have had a gracious issue and result. I. Some word of truth or dispensation, putteth the person to a dreadful stand, with a great stir in the soul: Some *are pricked in heart*, Acts ii. 37. Some *fall on trembling*, Acts xvi. 29. And this is such a stir, that the person is brought to his wits end: *What wilt thou have me to do?* saith Paul, Acts ix. 6. *What must I do to be saved?* saith the Jaylor, Acts xvi. 30. II. The person is content to have salvation and God's friendship on any terms, as the questions do import, *What shall I do?* As if he had said, *What would I not do? What would I not forego? What would I not undergo?* III. The person accepteth the condition offered by Christ and his servants, as is clear from the forecited scriptures. IV. The person presently becometh of one interest with the saints, joining himself with that persecuted society, putting respect on those whom he had formerly persecuted, joining and continuing with them

them in the profession of Christ on all hazards. Those with whom the Lord hath so dealt, have much to say for a gracious work of God's Spirit in them; and it is like, many of them can date their work from such a particular time and word, or dispensation, and can give some account of what past between God and them, and of a sensible change following in them from that time forward; as Paul giveth a good account of the work and way of God with him afterwards, Acts xxii.

Again, the Lord sometimes carryeth on this work more calmly, softly and gently, protracting it so, as the several steps of mens exercise under it are very discernible. It would draw a great length to enlarge every step of it; we shall touch the most observable things in it.

i. The Lord layeth siege to men, who, it may be, have often refused to yield to him, offering himself in the ordinances; and by some word preached, read, or born in on the mind, or by some providence leading in unto the word, he doth assault the *house kept peaceably by the strong man* the devil, and thus Christ, who is *the stronger Man, cometh upon him*, Luke xi. 22. And by the Spirit of Truth, doth fasten the *Word* on the man, in which God's curse is denounced against such and such sins, whereof the man knoweth himself guilty. The Spirit convinceth the man, and bindeth it upon him, that he is the same person against whom the word of God doth speak, because he is guilty of such sins; and from some sins the man is led on to see
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more, until ordinarily he come to see the sins of his youth, sins of omission, &c. Yea he is led on until he see himself guilty almost of the breach of the whole law; he seeth *innumerable evils compassing him*, as David speaketh in a fit of exercise, Psal. xl. 12. A man sometimes will see ugly sights of sin in this case, and is sharp-sighted to reckon a fibness to every sin almost. Thus *the Spirit convinceth of sin*, John xvi. 8.

II. The Lord shaketh a special strong hold in the garrison, a refuge of lies, to which the man betaketh himself when his sins are thus discovered to him. The poor man pretendeth to faith in Christ, whereby he thinks his burden is taken off him, as the Pharisees said, John viii. 41. *We have one Father, even God.* They pretend to a special relation to God as a common Lord. The Spirit of God beats the man from this by the truth of the scripture, proving that he hath no true faith, and so no interest in Christ, nor any true saving grace; shewing clear differences between true grace and the counterfeit fancies which the man hath in him; and between him and the truly godly, as Christ laboured to do to those in John viii. 42, 44. *If God were your father, ye would love me. Ye are of the devil, for ye do the lusts of such a father.* So, *fear surpriseth the hypocrite in heart*, Isa. xxxiii. 14. especially when the Lord discovereth to him conditions in many of these promises, wherein he trusted most, nor easily attainable; he now seeth grace and faith another thing than once he judged them to be. We may, in some respect

respect apply that word here, *The Spirit convinceth him of sin, because he hath not believed on the Son*: He is particularly convinced of unbelief, John xvi. 9. He seeth now a huge distance between himself and the godly, who he thought before out-stripped him only in some unnecessary, proud, hateful preciseness; he now seeth himself deluded and in the broad way with the perishing multitude; and so, in this sight of his misery, coucheth down under his own burden, which, before this time, he thought Christ did bear for him; he now beginneth to fear at the promises, because of that and such other words, *What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth, &c.*? Psal. l. 16.

III. The man becometh careful about his salvation, and beginneth to take it to heart, as the one thing necessary; he is brought to this with the jaylor, Acts xvi. 30. *What shall I do to be saved?* His salvation becometh the leading thing with him: It was least in his thoughts before, but now it prevaileth, and other things are much misregarded by him. Since his soul is ready to perish, *What shall it profit him to gain the world, if he lose his soul?* Mat. xvi. 26. Some here are much puzzled with the thoughts of an irrevocable decree to their prejudice, and with the fears of uncertain death, which may attach them before they get matters put to a point; and some are vexed with apprehensions that they are guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is unpardonable and so are driven a dangerous length, Satan still casting up to them many sad

examples of people, who have dolefully put an end to their own exercise: But they are in the hand of one, who *knoweth how to succour them that are tempted*, Heb. ii. 18.

IV. When a man is thus in hazard of miscar-
rying, the Lord useth a work of preventing mer-
cy towards him, quietly and under hand support-
ing him; and this is by bearing in upon his mind
the possibility of his salvation, leading the man to
the remembrance of pregnant proofs of God's
free and rich grace, pardoning gross transgressi-
ons, such as Manasseh, who was a bloody ido-
latrous man, and had correspondence with the
devil, and yet obtained mercy, 2 Chron. xxxiii.
12, 13. and other scriptures bearing offers of
grace and favours indifferently to all who will
yield to Christ, whatsoever they have been for-
merly; so as the man is brought again to this,
What shall I do to be saved? Which doth sup-
pose, that he apprehendeth a possibility of being
saved, else he would not propound the question.
He applieth that or the like word to himself, *It
may be, ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's
Anger*, Zeph. 2. 3. He findeth nothing exclud-
ing him from mercy now, if he have a heart for
the thing. Although here, it may be, the man
doth not perceive, that it is the Lord who up-
holdeth, yet afterwards he can tell, *That when
his foot was slipping, God's mercy held him up;*
as Psal. xciv. 17, 18. the Psalmist speaketh in a-
nother case. And he will afterwards say, *When
he was as a beast, and a fool in many respects,
God held him by the hand*, Psal. lxxiii. 22, 23.

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V. After this discovery of a possibility to be saved, there is a work of desire quickened in the soul; which is clear in that same expression, *What shall I do to be saved?* But sometimes this desire is arted amiss, whilst it goeth out thus, *What shall I do that I may work the works of God?* John vi. 28. In which case, the man formerly perplexed with fear and care about his salvation, would be at some work of his own to extricate himself; and here he suddenly resolved to do all that is commanded, and to forego every evil way (yet much miskening Christ Jesus) and so beginning to take courage to himself again, *establisshing his own righteousness, but not submitting unto the righteousness of God,* Rom. x. 3. Whereupon the Lord maketh a new assault on him, intending the discovery of his absolutely broken state in himself, and so room may be made for the cautioner; as Joshua did to the people, when he found them so bold in their undertakings, Joshua xxiv. 18, 19. *You cannot serve the Lord, saith he, for he is a holy God, a jealous God, &c.* In this new assault the Lord,

1. Bends up against the man, the spirituality of the law; the commandment cometh with a new change in the spiritual meaning of it, Rom. vii. 9. *The law came, saith Paul, viz. in the spiritual meaning of it;* Paul had never seen such a sight of the law before.
2. God most holily doth loose the restraining bonds, which he had laid upon the man's corruption, and suffereth it not only to boil and swell within, but to threaten to break out in all the outward members. Thus

sin groweth bold, and kicketh at the law, becoming exceeding sinful, Rom. vii. 8, 9. *But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence; for without the law sin was dead; for I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Was then that which is good, made sin unto me? God forbid: But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.* 3. The

Lord doth discover to the man, more now than ever before, the uncleanness of his righteousness, and what spots are in his best things. These things kill the man, and *he dieth* in his own conceit, Rom. vii. 9. and despaireth of relief in himself, if it come not from another art.

VI. After many ups and downs here, ordinarily, the man resolveth some retirement; he desireth to be alone. he cannot keep company as before; like those who in a besieged city, when they see they cannot hold out, and would be glad of any good condition from the besieging enemy, they go to a council, that they may resolve somewhat. So the man here retireth, that he may speak with himself. This is like that *communing with our own heart*, Psal. iv. 4. Thus God *leading to the wilderness, that he may speak to the heart*, Hof. ii. 14. When the person is retired, the thoughts of heart, which were scattered in former steps of the exercise, do more observably throng in here. We shall reduce them into this method, 1. The man

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thinks of his unhappy folly, in bearing arms against God; and here there be large thoughts of former ways, with a blushing countenance, and self-loathing, Ezek. xxxvi. 31. *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, &c.* like that of Psal. li. 3. *His sin is ever before him.* 2. Then he remembereth how fair opportunities of yielding to God he hath basely lost; his spirit is like to faint when he remembereth that, as is said in another case, Psal. xlii. 4, 5, 6. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted in me?—O my God, my soul is cast down within me?—*3. He now thinks of many Christians, whom he mocked and despised in his heart, persuading himself now that they are happy, as having chosen the better part; he thinks of the condition of those who wait on Christ, as the Queen of Sheba did of Solomon's servants: *Happy are thy servants, saith she, who stand continually before thee. and that hear thy wisdom,* Kings x. 8 *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house. &c.* Psal. lxxxiv. 4. He wisheth to be one of the meanest who have any relation to God, as the prodigal son doth speak, he would be as *one of the father's hired servants,* Luke xv. 7, 19. 4. Then he calleth to mind the good report that is gone abroad of God, according to that testimony, Jonah iv. 2. The prophet knew that God was *a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, &c.*

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The free and large promises and offers of grace come in here; and the glorious practices which have past upon sinners of all sorts, according to the fame of God in scripture. 5. He thinks with himself, Why hath God spared me so long? And why have I got such a sight of my sin? And why hath he kept me from breaking prison at my own hand, in choosing some unhappy outgate? Why hath he made this strange change on me? It may be it is in his heart to do me good; O that it may be so!—Although all these thoughts be not in the preparatory work of every one, yet they are with many, and very promising where they are.

VII. Upon all these thoughts and meditations, the man, more seriously than ever before, resolveth to pray, and to make some essay with God upon life and death; he concludeth, *it can be no worse with him: For if he sit still, he perisheth*, as the lepers speak, 2 Kings vii. 3, 4. He considereth, with the pinch'd prodigal son, *that there is bread enough in the father's house, and to spare, while he perisheth for want*: So he goeth to God, for he knoweth not what else to make of his condition, as the prodigal son doth, Luke xv. 17, 18. And it may be, here he resolveth what to speak; but readily things do vary when he is sifted before God, as the prodigal son forgot some of his premeditated prayers, Luke xv. 18, 19, 21. *I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me*

as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came unto his father, and said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

And now, when he cometh before God. more observably than ever before. I. He beginneth with *the Publican afar off*, Luke xviii. 13. with many thorough confessions and self-condemnations. whereof he is very liberal, as Luke xv. 21. *I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy, &c.* II. Now begin his thoughts anent the hearing of his prayer, which he was not wont to question much; he now knows what those expressions of the saints, anent the hearing of their prayers, do import. III. It is observable in this address, that there are many broken sentences, like that of Psal. vi. 3. *But thou, O Lord, how long? supplied with sighs and groanings which cannot be uttered*, Rom. viii. 26. and greedy looking upward, thereby speaking more than can be well expressed by words. IV. There be ordinarily some interruptions, and, as it were, diversions, the man speaking sometimes to the enemy, sometimes to his own heart, sometimes to the multitude in the world, as David did in other cases, Psal. ix. 6. *O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end.* Psal. xlii. 5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.* Psal. iv. 2. *O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn*

my glory into shame? V. It is observable here, that sometimes the man will halt and be silent to hear some indistinct whispering of a joyful sound glancing on the mind, or some news in some broken words in scripture, which, it may be, the man scarcely knoweth to be scripture, or whether it is come from God, or Satan to delude him; yet this he hath resolved, only to *hear what God the Lord will speak*, as, upon another occasion, Psal. lxxxv. 8. VI. More distinct promises come into the man's mind, whereupon he essayeth to lay hold, but is beaten off with objections, as in another case the Psalmist is, Psal. xxii. 3, 6. *But thou art holy. But I am a worm.* Now it is about the dawning of the day with the man, and faith will stir as soon as the Lord imparteth *the joyful sound*, Psal. lxxxix. 15. This is the substance of the covenant, which may be shortly summed up in these words. *Christ Jesus is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

We can speak no further of the man's exercise, as a preparatory work; for what followeth is more than preparatory. Yet that the exercise may appear compleat and full, we shall add here, That, after all these things, the Lord, it may be, after many answers of divers sorts, mightily conveyeth the sound of his covenant into the heart, and determineth the heart to close with it; and God now *draweth* so to Christ, John vi. 44. and so shapeth out the heart for him, that the conception cannot miscarry; for now the heart is so in breadth and length for

him, as that less cannot satisfy, and more is not desired, as that of Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? Or whom have I desired on earth beside thee?* The soul now resolveth to die, if he command so, yea at his door, and facing to himwards.

We have drawn this preparatory work to some length, not tying any man to such a work so circumstantiated, only, we say, The Lord dealth so with some; and where he so convinceth of sin, corruption, and self-emptiness, and maketh a man take salvation to heart, as the one thing necessary; and setting him on work in the use of the means which God hath appointed for relief; I say, such a work rarely shall be found to fail of a good issue and gracious result.

C H A P. VI.

The difference betwixt that preparatory law-work which hath a gracious issue, and the convictions of hypocrites.

Object. **H**YPOCRITES and reprobates have great stirrings of conscience, and deep convictions about sin, setting them on work sometimes, and I do suspect any preparatory work of the law I ever had, to be but such as they have.

Answ. It will be hard to give sure essential differences between the preparatory work in those in whom afterwards Christ is formed, and these

those legal stirrings, which are sometimes in reprobates: If there were not some gracious result of these convictions and wakenings of conscience in the Lord's people, and other marks of which we shall speak afterwards, it were hard to adventure upon any difference that is clear in these legal stirrings. Yet, for answer to the objection, I shall offer some things, which rarely will be found in the stirrings of reprobates, and which are ordinarily found in that law-work which hath a gracious issue.

I. The convictions of hypocrites and reprobates, are usually confined to some few very gross transgressions. Saul grants no more but the persecuting of David, 1 Sam. xxvi. 21. Judas grants only the *betraying of innocent blood*, Mat. xxvii. 4. But usually those convictions, by which the Lord prepareth his own way in the soul, although they may begin at one or more gross particular transgressions, yet they sist not, but the man is led on to see many breaches of the law, and *innumerable evils compassing him*, as David speaketh in the sight of his sin, Psal. xi. 12. And withal, that universal conviction, if I may call it so, is not general, as usually we hear senseless men saying, *that in all things they sin*: But it is particular and condescending, as Paul afterwards spake of himself; he not only is *the chief of sinners*, but particularly, he was a *blasphemer, a persecutor*, 1 Tim. i. 13.

II. The convictions which hypocrites have, do seldom reach their corruption, and that body of death, which breeds an averfeness from what

is good, and strongly inclineth to what is evil. Ordinarily where we find hypocrites speaking of themselves in scripture, they speak loftily and with some self-conceit. both as to their freedom from corruption, John ix. 34. The Pharisees say to the poor man, *Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?* As if they themselves were not as corrupt by nature as he; they speak of great sins, as Hazael did, 2 Kings viii. 13. *Am I a dog, that I should do this great thing?* And also in their undertakings of duty, as that Scribe spake, Mat. viii. 19. *Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.* See how the people do speak, Jer. xlii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. They undertake to do all that God will command them: So that they still go about, in any case, *to establish their own righteousness, not submitting unto the righteousness of God,* Rom. x. 5. But I may say, that convictions and exercise about corruption, and that body of death, inclining to evil, and disenabling for good, is not the least part of the work where the Lord is preparing his own way. They use to judge themselves very wretched because of a body of sin, and are at their wits end how to be delivered, as Paul speaketh when he is under the exercise of it afterwards, Rom vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

III. It will ordinarily be found, that the convictions, which are in hypocrites, either are not so ferious, as that some other business will not put them out of head before any satisfaction be

gotten, as in Cain, who went and *built a city*, and we hear no more of his convictions, Gen. iv. Felix went away until a more *convenient time*, and we hear no more of his *trembling*, Acts xxiv. 25. Or, if that work become very serious, then it runneth to the other extremity, and despair of relief, leaving no room for any outgate. So we find Judas very serious in his convictions, yet he grew desperate and *hanged himself*, Mat. xxvii. 4, 5. But where the Lord prepareth his own way, the work is both so serious, as the person cannot be put off it, until he find some satisfaction; and yet under that very seriousness he lieth open for relief: both which are clear in the jaylor's words, *What must I do to be saved?* Acts xvi. 30. This serious enquiry after relief, is a very observable thing in the preparatory work which leadeth on to Christ. Yet we desire none to lay too much weight on these things, since God hath allowed clear differences between the precious and the vile.

Object. I still fear I have not had so through a sight of my sin and misery, as the Lord giveth to many whom he effectually calleth, especially to great transgressors, such as I am.

Answer. It is true, the Lord discovereth to some great sights of their sin and misery, and they are thereby put under great legal terrors: But as all are not brought in by that sensible preparatory law-work, as we shewed before; so even those who are dealt with after that way, are very differently and variously exercised, in regard of the degrees of terror, and of the conti-

nuance of that work. The jaylor hath a violent work of very short continuance; Paul hath a work continuing three days; some persons are *in bondage through fear of death all their days*, Heb. ii. 15. So that we must not limit the Lord to one way of working here. The main thing we are to look unto in these legal wakenings and convictions of sin and misery, is, if the Lord reach those ends in us, for which usually these stirrings and convictions are sent into the soul; and if those ends be reached, it is well, we are not to vex ourselves about any preparatory work further. Now, those ends which God driveth ordinarily with sinners, by these legal terrors and wakenings of conscience, are four.

First. The Lord discovers sights of mens sin and misery to them, to chase them out of themselves, and to put them out of conceit of their own righteousness. Men naturally have great thoughts of themselves, and do incline much to the covenant of works: The Lord therefore doth discover to them so much of their sin and corruption, even in their best things, that they are made to lothe themselves, and to despair of relief in themselves; and so they are forced to flee out of themselves, and from the covenant of works, *to seek refuge else where*, Heb. vi. 18. *They become dead to themselves and the law*, as to the point of justification, Rom. vii. 4. *Then have they no more confidence in the flesh*, Phil. iii. 3. This is supposed in the offers of Christ, *coming to seek and save that which is lost*, Luke xix.

10. and to be a physician to those who are sick, Mat. xix. 12.

The *Second* great end is, to commend Christ Jesus to mens hearts above all things, that so they may fall in love with him, and betake themselves to that treasure and jewel, which only enricheth, Mat. xiii. 44, 46. and, by so doing, may serve the Lord's design in the contrivement of the gospel, which was the manifestation of his free grace through Christ Jesus in the salvation of men. The sight of a man's own misery and damnable estate by nature, is a ready way to make him prize Christ highly, who alone can set such a wretch at liberty: Yea, it not only leadeth a man to an high esteem of Christ, but also of all things that relate to that way of salvation, as grace, the new covenant, faith, &c. and maketh him carefully to gather and treasure up his Michtams, or golden scriptures, for the confirmation of his interest in these things.

The *Third* great end is, to deter and fear people from sin, and to make them cast out with it, and consent to put their neck under all his yoke. God kindleth some sparks of hell in mens bosoms by the discovery of their sin, as a ready mean to make them henceforth stand in awe, knowing how *bitter a thing it is to depart from the Lord*, Jer. ii. 19. So we find rest offered to the *wearry*, upon condition they will take on Christ's yoke, Mat. xi. 29. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* And God offereth to own men, as their God and Fa-
ther.

ther, upon condition they will allow no peaceable abode to Belial, 2 Cor, vi. 14, 15, 17, 18. *What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 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 unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

The *fourth* great end is, to work up men to a patient and thankful submission to all the master's pleasure. This is a singular piece of work, Ezek. xvi. 63. *Then shalt thou remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord.* The sight of a man's own vileness and deservings, maketh him silent, and to lay his hand on his mouth, whatsoever God doth unto him, Psal. xxxix. 9. *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; because thou didst it,* Ezra. ix. 13. *God hath punished us less than our iniquities.* Micah vii. 9. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned.* The man careth not what God doth to him, or how he deal with him, if he save him from the deserved wrath to come. Also any mercy is a large mercy to him, who hath seen such a sight of himself; he is *less than the least of mercies*, Gen. xxxii. 10. *Any crumb falling from the Master's table*

table is welcome, Mat. xv. 27. He thinks it rich *mercy that he is not consumed*, Lam. iii. 22. This is the thing that marvellously maketh God's poor crossed people so silent under, and satisfied with their lot; nay, they think he deserveth hell who openeth his mouth at any thing God doth to him, since he hath pardoned his transgressions.

So then, for satisfying the objection, I say, If the Lord hath driven thee out of thy self, and commended Christ to thy heart above all things and made thee resolve, on his strength, to wage war with every known transgression; and thou art, in some measure, as a weaned child, acquiescing in what he doth unto thee, desiring to lay thy hand on thy mouth thankfully; then thy convictions of sin and misery, and whatsoever thou dost plead as a preparatory work is sufficient, and thou art to debate no more anent it: Only be advised to study new discoveries of the sense of thy lost condition every day, because of thy old and new sins; and also to see fresh help in Christ, who is a priest for ever to make intercession; and to have the work of sanctification and patience with thankfulness renewed and quickned often: For somewhat of that which abaseth thee, exalteth Christ, and conformeth to his will, must convey thee through all thy lifetime in this world.

C H A P.

C H A P. VII.

Of faith.

WE come now to speak of some more clear and sure marks, by which men may take up their gracious state and interest in Christ. The first thing whereby men may know it, is, their closing with Christ in the gospel, wherein he is held forth. This is believing, or faith, which is the condition of the covenant, Rom. iv. 16. *It is of faith, &c.* Acts xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,* Now although, in propriety of speech, it is hard to prove an interest by faith, it being our very interest in him; yet the heart's closing with Christ Jesus is so discernible in itself, that we may well place it amongst the marks of a gracious state: And if a man can make out this, that he believeth on and in Christ Jesus, he thereby doth prove a very true interest in him.

Many do fear at this, as a mark, upon one of these three grounds ordinarily.

I. Some conceive faith to be a difficult mysterious thing, hardly attainable. To these I say, do not mistake, faith is not so difficult as many do apprehend it to be: I grant true faith in the meanest degree is the gift of God, and above the power of flesh and blood; for God must draw men to Christ, John vi. 44. *No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me,*
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draw him, Phil. i. 29. Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, to believe on him. Yet it were a reflection upon Christ, and all he hath done, to say it were a matter of insuperable difficulty; as is clear, Rom. x. 6, 11. *The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above: Or, who shall descend into the deep? That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation; for the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.* It were according to that scripture, as much upon the matter as to say, Christ came not from heaven, is not risen from the dead, or ascended victorious to heaven. I say, he hath made the way to heaven most easy; and faith, which is the condition required on our part, more easy than men do imagine. For the better understanding of this, consider that justifying faith is not to believe that I am elected, or to believe that God loveth me, or that Christ died for me, or the like; these things are indeed very difficult, and almost impossible at the first hand to be won at by those who are serious; whilst natural Atheists, and deluded hypocrites,

crites, find no difficulty in asserting all those things; I say, true justifying faith is not any of the foresaid things; neither is it simply the believing of any sentence that is written, or that can be thought upon. I grant, he that believeth on Christ Jesus, believeth what God hath said anent man's sinful miserable condition by nature, and he believeth that to be true, *That there is life in the Son, who was slain, and is risen again from the dead, &c.* But none of these, nor the believing of many such truths, do speak out justifying faith, or that believing on the Son of God, spoken of in scripture; for then it were simply an act of the understanding: But true justifying faith, which we now seek after, as a good mark of an interest in Christ, is chiefly and principally an act or work of the heart and will, having presupposed sundry things about truth in the understanding, *With the heart it is believed unto righteousness, Rom. x. 10.* And altho' it seem, verse 9. of that chapter, that a man is saved upon condition that he believe this truth, *God raised Christ from the dead;* yet we must understand another thing there, and verse 10. than the believing the truth of that proposition: For, beside that all devils have that faith whereby they believe, that God raised Christ from the dead; so the scripture hath clearly resolved justifying faith into a *receiving* of Christ, *Joha i. 12. As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God: even to them that believe on his name.* The receiving of Christ is there explained to be the *believing*

on his name. It is still called a *staying on the Lord*, Isa. xxvi. 3. a *trusting in God*, often mentioned in the psalms, and the word is a leaning on him. It is a *believing on Christ*, John vi. 29. *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*, and often so express in the New Testament. When God maketh men believe savingly, he is said to *draw* them unto Christ; and when the Lord inviteth them to believe, he calleth them to come to him John vi. 37, 44. *All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.* The kingdom of heaven is like a man finding a jewel, wherewith he falleth in love, Mat. xiii. 44, 45, 46. Now, I say, this acting of the heart on Christ Jesus, is not so difficult a thing as is conceived. Shall that be judged a mysterious difficult thing, which doth consist much in desire? If men have but an appetite. they have it; for they are *blessed that hunger after righteousness* Mat. v. 6. *If you will, you are welcome* Rev. xxii. 17. Is it a matter of such intricacy and insuperable difficulty, greedily *to look* to that exalted Saviour. Isa. xlv. 22. *Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth;* and to receive a thing that is offered, held forth, and declared to be mine, if I will but accept and take it, and in a manner *open my mouth*, and give way to it, Psal. xviii. 10. *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* Such a thing is faith, if not less. Oh, if I could persuade people what is justifying faith,

which impropriateth Christ to me! We often scar people from their just rest and quiet, by making them apprehend faith to be some deep mysterious thing, and by moving unnecessary doubts about it; whereby it is needlessly darkned.

II. Some make no use of this mark, as judging it a high presumptuous crime to pretend to so excellent a thing as is the very condition of the new covenant. To these I say, you need not startle so much at it, as if it were high pride to pretend to it: For whatsoever true faith be, men must resolve to have it, or nothing at all; all other marks are in vain without it; a thousand things besides will not do the business: *Unless a man believe, he abideth in the state of condemnation, John iii. 18, 36. He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

III. Others do not meddle with this noble mark of faith, because they judge it a work of the greatest difficulty, to find out faith where it is. To these I say. it is not so difficult to find it out, since *he that believeth, hath the witness in himself, John v. 10.* It is a thing which by some serious search may be known. Not only may we do much to find it out by the preparatory work going before it in many, as the apprehending and believing of a man's lost estate, and that he cannot do his own business, and that there is satisfying fulness in Christ, very desirable

able if he could overtake it; a serious minding of this, with a heart laid open for relief; as also by the ordinary companions and concomitant of it, *viz.* the liking of Christ's dominion, his kingly and prophetic office, a desire to resign my self wholly up to him, to be at his disposing: As also by the native consequences of it, *viz.* The affoilzying of the word, the affoilzying of my own conscience according to the word, a heart-purifying work, a working by love, &c. I say, not only may we know faith by these things, but it is discernible by itself and of its own nature; although I deny not, but there must be some help of God's Spirit, *by which we know what is freely given unto us of God, 1 Cor. ii. 12.* As also, that God hath allowed many evidences and marks, as precious helps, whereby men may clear up faith more fully to themselves, *1 John v. 13. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.* Yet I still say, that faith, or believing, which is some acting of the heart upon Christ in the gospel, and the transacting with him there, is discernible of itself, and by itself, to a judicious understanding person, with an ordinary influence of the Spirit; unless the Lord, for reasons known to himself, do overcloud a man's reflex light, by which he should take up and perceive what is in him.

This justifying faith, which we assert to be so discernible is, in the Lord's deep wisdom and gracious condescendency, variously exprest in scripture, according to the different actings of

it upon God, and outgoings after him, so as every one who hath it, may find and take it up in his own mould. It sometimes acteth by a desire of union with him in Christ: This is that *looking* to him in Isa. xlv. 22. *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.* This seems to be a weak act of faith, and far below other actings of it at other times, perhaps in that same person. Men will look to what they dare not approach, to their apprehension, which they dare not touch or embrace; they may look to one to whom they dare not speak: Yet God hath made the promise to faith in that acting, as the forecited Scripture doth shew, and this he hath done mercifully and wisely; for this is the only discernible way of the acting of faith of some persons sometimes. Such are the actings or outgoings of faith exprest in scripture, by *hungring and thirsting after righteousness*, Mat. v. 6. And that exprest by *willing*, Rev. xxii. 17. *And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

Again, this faith goeth out sometimes in the act of recumbency. or leaning on the Lord, the soul taking up Christ then as a resting-stone, and God hath so held him out, although he be a *stumbling-stone* to others, Rom. ix. 33. This acting of it is hinted in the expressions of *trusting* and *staying* on God, so often mentioned in scripture; and precious promises are made to this acting of faith, as Isa. xxvi. 3, 4. *God will keep them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on him; because such do trust in him. Trust in the Lord;*

Lord; for with him is everlasting strength. So, Psal. cxxv. 1. They that trust in the Lord, shall be as Mount Zion, which abideth forever. I say, the Lord hath made promises to this way of faith's acting, as knowing it will often go out after him in this way with many persons; and this way of its acting will be most discernible to them.

It goeth out after God sometimes by an act of waiting, when the soul hath somewhat depending before God, and hath not got out his mind satisfiably anent that thing; then faith doth wait, and so it hath the promise, Isa. xlix. 23. *They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.* Sometimes it acteth in a wilful way upon the Lord, when the soul apprehendeth God thrusting it away, and threatening its ruin; so, Job xiii. 15. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* The faith of that poor woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. 22—28. so highly commended by Christ, did go out in this way of wilful acting over difficulties; and the Lord speaketh much good of it, and to it, because some will be put to it, to exercise faith that way sometimes, and so they have that for their encouragement. It were tedious to instance all the several ways of faith upon, and its exercise about, and outgoing after Christ. I may say, according to the various conditions and pressures of the soul of man, the Lord hath variously held out himself and his fulness in Christ under divers notions, as might most fitly meet the distress or condition of man. And accordingly, faith, which God hath appointed

pointed to traffick and travel between Christ and man, as the instrument of conveyance of his fulness unto man, and of maintaining union and communion with him, acteth variously and differently upon God in Christ: For faith is the very shaping out of a man's heart according to God's device of salvation by Christ Jesus, in whom it pleased the Father that fulness should dwell; so that let Christ turn what way he will, faith airteth and pointeth that way. Now he turneth all ways in which he can be useful to poor man, and therefore faith acteth accordingly on him for drawing out of that fulness, according to a man's case and condition. As for example, the soul is *naked*, destitute of a covering to keep it from the storm of God's wrath: Christ is *fine raiment*, Rev. iii. 17, 18. Then accordingly faith's work here is to *put on the Lord Jesus*, Gal. iii. 27. The soul is hungry and thirsty after somewhat that may everlastingly satisfy: Christ Jesus is, *Milk, Wine, Water, the Bread of Life, and the true Manna*, Isa. lv. 1. 2. John vi. 48.—51. He is *the feast of fat things, and of wine refined*, Isa. xxv. 6. Then the work and exercise of faith is, to *go, buy, eat and drink abundantly*, Isa. lv. 1. John vi. 53.—57. The soul is pursued for guilt more or less, and is not law-biding; Christ Jesus is the city of refuge, and the High Priest there, during whose lifetime, that is, for ever, the poor man who wins thither, is safe; then the work and exercise of faith is, *to flee thither for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us*, Heb. vi. 18.

vi. 18. In a word, whatsoever way he may benefit poor man, so he speaketh of himself: And as he holdeth out himself in the scripture; so faith doth point towards him. If he be a Bridegroom, faith will go out in a marriage-relation; if he be a Father, faith pleadeth the man to be a child; if he be a Shepherd, faith pleads he may be one of his sheep; if he be a Lord, faith calleth him so, *which none can do but by the Spirit of Jesus*, 1 Cor. xii. 3. If he be dead, and risen again for our justification, faith *believeth God hath raised him* on that account, Rom. x. 9. Wheresoever he be, there would faith be; and whatsoever he is, faith would be somewhat proportionally: For, by faith the heart is shapen out in breadth and length for him; yea, when the fame and report of him goeth abroad in his truth, although faith seeth not much, yet it *believeth in his name* upon the very fame he hath sent abroad of himself, John i. 12.

But here, for avoiding of mistakes, consider, 1. That although justifying faith acteth so variously, yet every believer, who hath a good title to Christ Jesus, hath not all these various actings and exercises of faith; for his condition craveth them not: And also the Master is pleased not to lead out the faith of some persons at some times in some of these ways, for reasons known to himself, even when their necessity (to their apprehension) calleth for such acting of faith. Surely, every one dare not say, *Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him.* Many would not have gone up with the wo-

man of Canaan I spake of, Mat. xv. but would have been discouraged, and have quit the pursuit. It is on this account that Christ doth highly commend the faith of some beyond the faith of others, Mat. viii. 10. of the Centurion, Mat. xv. 28. of the woman of Canaan. Many good people are much disquieted anent their faith because it goeth not out in all those ways we find recorded in scripture; but there is hardly any man will be found, whose faith hath acted all these ways.

II. Many of these actings of faith are much intended and remitted. They are sometimes strong and vigorous, and discernible; and sometimes they fail, and misbelief doth prevail; so as it were an uncertain thing to judge of a man's state by these. We find the saints very different from themselves in regard of the actings of faith sometimes, as we shewed before.

III. Each one of these actings of faith speaketh good to the person in whom it is, and hath promises annexed unto it, as we have said. Yet,

IV. Although these actings of faith have promises annexed unto them, they are not, for that, the condition of the new covenant; for then every one behoved to have each one of them, which is not true, as we said before. A promise is made to him who overcometh; but perseverance is not the condition of the new covenant, but doth suppose it. There are promises made to the exercise of all graces, in scripture; but only faith is the condition of the covenant. I say then, these promises are made to
these

these actings of faith, not as such, but as they do suppose justifying faith, which is the condition of the covenant. All these are actings of faith, but not as it is justifying. Therefore,

V. There is somewhat common to all gracious persons, which may be supposed by all the foresaid actings of faith, wherein the nature and essence of justifying faith standeth. And this is the heart's satisfaction anent God's device of salvation by Christ; when man pleased God's invention of satisfaction to justice, through Christ Jesus, in whom all fulness doth dwell now by the Father's pleasure; when the soul and heart of man acquiesceth in that, then it believeth unto salvation. As at first the Lord made man suitable to the covenant of works, by creating him perfect, and so putting him in a capacity to perform his will in that covenant, so under the new covenant, when God giveth the new heart to man, he setteth the idea and stamp of all his device in the new covenant upon the man, so as there is a consonancy to God's will there; Thus he beareth the image of the second Adam, Christ Jesus, on him. This is a great part of the new heart, and is most opposed to works; since now the man absolutely falleth off works, *becoming dead to the law* as to the point of justification, *by the body of Christ*, Rom. vii. 4. Man perceiving that God hath devised a way of satisfying divine justice, and recovering lost man by the incarnation of Christ, he thinks this so good and sure a way, that he absolutely giveth up with the law, as I said before, and clos-

eth:

eth with this device: And this is believing or faith, very opposite to works, and all resting thereupon. This cannot fail to be in all gracious persons, in whom many of the actings of faith are not to be found. This doth clearly suppose known distress in a man, without all relief in himself: this supposeth known fulness in Christ, as the alone sufficient relief; this imports a sort of impropriation: For the heart. pleasing that device, in so far swayeth towards it. This is a thing clearly supposed in all the actings of faith, spoken of before. He that greedily hungreth, hath this; and he that leaneth, hath this; and he that puts on Christ, hath this, &c. This is to esteem *Christ the wisdom and power of God* to salvation; so is he said to be to all that believe, 1 Cor. i. 24. They esteem that device wise and sure, beseeming God; and that is to believe. On this account, *Christ, who is the rejected stone to many, is precious to them who believe; a fit stone to recover, fortify and beautify the tottering building and fabrick of lost men. To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious; ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. - Wherefore it is contained in the scriptures, Behold I lay in Sion a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the Stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head*

of the corner: And a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed, 2 Pet. ii. 4—8. The kingdom of God is like a man finding a treasure, for which with joy he selleth all, Mat. xiii. 44. These words hold out the very way of believing, viz. Salvation is discovered in the gospel to be by Christ; the heart valueth that invention as satisfying. This is to believe on the Son of God *lifted up*; which is compared with the looking to the *brasen serpent*, John iii. 14. It was man's approbation of that device which made it effectual for his healing; so is it here, *he that so believeth, setteth to his seal that God is true*, John iii. 33. True, Wherein? In that record he hath born, that God hath provided life for men, and placed it all in Christ, John v. 10, 11. *He that believeth not, maketh God a liar*. Wherein? In his saying that Christ is a safe and sure way to heaven. This is the pleasing and acquiescing in that device; and it is consonant to all I know spoken of justifying faith in scripture. This is the believing on Christ and on his name, the receiving and resting on him for salvation, in our *Catechism*; the believing that Jesus is the Christ, that is, the anointed One, whom the Father hath sealed, and set apart. and qualified for the work of reconciling man unto God; and *he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*. 1 John v. 1. This is to *believe with the heart, that God hath raised Christ from the dead*, Rom. x. 9. The man believeth Christ died, and is

raised

raised on the account of satisfaction for men's transgression. Devils may believe that: nay, but the man I speak of, *believeth it with his heart*, (which no natural man doth, until a new heart be given unto him) that is, he cordially pleaseth, is satisfied with, and acquiesceth in this noble invention. And this faith layeth out itself now and then in its actings, outgoings and exercise, according to all the covenant-relations under which Christ is held forth in the scripture.

Now. I say, this faith is discernible, not only in these actings many times: A man may know if his heart doth hunger after Christ, and flee for refuge to him, when pursued; and if he doth commit himself to God, &c. but also in its very nature: As it is justifying, it is discernible, and may be known. A man may clearly know, if from known distresses in himself, upon the report and fame of Christ's fulness, his heart doth please God's device in the new covenant; if it goeth out after Christ in that invention, and pleaseth him as Lord of the life of men, terminating and resting there, and no where else, acquiescing in that contrivement with desire and complacency: This is a discernible thing; therefore I obtest men impartially to examine themselves, and if they find that their heart has closed so with that device of salvation, and is gone out after him as precious, that thereupon they conclude a sure and true interest in Christ Jesus, and a good claim and title to the crown, *since he that believeth shall never perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 16—36.

C H A P. VIII.

The difference between the faith of hypocrites and true saving justifying faith.

Object. **H**YPOCRITES and reprobates have a sort of faith, and are said to believe, John ii. 23, 24. *Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did: But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, Acts viii. 13. Then Simon, the Sorcerer, himself believed also; and cannot choose but go out after Christ, and that device of salvation, when they hear of it; and they profess they do so, yet are deluded, and so may I be.*

Ans^w. To say nothing of that thought of your heart, (whereby you wonder that any man should not please the device of salvation by Christ, and lead out towards him) as a very promising thing, and speaking out justifying faith to be in your bosom; and to say nothing in contradiction to that which you think, that a natural man, whilst such, and before he get a new heart, can please that device, and believe with his heart, and affectionately, that which perfectly overthroweth the covenant of works, and abaseth man in the point of self-righteousness already attained, or that can be won at by him, which is inconsistent with many scriptural truths; I offer these differences between the faith of all hypocrites or reprobates, and that
true

true saving justifying faith whereof we have spoken.

I. They never close with Christ Jesus in that device, and him alone as a sufficient covering of the eyes, as is said of Abraham to Sarah, Gen. xx. 16. They still hold fast somewhat of their own, at least to procure God's favour and salvation: Their heart doth still speak, as that young man's speech, Luke xviii. 18, 21. doth insinuate, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* Beside that, they do still retain their former lovers, and will not break their covenants with hell and death, imagining they may have Christ with these things equally sharing in their heart; contrary to that, *A man cannot serve two masters*, Mat. vi. 24. Either Christ must be judged absolute Lord, and worthy to be so, or nothing at all. And so it is clear, their heart is not shapen out for that device of salvation by Christ, whom God hath alone made Lord here, in whom all fulness shall dwell. But where justifying faith is, the soul of a man and his heart doth close with Christ, and him alone, *having no confidence in the flesh*, Phil. iii. 3. Psal. lxii. 5. *He trusteth only in God.* Also the man here giveth up with other lovers, as they compete with Christ, he resolves *not to be for another*, Hosea iii. 3. He calls him Lord, *which a man can only do by the Spirit of Christ*, 1 Cor. xii. 3.

II. As hypocrites and reprobates do never close with Christ alone; so they do never close with a full Christ, as he is anointed to be a King, to rule over a man in all things; a Priest, to procure

cure pardon, and to make peace for man upon all occasions; a Prophet, to be wisdom, and a Teacher and Counsellor in all cases to man: So they do not receive Christ, especially in the first and third office. But where true justifying faith is, a man closeth with whole Christ in all his offices, judging all his *will good, holy, just and spiritual*, Rom. vii. 12, 14. and *right concerning all things*, Psal. cxix. 128. *making mention of his righteousness only*, Psal. lxxi. 16.

The man also giveth up himself to be taught of him, Mat. xi. 29. *Learn of me*. So that Christ is made to the true believer, with his own consent, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption*, Cor. i. 30. And although he hath not all these things formally in exercise, when his heart goeth out after Christ, yet, upon search and trial, it will be found with him, as I have said.

III. Hypocrites and reprobates do never close with Christ, and all the inconveniencies that may follow him; they stick at that with the Scribe, Mat. viii. 19, 20. But where true justifying faith is, a man doth close with him on all hazards; he resolveth to forego all, rather than to forego Christ. *We have left all, and have followed thee*, Mark x. 28. *He reckoneth all to be loss and dung for the excellency of Christ Jesus, as his Lord, and to be found in him*, Phil. iii. 8.

We might give other difference also; as that true faith is operative, *purifying the heart*, Acts xv. 9. *working by love*, Gal. v. 6. whilst hypocrites do only cleanse the outside of the platter,
Mat.

Mat. xxiii. 25. and *do all to be seen of men*, Mat. vi. 5. *not seeking the honour that is of God only, and so cannot believe*, John v. 44. We might also shew, that true faith is never alone in a man, but attended with other saving graces: But because these things will coincide with what followeth; and here we are shewing that a man may take up his gracious state by his faith, and the acting thereof on Christ; we pass these things.

C H A P. IX.

Of the new Creature.

THE second great mark of a gracious state, and true saving interest in Jesus Christ, is the new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.* This new creation or renovation of that man, is a very sensible change, although not in those who are effectually called from the womb, or in their younger years; because those have had this new creature from that time in them, so as this change in after-periods of time is not discernible; yet in those who have been regenerated and brought in to Christ after they were come to greater age, and so have more palpably been under the *power of darkness*, before they were *translated into the kingdom of Christ*, Col. i. 13. But in all who do warrantably pretend to Christ, this new creature must be; although some do
not

not know experimentally the contraries of every part of it, so as others do; because they have not been equally, in regard of practice, under the power of darknes. This new creature is called *the new man*, Col. iii. 10. which doth hold out the extent of it. It is not simply a new tongue or new hand, but *a new man*. There is a principle of new life and motion put in the man, which is the new heart; which new principle of life sendeth forth acts of life, or of *conformity to the image of him who created it*, Col. iii. 10. so as the party is renewed in some measure every way. This renovation of the man who is in Christ, may be reduced into these two great heads.

First, There is a renovation of the man's person, soul and body, in some measure. I. His understanding is renewed, so as he judgeth *Christ preached* in the gospel to be *the wisdom and power of God*, a wise and strong device beseeming God, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. He knoweth the things of God really and solidly, not to be *yea and nay*, and uncertain fancies; but all to be *yea and amen*, solid, certain, substantial things, having a desirable accomplishment in Christ, and resolving much in him, 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned: But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, 2 Cor. i. 18, 19, 20. As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who

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was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea: For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God in us." Natural men, educated under gospel-ordinances, although they have some notional knowledge of God, Christ, the promises, the motions of the holy Spirit, &c. so as they may confer, preach and dispute of these things; yet they look on them as common received maxims of christianity, from which to recede were a singularity and disgrace; but not as real, solid, substantial truths, so as to adventure their souls and everlasting being on them. The understanding is renewed also, to take up somewhat of God in the creatures, as bearing sparks of his glorious attributes, Psal. xix. 1. *They see the heavens declaring his glory and power; and somewhat of God in providence and dispensations that fall out: His wondrous works declare that his name is near* Psal. lxxv. 1. The understanding also taketh up the conditions and cases of the soul, otherways than it was wont to do; as we find the saints usually speaking in scripture, *O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord*, Psal. xvi. 2. *My soul said, Thy face will I seek*, Psal. xxvii. 8. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* Psal. xlii. 5. Psal. xliii. 5. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*, Psal. cxvi. 7.

II. The heart and affections are renewed. The heart is made a *new heart, a heart of flesh*, capable of impressions, having a copy of his law stamped on it, and *fear of God put into it*, where-
by

by the man's duty becometh in a manner native and kindly to the man, Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. It was before a *heart of stone*, void of the fear of God. The affections are renewed now: The love is renewed in some good measure; it goeth out after God. *I will love the Lord*, Psal. xviii. 1. after his law, *O how love I thy law!* Psal. cxix. 97. after those who have God's image in them, John xiii. 35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*, 1 John iii. 14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life; because we love the brethren.* This love to God's people is upon a pure account, as they are the children of God, and do keep his statutes, 1 Peter i. 22. It is *with a pure heart fervently*; and therefore it goeth towards all such, whom the man knoweth or apprehendeth to be such, Psal. cxix. 63. *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts*, in all cases and conditions, even where there is nothing to beautify or commend, but the image of God. And this love is so *fervent* many times, 1 Pet. i. 22. that it putteth itself out in all relations, so as a man seeketh a godly wife, a godly master, a godly servant, a godly counsellor, if he have to choose upon, Psal. ci. 6. *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.* And it is not *quenched by many waters*, Cant. viii. 7. Many imperfections and infirmities, difference in opinion, wrongs received, will not altogether

quench love. Also it is communicative of good according to its measure, and as the case of the poor godly requireth, Psal. xvi. 2. "Thou art my Lord, my goodnes extendeth not to thee, but to the saints, &c, 1 John iii. 17, 18, 19. But whofo hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." The man's hatred is also renewed, and is now bended against sin, Psal. cxix. 113. *I hate vain thoughts*; against God's enemies, as such, Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22. *Do not I hate them that hate thee?* &c. The joy or delight is renewed, for it runneth towards God, Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee*; toward his law and will, Psal. i. 2. *His delight is in the law of the Lord*; and towards the godly and their fellowship, Psal. xvi. 3. *To the saints in whom is all my delight*. The sorrow is turned against sin which hath wronged Christ, Zech. xii. 10. *Looking to him whom they have pierced, they mourn*, 2 Cor. vii. 11. *The sorrow is godly* there, and against what encroacheth upon God's honour. *They are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of that is their burden*, Zeph. iii. 18. There is some renovation in all the affections, as in every other part of the soul pointing now towards God.

III. The very outward members of the man are renewed, as the scripture speaks, the tongue, the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, &c. so that *those members which once were improved as weapons of unrighteousness unto sin, are now improved as weapons of righteousness unto holiness,* Rom. vi. 19.

Secondly, A man who is in Christ, is renewed in some measure in all his ways: *Behold, all things are become new,* 2 Cor. v. 17. The man becometh new. I. In the way of his interest. He was upon any good before, though but apparent, and at best but external, Psal. iv. 6. *Many say, Who will shew us any good?* But now his interest and business is, how to be found in Christ in that day, Phil. iii. 9. or, how to be forthcoming to him, and *walk before him in the light of the living,* Psal. lvi. 13. which he would choose among all the mercies that fill this earth, Psal. cxix. 64. "The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy, teach me thy statutes." The interest of Christ also becometh the man's interest, as appeareth in the song of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. and in the song of Mary, Luke i. It is strange to see people newly converted, and having reached but the beginnings of knowledge. concern and interest themselves in the public matters of Christ's kingdom, so desirous to have him riding prosperously, and subduing the people under him.

II. The man that is in Christ, is renewed in the way of his worship. He was wont to serve God in the oldness of the letter, for the fashion, answering the letter of the command in the out-

side of duty. which one in whom the old man hath absolute dominion can do: But now he worshippeth God *in newness of spirit*, Rom. vii. 6. in a new way, wherein he is *helped by the spirit of God*, Rom. viii. 26. beyond the reach of flesh and blood. He *serveth now the true and living God*, 1 Thess. i. 9. *in spirit and in truth*, John iv. 24. having spiritual apprehensions of God, and engaged in his very soul in that work, doing and saying truly and not feignedly when he worshippeth; still *desiring to approach unto him as a living God*, who heareth and seeth him, and can accept his service, Psal. xlii. 1, 2. I grant, he fails of this many times; yet I may say, such worship he intendeth, and sometimes overtaketh; and doth not much reckon that worship, which is not so performed unto God; and the iniquity of his holy things is not the least part of his burden and exercise. Such a worship natural men are strangers unto, whilst they babble out their vain-glorious boastings, like the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, 12. *to an unknown God*, Acts xvii. 23.

III. The man that is in Christ is renewed in the way of his outward calling and employment in the world; he now resolveth to be about it, because God hath commanded so, "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, Rom. xii. 11. and to eye God in it as the last end, doing it to his glory, 1 Cor. x. 31. and studieth to keep some intercourse with God in the exercise of his outward employments, as Jacob doth in his latter will, Gen. xlvii. 18. "I have

have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." And as Nehemiah did, Neh. ii. 4. "Then the King said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven." So as the man resolveth to walk with God, and *set him always before him*, Psal. xvi. 8. wherein, I deny not, he faileth often.

IV. He becometh new in the way of his relations; he becometh a more dutiful husband, father, brother, master, servant, neighbour, &c. "Herein doth he exercise himself to keep a conscience void of offence towards men, as well as towards God, Acts xxiv. 16. becoming all things to all men," 1 Cor. ix. 22.

V. He becometh new in the way of lawful liberties; he studieth to make use of meat, drink, sleep, recreations, apparel with an eye to God, labouring not to come under the power of any lawful thing, 1 Cor. vi. 12. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." Not to give offence to others in the use of these things, Rom. xiv. 20, 21. "For meat destroy not the work of God; all things indeed are pure, but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence: it is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Rom xv. 20. "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification, nor using liberty as an occasion to the flesh," Gal. v. 13. Yea, he laboureth to use all these things as a stranger on earth, so as his

moderation may appear, Phil. iv. 5. *Let your moderation be known unto all men.* And some way he doth eye God as the last end in these things, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Doing all to the glory of God:* So as we may say of that man, *Old things are much past away, all things are, in some measure, become new,* 2 Cor. v. 17. He that is so a new creature, is undoubtedly in Christ.

This renovation of a man in all manner of conversation, and this being under law to God in all things, is that *holiness without which no man shall see the Lord,* Heb. xii. 14. Men may fancy things to themselves, but unless they study to approve themselves unto God in all well-pleasing, and reach some inward testimony of sincerity that way, they shall not assure their hearts before him. “The testimony of mens conscience is their rejoicing,” 2 Cor. i. 12. “By this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments,” 1 John ii. 3. “And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him; for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God,” 1 John iii. 19, 20, 21. No confidence if the heart condemn. This is the new creature, having a principle of new spiritual life infused by God into the heart, whereby it becometh new, and putteth forth acts of new life throughout the whole man, as we have said, so as he pointeth towards the whole law: Both towards these commands which forbid sin; so he
resolveth

resolveth to set against secret sins, *not to lay a stumbling-block before the blind*, Lev. xix. 14. Little sins, which are judged so by many, the least things of the law, Mat. v. 19. "Whoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." Spiritual sins, filthiness of the spirit, 2 Cor. 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." Sins of omission as well as of commission, since men are to be judged by these, Mat. xxv. 41, 42, 43, 44, 45. "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, &c. Yea, sins that are winded into his natural humour and constitution, and so are as a right eye or hand to him, Mat. v. 29. *If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, &c.* His new principle of life, by the good hand of God, maketh the man set against every known sin, so far as not to allow peaceable abode to any known darkness, 2 Cor. vi. 14. *What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?* As also he pointeth towards those commands which relate to duty, and the quickening of grace in the man: It maketh a man *respect all God's known commands*, Psal. cxix. 6. *To live godly, righteously, and soberly*, Tit. ii. 12.

Yea, and to study a right and sincere way and manner of doing things, resolving not to give over this study of conformity to God's will, whilst he liveth on earth, but still to *press forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, Phil. iii. 13, 14. This is true holiness, very becoming all those who pretend to be heirs of that holy habitation, in the immediate company and fellowship of a holy God, 1 John iii. 3. *We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.*

Some may think these things high attainments, and very hard to be won at. I grant it is true: But, *First*, Remember that there is a very large allowance in the covenant, promised to his people, which maketh things more easy. The Lord hath engaged *to take away the stony heart, to give a heart of flesh, a new heart, an heart to fear him for ever*; he hath engaged *to put his law in mens heart, to put his fear in their heart, to make them keep that law; to put his Spirit in them, to cause them keep it.* He hath promised *to satisfy the priests with fatness, that the souls of the people may be satiated with his goodness, and to keep and water them continually every moment*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Jer. xxxi. 33. Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Jer. xxxi. 12. Isa. xxvii. 3. And if he must be *enquired to do all these things unto men*, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. He engageth *to pour out the spirit of grace and supplication on them*, Ezek. xii. 10. And so to learn them how to seek these things, and how to put him to it, to do all for them.

Secondly,

Secondly, For the satisfaction of the weaker, I grant this new creature, as we have circumscribed and enlarged it, will not be found, in all the degrees of it, in every gracious person. But it is well if,

I, There be a new man: We cannot grant less; *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*, 2 Cor. v. 17. And that is the new man, which all must put on who are savingly taught of Christ, Eph. iv. 21, 22, 23, 24. "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." There must be some renewing after the image of God in a man's soul and body; there must be somewhat of every part of the man pointing towards God; although I grant every one cannot instruct this to others, neither discern it in himself, because many know not the distinct parts of the soul, nor pieces of reformation competent to every part of the soul and body; yet it will be found there is some such thing in them, yea, they have a witness of it within them, if you make the thing plain and clear to them what it is.

II. There must be such a respect unto God's known commands, that a man do not allow peaceably any known iniquity to dwell in him; for, *what fellowship hath righteousness with un-*
right.

righteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16. He must not regard iniquity. Psal. cxix. 6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. Psal. lxxvi. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. I grant men may be ignorant of many commands and many sins, and may imagine in some cases, that some sins are not hateful unto God; but supposing that they are instructed in these things there can be no agreement between righteousness and unrighteousness.

III. Men must point towards all the law of God in their honest resolutions; for this is nothing else than to give up the heart unto God, to put his law in it without exception, which is a part of the covenant we are to make with God, Heb. viii. 10. *This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel—I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.* I grant many know not how to point towards God's law in all their ways; but if it be made manifest unto them how that should be done, they will point at it. And it is true, they will many times fail of their resolutions in their practice; yet when they have failed, they can say, they did resolve otherways, and will yet honestly, and without guile, resolve to do otherways, and it will prove their affliction to have failed of their resolution, when the Lord discovereth it to them, which he will do in due time.

IV. When we are to judge of our state by the new creature, we must do it at a convenient
time

time, when we are in good case, at least not when we are in the worst case; for *the flesh and spirit do lust and fight against other*, Gal. v. 17. And sometimes the one and sometimes the other doth prevail. Now I say, we must choose a convenient time, when the spiritual part is not by some temptation worsted and overpowered by the flesh: For, in that case, the new creature is recoile^d back in its streams, and much returned to the fountain and the habits, except in some small things not easily discernible, whereby it maketh opposition to the flesh, according to the foresaid scripture: For, now is it the time of winter in the soul, and we may not expect fruit, yea, not leaves, as in some other season; only here, lest profane Atheists should make advantage of this, we will say, that the Spirit doth often prevail over the flesh in a godly man, and the scope, aim, tenor, and main drift of his way is in the law of the Lord, that is, his *walk*, Psal. cxix. 1. Whereas the path-way, and ordinary course, of the wicked is sin, as is often hinted in the book of the Proverbs of Solomon. And if it happen that a godly man be overmastered by any transgression, ordinarily it is his sad exercise; and we suppose he keeps it still in dependency before God, to have it rectified as David speaketh, Psal. lvi. 13. *Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?*

C H A P. X.

The difference betwixt a truly renewed man who is in Christ, and hypocrites.

Object. **A** THEISTS and hypocrites may have great changes and renovation wrought upon them, and in them, and I fear mine be such.

Answ. I grant that Atheists and hypocrites have many things in them, which do look like the new creature. First, in regard of the parts of the man, they may 1. come to much knowledge, as Heb. vi. 4. *They are enlightned.* 2. There may be a reel among their affections, as, *they receive they word with joy, as he that received the seed into stony places,* Mat. xiii. 20. 3. They may reach a great deal of outward reformation in the outward man, both anent freedom from sin, and engagement to positive duty, as that Pharisee did, Luke xviii. 11, 12. *God. I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Yea, 4. in regard of their practical understanding, they may judge some things of God to be excellent; the officers said, *that never man spake as Christ,* John vii. 46.

Secondly, Hypocrites may have a great deal of profession. 1. They may talk of the law and gospel, and of the covenant, as the wicked do:

do: Psal. l. 16. "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou should'st take my covenant in thy mouth?" 2. They may confess sin openly to their own shame, as king Saul did, : Sam. xxvi. 21. 3. They may humble themselves in sackcloth with Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27. 4. They may enquire busily after duty, and come cheerfully to receive it; Isa. lviii. 2. "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God." 5. They may join with God's interest in a hard and difficult time, as Demas and other hypocrites in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, who afterwards fell off 6. They may give much of their goods to God and the saints, as Ananias, Acts v. 1, 2. if not all their goods, : Cor. xiii. 3. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," Yea, 7. it is not impossible for some such, being straitly engaged in their credit. to *give their bodies to be burnt*, as in the last cited place.

Thirdly, Hypocrites may advance far in the common and ordinary steps of a Christian work; such as the elect have when God leads them captive. As, 1. They may be under great convictions of sin, as Judas was, Mat. xxvii. 3, 4, 5. So was king Saul often. 2. They may tremble at the word of God, and be under much terror, as Felix was, Acts xxiv. 25. 3. They may *rejoice in receiving of the truth*, as
he

he that received the seed into stony places, Mat. xiii. 20. 4. They may be in some peace and quiet in expectation of salvation by Christ, as the foolish virgins were, Mat. xxv. 5. All this may be backed and followed with some good measure of reformation, as the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, 12. *The unclean spirit may go out of them, Mat. xii. 43.* 6. This work may seem to be confirmed by some special experiences and *tastings of the good word of God, Heb. vi. 4, 5.*

Fourthly, Hypocrites may have some things very like the saving graces of the Spirit; as, 1. They may have a sort of faith, with Simon Magus, Acts viii. 13. 2. They may have a sort of repentance, and may walk mournfully, Mal. iii. 14. *What profit is it that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?* 3. They may have a great fear of God, such as Balaam had, who for a house-full of gold would not go with the messengers of Balak, without leave asked of God, and given, Numb. xxii. 18. 4. They have a sort of hope, Job viii. 13. *The hypocrites hope shall perish.* 5. They have some love, so had Herod to John, Mark vi. 26. I need not to insist, it is out of all question they have counterfeits of all saving graces.

Fifthly, They have somewhat like the special communications of God, and the witnessing of his Spirit, as somewhat like the powers of the world to come, powerfully on them, with some flashes of joy arising thence, as Heb. vi. 4, 5. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and

and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.' Notwithstanding of all which, they are but *almost persuaded with Agrippa to be Christians, Acts xxvi. 28.* It were tedious to speak particularly to each of these things, and to clear it up, that they are all but rotten ware: I shall condescend upon some few things, wherein a truly renewed man, who is in Christ, doth differ from hypocrites and reprobates.

I. Whatsoever change be in hypocrites, yet their heart is not changed and made new. The new heart is only given to the elect, when they are converted and brought under the bond of the covenant. *Jer. xxxii. 39. I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.* Hypocrites did never apprehend Christ as the only satisfying good in all the world, for which *with joy they would quit all;* for then the kingdom of God were entered into them. *Mat. xiii. 44.* "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field." The truly renewed man dare and can upon good ground say, and hath a testimony of it from on high, that his heart hath been changed in taking

up of Christ, and hath been led out after him, as the only enriching treasure, in whom *to be found he accounteth all things else loss and dung*, Phil. iii. 8, 9.

II. Whatsoever reformation or profession hypocrites do attain unto; as it cometh not from a new heart, and pure principle of zeal for God, so it is always for some wicked and by-end, as, *to be seen of men*, Mat. vi. 5. or to evite and shun some outward strait, to be free of God's wrath and the trouble of their own conscience, Isa. lviii. 3. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?* Mal. iii. 14. *What profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? In testimony of this, they never have respect to all known commands, else they should never be ashamed*, Psal. cxix. 6. Nor do they without approven guile in their own heart, resolve against every known iniquity, else they were freed of *heart-condemnings*, and so might justly have *confidence before God*, 1 John ii. 21, 22. If in never so mean a case, they did, from a principle of love unto and of zeal for Christ, and for a right end, confess and profess him, Christ were obliged by his own word *to confess them before his Father*, Mat. x. 32.

III. Whatsoever length hypocrites advance in that work, by which people are led in unto Christ, yet they never *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, Mat. vi. 33. *The one thing that is necessary*, viz. Christ's friendship
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and fellowship, is never their *one thing* and heart-satisfying choice, else that *better part would never be taken from them*, Luke x. 42.

IV. Whatsoever counterfeits of grace are in hypocrites, yet they are all bred there, without any saving work of the Spirit of Christ, and it is enough to exclude them from the benefit of this mark, that they are never denied to these things, nor emptied of them, but still do rest on them as their Saviour, so that *they submit not unto the righteousness of God*, Rom. x. 3. And that is enough to keep them at a distance from Christ, who will never clout that *old garment* of hypocrites with his fine *new linen*, nor *put his new wine into old bottles*, Mat. ix. 16, 17.

V. We may say, let hypocrites, reprobates, or Atheists have what they can, they want the three great essentials of religion and true Christianity. First, They are not broken in themselves, and emptied even of their righteousness, the length of self-lothing, yet lying open for relief. Such *lost ones Christ came to seek and save*, Luke xix. 10. Secondly, They never took up Christ Jesus as the only treasure and jewel that can only enrich, and should satisfy; and therefore have never cordially agreed unto God's device in the covenant, and so are not worthy of him; neither hath the kingdom of God savingly entered into their heart, Mat. xiii. 44. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth; and for joy thereof selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field.* Thirdly, They ne-

ver in earnest do close with Christ's whole *yoke* without exception, judging all his *will, just and good, holy and spiritual*, as Rom. vii. 12. And therefore no *rest* allowed on them by Christ, Mat. xi. 29. *take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* Therefore, whosoever thou art, who can lay clear and just claim to these three foresaid things, thou art beyond the reach of all Atheists, hypocrites and reprobates in the world, as having answered the great ends and intents of the law and gospel.

Object. I am clear sometimes, I think, to lay claim to that mark of the new creature, yet at other times sin doth so prevail over me, that I am made to question all the work within me.

Answer. It is much to be lamented, that people professing his name, should be so flaited and enslaved by transgression, as many are. Yet in an answer to the objection, if it be seriously proposed, we say, The saints are found in scripture justly laying claim unto God and his covenant, when iniquity did prevail over them, as we find, Psal. lxxv. 3. *Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away,* Rom. vii. 23, 25. *Paul thanks God through Christ, when a law in his members leads him captive unto sin.* But for the better understanding, and safe application, of such truths, we must difference between gross outbreakings and ordinary infirmities or heart-ills, or sins that come unawares upon a man, without forethought or any deliberation. As for the former sort, it is hard for a man, whilst he is under the power
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of them, to see his gracious change, although it be in him; and very hard to draw any comfort from it, until the man be in some measure recovered, and begin seriously to resent such sins, and to resolve against them. We find David calling himself God's servant, quickly after his numbering of God's people; but he was then under the serious resentment of his sins, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. Jonah layeth claim to God as his master under his rebellion; but he is then ruing it, and in a spirit of revenge against himself for his sin, Jonah i. 9, 10, 12. Next, as for these sins of infirmity, and daily incurſion and heart-ills, ſuch as thoſe whereof Paul doth complain, it is like, were.

We ſhall draw out ſome things from that ſeventh chapter to the Romans, whereupon Paul maintains his intereſt in Chriſt, and if you can apply them, it is well. 1. When Paul findeth that he doth much fail, and cannot reach conformity to God's law, he doth not blame the law, as being too ſtrict, ſo as man cannot keep it, as hypocrites uſe to ſpeak; but he doth blame himſelf as being *carnal*; and he ſaith of the law, *that it is good, holy and ſpiritual*, Rom. vii. 12, 14. 2. He can ſay, he failed of a good which he intended, and did outſhoot himſelf, and he had often honeſtly reſolved againſt the evil which he fell into Rom. vii. 15, 18; 19. 3. He ſaith, that the prevailing of ſin over him is his exerciſe, ſo as he judgeth himſelf *wretched* becauſe of ſuch a *body of death*, from which he longeth to be *delivered*, Rom. vii. 24. 4. He ſaith

faith, that whilst he is under the power and law of sin, there is somewhat in the bottom of his heart opposing it, although overmastered by it, which would be another way, and when that gets the upper hand, it is a delightful thing, Rom. vii. 22, 25. Upon these things he *thanks God in Christ that there is no condemnation*, Rom. viii. 1. Now then look if can lay claim to these things. 1. If you do blame yourself, and approve the law, whilst you fail. 2. If you can say, that you do often resolve against sin honestly, and without known guile; and do so resolve the contrary good before the evil break in upon you. 3. If you can say, that you are so far exercised with your failings, as to judge yourself wretched because of such things, and a body of death which is the root and fountain of such things. 4. If you can say, that there is a party within you opposing these evils, which would be at the right way, and as it were, is in its element when it is in God's way, it is well; only be advised not to take rest until in some good measure you be rid of the ground of this objection, or at least, until you can very clearly say, you are waging war with these things. Now, a good help against the prevailing power of sin, is, to cleave close to Christ Jesus by faith, which as it is a desirable part of sanctification, and a notable piece of conformity to God's will, and most subservient unto his design in the gospel, Gal. ii. 20, 21. *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not*
frus-

frustrate the grace of God: and so should be much endeavoured by people, as a work pleasing unto God. John vi. 29. This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. So it is the ready way to draw life and sap from Christ the blessed root, for fruitfulness in all cases, as John xv. 4, 5. Abide in me and I in you: As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.

C H A P. XI.

Of the special communication of God, and the singular gracious operations of his Spirit.

Object. **I** DO not partake of these special communications of God, mentioned in the scripture, and actings and outgoings of his Spirit, whereof gracious people often are speaking, and whereunto they attain; the want of these things maketh me much suspect my state.

Answer. I shall shortly hint some of these excellent communications, and I hope, upon a right discovery of them, there will be but small ground found for the jealous complaints of many gracious people.

First, (Beside these convictions of the Spirit of God, which use to usher Christ's way unto

the souls of men, and these also which afterwards do ordinarily attend them) There is a *seal* of the Spirit of God spoken of in scripture, the principal thing whereof is the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, imprinting the draughts and lineaments of God's image and revealed will upon a man, as a seal or signet doth leave an impression and stamp of its likeness upon the thing sealed. So it is, 2 Tim. ii. 19. *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* And thus I conceive the seal to be called a witness, 1 John v. 10. *He that believeth hath the witness in himself;* that is, The grounds upon which an interest in Christ is to be made out and proved, are in every believer; for he hath somewhat of the sanctifying work of God's Spirit in him, which is a sure, although not always a clear and manifest, witness.

Secondly, There is *communication* with God, much talked of among Christians, whereby they understand the sensible presence of God refreshing the soul exceedingly: But if we speak properly, communion with God is a mutual interest between God and man, who hath closed with him in Christ. It is a commonness, or a common interest between God and a man; not only is a man interested in God himself, but in all that is the Lord's; so the Lord hath a special interest in the man, and all that belongs to him. There is a communion between husband and wife, whereby they have a special interest in others persons,

sons, goods, gear and concernment; so is it here: There is a communion with God, he is our God, and all things are ours, because he is ours. This communion with God all true believers have at all times, as we shall shew afterwards. I grant there is an actual improvement of that communion, whereby men do boldly meddle with any thing that belongs unto God, and do meddle with himself, as their own, with much homeliness and familiarity, especially in worship, when the soul doth converse with a living God, partaking of the divine nature, growing like unto him, and sweetly travelling through his attributes, and with some confidence of interest, viewing these things as the man's own goods and gear: This we call communion with God in ordinances. This indeed is not so ordinarily nor frequently made out to men, and all his people do not equally partake of it; and it is true, that what is in God, goeth not out for the behoof of the man to his apprehension equally at all times, yet certainly communion with God, properly so called, *viz.* That commonness of interest between God and a man who is faithfully in covenant with him, doth always stand firm and sure; and so much of communion with God in ordinances have all believers. as that their heart converseth with a living God there, now and then, and is in some measure changed into that same image; and there needeth be no doubt about any further in it.

Thirdly, There is a thing which is called *fellowship* with God, often mistaken also among
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believers. If by fellowship be meant the walking in our duty as in the sight of a living God, who seeth and heareth us, and is witness to all our carriage, it is a thing common unto all gracious men; they all have it habitually, and in design, Psal. xvi. 8. *I have set the Lord always before me.* Yea, and often they have it actually in exercise, when their spirit is in good frame; they walk as if they saw God standing by them, and have some thoughts of his favour through Christ: *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,* 1 John i. 3. If we by *fellowship* do mean a sweet, refreshing, familiar, sensible conversing with God, which doth delight and refresh the soul, beside what the conscience of duty doth; it is then a walking in the light of his countenance, and a good part of sensible presence: And although it seemeth Enoch had much of it, whilst it is said, *He walketh with God,* Gen. v. 24, yet it is not so ordinary as the former, nor so common to all Christians; for here *the soul* is filled *as with marrow and fatness, following hard after* its guide, and singularly *upheld by his right hand,* Psal. lxxiii. 5. 8. *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; my soul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me.*

Fourthly, There is a thing which is called *access* unto God; and this I take to be the removing of obstructions out of the way between a man and God, so as the man is admitted to come near. We are said to have access to a great person,

person, when doors are cast open, guards removed from about him, and we admitted to come close at him; so it is here. Now this access in scripture, is sometimes taken for Christ's preparing of the way, the removing of enmity between God and sinners, so as men now have a patent way to come unto God through Christ; Eph. ii. 18. *For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.* Sometimes it is taken for the actual improvement of that access purchased by Christ, when a man finds all obstructions and differences, which do ordinarily fall in between him and God, removed: God is not uncouth to him, nor as a stranger, keeping up himself from him, or frowning on him, but the man is *come even to his seat*, as Job xxiii. 3. Of the want of this doth Job complain, Job xxiii. 8, 9. whilst he saith, *I go forward, backward, to the right and left hand, and I find him not.* The first sort of access is common to all believers; they are brought near by the blood of the covenant, and are no more far off, as the deadly enmity between God and them is removed. But access in the other sense is dispensed more according to the Lord's absolute sovereignty and pleasure, and it is left in the power of believers to obstruct it unto themselves, until it please the Lord mercifully and freely to grant it unto them again; so it is up and down, and there needs be no question as to a man's state about it.

Fifthly, There is a thing called *liberty* before God; and this properly is freedom, or free speaking

ing unto God. Many do much question their state, because of the want of this now and then, since the scripture hath said, *Where the Spirit is, there is liberty*, 2 Cor. iii. 17. But they do unjustly confine that liberty spoken of there, unto this free speaking before God. I grant where the Spirit of the Lord doth savingly discover God's will in the scriptures to a man, there is liberty from any obligation to the ceremonial law, and from the condemning power of the moral law, and from much of that gross darkness and ignorance, which is on natural hearts as a vail hiding Christ in the gospel from them. I grant also, that sometimes, even this liberty which is a free communing with God, and *ordering of our cause before him, and filling of our mouth with arguments*, Job xxiii. 4. is granted to the godly, but not as liberty taken in the former senses. Although the Lord hath obliged himself to *pour out the spirit of prayer upon all the house of David* in some measure, Zech. xii. 10. yet this communication of the Spirit, which we call liberty or free speaking unto God, dependeth much on the Lord's absolute pleasure, when, and in what measure, to allow it. This liberty, which we call freedom or free speaking with God in prayer, is sometimes much abstracted from any great confidence in the time of prayer, at least, until it draw towards the close of it; it standeth much in a vivacity of the understanding to take up the case which a man is to speak before God, so as he can order his cause: And next, there be words, or verbal expressions, elegant,

legant, suitable, and very emphatical, or powerful and pithy. There is also joined a fervency of spirit in prayer, whereof the scripture speaketh; the soul is hot and bended, and very intent.

There is also ordinarily in this liberty, a special melting of the heart often joined with a great measure of the *Spirit of grace and supplication*, Zech. xii. 10. So the soul is poured out before God as for a *first-born*. Such is the liberty which many saints get before God, whilst in much brokenness of heart and fervency of spirit they are admitted to speak their mind fully to God, as a living God, noticing (at least) their prayer. Sometimes this liberty is joined with confidence, and then it is not only a free, but also a bold speaking before God. It is that *boldness with confidence*, Eph. iii. 12. *In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence by the faith of him*. This is more rarely imparted unto men than the former, yet it is ordinary: It hath in it, beside what we spake before, some influence of the Spirit upon faith, making it put out some vigorous acting in prayer. There is a sweet mournful frame of spirit, by which a man poureth out his heart in God's bosom, and with some confidence of his favour and good will, pleadeth his cause before him as a living God; and this is all the sensible presence that many saints do attain unto. There is no ground of doubt anent a man's state, in the point of liberty before God, in this last sense, because there is nothing essential to the making up of a
gracious

gracious state here: Some have it, some want it, some have it at some times, and not at other times, so that it is much up and down; yet I may say, gracious men may do much, by a very ordinary influence, contributing towards the attaining and retaining, or keeping of such a frame of Spirit.

Sixthly, There is a thing called *influence* or breathing of the Spirit. This gracious influence, for of such only do I now speak, is either ordinary, and this is the operations of the Holy Spirit on the soul, and the habits of grace there, whereby they are still kept alive, and in some exercise and acting, although not very discernible. This influence, I conceive, doth always attend believers, and is that *keeping and watering night and day, and every moment, promised, Isa. xxvii. 3.* Or, this influence is more singular and special, and is that same to a gracious, although a withered soul, as the *wind and breath to the dry bones*, putting them in good case, *Ezek. xxxvii. 9, 10.* And as dew or *rain to the grass*, or newly mown Field and parched ground, *Psal. lxxii. 6.* Such influence is meant, *Cant. iv. 16.* by the *blowing of the South-wind, making the spices to flow out.* When the Spirit moveth thus, there is an edge put upon the graces of God in the soul, and they are made to act more vigorously. This is the *enlarging of the heart*, by which a *man doth run in the ways of God*, *Psal. cxix. 32.* This influence is more discernible than the former, and not so ordinarily communicated. Also here, sometimes the wind bloweth

eth more upon one grace, and sometimes more discernibly upon another, and often upon many of the graces together; and according to the lesser or greater measure of this influence, the soul acteth more or less vigorously towards God: And since faith is a created grace in the soul, this influence of the Spirit is upon it, sometimes less, sometimes more, and accordingly is the assurance of faith small or great.

Seventhly, There is the *hearing of prayer*, often spoken of in scripture; and many vex themselves about it, alledging that they know nothing of it experimentally. I grant that there is a favourable hearing of prayer; but we must remember it is two-fold: Either *first*, It is such as a man is simply to believe by way of argument on scriptural grounds; as if I be fled unto Christ, and do approach unto God in him, pray according to his will, not regarding iniquity in my heart, exercising faith about the thing I pray for, absolutely or conditionally, according to the nature of the thing, and promises anent it: I am obliged to believe that God heareth my prayer, and will give what is good, according to these scriptures, John xiv. 13, 14. *Whatsoever ye ask in my name, I will do it,* John v. 14. *This is our confidence, that whatsoever we ask according to his will, he heareth us,* Mark xi. 24. *Believe that ye receive, and ye shall receive what ye desire,* Psal. lxxvi. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear;* then if I regard not iniquity, I may believe that he doth hear me. Or, *Secondly,* A man doth sensibly perceive

perceive that God heareth his prayer; it is made out to his heart, without any syllogistical deduction. Such a hearing of prayer got Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18. *Her countenance was no more sad.* Surely the Lord did breathe upon her faith, and made her believe that she was heard: She could not make it out by any argument; for she had not grounds whereupon to build the premisses of the argument, according to scripture, in that particular: God did stamp it some way upon her heart sensibly, and so made her to believe it. This is but rarely granted, especially in cases clearly deducible in scripture; therefore people are much to be satisfied in exercising their faith about the other, and ought to leave it to God to give of this latter what he pleaseth. A man's gracious state should not be brought upon debate, upon the account of such hearing of prayer.

Eightly, There is *assurance* of God's favour by the witnessing of our own spirits; which assurance is deduced by way of argument syllogistically thus: Whosoever believeth on Christ shall never perish; but I do believe on Christ: Therefore, I shall never perish. Whoso hath respect unto all God's commandments, shall never be ashamed; but I have respect unto all his commands; therefore, I shall never be ashamed. I say, by reasoning thus, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual things, a man may attain unto a good certainty of his gracious state. It is supposed, 1 John iii. 18, 19. that by *loving the brethren in deed and in truth, we may assure*

our hearts before God, and that a man may rejoice upon the testimony of a good conscience, 2 Cor. i. 12. A man may have confidence towards God, if his heart do not condemn him, 1 John iii. 21. We may then attain unto some assurance, although not full assurance, by the witness of our spirits. I do not deny, that in this witnessing of our spirits towards assurance, there is some concurrence of the Spirit of God: But I conceive, there needeth but a very ordinary influence, without which we can do nothing. Now, this assurance, such as it is, may be reached by intelligent believers, who keep a good conscience in their walk. So I hope, there needs be no debate about it, as to a man's gracious state; for, if a man will clear himself of heart-condemnings, he will speedily reach this assurance.

Ninthly, There is a *witnessing of God's Spirit*, mentioned, Rom. viii. 16. *bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* This operation of the spirit is best understood, if we produce any syllogism by which our spirit doth witness our sonship; as for example, Who-soever loveth the brethren is past from death to life, and consequently is in Christ; but I love the brethren: therefore, I am past from death to life. Here there is a threefold operation of the Spirit, or three operations rather: The first is a beam of divine light upon the first proposition persuading the divine authority of it, as the word of God. The Spirit of the Lord must witness the divinity of the scripture, and that it

is the infallible word of God, far beyond all other arguments that can be used for it. The second operation is a glorious beam of light from the Spirit, shining upon the second proposition, and so upon his own graces in the soul, discovering them to be true graces, and such as the scripture calleth so. Thus we are said to *know by his Spirit the things that are freely given unto us of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 13. The third operation is in order to the third proposition of the argument, or the conclusion, and this I conceive to be nothing else but an influence upon faith, strengthening it to draw a conclusion of full assurance upon the foresaid premisses.

Now, (with submission unto others, who have greater light in the scripture, and more experience of these precious communications) I do conceive the witness of the Spirit, or witnessing of it, which is mentioned, Rom. viii. 16. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*, is not that first operation upon the first proposition; for that operation is that testimony of the Spirit, by which he beareth witness to the divinity of the whole scripture, and asserteth the divine authority of it unto the souls of gracious men: And such an operation may be upon a truth of scripture, which doth not relate to a man's sonship or interest in Christ at all. The Spirit may so shine upon any truth, relating to duty, or any other fundamental truth persuading the divinity of it, upon and unto the soul, and speak nothing relating to a man's interest in Christ. Neither is the third operat-

operation of the Spirit, by which he makes faith boldly draw the conclusion, this witnessing of the Spirit; for that operation is nothing else but an influence upon faith, bringing it out to full assurance: But that whereupon this assurance is drawn or put out, is somewhat deponed or witnessed already: Therefore I conceive the second operation of the Spirit upon the second proposition, and so upon the graces in the man, is that witness of God's Spirit, that beam of divine light shining upon those graces, whereby they are made very conspicuous to the understanding: That is the witness, the shining so on them is his witnessing; for only here in this proposition, and in this operation, doth the Spirit of God prove a co-witness with our spirit: For the main thing wherein the witness of our spirit lieth, is in the second proposition. So these two witnesses having deponed and witnessed one and the same thing, *viz.* the truth and reality of such and such graces in the man, which our own spirit or conscience doth depone, according to its knowledge, and the Spirit of the Lord doth certainly affirm and witness to be so; there is a sentence drawn forth, and a conclusion of the man's sonship by the man's faith, breathed upon by the Spirit for that effect: And this conclusion beareth the full assurance of a man's sonship. It may be presumed, that some true saints do not partake of this all their days. as Heb. ii 15. *And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

Tenthly, I speak with the experience of many

saints, and I hope according to scripture, if I say there is a communication of the Spirit of God which is let out to some of his people sometimes, that is somewhat beside, if not beyond that witnessing of a fellowship spoken of before. It is a glorious divine manifestation of God unto the soul, shedding abroad God's love in the heart. It is a thing better felt than spoken of. It is no audible voice, but it is a wass of glory filling the soul with God, as he is life, light, love and liberty, countervailing that audible voice, *O man, greatly beloved*, Dan. x. 19. putting a man in a transport with this on his heart, *It is good for us to be here*, as Mat. xvii. 4. It is that which went out from Christ to Mary, when he but mentioned her name, John xx. 16. *Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master.* He had spoken some words to her before. and she understood not that it was he: But when he uttered this one word, *Mary*, there was some admirable divine conveyance and manifestation made out unto her heart, by which she was so satisfyingly filled, that there was no place for arguing and disputing whether or no that was Christ, and if she had any interest in him. That manifestation made faith to itself; and did purchase credit and trust to itself, and was equivalent with *Thus saith the Lord*. This is such a glance of glory, that it may in the highest sense be called, *The earnest or first-fruits of the inheritance*, Eph. i. 15. for it is a felt armful of the holy God, almost wholly conform-

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ing the man unto his likeness, so swallowing him up, that he forgetteth all things except the present manifestation. O how glorious is this manifestation of the Spirit! Faith here riseth to so full an assurance, that it resolveth wholly into sensible embracements of God. This is the thing which doth best deserve the title of sensible presence, and, it is like, is not given unto all believers, some whereof *are all their days under bondage, and in fear*, Heb. ii. 15. But here *love, almost perfect, casteth out fear*, 1 John iv. 18. This is so absolutely let out upon the master's pleasure, and so transient, and passing, or quickly gone when it is, that no man may bring his gracious state upon debate for want of it.

Eleventhly, There is a thing we call *peace*, about which many do vex themselves. This peace is either anent a man's state, that he is reconciled unto God by Jesus Christ, or it is anent his present case and condition, that he is walking so as approved of God, at least, so far as there is no quarrel or controversy between God and him threatening a stroke. Both of these are either such in the court of scripture, and consequently in God's account; or in the court of a man's own conscience. Peace anent a man's state, as being in Christ, is sure in the court of scripture and of heaven, when a man doth by faith close with Christ and the new covenant, Rom. v. 1. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.* It being sure and solid in the court of a man's conscience, it being

rightly informed; for in that case, it still speaks according to scripture: but, because often the conscience is misinformed and in the dark; therefore there is often peace anent man's state according to scripture, whilst his conscience doth threaten the contrary, and doth still condemn, and refuseth to assail the man, as being reconciled unto God through Christ. In this case, the conscience must be informed, and the man's gracious state made out by the marks of grace, as we shewed before; and here the witness of my own spirit will do much to allay the cry of the conscience, and if the spirit of the Lord join his Witness and testimony, the conscience is perfectly satisfied, and proclaimeth peace to the man.

The other peace, anent a man's present case or condition. *viz.* that it is approved of God in a gospel-sense, it may be wanting, and justly, wanting, although the peace anent a man's state be sure. This peace anent a man's case and condition, is either such in the court of scripture, and this is when a man is not regarding iniquity, and respecting the commands of God without exception; then the scripture saith, he stands in an even place, and he needeth fear no stated quarrel between God and him; in order to a temporary stroke; and when it is thus, his conscience should also assail him that same way, and would do so, if it were rightly informed: but because the conscience is often in the dark, therefore a man may be alarmed with evil in the court of conscience, as if he were justly to expect

pect a stroke from God because of his sin, and some quarrel God hath at him, although he intend salvation for him. This is enough to keep a man in disquiet, and to inhibit him the rejoycing allowed unto him, whilst he is walking in his integrity: therefore a man must here also inform his conscience, and receive no accusations nor condemnings from it, unless it make them clear by scripture. At that bar let every man stand, both anent his state, and his condition or case; and let him appeal from all other courts to that, and not receive any indictment but conform to the truth of God, by which the conscience is to proceed in all things. And if this were well looked unto, there would not be so many groundless suspicions amongst the Lord's people, either anent their state, or their condition, upon every thought that entereth their mind.

Twelfthly. There is the joy of the Holy Ghost; and this is when the spirit doth breathe upon our rejoycing in God, (which is a grace very little in exercise with many) and maketh it set out sensibly and vigourously; and he exciteh and stirreth the passion of joy and of delight in the soul, so as there is an *unspeakable and glorious joy in the soul*, in the apprehension of God's friendship and nearness unto him. 1 Pet. i. 8. *In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoyce with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* This joy followeth upon peace, and peace followeth righteousness, Rom. xiv. 17. *The kingdom of God—is Righteousness, and peace, and joy in the*

Holy Ghost. This joy readily will not fail to be according to the measure of the assurance of faith, as 1 Pet. i. 8. *In whom believing, ye rejoice :* So that the removal of mistakes about other things will allay doubts anent this.

Now, because some of these excellent communications of the Spirit, after they are gone, are brought in question as delusions of Satan; for vindication of them, we say, That the special operations of God's Spirit in any high degree, usually are communicated to people after such brokenness of spirit, Psal. li. 8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.* After so singular pains in religious duty, Dan. ix. 3, 21. *And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth, and ashes. And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin—the man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me.* 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14. *Rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory, and of God resteth upon you. Or if they break in as the rain that waiteth not for man, then they do so humble and abase the person, Isa vi. 5. Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips,—for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* And there are found so many evidences of grace in the man, Rom. viii. 16.

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The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. Or these things do so provoke unto holiness, and to have every thing answerable and conform to those manifestations of God, 2 Tim. ii. 19. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity. The person under them doth so lothe all things beside God's friendship and fellowship, Mat. xvii. 4. Peter said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. And these things do carry on them and with them so much authority and divine superscription, whilst they are in the soul, that afterwards they may appear sufficiently to be special communications of God, and singular gracious operations of his Spirit, and no delusions of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light, 2 Cor. xi. 14. nor such common flashes of the Spirit as may admit afterwards irrecoverable apostasy from God, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the power of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.

Now then to conclude this part of the work that relateth unto trial; I say to all these who complain of the want of the precious outlettings of the Spirit, *1st*, Bless God if you want nothing essential for making out of a saving interest in Christ. God hath given unto you Christ Jesus, the greatest gift he had, and since your heart is shapen out for him, he will with him
give

give you all things that are good for you in their season. *2dly*, I do believe, upon a right search and trial, after you have understood the communications of the Spirit, you are not so great a stranger to many things as you did suspect yourself to be. But, *3dly*, Remember the promises of life and of peace with God, are no where, in scripture, made unto these special things whereof you alledge the want: The promises are made unto faith, followed with holiness; and it may be presumed, that many heirs of glory do not in this life partake of some of these things, but are *in bondage all their days through fear of death*, Heb. ii. 15. so that there should be no mistake about these things; we may seek after them, but God is free to give or withhold them. *4thly*, Many do seek after such manifestations before they give credit by faith unto God's word. He hath born record that there is life enough for men in Christ Jesus, and if men would by believing set to their seal that God is true, they should partake of more of these excellent things. *5thly*, I may say, many have not honourable apprehensions and thoughts of the Spirit of God, whose proper work it is to put out the foresaid noble operations. They do not adore him as God, but vex, grieve, quench, and resist him; and many people complaining of the want of these things, are not at the pains to seek the Spirit in his outgoings, and few do set themselves apart for such glorious receipts: Therefore be at more pains in religion, give more credit to his word, and esteem

more highly of the Spirit of God, and so you may find more of these excellent things.

P A R T II.

How to attain unto

A Saving Interest in CHRIST.

HA V I N G, in the former part of this treatise, put every man's state to trial, it now remains, that in this following part, we give advice to those, who neither can, nor dare lay claim to the marks formerly mentioned.

QUEST. II. What shall they do who want the marks of a true and saving interest in CHRIST, already spoken of, and neither can nor dare pretend unto them?

ANSW. If men miss in themselves the marks of a saving interest in Christ, spoken of before, then it is their duty, and of all that hear this gospel, personally and heartily to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, and this shall secure their state.

C H A P.

C H A P. I.

Some things premised for the information of those who are more ignorant.

FOR the better understanding of this, we shall premise some things for information of those who are more ignorant, and then speak more directly to the thing. As for the things to be premised,

I. The Lord did at the beginning, out of his bounty, make a covenant with man in Adam, Gen. ii. 16, 17. and did enable man to abide in that covenant, Eccles. vii. 29. *God hath made men upright*; but man by eating of that forbidden fruit, Gen. iii. did break that covenant, Hos. vi. 7. *They like Adam have transgressed the covenant*, and made it void forever, Rom. iii. 28. *By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight*, and involved himself into all misery thereby, Rom. v. 12. *As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

II. The Lord did most freely, from everlasting, purpose and intend to save men another way, viz. by Christ Jesus and the covenant of grace, in which he intended reconciliation with the elect thro' Christ Jesus, God and man born of a woman in due time, to make this agreement effectual. And this device of satisfying

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his own justice, and saving of the elect by Christ, he did at first intimate to our parents in paradise, Gen. iii. 15. where he saith, *That the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* And the Lord hath in all generations made this known to his church.

III. The Lord hath in all ages covenanted to be the reconciled God of all these, who by their subjection to his ordinances, did profess their satisfaction with this device, and oblige themselves to acquiesce in the same, and to seek salvation by Christ Jesus, as God doth offer him in the gospel; so all the people of Israel are called the Lord's people, and are said to *vouch him to be their God*, and he *doth vouch them to be his people*, Exod. xix. 5, 8. Deut. xxvi. 17, 18. Yea, the Lord doth also engage himself to be the God of the seed and children of those who do so subject to his ordinances. The covenant is said to be *made between God and all the people, young and old, present and not present that day*, Deut. xxix. 10, 11.—15. And all are appointed to come under some seal of that covenant, as was enjoined to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 10. Not only was it so in the Old Testament, but it is so in the New Testament also; The Lord makes offer of himself to be our God in Christ Jesus; and the people professing their satisfaction in that offer, and in testimony, thereof subjecting themselves unto the ordinances, they are reckoned a covenanted people, and are joined unto his church in thousands, receiving a seal of the covenant, without any further particular

particular previous trial, Acts ii. 38.—41. *Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.—Then they that gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

IV. Many do deal treacherously with God in this covenant, Psal. lxxviii. 36, 37. “Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.” And altho’ they profess their estimation of Christ the Saviour, and their heart-satisfaction with that device of saving sinners by him, and having the image of God restored by him in them; yet their heart is not right with God, and they do content themselves with an empty title, of being in a sealed covenant with God, John viii. 39. *Abraham is our father*, say they. For although the Lord obligeth every man, who professeth his satisfaction with Christ Jesus the devised ransom to be cordial and sincere herein; and only to these who are so, doth he make out the spiritual promises of the covenant, they only being *priviledged to be the sons of God, who do really receive Christ*, John i. 12. yet the Lord doth permit many to profess their closing with him in Christ, both in the Old and New Testament, whilst their heart is not engaged; and he doth admit them to be members of his church, granting unto them the use of ordinances, and many other

other external mercies and privileges denied unto the heathen, who are not in covenant with him.

V. Although the great part of people do foolishly fancy, that they have closed with God in Christ Jesus sincerely and heartily, or at least, they do without any ground or warrant, promise a new heart to themselves before they depart this life; yet there be but very few who do really and cordially close with God in Christ Jesus as he is offered in the gospel; and so there be but very few saved, as is clear, Mat. vii. : 4. *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be who find it.* Mat. xx. : 6. *Many are called, but few are chosen.* If people would believe this, it might help to alarm them.

VI. Although none at all do cordially close with God in Christ Jesus, and acquiesce in that ransom found out by God, except only such as are elected, Rom. xi. 7. *But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded,* and whose hearts the Lord doth sovereignly determine to that blessed choice, John vi. 44. *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him;* yet the Lord hath left it as a duty upon people who hear this gospel, to close with his offer of salvation through Christ Jesus, as if it were in their power to do it: And the Lord, through these commands and exhortations, wherein he obligeth men to the thing, doth convey life and strength to the elect, and doth therein convey the new heart unto them,
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which pointeth kindly towards this new device of saving sinners, and towards Christ in his covenant-relations; or, it is the Lord's mind in these commands and invitations, to put people on some duty, with which he useth to concur for accomplishing that business between him and them: So then. it is a *coming* on our part, and yet a *drawing* on his part, John vi. 44. it is a *drawing* on his part, and a *running* on our part, Cant. i. 4. it is an *approaching* on our part, and yet a *chusing and causing to approach* on his part, Psa. lxxv. 4. it is a *believing*, or *receiving* on our part, John i. 12. and yet *it is given us to believe*, Phil. i. 29..

C H A P. II.

What it is to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, and that it is a necessary duty.

HA VING premised these things, I say if men miss in themselves the marks of a saving interest in Christ, spoken of in the former part of the treatise; then for securing their state, they are obliged with all diligence personally and heartily to accept of, and close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, held out in the gospel.

In handling of this, we shall, 1st. shew what it is to accept of, and close with that noble invention. 2^{dly}, We shall shew that it is the necessary

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ary duty of those who would be in favour with God, and secure their souls. *3dly*, What is previously required of those who perform this duty. *4thly*, What are the qualifications and properties of this duty, if rightly managed. *5thly*, What be the native consequences of it, if it be performed aright.

As for the *first*, What it is to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, held out in the gospel: Here we must remember, as we shewed before, that at first God willed man to abide in his favour, by holding fast his first integrity in which he was created; but man by his transgression lost God's favour, made void that covenant of works, and put himself in an utter incapacity to regain the Lord's friendship which he had lost by his sin, and to rescue himself from the curse and wrath now due to him for the same, or any way to procure his own salvation: But the Lord freely hath manifested another way of repairing man's lost estate, *viz.* by sending his Son Christ Jesus in the flesh, to satisfy his justice for the sins of the elect, and to restore in them his image now defaced, and to bring them unto glory; and he hath made open proclamation in the church that whosoever will lay aside all thoughts of saving themselves by the covenant of works, or inherent righteousness, and will agree heartily to be saved by Christ Jesus, they shall be restored to a better condition than formerly man was in, and shall be saved. So then, to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, is, to quite and forgo all

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thoughts of help or salvation by our own righteousness, and to agree unto this way which God hath found out; it is to value and highly esteem of Christ Jesus, as the treasure sufficient to enrich poor man, and with the heart to believe this record, that there is life enough in him for men; it is to please this invention, and to acquiesce in it, as the only way to true happiness; it is to point towards this Mediator, as God holdeth him out in the gospel, with desire to lay the stress of our whole state on him. This is that which is called faith or *believing the receiving of Christ, or believing on his name*; John i. 12. This is that *believing on the Lord Jesus Christ*, commanded unto the jaylor for his safety, Acts xvi. 31. This agreeth to all the descriptions of justifying faith in the scripture. This doth answer the type of *looking to the brasen serpent lifted up in the wilderness*, John iii. 14, 15. And this is supposed in all these ordinary actings of faith, to which promises are annexed in the scripture; and will be found in all who have got the new heart from God, and it will be found in none else.

As to the *second* thing, *viz.* That this is the necessary duty of all such who would be in favour with God, and secure their souls, It appeareth thus:

I. This closing with God's device, or believing in Christ, is commanded every where in scripture by the Lord, as the condition of the new covenant, giving title and right unto all the spiritual blessings of the same; for it is, upon
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the matter, the receiving of Christ: This is commanded, whilst God bids men *come and buy*, that is, *impropriate all, by closing with that device*, Isa. lv. 1. The *weary* are commanded to *come unto him* thus, for their rest, Mat. xi. 28. *This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*, 1 John iii. 23. This is enough to prove it a duty incumbent: But further, it is such a duty, as only giveth title and right to a sonship; for, only they who receive him, are priviledged to be sons, John i. 12. *But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*

II. It appeareth to be the necessary duty of all, thus, no less than this doth give a meeting unto God, offering himself to be our God in Christ; and no less than this doth answer our profession, as we are in covenant with him, as members of his visible church. The Lord offereth to be our God in Christ; if we do not close with the offer, laying aside all thoughts of other ways by which we may attain to happiness, we give no meeting to him. He saith, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*, Mat. xvii. 5. If we close not with the offer, we give no answer unto God. Moreover, we are all *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins*, Acts ii. 38. Now, unless we close with Christ, as said is, we falsify that profession; therefore, since this is the thing which doth answer God's offer in the gospel, and maketh good our profession as members of

his church, it is a necessary duty lying upon us.

III. Whatsoever a man hath else, if he do not thus close with God's device anent Christ Jesus, and do not receive him, it doth not avail, either as to the accepting of his person, or of his performances, or as to the saving of his soul. Men are *accepted only in Christ the beloved*, Eph. i. 6. Abel and his offering are accepted by faith, Heb. xi. 4. *Without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 6. *And he that believeth not, is condemned already, and shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*, John iii. 18, 36. For want of this, no external title doth avail: *The children of the kingdom are cast out if this be wanting*, Mat viii. 10, 11, 12. The people of Israel are like other heathens, in regard of a graceless state, lying open to the wrath of God, Jer. ix. 25, 26. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised, Egypt, and Judah, and Edom—for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.* If men do not believe that he who was slain at Jerufalem, who was called Christ Jesus, and witnessed unto by the prophets, and declared to be the Son of God by many mighty works; I say. if men do not believe that he is the way, and close not with him as the only way, they shall die in their sins, John viii. 24. *I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

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We say then, it is a most necessary duty thus to close with Christ Jesus, as the blessed relief appointed for sinners. Every one who is come to years of understanding, and heareth this gospel, is obliged to take to heart his own lost condition, and God's gracious offer of peace and salvation through Christ Jesus; and speedily to flee from the wrath to come, by accepting and closing with this offer, heartily acquiescing therein as a satisfying way for saving of poor sinners. And, that all may be the more encouraged to set about this duty, when they hear him praying them to be reconciled unto him, let them remember that peace and salvation is offered to the people in universal terms, to all without exception; *If any man will, he shall be welcome, Rev. xxii. 17.* *If any thirst, although after that which will never profit, yet they shall be welcome here, on the condition foresaid, Isa. lv. 2, 3.* *All are commanded to believe, 1 John iii. 23.* *This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* The promises are to all who are externally called by the gospel. God excludes none, if they do not exclude themselves, Acts ii. 39. *The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* So that if any have a mind for the thing, they may come forward, *he will in no wise cast them out, John vi. 37.* *being able to save to the uttermost them who come to God through him, Heb. vii. 25.* And these who have long delayed to take this matter to heart, had now the

more need to look to it, lest what belongs to their peace, be hid from their eyes. But all these words will not take effect with people, until *God pour out his Spirit from on high*, Isa. xxxii. 15. to cause men approach unto God in Christ; yet we must still press men's duty upon them, and obtest and charge them by the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, and their reckoning to him in that day, that they give the Lord no rest, until he send out that *Spirit, which he will give to them that ask it*. Luke xi. 13. and cause them know what belongs unto their peace, and bring them up to their duty.

C H A P. III.

What is previously required of those that would believe on Christ Jesus.

WE come now to speak of the *third* thing, *viz.* what is previously required of these who are to perform this duty. Men must not rashly, inconsiderately, and ignorantly rush in upon this matter, saying, They please that device of saving sinners by Christ, and will acquiesce and rest on him for safety: Often, men do deceive themselves here, and do imagine that they have done the thing. We shall therefore hold out some things pre-required in a person who is to close with Christ Jesus; which altho' we offer not as positive qualifications, fitting a man for Christ that way, Isa. lv. 1. *Come—without*

out money, and without price; yet they are such things, as without them, a man cannot knowingly and cordially perform the duty of believing on Christ Jesus.

Beside the common principles which are to be supposed in those who live under gospel-ordinances, as the knowledge that men have immortal souls; that soul and body will be united again at the last day; that there is a heaven and hell, one of which will be the everlasting lot of all men; that the Old and New Testament is the true word of God, and the rule of faith and manners; that every man is by nature void of the grace of God, and is an enemy unto God, and an heir of condemnation; that reconciliation is only by the Mediator Christ Jesus; that faith unites unto him, and is the condition of the new covenant; that holiness is the fruit of true faith, and is to be studied, as that without which no man shall see God: I say, beside these things, the knowledge of which is necessary, it is required of him who would believe on Christ Jesus, *1st*, That he take to heart his natural condition; and here he must know some things, and also be very serious about them; I say, he must know some things, as,

I. That as he was born a rebel and out-law unto God; so he hath by many actual transgressions disobliged God, and ratified the forfeiture of his favour: Yea, a man should know many particular instances of his rebellion on all hands, as that he is a liar, Sabbath-breaker, blasphemmer, or the like, as Paul speaketh very particularly

of himself afterwards, 1 Tim. i. 13.

II. The man must know, that the wrath of God denounced in scripture, is standing in force against those very sins whereof he is guilty, and so consequently he is the party undoubtedly against whom God, who cannot lie, hath denounced war. A man must know, that when the scripture saith, *Cursed is he that offereth a corrupt thing unto God*, Mal. i. 14. it speaketh against him for his superficial service performed unto God with the outward man, when his heart was far off. When the word saith, *The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*, Exod. 20. 7. the man must know, it speaketh against himself, who hath often carelessly profaned that dreadful name, before which all knees should bow, Phil. ii. 10. and which his enemies do take in vain, Psal. cxxxix. 20. When the word saith, *Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently*, Jer. xlviii. 10. The man must know that it speaks against himself, who hath irreverently, with much wandring of heart, and drowsiness, heard the word preached; and without sense, faith or understanding, hath often prayed before him. When the word saith, *Wo be unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, and putteth his bottle to him, to make him drunk also, that he may look on his nakedness*, Hab. ii. 15, 16. the man must know that it is spoken against himself, who hath gloried in making his neighbour drunk, and that dreadful wrath is determined against him, according to that scripture. When the word saith, *God will judge unclean persons,*

persons, Heb. xiii. 4. and will close them out of the new Jerusalem, and they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, Rev. xxi. 8. the man must know that the scripture speaketh these very words against him, he being an unclean person; so that he is the person against whom the curses of the law do directly strike.

III. A man must know that he hath nothing of his own to procure his peace, and to set him free of the hazard under which he lieth; because *all his righteousness is as an unclean thing*, Isa. lxiv. 6. His prayers, his other service done to God, his alms-deeds, &c. are not pass-guilt before God, since they came not from a right principle in his heart, and were not performed in a right way, nor upon a right account, nor for a right end: *His sacrifices have been an abomination unto God*, Prov. xxi. 27.

IV. He must know, that as he is void of all the saving graces of the Spirit, as the true love of God, the true fear of his name godly sorrow for sin, &c. so particularly, that he wants faith in Christ, who taketh burden for all them who believe on him. Until a man know this, he will still leave all his debt and burden, without care or regard, any where else, before he bring it to the common cautioner.

Now, not only must a man know these things, as I said before, but must also very seriously take them to heart, that is to say, he must be affected with these things, and be in sad earnest about them, as he useth to be in other cases, wherein
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he useth to be most ferious; yea, he should be more in earnest here, than in other cases, because it is of greater concernment unto him. This feriousness produceth,

I. A taking salvation to heart more than any thing else. Shall men be obliged to *seek first the kingdom of God?* Mat. vi. 33. Is there but *one thing necessary?* Luke x. 42. Shall Paul count *all things loss and dung* for this matter? Phil. iii. 8. Is *a man a loser* gaining all the world, if he loss his soul? Mark viii. 36. Shall this be the only ground of joy *that mens names are written in the book of life?* Luke x. 20. And shall not men, who would be reckoned ferious, take their soul and salvation more to heart than any thing else? Surely it cannot fail. Let none deceive themselves. If the hazard of their soul, and the salvation thereof, and how to be in favour with God, hath not gone nearer to their heart than any thing in the world beside, it cannot be presumed upon just grounds, that they ever knew sin, or God, or the everlastingness of his wrath aright.

II. This feriousness breaketh the man's heart, and fainteth the stoutness of it, and leadeth it out to sorrow, *as one doth for a first-born.* Zech. xii. 10. I grant their sorrow will better suit that scripture afterwards, when they apprehend Christ pierced by *their* sins.

III. It leadeth the man to a self-lothing, A man taking up himself so, cannot but loath himself for his abominations, whereby he hath destroyed himself. There is somewhat of that spirit

spirit of *revenge*, which is mentioned as a fruit of true repentance, 2 Cor. vii. 11. *This self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you—yea, what revenge.*

IV. This seriousness doth make the man peremptory to find relief; since it is not in himself, he dare not put off and delay his business, as before: And this is indeed required, that he find himself so pursued and put to it, that he flee for refuge somewhere. I grant some have a higher and some a lesser degree of this seriousness, as we shewed in the former part of this treatise: But if we speak of the Lord's ordinary way of working with those who are come to age, we say, they must very seriously take their soul's estate to heart, despairing of help in themselves, since *the whole need not a physician, but those who are sick*, Mat. ix. 12. As for the measure, we plead only that which probably doth suppose that a man will be induced thereby to transact cordially with Christ, on any terms he doth offer himself to be closed with.

The *second* thing pre-required of him who would believe on Christ Jesus, is, He must know and take to heart the way of escape from God's wrath: The Spirit must convince him of that righteousness. Here a man must understand somewhat distinctly, that God hath devised a way to save poor lost man by Jesus Christ, whose perfect righteousness hath satisfied offended justice, and procured pardon and everlasting favour to all those whom he persuadeth by this gospel

to accept of God's offer, Acts xiii. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you therefore—that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things—John i. 12. As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* So that no person is excluded, of whatsoever rank or condition, whatsoever hath been his former way, unless he be guilty of the *sin against the Holy Ghost*, which is a malicious hatred and rejection of the remedy appointed for sinners, as we shall hear; for, *all manner of sins is forgiven unto those who accept of the offer in God's way, Mat. xii. 31. He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God through him, Heb. vii. 25.*

The *third* thing pre-required, is, A man must know, that as God hath not excluded him from the relief appointed, so he is willing to be reconciled unto men through Christ; and hath obliged men to close with him through Christ Jesus, and so to appropriate that salvation to themselves. He not only invites all to come, Isa. lv. 1, 2. and welcomes all that come, as we find in the gospel, and recommendeth those who come, as the Centurion, Mat. viii. 10. and the woman of Canaan, Mat. xv. 28. and chideth for not coming and closing with him, John v. 40. *And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life; and condemneth for not closing so with him, John iii. 18. He that believeth not is condemned already; but also he commandeth all to believe*

believe

believe on Christ, 1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* So as a man is not to question the Lord's willingness to receive men who go to Christ honestly, for God hath abundantly cleared that in scripture. Unless that a man know so much, he will scarcely dare to lay his heart open for that noble device of saving sinners, or adventure his own weight and strefs upon Christ Jesus.

The *fourth* thing pre-required, is, The man who would close with Christ Jesus, must resolve to break all *covenants with hell and death*, Isa. xxviii. 15. Whatsoever known evil men are engaged into, they must resolve to forego it; for, *there is no concord between Christ and Belial*, 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. The Lord requir-eth that they who would expect *him to be for them, should not be for another*. Hos. iii. 3. This is far from evangelick repentance, which I grant doth not precede a man's closing with Christ by faith: There is little here beyond a misregard of these things unto which a man was formerly devoted, and a slighting what he was mad upon, because he seeth himself destroyed thereby, and relief now offered; whereupon his heart beginneth to be more intent than formerly it was. After this, when Christ is lookt upon alone, his worth and beauty doth appear. so as among all the gods there is none like unto him, and he looketh out as a sufficient covering of the eyes to all who get him: upon which the heart loveth God's device in the new covenant, and loveth
to

to lay its weight upon Christ rather than any other way, bending towards him; and so the man becometh a believer.

Now, I will not say that all these things whereof we have spoken, are formally, orderly and distinctly found in every person before he close with God in Christ; for, the way of the heart with Christ may be added to *the four wonderful Things*. Prov. xxx. 18, 19. It is hard to trace the heart in its translation from darkness to light; yet we hold out the most ordinary and likely way, to him who doth ask the way; debarring thereby ignorant and senseless persons from meddling, and discharging them to pretend to any interest in him whilst they remain such.

C H A P. IV.

The properties and native consequences of true believing.

THE *fourth* thing we proposed to speak to, is, the properties of this duty, when rightly gone about. I shall only hint a few.

I. Believing on Christ must be *personal*; a man himself and in his own proper person must close with Christ Jesus; *The Just shall live by his faith*, Hab. ii. 4. This faith, that it will not suffice for a man's safety and relief, that he is in covenant with God, as a born member of the visible church, by virtue of the parents subjection to God's ordinances: neither will it suffice, that the person had the initiating seal of baptism

added, and that he then virtually engaged to seek salvation by Christ's Blood, as all infants do: neither doth it suffice, that men are come of believing parents, their faith will not instate their children into a right to the spiritual blessings of the covenant: neither will it suffice that parents, did in some respect engage for their children, and give them away unto God: all these things do not avail. The children of the kingdom and of godly predecessors are cast out; unless a man, in his own person, put out faith in Christ Jesus, and with his own heart, please and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners, he cannot be saved. I grant this faith is given unto him by Christ, but certain it is, that it must be personal.

II. This duty must be *cordial* and *heartly*; *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*, Rom. x. 10. A man must be sincere, and without guile in closing with Christ, judging him the only covering of the eyes, not hankering after another way. The matter must not swim only in the head of understanding, but it must be in the heart; the man not only must be persuaded that Christ is the way, but affectionately persuaded of it, loving and liking the thing, having complacency in it; so that *it is all a man's desire*, as *David* speaketh of the covenant, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. If a man be a cordial and affectionate in any thing, surely he must be so here in this *one thing that is necessary*. It must not be simply a fancy in the head, it must be a heart-business, a soul-business; yea, not a business in the outter court of affections, but in the flower of affections.

and

and in the innermost cabinet of the soul, where Christ is formed. Shall a man be cordial in any thing, and not in this, which doth comprize all his chief interests, and his everlasting state within it? shall *the Lord* be said to *rejoice over a man, as a Bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride?* Isa. lxii. 5. and to *rest in his love with joy?* Zeph. iii. 17. and shall not the heart of man go out and meet him here? the heart or nothing; love or nothing; marriage love, which goeth from heart to heart; love of espousals, or nothing, Prov. xxiii. 26. *My son, give me thine heart.* 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3. *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.* I will not say, that there is in all, as soon as they believe, a prevailing sensible love, which maketh sick; but there must be in believing, a rational and kindly love, so well grounded, and deeply engaging, that *many waters cannot quench it. It is strong as death, and jealousy in it burneth as fire,* Cant. viii. 6, 7.

The *third* property or qualification of believing, as it goeth out after Christ, it must be *rational*. Hereby I mean, that the man should move towards God in Christ, in knowledge and understanding, taking up God's device of saving sinners by Christ, as the scripture doth hold it out, not fancying a Christ to himself, otherwise than the Gospel speaketh of him, nor another way of relief by him than the word of God holdeth out. Therefore we find *knowledge* joined

ed to the *covenant* between God and man as a requisite, Jer. xxiv. 7. *And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.* Jer. xxxi. 34. *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord.* I mean here also, that a man be in calmness of spirit, and, as it were, in his cold blood in closing with Christ Jesus; not in a simple fit of affection, which soon vanisheth, Mat. xiii. 20. *He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it.* Nor in a distemper through some outward distress, as the people were, Psa. lxxviii. 34. *When he slew them, then they sought him—and proved not stedfast in thy, covenant.* Nor under a temptation of some outward temporary interest, as Simon Magus was when he believed, Acts. viii. A man must act here rationally, as being master of himself, in some measure able to judge of the good or evil of the thing as it stands before him.

The *fourth* is, faith; as it goeth out rationally, so it goeth out *resolutely*. The poor distressed people in the gospel did most resolutely cast themselves upon Christ. This resoluteness of spirit, is in order to all difficulties that lay in the way; violence is offered to these. The man whose heart is a shaping out for Christ Jesus, cannot say, *there is a lion in the street* Prov. xxvi. 13. if he cannot have access by the door, he will

break through the roof of the house, with that man, Luke v. 19. He often doth not regard that which the world calleth discretion or prudence, like *Zaccheus* climbing up on a tree to see Christ, when faith was breeding in his bosom, Luke xix. This resoluteness of spirit looketh towards what inconveniencies may follow, and waveth all these; at least resolving over all these, like a *wise builder who reckoneth the expence beforehand*, Luke xiv. 28. This resoluteness is also in order to all a man's idols, and such weights as would easily beset him, if he did not bend after Christ over them all, like that *blind man* who did cast his garment from him, when Christ called him, Mark x. 50. This resoluteness in the soul proceedeth from desperate self-necessity within the man, as it was with the *jaylor*. Acts xvi. 30. and from the sovereign command of God, obliging the man to move towards Christ, . John iii. 23. *This is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ*, and from the good report gone abroad of God *that he putteth none away that come unto him through Christ*, John 6. 37. but doth commend such as do adventure over the greatest difficulties. *as the woman of Canaan*, Mat. xv. 28. but above all, this resoluteness doth proceed from the arm of JEHOVAH, secretly and strongly drawing the sinner towards Christ, John vi. 44. *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.*

I will not say, that every one, closing with Christ in the offers of the gospel, hath all the
fore-

foresaid thoughts formally in his mind; yet, upon search it will be found, if he be put to it, or put in mind of these things, they are then aloft in the soul.

By what is said, it doth manifestly appear, that many in the visible church had need to do somewhat further for securing of their soul, when they come to years of discretion, than is found to have been done by them before, in the covenant between God and the church, sealed to them in baptism.

By what is said also, there is a competent guard upon the free grace of God in the gospel, held out through Christ Jesus; so as ignorant, senseless profane men cannot, with any shadow of reason, pretend to an interest in it. It is true, believing in Christ, and closing with him as a perfect Saviour, seemeth easy, and every godless man saith, that he believeth on him: But they deceive themselves, since their soul hath never cordially, rationally and resolutely gone out after Christ Jesus, as we have said. It may be some wicked men have been *enlightened*, Heb. vi. 4. and have found some reel in their fear, *Felix trembled*, Acts xx. 25. or in their joy, *He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it*, Mat. xiii. 20. and *Herod heard John gladly*, Mark vi. 20. But not having engaged their heart in approaching to God, Jer. xxx. 21. have either sitten down in that common work, as their sanctuary, until the trial came, Mat. xiii. 20, 21. *When*

tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended; or they return back with the dog to their vomit, from which they had in some measure escaped by the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22. or they utterly fall away to the hatred and malicious despising and persecuting of Christ and his interests; from whence hardly can they be recovered, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. and x. 26, 29. Which things should provoke men to be ferious in this great business.

We come now to speak to the *fifth* thing proposed, and that is, What be the native consequences of true believing. I shall reduce what I will speak of them to these two, *viz.* union with God and communion. *First* then, I say, when a sinner closeth with Christ Jesus, as said is, there is presently an admirable union, a strange oneness between God and the man, as the husband and wife, head and body, root and branches, are not to be reckoned two but one; so Christ, or God in Christ, and the sinner closing with him by faith, are one; *We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, &c.* Eph. v. 30, 31, 32. *He that is so joined unto the Lord, is one Spirit,* 1 Cor. vi. 17. *As the Father is in the Son, and Christ in the Father; so believers are one in the Father and the Son: They are one as the Father and the Son are one. The Father in Christ, and Christ in believers, that they may be made perfect in one,* John xvii. 21, 22, 23, 26. O what a strange interweaving, and indissoluble knot there!

Because

Because of this union betwixt God and the believer, I. They can never hate one another henceforth the Lord will never hate the believer. *As no man hateth his own flesh at any time, but cherisheth and nourisheth it, so doth Christ his people,* Eph. v. 29. He may be angry, so as to correct and chastise the man that is a believer; but all he doth to him, is for his good and advantage. *All the Lord's paths must be mercy and truth to him,* Psal. xxv. 10. *All things must work together for good to him,* Rom. viii. 28. On the other side the believer can never hate God maliciously; for, *He that is born of God sinneth not.* 1 John iii. 9. For the Lord hath resolved and ordained things so, that his hand shall undoubtedly so be upon all believers for good, that they shall never get leave to hate him, and be so plucked out of his hand.

II. Because of this union, there is a strange sympathy and fellow-feeling between God and the believer. *The Lord is afflicted with the man's affliction,* Isa. lxiii. 9. He doth tenderly, carefully and seasonably resent it, as if he were afflicted with it. *He who toucheth the believer, toucheth the apple of the Lord's eye,* Zech. ii. 8. *He is touched with the feeling of their infirmities,* Heb. iv. 15. *and precious in his sight is their blood,* Psal. cxvi. 15. In a word, what is done to them, is done unto him; and what is not done unto them, is not done unto him, *Mat. x. 40. He that receiveth you, receiveth me.* *Mat. xxv. 40. 45. In as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. In as much as ye did it not to*

one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me. On the other part, *the zeal of his house* sitteth in the heart of the believer, Psal. lxxix. 9. *The Lord's reproach* lighteth on the believer. If it go well with his affairs, that is the business of his people. So there is a strange sympathy between God and believers, all by virtue of the union between them; because of which, men should hate every thing which should compete with him in their love or affections, and should disdain to be slaves to the creatures, since these are the servants of their Lord and husband, and their servants thro' him. What a hateful thing of a queen to whore with the servants of her prince and husband? It is also a shame for a believer to be *be afraid of evil tidings*, since the Lord, with whom he is one, alone ruleth all things, "and doth whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven and earth," 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," Psal. cxii. 6, 7. "Surely he shall not be moved for ever, he shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord, his heart is established, he shall not be afraid." Psal. cxv. 3. "Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased."

The other great consequence of believing, is an admirable unparalleled communion; by virtue whereof, I. The parties themselves do belong each to other. The Lord is the God of his people: He himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is their God, in all his glorious attributes, his justice as well as his mercy, his wisdom,
power,

power holiness, &c. for he becometh the God of his people, as he often speaketh in the covenant. On the other part. the believers are his people. In their very persons they are his, as the covenant doth speak: They shall be his people; their head, their heart, their hand, &c. whatsoever they are, they are his.

II. By virtue of this communion, they have a mutual interest in one anothers whole goods and gear, in as far as can be useful. All the Lord's word doth belong to the believer. Threatnings, as well as promises, for their good; all his ways, all his works of all sorts, special communications, death, devils, even all things, in so far as can be useful, 1 Cor. iii. 2, 24, 23. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." On the other side, all which belongeth to the believer is the Lord's; heritage. children, life, wife, credit, &c. all is at his disposing; if any of these can be useful to him, the believer is to forgo them, else he falsifieth that communion, and declareth himself, in so far. worthy of Christ, Luke xiv. 6. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father,—yea, and his life also, he cannot be my disciple.

III. By virtue of this communion there should be much homeliness and familiarity between God and the believer. The Lord may meddle with any thing which doth belong to the believer, and do unto him *what seemeth good to him*; and the man is not

to mistake, or say unto God, *What dost thou?* except in so far as concerneth his duty; yea, he is still to say in every case, *Good is the word and will of the Lord*, Isa. xxxix. 8. 2 Kings iv. 23, 26. On the other part, the believer may in an humble way, be homely and familiar with God in Christ; he may *come with boldness to the throne of grace*, and not use a number of compliments in his addresses unto God Heb. iv. 16. *For he is no more a stranger unto God*, Eph. ii. 19. so that he needs not speak unto God; as one who has acquaintance to make every hour, as many professors do; and it maketh a huge inconsistency in their religion.

The believer also may lay open all his heart unto God, 1 Sam. i. 15. *I have poured out my soul before the Lord*, and impart all his secrets unto him, and all his temptations, without fear of a mistake. The believer also may enquire into what God doth in so far as may concern his own duty, or in so far as may ward off mistakes of the Lord's way, and reconcile it with his word; so Job xiii. 15. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; but I will maintain mine own ways before him.* The believer is a friend in this respect, as *knowing what the Master doth*. See Gen. xviii. 23, &c. Jer. xii. 1. Isa. lxiii. 17.

The believer also may be homely with God, to go in daily with his failings, and seek repentance, pardon and peace through Christ's advocacy, Acts v. 31. *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour,*
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for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, 1 John ii. 1. *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* O how often in one day may the believer plead pardon, if he intend not to mock God, or to turn grace into wantonness! The Lord hath commanded men to *forgive seventy times seven times in one day*, and hath hinted there in the parable of a king who took account of his servants, how much more the master will forgive, Mat. xviii. 22—28.

The believer also may be homely to intrust God with all his outward concerns, for he doth care for these things, Mat. vi. 20, 31, 32. *If God so clothe the grass of the field—shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewith shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.* 1 Pet. v. 7. *Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.* Yea, the believer may humbly put God to it, to make him forthcoming for him, in all cases, as becometh, and to help him to suitable fruit in every season, *even grace in time of need*, Heb. iv. 16. Yea, how great things may believers seek from him in Christ Jesus, both for themselves and others, 1 John v. 14, 15. *If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* John xiv. 13. *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.* Isa. xlv. 11. *Ask of me things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.* It is
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the shame and great prejudice of his people, that they do not improve that communion with God more than they do: Christ may justly upbraid them, *that they ask nothing in his name*, John xvi. 24.

By what is said, it doth appear, of how great consequence this duty of believing is, by which a man closeth with Christ Jesus, whom the Father hath sealed, and given for a covenant to the people. It is so honourable for God, answering his very design, and serving his interest in the whole contrivement and manifestation of the gospel; and it is so advantageous to men, that Satan and an evil heart of unbelief do mightily oppose it, by moving objections against it. I shall hint some most ordinary.

C H A P. V.

Objections, taken from a man's unworthiness, and the bairousness of his sin, answered.

Object. I AM so base, worthless, and feckless of myself, that I think it were high presumption for me to meddle with Christ Jesus, or the salvation purchased at the rate of his blood.

Ans. It is true, all the children of Adam are base and naughty before him, *who chargeth his angels with folly*, Job iv. 18. *All nations are less than nothing, and vanity before him*, Isa. xl. 17. There is such a disproportion between God
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and men, that unless he himself had devised that covenant, and of his own free will had offered so to transact with men, it had been high treason for men or angels to have imagined, that God should have humbled himself, and become a servant, and have taken on our nature, and have united it by a personal union to the blessed God-head; and that he should have subjected himself to the shameful death of the cross; and all this, that men, who were rebels, should be reconciled unto God, and be made eternally happy, by being in his holy company for ever.

But I say, all that was his own device and free choice: Yea, moreover, if God had not sovereignly commanded men so to close with him in and through Christ, Isa. lv. 1, 2, 3. Mat. xi. 28. John iii. 23. 2 Cor. v. 20. no man durst have made use of that device of his. So then, although with Abigail, I may say, *Let me be but a servant, to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord,* Sam. xxv. 41. yet since he hath in his holy wisdom devised that way, and knoweth how to be richly glorified in it, Eph. i. 18. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know—what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.* John xvii. 10. *All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.* And he hath commanded me, as I shall be answerable in the great day, to close with him in Christ, as said is. I dare not disobey, nor inquire into the reasons of his contrivements and commands, but must adventure on the business, as I would not be found to

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frustrate the grace of God, Gal. ii. 21. and in a manner disappoint the gospel, and falsify the "record which God hath born of his Son, that there is life enough in him for men," 1 John v. 20, 21. and so make God a liar, and add that rebellion to all my former transgressions.

Object. I am a person singularly sinful, beyond any I know; therefore I dare not presume to go near unto Christ Jesus, or look after that salvation which is through his righteousness.

Answer. Is your sin beyond the drunkenness and incest of Lot; adultery covered with murder in David; idolatry and horrid apostacy in Solomon; idolatry, murder, and witchcraft in Manasseh; anger against God, and his way, in Jonah; forswearing of Christ in Peter, after he was forewarned, and had vowed the contrary; bloody persecution in Paul, making the saints to blaspheme, &c.? (but woe to him who is emboldued to sin by these instances recorded in scripture, and adduced here, to the commendation of the free and rich grace of God, and to encourage poor penitent sinners to flee unto Christ) I say, are your sins beyond these? Yet all these obtained pardon through Christ, as the scripture doth shew.

Know therefore, that all sins do ly alike level before the free grace of God, *who loveth freely, Hos. xiv. 4. and looketh not to less or more sin. If the person have a heart to come unto him thro' Christ, then he is able to save to the utmost, Heb. vii. 25.* Yea, it is more provoking before God, not to close with Christ when the offer cometh to a man, than all the rest of his transgressions

are;

are; for *he that believeth not, hath made God a liar, in that record he hath born of life in the Son,* 1 John v. 10, 11. *And he who doth not believe, shall be condemned for not believing on the Son of God,* John iii. 18. That shall be the main thing in his dittay; so that much sin cannot excuse a man, if he scar at Christ, and shift his offer, since God hath openly declared, that this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, *Christ came to save sinners, whereof I am chief.* Even he who is chief of sinners in his own apprehension, is bound to believe and *accept this saying,* 1 Tim. i. 15.

Object. My sins have some aggravating circumstances beyond the same sins in other persons, which doth much terrify me.

Answer. What can the aggravations of thy sins be, which are not paralleled in the forecited examples? Is thy sin against great light? So behoved many of these we spake of before. Was it against singular mercies and deliverances? So was that of Lot's and Noah's drunkennes. Was thy sin done with much deliberation? So was David's, whilst he wrote the letter against Uriah. Was it against, or after any singular manifestation of God? So was Solomon's. Was it by a small and despicable temptation? So was that of Jobah, and of Peter, if we consider the hainousness of their transgression. Hast thou reiterated the sin, and committed it over again? So did Lot, so did Peter, so did Jehoshaphat in joining with Ahab and Jehoram, 1 Kings xxii. 2 Kings iii. Are there many gross sins concurr-

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ing together in thee? So were there in Manasseh. Hast thou stood long out in rebellion? (that, as the former, is thy shame: But) so did the *thief on the cross*; he stood it out to the last gasp, Luke xxiii. 42, 43. If yet *thou hast an ear to hear*, thou art commanded to *hear*, Mat. xiii. 9. Altho' thou hast long *spent thy money for that which is not bread*, Isa. lv. 1, 2. thou hast the greater need now to make haste, and to flee for refuge. and if thou do so, he shall welcome thee, and *in no wise cast thee out* John vi 37. especially, since he hath used no prescription of time in scripture. So that all those aggravations of thy sin will not excuse the shifting of the Lord's offer.

Object. In all these instances given, you have not named the particulars whereof I am guilty; nor know I any who ever obtained mercy before God, being guilty of such things as are in me.

Answer. It is hard to condescend upon every particular transgression which may vex the conscience; yea, lesser sins than some of those I have mentioned, may hugely disquiet, if the Lord blow the fire. But, for thy satisfaction, I shall condescend upon some truths of scripture, which do reach sins and cases more universally, than any man can do particularly. See Exod. xxxiv. 7. *God pardoneth iniquity, transgressions and sin*, that is, all manner of sin. Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, 30. *If a man turn from all his wickedness, it shall no more be remembered, or prove his ruin*, John. vi. 37. *Him that cometh, he will in no wise cast out.* That is, whatsoever be his sins,

or the aggravations of them. John iii. 16. *Who-soever believeth shall have everlasting life*, that is without exception of any sin, or any case. Heb. vii. 25. *He is able to save to the utmost these who come to God through him*. No man can sufficiently declare what is God's uttermost. Mat. xii. 31. *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men*, that is, there is no sort of sin, whereof one instance shall not be forgiven in one person or other, *except the sin against the Holy Ghost*. These and the like scriptures, do carry all sorts of sin before them; so that, let thy sins be what they will or can be, they may be sunk in one of these truths, so as thy sin can be no excuse to thee for shifting the offer of peace and salvation through Christ, since *any man who will, is allowed to come and take*, Rev. xxii. 7.

We will not multiply words: The great God of heaven and earth hath sovereignly commanded all who see their need of relief, to betake themselves unto Christ Jesus. and to close cordially with God's device of saving sinners by him, laying aside all objections and excuses. as they shall be answerable unto him in the day he shall judge the quick and the dead, and shall drive away out of his presence all these who would dare to say. their sins and condition were such, as that they durst not adventure upon Christ's perfect righteousness for their relief, notwithstanding of the Lord's own command often interposed, and in a manner his credit engaged.

C H A P. VI.

Of the sin against the Holy Ghost.

Object. **I** suspect I am guilty of the *sin against the Holy Ghost*, and so am incapable of pardon; and therefore I need not think of believing on Christ Jesus for saving of my soul.

Answer. Altho' none should charge this sin on themselves, or on others, unless they can prove and instruct the charge according to Christ's example, Mat. xii. 5, 26, 32. yet for satisfying of the doubt, I shall, 1. shew what is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, properly so called, because there be some gross sins which people do unwarrantably judge to be this unpardonable sin. 2. I shall shew what is the sin against the Holy Ghost. 3. I shall draw some conclusions in answer directly to the objection.

As for the *first*, 'There be many gross sins, which altho' as all other sins, they be sins against the Holy Ghost, who is God equal and one with the Father and the Son, and are done against some of his operations and motions, yet are they not *the sin against the Holy Ghost*, which is the unpardonable sin. As, 1. *Blaspheming* of God under bodily tortures, is not that sin; for some saints fell into this, Acts xxvi. 11. *And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme*, much less, blaspheming of God in a fit of distraction, or frenzie; for a man is

is not a free rational agent at that time: And *he that spareth his people, as a father doth the son that serveth him, Mal. iii. 17. and pitieth them that fear him, as a father pitieth his children, Psal. ciii. 13.* so doth he spare and pity in these roivings; for so would our fathers according to the flesh do, if we blasphemed them in a fit of distraction: much less are horrid blasphemies against God, darted in upon the soul, and not allowed there, this unpardonable sin; for such things were offered to Christ, Mat. iv. and are often cast in upon the saints.

II. The hating of good in others, whilst I am not convinced that it is good, but in my light do judge it to be evil; yea, the speaking against it, yea, the persecuting of it in that case, is not the sin against the Holy Ghost; for all these will be found in Paul before he was converted; and he obtained mercy, because he did these things ignorantly.

III. Heart-rising at the thriving of others in the work and way of God, whilst I love it in myself; yea, the rising of heart against providence, which often expresseth itself against the creatures nearest our hand; yea, this rising of heart entertained and maintained, (altho' they be horrid things leading towards that unpardonable sin, yet) are not that sin; for these may be in the saints, proceeding from self-love, which cannot endure to be darkned by another, and proceeding from some cross in their idol under a pretence of temptation; the most part of all this was in Jonah, Jon. iv.

IV. Not only are not decays in what once was in the man, and falling into gross sins against light, after the receiving of the truth, this unpardonable sin; for then many of the saints in scripture were undone: But further, apostasy from much of the truth, is not that sin; for that was in Solomon, and in the church of Corinth and Galatia; yea, denying, yea, forswearing of the most fundamental truth under a great temptation, is not this sin; for then Peter had been undone.

V. As resisting, quenching, grieving and vexing of the Spirit of God by many sinful ways, are not this unpardonable sin; for they are charged with these, who are called to repentance in scripture, and not shut out as guilty of this sin: So neither reiterating sin against light, is the sin against the Holy Ghost, altho' it leadeth towards it; for such was Peter's sin in denying Christ; so was Jehoshaphat's sin in joining with Ahab and Jehoram.

VI. Purposes and essays of self-murder, and even purposes of murdering godly men, the party being under a sad fit of temptation; yea, actual self-murder, (altho' probably it often joineth in the issue with this unpardonable sin, which ought to make every soul look upon the very temptation to it with horror and abhorrency, yet) is not the sin against the Holy Ghost. The jaylor intended to kill himself, upon a worse account than many poor people do, in the sight and sense of God's wrath, and of their own sin and corruption; yet that jaylor obtained pardon,

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Acts xvi. 27, 34. And Paul before his effectual calling, was accessory unto the murder of many saints, and intended to kill more, as himself granteth, Acts ix. 10, 11, 12.

Altho' all these are dreadful sins, each of them deserving wrath everlasting, and not being repented of, bring endless vengeance; especially the last cuts off hope of relief, for ought can be expected in an ordinary way; yet none of these is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost: And so under any of these, there is hope to him that hath an ear to hear the joyful sound of the covenant. All manner of such sin and blasphemy may be forgiven, as is clear in the scripture, where these things are mentioned.

As for the *second* thing, Let us see what the sin against the Holy Ghost is. It is not a simple act of transgression, but a complex of many mischievous things, involving soul and body ordinarily in guilt. We thus describe it: *It is a rejecting and opposing of the chief gospel-truth, and way of salvation, made out singularly to a man by the Spirit of God, in the truth and good thereof; and that avowedly, freely, wilfully, maliciously and despitefully, breeding hopeless fear.* There be three places of scripture which do speak most of this sin, and thence we will prove every part of this description, in so far as may be useful to our present purpose; by which it will appear that none who have a mind for Christ, need stumble at what is spoken of this sin in scripture.

See Mat. xii. 23.—32. Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. and x. 25.—29.

First then, let us consider the object about which this sin, or sinful acting of the man guilty thereof, is conversant, and that is the chief gospel truth and way of salvation; both which run to one thing. It is the way which God hath contrived for saving of sinners by Jesus Christ the promised Messiah and Saviour, by whose death and righteousness men are to be saved, as he hath held forth in the ordinances, confirming the same by many mighty works in scripture tending thereaway. This way of salvation is the object. The Pharisees oppose this, that Christ was the Messiah, Mat. xii. 23, 24. *And all the people said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of devils.* The wrong is done against the Son of God, Heb. vi. 6. *It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.* And against the blood of the covenant, and the Spirit graciously offering to apply these things, Heb. x. 29. *Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall be thought worthy, who hath troden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*

Secondly, In the description, consider the qualification of this object. It is singularly made out to the party by the Spirit of God, both in
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the truth and good thereof. This faith, i. That there must be knowledge of the truth and way of salvation. The Pharisees knew that Christ was the heir, Mat. xxi. 38. "But when they saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him." The party hath knowledge, Heb. x. 26. "But if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" 2. That knowledge of the thing must not swim only in the head, but there must be some half heart persuasion of it. *Christ knew the Pharisees thoughts*, Mat. xii. 23. and so did judge them, and that the contrary of what they spake was made out upon their heart. There is a tasting which is beyond simple enlightning, Heb. vi. 4, 5. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightned, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have tasted of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come." Yea, there is such a persuasion ordinarily as leadeth to a deal of outward sanctification, Heb. x. 29. *Who hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified. an unholy thing.* 3. This persuasion must not only be of the verity of the thing, but of the good of it. The party *tasteth the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come*, Heb. vi. 5. and he apprehendeth the thing as eligible. 4. This persuasion is not made out only by strength of argument, but also by an enlightning work of God's Spirit, shining on the truth, and making it conspicuous;

therefore is that sin called, *the sin against the Holy Ghost*, Mat. xii. 31. Mark iii. 29. The persons are said *to have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, Heb. vi. 4. and *to do despite unto the Spirit of grace*, Heb. x. 29. who was in the nearest step of a gracious operation with them.

Thirdly, In this description, consider the acting of the party against the object so qualified. It is a rejecting and opposing of it; which importeth, 1. That men have once, some way at least, been in hands with it, or had the offer of it, as is true of the Pharisees. 2. That they do reject, even with contempt, what they had of it, or in their offer. The *Pharisees deny it*, and speak disdainfully of Christ. Mat. xii. 24. *This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. They fall away, intending to put Christ to an open shame*, Heb. vi. 6. 3. The men set themselves against it by the spirit of persecution, as the Pharisees did still. They rail against it; therefore it is called *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*, Mat. xii. 24, 31. They would *crucify Christ again*, if they could, Heb. vi. 6. They are *adversaries*, Heb. x. 27.

Fourthly, Consider the properties of this acting. 1. It is *avowed*, that is, not seeking to shelter or hide itself. The Pharisees speak against Christ publicly, Mat. xii. 24. They would *have Christ brought to an open shame*. Heb. vi. 6. They *forsake the ordinances* which favour that way, Heb. x. 25. and despise the danger; for, *looking for indignation, they trample that blood*
still,

still, Heb. x. 27, 29. 2. The party acteth *freely*. It is not from unadvisedness, nor from force or constraint, but an acting of free choice; nothing doth force the Pharisees to speak against and persecute Christ. They *crucify to themselves*, they re-act the murder of their own free accord, and in their own bosom, none constraining them, Heb. vi. 6. They *sin* of free choice. or, as the word may be rendred, *spontaneously*, Heb. x. 26.

3. It is acted *wilfully*. They are so resolute, they will not be dissuaded by any offer, or the most precious means, as is clear in the foresaid scriptures. 4. It is done *maliciously*, so as it proceeds not so much, if at all, from a temptation to pleasure, profit or honour. It proceedeth not from fear, or force, or from any good end proposed; but out of heart-malice against God and Christ, and the advancement of his glory and kingdom: So that it is of the very nature of Satan's sin, who hath an irreconcilable hatred against God, and the remedy of sin, because his glory is thereby advanced. This is a special ingredient in this sin. The Pharisees are found guilty of heart-malice against Christ, since they spake so against him, and not against their own children casting out devils; and this is the force of Christ's argument: *If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?* Mat. xii. 27. They do their utmost *to crucify Christ again, and to bring him to an open shame*, Heb. vi. 6. They are *adversaries* like the devil, Heb. x. 5. It is done *despitefully*. The malice must bewray itself. The Pharisees must pro-

claim that Christ hath correspondence with devils, Mat. xii. 24. He must *be put to an open shame, and crucified again*, Heb. vi. 6. They must *tread under foot that blood, and do despite to the spirit*, Heb. x. 29. So that the party had rather perish a thousand times, than be in Christ's debt for salvation.

The last thing in the description, is, the ordinary attendant or consequence of this Sin; it breedeth *desperate and hopeless fear*. They fear him whom they hate, with a slavish hopeless fear, such as devils have, Heb. x. 27. *A certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries*. They know that God will put out his power against them: they tremble in the remembrance of it; and if they could be above him, and destroy him, they covet it; and since they cannot reach that, they hate with the utmost of heart-malice, and do persecute him, and all that is his, with despite.

As for the *third* thing proposed, *viz.* the *conclusions* to be drawn from what is said, whereby we will speak directly to the objection. 1. As I hinted before, since the sin against the Holy Ghost is so remarkable, and may be well known where it is, none should charge themselves with it, unless they can prove and instruct the charge; for it is a great wrong done unto God, to labour to persuade my soul that he will never pardon me: It is the very way to make me desperate, and to lead me unto the unpardonable sin; therefore, unless thou can and dare say, that thou dost hate the way which God hath devised for
saving

saving of sinners, and dost resolve to oppose the thriving of his kingdom, both with thyself and others, out of malice and despite against God, thou oughtest not to suspect thyself guilty of this sin. 2. Whatsoever thou hast done against God, if thou dost rue it, and wish it were undone, thou cannot be guilty of this sin; for in it, heart-malice and despite against God do still prevail. 3. If thou art content to be his debtor for pardon, and would be infinitely obliged unto him for it, then thou cannot in that case be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost; for, as we shewed before, they who are guilty of it, do so despite God, that they would not be his debtors for salvation. 4. Whatsoever thou hast done, if thou hast a desire after Jesus Christ, and dost look with a sore heart after him, and cannot think of parting with his blessed company for ever, or, if thou must shed with him, yet dost wish well to him, and all his, thou needest not suspect thyself to be guilty of this unpardonable sin; for there can be no such hatred of him in thy bosom, as is necessarily required to make up that sin. 5. If thou would be above the reach of that sin, and secure against it for ever, then go work up thy heart to please salvation by Christ Jesus, and to close with God in him, acquiescing in him as the sufficient ransom and rest, as we have been pressing before, and yield to him to be saved in his way. Do this in good earnest, and thou shalt be for ever put out of the reach of that ugly thing, wherewith Satan doth affright so many poor seekers of God.

C H A P. VII.

Objections, taken from want of power to believe, and unfruitfulness, answered

Object. **A**LTHOUGH I be not excluded from the benefit of the new covenant, yet it is not in my power to believe upon Christ; for faith is the gift of God, and above the strength of flesh and blood.

Answ. It is true, that saving faith, by which alone a man can heartily close with God in Christ, is above our power, and is the gift of God, as we said before in the premises: yet remember, 1. the Lord hath left it as a duty upon all who hear this gospel, cordially by faith to close with his offer of salvation through Christ, as is clear in the scripture. And you must know, that although it be not in our power to perform that duty of ourselves; yet the Lord may justly condemn for not performing of it, and we are inexcusable; because at first he made man perfectly able to do whatsoever he should command 2dly, The Lord commanding this thing, which is above our power, willeth us to be sensible of our inability to do the thing and would have us putting it on him to work it in us. He hath promised to give the new heart, and he hath not excluded any from the benefit of that promise. 3dly, The Lord useth by these commands and invitations, and mens meditation on the same, and their supplication about the thing,

thing, to convey power unto the soul to perform the duty.

Therefore. for answer to the objection, I do obtest thee in the Lord's name, to lay to heart these his commandments and promises, and meditate on them, and upon that blessed business of the new covenant, and pray unto God, as you can, over them, *for he will be enquired to do these things*, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. and lay thy cold heart to that device of God exprest in the scriptures, and unto Christ Jesus, who is given for a covenant to the people, and look to him for life and quickning. Go and essay to please that salvation in the way God doth offer it, and to close with, and rest on Christ for it, as if all were in thy power; yet looking to him for the thing, as knowing that it must come from him: and if thou do so, *he who meets these who remember him in his ways*, Isa. lxiv. 5. will not be wanting on his part; and thou shalt not have ground to say, that thou movedst towards the thing, until thou could do no more for want of strength, and so left it at God's door: It shall not fail on his part, if thou have a mind for the business; yea, I may say, if by all thou hast ever heard of that matter, thy heart loveth it, and desireth to be in hands with it, thou hast it already performed within thee, so that difficulty is past, before thou wast aware of it.

Object. Many who have closed with Christ Jesus, as said is, are still complaining of their leanness and fruitlessness, which maketh my
heart

heart lay the leſs weight on that duty of believing.

Anſw. If thou be convinced that it is a duty to believe on Chriſt, as ſaid is, you may not ſhift it under any pretence. As for theſe complaints of ſome who have looked after him, not admitting every one to be judge of his own fruit, I ſay,

I. Many by their jealousies of God's love, and by their miſbelief, after they have cloſed with God, do obſtruct many precious communications, which otherwiſe would be let out to them, Matth. xiii. 58. "And he did not many mighty works there, becauſe of their unbelief."

II. It cannot be that any whoſe heart is gone out after Chriſt, *have found him a wilderneſs*, Jer. ii. 31. Surely they find ſomewhat in their ſpirit ſwaying them towards God in theſe two great things, *viz.* how to be found in him in that day, Phil. iii. 8, 9. "Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord; for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Chriſt, and be found in him, not having mine own righteouſneſs which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith:" and, how to be forthcoming to his praiſe in the land of the living, Pſal. cxix. 17. *Deal bountifully with thy ſervant, that I may live and keep thy word.* Pſal. lvi. 13. *Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light*
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of the living? They find these two things aloft in the soul, and that is much. Moreover, they shall, after search, if they judge aright, find ever such an emptiness in the creatures, which abundance of the creature cannot fill up: All is vanity, only God can fill the empty room in their heart; and when he but breatheth a little there is no room for additional comfort from creatures. This faith, that God hath captivated the man, and hath fixed that saving principle in the understanding and heart. *Who is God but the Lord? Worship him, all ye gods, Psal. xcvi. 7.* Yea, further, these whose heart hath closed with God in Christ as said is, will not deny that there have been seasonable preventings and quicknings now and then, when the soul was like to fail, *Psal. xxi. 3. For thou preventest me with the blessings of thy goodness. Psal. xciv. 18, 19. When I said, My foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.* Therefore let none say, that there is no fruit following, and let none shift their duty upon the unjust and groundless complaints of others.

C H A P. VIII.

Of Covenanting with God.

Object. **A**LTHOUGH I judge it my duty to close with God's device in
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the covenant, I am in the dark how to manage that duty; for sometimes God doth offer to be our God without any mention of Christ, and sometimes saith, that he will betrothe us unto him; and in other places of scripture, we are called to come to Christ, and he is the bridegroom. Again, God sometimes speaketh of himself as a father to men, sometimes a husband; Christ is sometimes called the Husband, and sometimes a Brother, which relations seem inconsistent, and do much put me in the dark how to apprehend God, when my heart would agree with him, and close with him.

Ans^w. It may be very well said, That men do come to God, or close with him; and yet they come to Christ and close with him. They may be said to come under a marriage-relation unto God; and unto Christ also, who is husband, father, brother, &c. to them; and there is no such mystery here as some do conceive

For the better understanding of it, consider these few things. I. Although God made man perfect at the beginning, and put him in some capacity of transacting with him immediately, Eccl. vii. 29. *God made man upright.* Gen. ii. 16, 17. *And the Lord God created the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. &c.* yet man, by his fall, did put himself at a perfect distance with God, and in an utter incapacity to bargain or deal any more with him immediately.

II. The Lord did, after Adam's fall, make manifest the new covenant, in which he did signify

nify he was content to transact with man again in and through a Mediator; and so did appoint men to come to him through Christ, Heb. vii. 25. *He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him, and to look for acceptation only in him, Eph. i. 6. To the praise of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved, ordaining men to hear Christ, he being the only party in whom God was well pleased, Mat. xvii. 5. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.*

III. This matter is so clear, and supposed to be so notour in the scripture, and so manifest to all who are under the ordinances, that the Lord doth often speak of transacting with himself, not making mention of the Mediator, because it is supposed, that every one in the church knoweth that now there is no dealing with God, except by and through Christ Jesus the Mediator.

IV. Consider that Christ Jesus, God-man, is not only a fit trysting-place for God and men to meet into, and a fit spokesman to treat between the parties now at variance, 2 Cor. v. 19. *God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.* But we may say also, he is immediate Bridegroom; and so our closing or transacting with God may be justly called *the marriage of the King's Son*, and the elect may be called *the Lamb's wife*; Christ Jesus being, as it were, the hand which God holdeth out unto men, and on which they lay hold when they deal with God. And so through and by Christ we close with God, as our God, on whom our soul doth

terminate lastly and ultimately through Christ, 1 Pet. i. 21. *Who by him do believe in God that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.*

V. Consider that the divers relations mentioned in scripture, are set down, to signify the sure and indissoluble union and communion between God and his people: Whatsoever nearness is between head and members, root and branches, king and subjects, shepherd and flock, father and children, brother and brother, husband and wife, &c. all is here, John xvii. 21, 22, 23, 26. *And they all shall be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them: That they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.* So that whatsoever be spoken in scripture, people may be clear, that God calleth them to be reconciled unto him through Christ, and doth offer himself to be their God and Husband in him alone: And men are to accept God to be their God in Christ, pleasing that way of relief for poor men, and to give up themselves unto God in Christ, in whom alone they can be accepted. And they who close with Christ, they do close with God in him, *who is in Christ reconciling*

conciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. v. 19. John xiv, 8, 9, 10, 11. And we are not to dip further into the divers relations mentioned in scripture, between God or Christ, and men, than as they may point out union and communion, or nearness with God through Christ Jesus, and our advantage thereby.

These things being clear, we will not multiply words: But, since to believe on Christ is the great duty required of all that hear this gospel, we obtest every one in the Lord's name, to whom the report of this shall come, That without delay they take to heart their lost condition in themselves, and that they lay to heart the relief which God hath provided by Jesus Christ, whereof he hath made a free offer unto all who will be content of the same, and to be saved that way; and that they lay to heart, that there is no other way to escape from the wrath that is to come, because of which men would be glad, at the last day, to run into a lake of melted lead, to be hid from the face of the Lamb, whom they do here despise: We say, we obtest all in the consideration of these things, to work up their heart to this business, and to lay themselves open for God, and to receive him through Christ in the offers of the gospel, acquiescing in him, as the only desireable and satisfying good, that so they may secure themselves. Go speedily and search for the offers of peace and salvation in the scripture, and work up your heart and soul to close with them, and with Christ in them, and with God in Christ, and do it so, as you
L may

may have this to say, that you were serious, and in earnest, and cordial here, as ever you were in any thing, to your apprehension; and for ought you know, Christ is the choice of your heart, at least you neither know nor allow any thing to the contrary; whereupon your heart doth appeal unto God to search and try if there be ought amiss, to rectify it, and lead into the right way.

Now this cleaving of the heart unto him, and casting itself upon him, to be saved in his way, is believing; which doth indeed secure a man from the wrath that is to come, because now he hath *received Christ, and believeth on him, and so shall not enter into condemnation*, as saith the scripture.

Object. When I hear what it is to believe on Christ Jesus, I think sometimes I have faith; for I dare say, to my apprehension, I please the invention of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, my heart goeth out after him, and doth terminate upon him as a satisfying treasure; and I am glad to accept God to be my God in him. But I often do question if ever I have done so, and so am, for the most part, kept hesitating and doubting if I do believe, or be savingly in covenant with God.

Answer. It is ordinary for many whose hearts are gone out after Christ in the gospel, and have received him, to bring the same in question again: Therefore I shall advise one thing as a notable help to fix the soul in the maintaining faith and an interest in God, and that is, that men not only close heartily with God in Christ,

as said is, but also, that they “ expressly, expli-
 “ citely, by word of mouth and viva voce, and
 “ formally close with Christ Jesus, and accept
 “ God’s offer of salvation through him, and so
 “ make a covenant with God.” And this, by
 God’s blessing, may contribute not a little for
 establishing them anent their saving interest in God.

Before I speak directly to this express cove-
 nanting with God, I premise these few things.
 I do not here intend a covenanting with God,
 essentially differing from the covenant between
 God and the visible church, as the Lord doth
 hold it out in his revealed will; neither do I in-
 tend a covenant, differing essentially from the
 transacting of the heart with God in Christ for-
 merly spoken unto: It is that same covenant;
 only it differeth by a singular circumstance, *viz.*
 the *formal expression* of the thing which the
 heart did before practise.

II. I grant this express covenanting and tran-
 sacting with God is not absolutely necessary for
 a man’s salvation; for if any person close hear-
 tily and sincerely with God, offering himself in
 Christ in the gospel, his soul and state is there-
 by secured, according to the scripture, although
 he utter not words with his mouth: But this
 express verbal covenanting with God is very ex-
 pedient for the better being of a man’s state, and
 his more comfortable maintaining of an interest
 in Christ Jesus.

III. This express covenanting with God by
 word of mouth is of no worth, without sincere
 heart closing with God in Christ joined with it;

for without that, it is but a profaning of the Lord's name, and a mocking of him to his face, *so to draw near unto him with the lips whilst the heart is far away from him.*

IV. I grant, both cordial and verbal transacting with God will not make out a man's gracious estate unto him. so as to put and keep it above controversy, without the joint witness of the Spirit, by which we know what is freely given unto us of God; yet this explicate way of transacting with God, joined with that heart-closing with him in Christ, contributes much for clearing up unto a man, that there is a fixed bargain between God and him and will do much to ward off him many groundless jealousies and objections of an unstable mind and heart. which useth affrontedly to deny this hour, what it did really act and perform the former hour. This explicate covenanting is as an instrument taken of what past between God and the soul, and so hath its own advantage for strengthening of faith.

As for this expresse covenanting, we shall, 1. shew that it is a very warrantable practice. 2. We shall shew shortly what is preparatorily required of those who do so transact with God. 3. How men shall go about that duty. 4. What should follow thereupon.

As to the *first*, I say, It is a warrantable practice, and an incumbent duty, expressly and by word to covenant with God: Which appeareth thus;

1. In many places of scripture, if we look to
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what they may bear, according to their scope, and the analogy of faith, God hath commanded it, and left it on people as a duty, Isa. xlii. 5. *One shall say, I am the Lord's.* Isa. xlv. 5. *Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* Jer. iii. 4. *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth.* Zech. xiii. 9. *They shall say, The Lord is my God.* Hosea ii. 16. *Thou shalt call me Ishi,* and in many places elsewhere. Now since God hath so clearly left it on men in the letter of the word, they may be persuaded, that it is a practice warranted and allowed by him, and well pleasing unto him.

II. *Argument.* It is the approved practice of the saints in scripture, thus expressly to covenant with God, and they have found much quiet in that duty afterwards. David did often expressly say unto God, that he was his God, his portion, and that himself was his servant. Thomas will put his interest out of question with it. John xxii. 28. *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord, and my God.* Yea, I say, the saints are much quieted in remembrance of what hath past that way between God and them, Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon all the earth that I desire besides thee.* Psal. cxlii. 5. *I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living.* We find it often so in the book of the Canticles. Now shall the chief worthies of God be so much in a duty, breeding so much quiet and satisfaction to them

in many cases, and shall we under the New Testament, unto whom access is ministred abundantly, and who partake of the sap of the olive; shall we, I say, ly behind in this approved piece of homeliness with God? Since we study to imitate that cloud of witnesses in other things, as faith, zeal, patience, &c. let us also imitate them in this.

III. *Argument.* The thing about which we move here, is matter of the greatest concernment in all the world: *It is the life of our soul,* Deut. xxxii. 47. Oh, shall men study to be express, explicite, plain and peremptory in all their other great busineses, because they are such; and shall they not much more be peremptory and express in this, which doth most concern them? I wonder that many not only do not speak it with their mouth, but they do not swear and subscribe it with their hand, and do not every thing for securing of God to themselves in Christ, and themselves unto God, which the scripture doth warrant, Isa. xlv. 5.

This also may have its own weight, as an argument to press this way of covenanting with God, that the business of an interest in Christ, and of real and honest transacting with him, is a thing; which in the experience of saints, is most frequently brought upon debate and in question; therefore men had need, all the ways they can, even by thought, word and deed, to put it to a point.

This also may have place here for pressing this as a duty, that God is so formal, express, distinct

distinct and legal, to say so, in all the business of man's salvation, *viz.* Christ must be a near kinsman, to whom the right of redemption doth belong; he must be chosen, called, authorized and sent; covenants formally drawn between the Father and him, the Father accepting payment and satisfaction, giving formal discharges, all done clearly and expressly. Shall the Lord be so express, plain and peremptory in every part of the business, and shall our part of it rest in a confused thought, and we be as dumb beasts before him? If it were a marriage between man and wife, it would not be judged enough, although there were consent in heart given by the woman, and known to the man; if she did never express so much by word, being in a capacity to do so. Now this covenant between God and man, is held out in scripture, as a *marriage between man and wife*, Hosea ii. 19, 20. 2 Cor. xi. 2. The whole Song of Solomon speaketh it. The Lord useth similitudes, to signify unto us, what he intends; and surely this is a special requisite in marriage, that the wife give an express and explicate consent unto the business: The man saith, So I take thee to be my lawful wife, and do oblige myself to be a dutiful husband: The woman is obliged on the other part to express her consent, and to say, Even so I take thee to be my lawful husband, and do promise duty and subjection. It is so here; the Lord saith. *I do betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt call me Ithi*, that is, my husband, Hosea ii. 16, 20. I will be for thee as a Head and Husband,

band, *if thou wilt not be for another*, Hosea iii. 3. The man ought to answer, and say, *Amen*, so be it, thou shalt be my God, my Head and Lord, and I shall and will be thine and not for another, Cant. vi. 3. *I am my Beloved's. and my Beloved is mine.* And so this making of the covenant with God, is called, *a giving of the hand to him*, as the word is, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. which doth hint a very exprefs, formal, explicite and positive bargaining with God. So then, we conclude it to be an incumbent duty, and a very approven practice, necessary for the quieting of a man's mind, and his more comfortable being in covenant with God, and more fully answering God's condescendency and offer in that great and primary promise, *I will be your God, and you shall be my people.*

Not only may and should people thus expressly close with God in Christ for fixing their heart; but they may, upon some occasions, renew this verbal transaction with God, especially, when through temptations they are made to question if ever they have really and sincerely closed covenant with God. As they are then to put out new acts of faith, embracing Christ as the desirable portion and treasure, and also upon other occasions, so it were expedient, especially if there remain any doubt aient the thing, that by viva voce and exprefs word, they determine that controversy, and *say of the Lord, and to him, That he is their Refuge and Portion.* Psal. xci. 2. Psal. cxlii. 5. We find the saints doing so; and we may imitate them, especially,

I. In the time of great backsliding, people were wont to renew the covenant with God. and we should do so also; our heart should go out after Christ in the promises of reconciliation with God, for he is our peace upon all occasions, and our advocate, and we are bound to apprehend him so, when we transgress, 1 John ii. 1. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous,* and to express so much by word, as the Saints did in their formal renewing of the covenant.

II. When people are in hazard, and difficulties are present or foreseen, then it were good that they should send out their heart after him, and express their adhering unto him, for securing their own heart. We find Joshua doing so, when he was to settle in the land of Canaan, in the midst of snares, Josh. xxiv. so David doth in his straits, Psal. lvii. .. *In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.*

III. When men apprehend God to be at a distance from them, and their soul to be under withering and decay, then it is safest heartily to close with Christ, and embrace him by faith for the securing of the soul; and it were good to put it out of question, by the expression of the thing. This is the ready way to draw sap from Christ the root, for recovering of the soul, and for establishing the heart before him. The spouse in the Song of Solomon doth so, thus asserting her interest in him, when in such a condition,

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dition, professing and avowing him to be her *beloved*, Cant. v.

VI. At the celebration of the Lord's Supper, men should thus cordially close with God in Christ, and speak and express so much; for, that is a feast of love; and then and there we come under a solemn profession of closing with God in Christ personally and openly. and do receive the seal of it: it is therefore befitting, at that time, to bring up both heart and tongue to second and answer our profession, apprehending God to be our God, and resigning over ourselves to be his, and at his disposing.

We shall not confine the Lord's people to times and seasons of this duty, the Lord may bind it upon them at his pleasure; only there is hazard, that by too frequent express covenanting with God, men turn too formal in it: therefore, it is not so fit that people should ordinarily at full length renew that explicate transaction with God, but rather to declare unto God, that they adhere unto the covenant made with him, and that they do maintain and will never revoke nor recal the same; and withal, they may hint the sum of it, in laying claim unto God in Christ, as their own God: and this they may do often, even in all their addresses to God. And probably this is the thing designed by the saints in their so ordinary practice in scripture. whilst they assert their interest in God, as their *God and portion*; and it is fit, that men, in all their walk, hold their heart at the business, by heart-cleaving to God in Christ. *The life we live in the flesh,*
should

should be by faith in the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20.

As to the second thing, viz. What is preparatorily required of him who is expressly to transact with God here: beside what we spake before, as previous to a man's closing with Christ Jesus, we only add, 1. That he who would explicitly bargain with God, must know, that to do so, is warranted and allowed by God, as we shewed before: if this be wanting, a man cannot do it in faith, and so it will be sin unto him Rom. xiv. 23. *Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.* 2. The man must labour to bring up his heart to the thing, that it do not belie the tongue; it will be a great mocking of God, so to draw near him with the lips, whilst the heart is far off from him, Isa. xxix. 13.

The third thing to be considered in this express verbal covenanting with God, is the way how it is to be performed and managed; and beside what was said before in heart-closing with Christ I add here,

I. The man should do it *confidently*, not only believing that he is about his duty when he doth it, but also, that God in Christ Jesus will accept his poor imperfect way of doing this duty: he doth accept a man according to what he hath, if there be a willing mind, 2 Cor. viii. 12. *A mite is accepted, since it is all the poor woman's substance,* Mark xii. 44. Yea, if it can be attained, the man should believe that the issue and consequence of this transacting shall prove comfortable, and all shall be well; and that God who engageth for all in the covenant, (since he hath

hath determined the man to this happy choice) will in some measure make him forthcoming, and will perfect what concerns him: *faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it,* 1 Theff. v. 24. If this confidence be wanting, the matter will be done with much fear and jealousy, if not worse; and will still prove a disquieting business to the man.

11. It should be done *holily*. It is called *the holy covenant*, Luke i. 72. *The holy things of David.* Acts xiii. 34. Here it were fitting, that what is done in this express transacting with God, should not be done passingly, and on the by, but in some special address unto God; the thing should be spoken unto the Lord. Psal. cxlii. 5, *I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, thou art my refuge and my portion.* It is becoming in so great a business, that a piece of time were set apart for confession and supplication before God; yea, also the person so transacting with God, should labour to have high apprehensions of God's greatness and sovereignty, 2 Sam. vii. 22. *Thou art great, O Lord God; for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee,* although he thus humble himself to behold things in heaven and earth; and these high and holy thoughts of him, will and should be attended with debasing and humbling thoughts of self, although admitted to this high dignity. 2 Sam. vii. 18. *Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord; and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* It is no small thing to be allied unto, and with the
great

great God of heaven, and his Son Christ; as David speaketh when king Saul did offer his daughter unto him, 1 Sam. xviii. 22. Yea, further, there should be special guarding and watching, that the heart keep spiritual in transacting with God. There is great reason for this holy way of performing the duty; for men are ready to misken themselves, and to shape the Lord according to their own fancy, and to turn carnal in the business, since it is a marriage-transaction held out in all the ordinary expressions of love, as in the Song of Solomon, Isa. lxii. 5. Zeph. iii. 17.

The *fourth* thing we shall speak a word unto, is, what should follow upon this express verbal covenanting with God. I say, beside that union and communion with God in Christ, following upon believing, if a man explicitly by word transact with God.

I. He should thence be singularly careful to abide close with God in all manner of conversation; for, if a man thenceforth do any thing unsuitable, he doth falsify his word before God, which will stick much in his conscience, and prove a *snare*: If a man henceforth misken God, and take on him to dispose of himself, since he is not his own, and hath opened his mouth unto the Lord, *he makes enquiry after vows, and devoureth that which is holy*, Prov. xx. 25.

II. He who so transacteth with God, should hold stedfast that determination and conclusion. It is a shame for a man, whose heart hath closed with God, and whose mouth hath ratified and

confirmed it solemnly before him, to contradict himself again, and to admit any thing to the contrary; he ought boldly to maintain the thing against all deadly.

Then let me obtest you who desire to be established in the matter of your interest in God, that with all conveniency you set apart a piece of time for prayer before God, and labouring to work up your heart to seriousness, affection, and the faith of the duty, to make a covenant, and to transact with God by exprefs words after this manner.

“ O LORD, I am a lost and broken creature by nature, and by innumerable actual transgressions, which I do confess particularly before thee this day: And altho’, being born within the visible church, I was from the womb in covenant with thee, and had the same sealed to me in baptism; yet, for a long time, I have lived without God in the world, senseless and ignorant of my obligation, by virtue of that covenant: Thou hast at length discovered unto me, and bound upon my heart, my miserable state in myself, and hast made manifest unto my heart the satisfying relief thou hast provided by Christ Jesus, offering the same freely unto me, upon condition that I would accept of the same, and would close with thee as my God in Christ, warranting and commanding me, upon my utmost peril, to accept of this offer, and to flee unto Christ Jesus: Yea, to my apprehension, now thou hast sovereignly determined my heart, and shaped it for Christ Jesus, leading it out after
him

him in the offers of the gospel, causing me to approach unto the living God, to close so with him, and to acquiesce in his offer, without any known guile. And that I may come up to that establishment of spirit in this matter, which should be to my comfort, and the praise of thy glorious grace: Therefore, I am here this day to put that matter out of question by express word before thee, according to thy will. And now I, unworthy as I am, do declare, that I believe that Christ Jesus, who was slain at Jerusalem, was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; I do believe that record, That there is life eternal for men in him, and in him only; I do this day in my heart please and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners by him, and do entrust my soul unto him; I do accept of reconciliation with God through him, and do close with thee as my God in him; I choose him in all that he is, and all that may follow him, and do resign up myself, and what I am, or have, unto thee; desiring to be divorced from every thing hateful unto thee, and that without exception, or reservation of any thing consistent within my knowledge, or intended reversion, here I give the hand to thee, and do take all things about me witness, that I, whatever I be, or have hitherto been, do accept of God's offers of peace thro' Christ; and do make a sure covenant with thee this day, never to be ranversed, hoping that thou wilt make all things forthcoming, both on thy part and mine, seriously begging, as I desire to be saved, that my corruptions may be sub-

subdued, and my neck brought under thy sweet yoke in all things, and my heart made cheerfully to acquiesce in whatsoever thou dost unto me, or with me, in order to these ends. Now, glory be unto thee, O Father. who devised such a salvation, and gave the Son to accomplish it: glory be to Christ Jesus, who, at so dear a rate, did purchase the outletting of that love from the Father's bosom, and thro' whom alone this access is granted, and in whom I am reconciled unto God, and honourably united unto him, and am no more an enemy or stranger glory to the Holy Ghost, who did alarm me when I was destroying myself, and who did not only convince me of my hazard, but did also open my eyes to behold the relief provided in Christ; yea, and did persuade and determine my wild heart to fall in love with Christ, as the enriching treasure, and this day doth teach me how to covenant with God and how to appropriate to myself all the sure mercies of David, and blessings of Abraham, and to secure to myself the favour and friendship of God forever. Now with my soul, heart, head, and whole man, as I can, I do acquiesce in thy choice this day, henceforth resolving not to be my own, but thine; and that the care of whatsoever concerns me, shall be on thee as my Head and Lord: Protesting humbly, that failings on my part, (against which I resolve thou knowest) shall not make void this covenant, for so hast thou said, which I intend not to abuse, but so much the more to cleave close unto thee; and I must have liberty to renew, ratify,

and

and draw extracts of this transaction, as often as shall be found needful. Now I know thy consent to this bargain stands recorded in scripture, so as I need no new signification of it; and I having accepted of thy offer upon thy own terms, will henceforth wait for what is good, and for thy salvation in end. As thou art faithful, pardon what is amiss in my way of doing the thing, and accept me in my sweet Lord Jesus, in whom I only desire pardon. And in testimony hereof, I set to my seal that God is true, in declaring him a competent Saviour.”

Let people covenant with God in fewer or more words, as the Lord shall dispose them; for we intend no platform of words for any person: Only it were fitting that men should, before the Lord, acknowledge their lost state in themselves, and the relief that is by Christ, and that they do declare that they accept of the same as it is offered in the gospel, and do thankfully rest satisfied with it, entrusting themselves henceforth wholly unto God to be saved in his way, for which they wait according to his faithfulness.

If men would heartily and sincerely do this, it might, thro' the Lord's blessing, help to establish them against many fears and jealousies; and they might date some good thing from this day and hour, which might prove comfortable unto them when they fall in the dark afterwards, and even when many failings do stare them in the face, perhaps at the hour of death.

2 Sam. xxiii. 5. *These be the last words of David*
— Although my house be not so with God; yet he
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bath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: For this is all my salvation, and all my desire. It is much if a man can appeal unto God, and say, Thou knowest there was a day and an hour, when in such a place I did accept of peace thro' Christ, and did deliver up my heart to thee, to write on it thy whole law without exception; heaven and earth are witnessers of it. *Remember the word unto thy servant, unto which thou hast caused me to hope,* Psal. cxix. 49.

Object. I dare not adventure to speak such words unto God, because I find not my heart coming up full length in affection and seriousness: So I should but lie unto God, in transacting so with him.

Answer. It is to be regretted that mens heart doth not, with much benfall of desire and affection, embrace and welcome that blessed offer and portion: Yet for answer to the objection remember, I. That in those to whom the Lord giveth the new heart, forming Christ in them, the whole heart is not renewed; there is *flesh and spirit lusting against other, the one contrary unto the other, so as a man can neither do the good or evil he would do, with full benfall,* Gal. v. 7. It is well if there be a good part of the heart going out after Christ, desiring to close with him on his own terms.

II. That there is often a rational love in the heart unto Christ Jesus, expressing itself by a respect to his commandments, 1 John v. 3. *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments;*

ments; and his commandments are not grievous. When there is not a sensible prevailing love which maketh the soul sick, Cant. ii, 4. *I am sick of love,* Men must not always expect to find this. I say then, altho' somewhat in your heart draw back; yet if you can say that you are convinced of your broken state without him, that you want a righteousness to cover your guilt, and that you want strength to stand out against sin, or to do what is pleasing before God, and that you all see fulness in him; in both these respects. if you dare say, that somewhat within your heart would be fain at him upon his own terms, and would have both righteousness for justification, and strength in order to sanctification; and that what is within you contradicting this, is your burden, in some measure, and your bondage: If it be so, your heart is brought up a tolerable length; go on to the business, and determine the matter by covenanting with God, and say with your mouth, *That you have both righteousness and strength in the Lord,* as he hath sworn you shall do, Isa. xlv. 23, 24. It is approved divinity to say unto God, I believe, when much misbelief is in me. and the heart divided in the case. Mark ix. 24. *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.* Withal, shew unto God how matters are in your heart, that so you may be without guile before him, concealing nothing from him; and put your heart, as it is, in his hand. to write his law on it, according to the covenant: For that is the thing he seeks of men, that they deliver up their heart to him, that he may stamp it with his whole will,

without exception; and if you can heartily consent unto that, judging Christ's blood a sufficient ransom and satisfaction for man's transgression, you may go and expressly strike covenant with God, for your heart and affection is already engaged.

Object. I dare not so covenant with God, lest I break to him; yea, I persuade myself, that if such a temptation did offer, so and so circumstantiated, I would fall before it, and succumb: Therefore to transact so with God, whilst I foresee such a thing, were but to agree my condemnation.

Answer. I. You have already entered covenant with God, as you are a member of his visible church; and what is now prest upon you, is, but that you more heartily, sincerely, particularly, and more expressly covenant and transact with him: You are already obliged heartily to close with God in Christ, for if you do it in heart, I hope the hazard is no greater by saying that you do so, or have done so.

II. What will you do if you shift hearty transacting with God in Christ, and do not accept his peace as it is offered? You have not a second of it in the world? either you must do this or perish for ever: And if you do it with your heart, you may also say it with your tongue.

III. If people may fear at covenanting with God, because they will afterwards transgress, then not one man should covenant with God; for surely every one will transgress afterwards, if they live any length of time after the transaction.

tion: And we know no way like this to secure men from falling; for if you covenant honestly with him, he engageth, beside the new heart, to put his fear and law therein, to give his Spirit to cause you walk in his way. And when you covenant with God, you deliver up yourself unto him to be sanctified and made conform to his will. It is rather a giving up of yourself to be led in his way in all things, and kept from every evil way, than any formal engagement on your part, to keep his way, and to hold off from evil: So that you need not fear at the covenant, the language whereof is, *Wilt thou not be made clean?* Jer. xiii. 27. And all that shun to strike covenant with God, do thereby declare, that they desire not to be made clean.

IV. As it is hard for any to say confidently, they will transgress, if such a temptation did offer, so and so circumstantiated because men may think that either God will keep a temptation out of their way, or not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, or give to them a way of escape, Psal. xlv. 1. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.* 1 Cor. x. 13. *There bath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* So the question is not, what I may do afterwards; but, what I now resolve to do. If my heart charge me presently with any deceit or resolution to transgress, I

must lay aside that deceit before I tranfact with God: But if my heart charge me with no such purpose, yea, I dare say, I resolve against every transgression; and altho' I think I will fall before such and such a temptation, yet that thought floweth not from any allowed and approved resolution to do so, but from knowledge of my own corruption, and of what I have done to provoke God to desert me: But the Lord knows I resolve not to transgress, nor do I approve any secret inclination of my heart to such a sin, but would reckon it my singular mercy to be kept from sin in such a case; and I judge myself a wretched man because of such a body of death within me, which doth threaten to make me transgress. In that case, I say, *my heart doth not condemn me, therefore I may and ought to have confidence before God*, If this then be the case, I say to thee, altho' thou should afterwards fail many ways, and so perhaps draw upon thyself sad temporal strokes thereby, and lose for a season many expressions of his love; yet *there is an Advocate with the Father to plead thy pardon.* 1 John ii. 1. who hath satisfied for our breaches, Isa. liii. 5, 6. *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.* And for his sake, God resolveth to hold fast the covenant with men after their transgression, Psal. lxxxix. 30.—37. *If*
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his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgements; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail, my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness—Else how could he be said to betrothe us unto himself forever? Hof. ii. 19, 20. And how could the covenant be called everlasting ordered in all things and sure, if there were not ground of comfort in it, even when our house is not so and so with God? 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Yea, it were no better than the covenant of works, if these who enter it with God, could so depart from him again, as to make it void unto themselves, and to put themselves into a worse condition than they were in before they made it. Jer. xxxii. 40. *And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, to do them good—*compared with Heb. viii. 6. *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much more also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. Mal. ii. 6. The Lord hateth putting away. No honest heart will stumble on this, but will rather be strengthened thereby in duty, Hof. xiv. 4. to the end, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him—who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them?*

for

for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them. For other ties and bonds, beside the fear of divorce, and punishment by death, do oblige the ingenious wife unto duty; so here men will *fear the Lord in goodness*, Hol. iii. 5.

Object. I have at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and at some other occasions, covenant-ed expressly and verbally with God; but my fruit-fulness in his ways, and the renewed Jealousies of my gracious state, maketh me question if ever I transacted with God in sincerity, and I think I can do it no otherways than I have done it.

Answer. I. Men are not to expect fruitfulness according to their desire, nor full assurance of God's favour immediately after they have fled unto Christ, and expressly transacted with God in him: these things will keep a man on work all his days. The saints had their failings and short-comings. yea, and back-slidings, with many fits of dangerous misbelief, after they had very seriously, and sincerely, and expressly closed with God, as their God in Christ.

II. Many do look for fruitfulness in their walk, and establishment of faith, from their sincerity in transacting with God, rather than from the spirit of the Lord Jesus. They heft their heart in their own honesty and resolutions, and not in the blessed Root Christ Jesus, without whom we can do nothing, and are vanity altogether in our best estate. Men should remember, that one piece of grace cannot produce any degree

degree of grace; further nothing can work grace but the arm of JEHOVAH: and if men would lean unto Christ, and covenant with him as their duty absolutely, whatsoever may be the consequence, at least, looking only to him for the suitable fruit, it should fare better with them. God pleaseth not that men should betake themselves unto Christ, and covenant with him for a season, until they see if such fruit and establishment shall follow, purposing to disclaim their interest in him and the covenant, if such and such fruit doth not appear within such a length of time. This is to put the ways of God to trial, and is very displeasing unto him. Men must absolutely close with Christ, and covenant with him, resolving to maintain these things as their duty, and a ready way to reach fruit, whatsoever shall follow thereupon; they having a testimony within them, that they seriously design conformity to his revealed will in all things; and that they have closed covenant with him for the same end, as well as to be saved thereby.

III. Men should be sparing to bring in question their sincerity in transacting with God, unless they can instruct the same, or have great presumptions for it. If you can instruct any deceit or guile in your transacting with him, you are obliged to disclaim and rectify it, and to transact with God honestly, and without guile; But if you know nothing of your deceit or guile, in the day you did transact with him; yea, if you can say, that you did appeal unto God in that day, that you dealt honestly with him,
and

and intended not to deceive; and did obtest him according to his faithfulness, to search and try if there was any crookedness in your way, and to discover it unto you, and heal it. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting,* Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. and that afterwards you came to the light, that your deeds might be manifest, John iii. 20, 21. And if you can say, that God's answers from his word to you, in so far as you could understand, were answers of peace, and confirmations of your sincerity. Yea further if you dare say, that if upon life and death, you were again to transact with him, you can do it no other way, nor intend more sincerity and seriousness than before: then I dare say unto thee, in the Lord's name, thou ought not to question thy sincerity in transacting with God, but to *have confidence before God, since i thy heart doth not condemn thee,* 1 John. iii. 21. and thou art bound to believe, that *God dealeth uprightly with the upright man, and with the pure doth shew himself pure,* Psal. xviii. 25, 29. If a man intend honestly, God will not suffer him to beguile himself; yea, the Lord suffereth no man to deceive himself, unless the man intend to deceive both God and men.

IV. Therefore impute your unfruitfulness to your unwatchfulness and your misbelief, and impute your want of full assurance, unto an evil heart of unbelief, helped by Satan to act against the glorious free grace of God; and charge not
these

these things upon want of sincerity in your closing with Christ. And resolve henceforth to abide close by the root, and you shall bring forth more fruit; and by much fruit you lay yourself open to the witness of God's Spirit, which will testify with your spirit, that you have sincerely and honestly closed with God, and that the rest of your works are wrought in God, and approved of him; and so the witness of the spirit and the water joining with the blood, whereupon you are to lay the weight of your soul and conscience, and where alone you are to sink the curses of the law due unto you for all your sins, and failings in your best things. These three do agree in one, *viz.* That this is the way of life and peace, and that you have interest therein, and so you come to quietness and full assurance, John xv. 4, 5. "Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me: I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." John xiv 21, 23. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Rom. viii. 16. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." 1 John iii. 8. "There
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are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.”

O blessed bargain of the new covenant, and thrice blessed Mediator of the same! Let him ride prosperously, and subdue nations and languages, and gather in all his jewels, that honourable company of the first-born, that stately troop of kings and priests, whose glory it shall be to have washed their garments in the blood of that spotless Lamb, and whose happiness shall continually flourish in following him whithersoever he goeth, and in being in the immediate company of the ancient of days, one sight of whose face shall make them in a manner forget, that ever they were in the earth. Oh if I could persuade men to believe that these things are not *yea* and *nay*, and to make haste towards him, who hasteth to judge the world, and to call men to an account, especially anent their improvement of this gospel. Even so, come LORD JESUS.

The whole Treatise resumed in a few

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

QUEST. I. **W**HAT is the great business a man hath to do in the world?

Answ. To make sure a saving interest in Christ Jesus, and to walk suitably thereunto.

Q. 2. *Have not all the members of the visible church a saving interest in Christ?*

A. No verily; yea, but a very few of them have it.

Q. 3. *How shall I know if I have a saving interest in him?*

A. Ordinarily the Lord prepareth, his own way in the soul, by a work of humiliation, and discovereth a man's sin and misery to him, and exerciseth him so therewith, that he longs for the physician Christ Jesus.

Q. 4. *How shall I know if I have got a competent discovery of my sin and misery?*

A. A competent sight of it makes a man take salvation to heart above any thing in this world: It maketh him disclaim all relief in himself, even in his best things: It maketh Christ, who is the Redeemer, very precious to the soul. It makes a man stand in awe to sin afterwards, and makes him content to be saved upon any terms God pleaseth.

Q 5.

Q. 5. What other way may I discern a saving interest in him?

A. By the going out of my heart seriously and affectionately towards him, as he is held out in the gospel. and this is faith or believing.

Q. 6. How shall I know if my heart goeth out after him aright, and that my faith is true saving faith?

A. Where the heart goeth out aright after him, in true and saving faith, the soul pleaseth Christ alone above all things, and pleaseth him in all his three offices, to rule and instruct, as well as to save; and is content to cleave unto him, whatsoever inconveniencies may follow.

Q. 7. What other mark of a saving interest in Christ can you give to me?

A. He that is in Christ savingly is a new creature, he is graciously changed and renewed in some measure, in the whole man, and in all his ways, pointing towards all the known commands of God.

Q. 8. What if I find sin now and then prevailing over me?

A. Although every sin deserveth everlasting vengeance, yet if you be afflicted for your failings, confess them with shame of face unto God, resolving to strive against them honestly henceforth, and flee unto Christ for pardon, you shall obtain mercy, and your interest stands sure.

Q. 9. What shall the man do who cannot lay claim to Christ Jesus, nor any of those marks spoken of?

A. Let

A. Let him not take rest until he make sure unto himself a saving interest in Christ.

Q. 10. *What way can a man make sure an interest in Christ, who never had a saving interest in him hitherto?*

A. He must take his sins to heart, and his great hazard thereby, and he must take to heart God's offer of pardon and peace thro' Christ Jesus, and heartily close with God's offer, by be-taking himself unto Christ the blessed refuge.

Q. 11. *What if my sins be singularly heinous, and great beyond ordinary?*

A. Whatsoever thy sins be, if thou wilt close with Christ Jesus by faith, thou shalt never enter into condemnation.

Q. 12. *Is faith in Christ only required of man?*

A. Faith is the only condition upon which God doth offer peace and pardon unto men. But be assured, faith, if it be true and saving, will not be alone in the soul, but will be attended with true repentance, and a thankful study of conformity to God's image.

Q. 13. *How shall I be sure that my heart doth accept of God's offer, and doth close with Christ Jesus?*

A. Go make a covenant expressly, and by word speak the thing unto God.

Q. 14. *What way shall I do that?*

A. Set apart some bit of time, and having considered your own lost estate, and the relief offered by Christ Jesus, work up your heart to please and close with that offer, and say unto God expressly, That you do accept of that offer,
and

and of him to be your God in Christ; and do give up yourself to him to be saved in his way, without reservation or exception in any case; and that you henceforth will wait for salvation in the way he hath appointed.

Q. 15. What if I break unto God afterwards?

A. You must resolve on his strength not to break, and watch over your own way, and put your heart in his hand to keep it: And if you break you must confess it unto God, and judge yourself for it, and flee to the Advocate for pardon, and resolve to do no more so: And this you must do as often as you fail.

Q. 16. How shall I come to full assurance of my interest in Christ, so as it may be above controversy?

A. Learn to lay your weight upon the blood of Christ, and study purity and holiness in all manner of conversation; and pray for the witness of God's Spirit, to join with the blood and the water; and his testimony added unto these will establish you in the faith of an interest in Christ.

Q. 17. What is the consequence of such closing with God in Christ by heart and mouth?

A. Union and communion with God, all good here, and his blessed fellowship in heaven forever afterwards.

Q. 18. What if I slight all these things, and do not lay them to heart to put them in practice?

A. The Lord cometh with his angels in flaming fire, to render vengeance to them who obey not this gospel; and thy judgment shall be greater

greater than the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah; and so much the greater that thou hast read this treatise, for it shall be a witness against thee in that day.

The end of the Trial.



S E R M O N S

B Y T H E

Rev. Mr. WILLIAM GUTHREY.

S E R M O N I.

Hosea xiii. 9.

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.

THOUGH Israels name speak out his glorious advancement and priviledge beyond all other parties in the world, yet Israel may come to be in a very low condition, even to be destroyed in all appearance, and cut off, as to their parts. *O Israel thou destroyed thyself.* It is true; the Lord hath a fovereign hand in the low condition of his people, and it is true also,
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that Israel's enemies have a great hand in their low condition, for which they will get no thanks from God, but it is as true that Israel hath a principal hand in this his low condition, he himself procuring his own overthrow, *O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself.* It is the iniquity of his people that separat betwixt him and them. Isa. lix. 2. *Behold the Lord's hand is not shortned that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear but your iniquity hath separate betwixt you and you. God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* And though many in Israel are now and then taking with this, that they by their sinning have a principal hand in their own overthrow and destruction yet a through, real; and right conviction of this is not soon fastned on Israel. The Lord many times in this prophecy hath told them that their destruction was of themselves, and he hath used several arguments to bear in the conviction hereof upon them in the preceding part of this chapter: and yet in the text he comes over it again, and leaves it of new at their door, as if he had said, I have often told you before, and have proven from the beginning of this chapter, that ye have ruined and overthrown yourselves by your sin: But because ye are not thoroughly enough convinced of it, I tell you again of it, again consider of it, and lay it more seriously to heart: *O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself:* Which says, that it is not easy to bind on the Lord's people a through, right and real conviction that they have a main and chief hand

by

by their sin in their own overthrow and destruction.

The Lord's people may be brought under strokes, 1. To acknowledge that their low condition and overthrow is from the Lord, 2. They may be brought to blame adversaries, as being the instruments in God's hand of their trouble, 3. They may blame their own sin, as the cause of their ruin, but a through, real, and right conviction of this they are not easily brought unto, which hath these four qualifications. 1. It must be personal. Some will grant, that it is sin that hath ruined the church of God, but will not let it light that it is their sin. 2. It must be particular, It is not only my sin, but it is this and that sin in me that hath done it. 3. It must be a pungent, wounding conviction of sin, as the cause of their ruin, a conviction which makes the heart sick, which is very rare. Many will blame themselves, and particularly many sins they are guilty of, and will grant they have a hand in bringing much wo wrack on the land and on themselves, and yet will not be affected for all that. 4. It must be an abiding permanent conviction. Many who have obtained the former three, come short in this. Many have been so far convinced of sin, of their own sins, as having a great hand in all the wrath lying upon us, and have hung down their heads like a bulrush for a day, but these affections have not bidden, they have not carried that weight along with them, as a counterballance to other things,

till the Lord's wrath was turned away from themselves, and from the land.

Object. What are the marks of a through real, and right conviction that we have destroyed ourselves, and have had a great hand in the destruction of Israel by our sin?

Ans. They who are rightly convinced, they lay their hand upon their mouth; they are silent before the Lord, notwithstanding of all that he hath done, is doing, or may do to them and to the land; so far are they from complaining and repining for any thing that is come upon them. Psal. xxxix. 9. *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou, O Lord did it.* There was a man rightly convinced of sin. As long as a person or people multiply complaints of heavy burdens and sad things on them, there is not a through, real, and right conviction fastned on their heart, for as soon as the conviction is thro', they will be dumb, not opening their mouth, and Lam iii. 39. *wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?* Will a rational man, if he be a man and not a beast, complain for any cross dispensation? he will not. for it is the punishment of his sin, and he is punished less than his iniquities deserve. 2. They are busy in searching out the ways whereby they have brought destruction on themselves and the church, Lam. iii. 40. *Let us search and try our ways.* Every man that is throughly, really and rightly convinced, that he hath had a hand in the overthrow of the people of God, he will search and labour to find out what is the hand

hand he hath had in it. 3. A right, real and through conviction hath following in it a sudden and halty reformation of these evils, which have procured and drawn on that wrath. And for me to say, that I have laid my sin to heart, as being convinced, that I have had a hand in this wrath that is on the church and people of God, and can father it on this and that evil in myself; and yet I study not to remove it it is but a fancy and not a real and through conviction. And though I would say, I am convinced, I but lie, for, would I hold a stroak on myself and others if I judged it a stroak, and that my sins procured it, if by any means I could remove it? This is also clear from Lam. iii. 40. *Let us turn again to the Lord*, a through, real, and right conviction of sin, and of our ruin by sin, brings every man to seek to reform what is amiss. 4. It makes the person diligently plead at the throne of grace for mercy, reconciliation and peace with God through a Mediator; speak of other things what ye will, that sticks most in the heart of a throughly convinced sinner. Lam. iii 4 . *Let us lift up our hearts, with our hands, or in our hands to God in the heavens* Speak to such a sinner of a delivery, and of this and that promising mean, and of an outgate, they signify not much to him without the peace and favour of God, moyen in heaven is that which most buiks in his eye. 5. They who are rightly convinced, whenever they hear or observe any new emergent, or declaration of God's wrath or evidence that he is angry, they not only look upon sin, as procur-

ing it, but much shame and confusion fills their face. Alas! we but sport with terrible emergents of God's wrath and anger, while we tell them over as news, and never reflect upon ourselves, nor are ashamed, nor blush as procuring them. If we were convinced, that we by our sin have a hand in harling the people of God before these miserable, unhappy ensnaring courts, is it possible but we would blush and be ashamed. Ye would think it strange, if one should come in and tell you, such a man is harled before the commission court, another is imprisoned or confined, and ye had a hand in it; but if ye were convinced, that it is right true, your hand was in it, would ye not be ashamed of it? Never think that ye are throughly, and rightly convinced, or that you really think your sin had a hand in such a thing, till you also think that ye have reason to be ashamed, and to take shame to yourself for every thing you hear of that kind. 6. They that have such a conviction will not be fortified with every delivery or outgate, except the bond be taken off. and the Lord remove the quarrel and sin, that brought on the stroak. I question not but this may be a challenge to all the Lord's people, that they have been content of, and would have been at any outgate or delivery, but is that each one of us to resemble the children of a King, and such a King in our sufferings, who should say (and would say if rightly convinced) no outgate. except God give repentance, take away sin. loose bands, and heal backslidings. And I would ask you, have
any.

any of you this for your work and business, for which you plead at his throne? The rightly convinced soul says, Lord, either deliver thy people from iniquity, or let them ly as they are, either loose our bonds, or no deliverance will content us; for they know any outward delivery could signify little or nothing to them, except iniquity were removed, and their bonds loosed and backslidings healed, because otherwise there would be a new browst upon the back of it. 7. They can put a blank in God's hand, to fill up what sufferings he pleaseth. It is not their care and fear what may be inflicted on them, they are resolute to suffer whatever he thinks good and that patiently. Mic. vii. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, I will justify the Lord, and sit silent, not only under what he hath done, but under what he shall do to me and will never ask a reason of his dealing, for I know he is holy and just, and can do me no wrong; and when it is so, then I take up myself destroying in the right hew, and am convinced I have a principal hand in it, and will say righteousness belongeth unto God, but shame and confusion of face to me.* 8. They have an high and eminent resentment of new discovered sin, whether in themselves or in others; and we will find some strange thoughts of resentment that this conviction hath driven some to in scripture, as in that holy man, Ezra ix. 3. who when he hears of the sin of the affinity of the people with strangers, *he rends his mantle, and plucks out the hair of his head*

and beard; his heart fails him, and he falls down upon his face as dead; that is an high resentment, and an evidence of a through conviction. And if such a conviction be, when ye hear tell that this or that man has slipped in a sin, to the bringing of more misery on the people of God, ye will also resent it sadly, ye will also find another high resentment of new discovered sin in Phinehas, Numb. xxv. When he sees Zimry and Cozby in the act of uncleanness, he steps out of his station and striks them both thorow the belly. Alas! if there were zeal in us, flowing from a right conviction of sin, when we hear this man falls in this sin, and another in drunkenness, a third hath taken that wicked declaration, our hearts would rise in high resentments of the things; our hatred of them would be so irreconcilable, we could not digest them, or our hearts would fail us at the new discoveries of new sin and guilt, new sin would make us sit down astonished, and nothing would weaken our hope and make us despond but that alone.

Use 1. Be not easily satisfied with yourself, under any convictions for sin ye win at, under all this misery that is come upon the church and people of God and upon yourselves.

Use 2. Never rest till ye get a conviction qualified with that fourfold qualification. 1. Till your conviction be personal, that you bring home things to yourself, and be made to say, *I am the man*, God is angry at me, and I have procured this wrath to the land, and to myself. 2. Rest not till ye come to particulars, this and that

that which I have done, and am guilty of, is the cause of all this desolation, ruin and overthrow; general confessions will not do it. 3. Rest not till your heart be kindly affected with the sins ye are convinced of; seek the conviction may be pungent and wounding. 4. Let not your conviction be transient, but seek it may be an abiding conviction. The wrath that is on us is no transient thing; it is like a cloud that is settled over us, and it is a sore matter, that our conviction should not be a settled and abiding conviction.

Use 3. Let me say, I fear upon trial, that by the marks that have been given, a through, real, and right conviction of sin be very rare, and there be few found, for all that's come and gone that have laid this matter rightly to heart. *O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself.* Do ye think that the Lord's people have been weeping these three or four years under a through conviction of their sin, and that the Lord regards not their tears? No surely, this is not it, we have not been humbled and weeping; and therefore, think it not strange, that it be with us as at this day. The Lord's people meet and pray, and there is no answer returned, but one ill upon the back of another; and the prophane are stumbled and hardened, when they see success doth follow their prayers, and they do prosper in their way. In this we are to clear the Lord, and blame ourselves. I doubt nothing, but if from a through, real, conviction, that we have ruined ourselves by our sin, we have been hum-
bling

bling ourselves before God, we should either by this time have had an outgate, or known better the outgate and mind of God concerning the continuance of our trial and outgate: or at least we should have had some token for good shewed unto us from the Lord. Oh! have we been silent before the Lord under our conviction, and put from our complaining? have we been busied in searching out our sins, whereby we have destroyed ourselves and others? have we made haste to reform these evils we found upon search? have we diligently pleaded at the throne of grace for pardon and peace with God, and the loosing of our bonds? have we upon every new declaration of wrath been ashamed, as having a deep hand in drawing it forth? would we be satisfied with no outgate, nor promising mean of delivery, except the Lord free us of the yoke of our transgressions; and heal our backslidings? have we been brought to put a blank in God's hand to afflict us as he pleaseth? have we in zeal highly resented new discovering of sin and wrath? No doubt there are many, who think there is no wrath upon Scotland, and that Israel is in a good case. and hath not destroyed himself. But oh! are ye so blind? are ye not convinced that God hath prophaned the church and state of Scotland, that he hath loosed the girdle of our nobles, and hath made their authority vile and contemptible before the people? that all our precious things are taken captive by the adversary; That our interpreters, each of them one of a thousand, are some of them banished, others
of

of them confined, and a godless prophane pack put in their room; do ye not yet see. how the land is ruined and destroyed, and the flocks of the Lord's people scattered? and are these things and many more, no evidences of God's wrath? I would not wish to any man such a measure of wrath, as is on that man who thinks there is no wrath upon Scotland. Again, are there not many of you faint hearted? Is not your spirit and courage, and valiantness for the truth gone? And is that no evidence of wrath? I doubt nothing, but it is a part of our plague, that we are as Ephraim, *a silly dove without heart*, nor do I deny that a manifest breach of covenant lyes on us upon that account; but this is not all; Israel hath sinned, and therefore is his heart faint, and his hands feeble, and he fled before the pursuer. Would ye know then, why the people of God are so faint hearted and weak? why Abner's hands were bound, and he died as a fool for sin, and want of a through, real and right conviction for sin, and not turning to God; otherwise I nothing doubt, but they had been as bread to us this day; and one of us should have chafed a thousand of them who now banish us, and harle us to prison. There is no hope as to this thing, till once we be brought to know and be made sensible. *we have destroyed ourselves*. And if we have a heart to believe this text, and the great truth contained in it, it is your sin hath ruined you, and separated betwixt God and you. Why sit ye still looking one upon another? Arise, as it is said of Ezra, he arose and fell about the

confession of sin, and they entered into a covenant
 to amend what was amiss. So I would say to
 you, sit not still discouraged, arise and fall to
 search and find out what is your part of the sin
 that hath brought on this wrath. Make your
 conviction personal, particular and pungent. eve-
 ry family apart, and their wives apart; set some
 time for the work, the finding out, and the con-
 fessing of sin and repentance for it and turning
 to God; and then if the Lord shall not bring a-
 bout your deliverance, you shall have ground of
 much peace, and ye shall have an easy task in
 your sufferings. If we were once thoroughly
 convinced of sin, and if matters were as clear be-
 twixt our God and us, as they are betwixt him
 and his enemies, I am confident the Lord would
 appear, and make bare his holy arm yet once
 more for his people. O but matters are clear be-
 twixt God and adversaries; and if we could say
 here is one evidence that matters are clear be-
 twixt God and us, and that we have heard the
 voice of the rod, and of him that hath appointed
 it, I nothing doubt, but ere long the Lord should
 do some great thing for us. But I know it is
 but lost labour for the most part. for a minister
 to give you a general charge, and bid every one
 search his own way, and labour that his convic-
 tion may be through, affecting and humbling.
 Many cannot be moved to it. Ye will hear what
 we say, but will not do what we bid you; for
 many a time hath God by his ministers bidden
 you search your ways since this work began; and
 I put it to your conscience, if ye have set time
 apart

apart for it. And if ye say, though ye win not to much, yet it is the work ye are, and were about. I fear, few of you can say this much; and who have it not to say, have an ill conscience, and scarcely can I think that ever they had this real, through and right conviction, that they have a principal hand in destroying themselves and the land by their sin. Others know not what to confess, nor how to further this work of conviction upon themselves.

Therefore it will be best to come a little to you in your relations and stations with this charge, and seeing it pleaseth the Lord now to speak to you, and ye know not how long, or whether he shall speak to you by us again. I exhort you to take to heart the things that I am to charge upon you, and every one as he finds himself, let some time apart to mourn before God and to seek for pardon and peace.

The first sort I shall speak to, is to ourselves who are ministers of the gospel. We cannot deny but our hand hath been deep in the desolation and destruction that hath come upon the Lord's Israel, and though the Lord's people have had that much charity, as to clear us, yet God forbid, that we clear ourselves. Many pastors have destroyed the Lord's vineyard, through their transgressions and sins. And while I am speaking to our own sins, who are the Lord's ministers, let none think that we are laying open their wickedness to their contempt, I know no way like this to make them honourable, to search out
their

their sin, and to be humbled for it before the Lord.

The first thing I charge on them is this, that we have had a carnal way in manning all his matters, we have taken our own prudential gate of binding things on people, and have laid more weight on these than on the ordinances of God, and the spirits working and backing them, and that both in doctrine, and in the exercise of discipline, and our not laying weight on his ordinances as divine; and his spirits presence and blessing promised to make them effectual, hath made his work take small effect among our hands.

2. We have been more careful to stock ourselves with matter of our work, than to bring fresh influences out of heaven to make his work taking, beautiful, and glorious; and every word we spake had been more favoury and refreshful with the people, if we had dipped our hearts in heavens influences; because we have not sought after this, but have only studied words, and to make up purpose, and have not laid the stress of our work upon the spirit, and on his divine influences, in the convey of these things we delivered, it hath made our work so much the more fruitless.

3. It hath been our sin, if we got our work off our hand with credit, and were born out in the delivery of our message to the people, we did not follow it with prayer, and seek after it. It hath not been so vexing to us after as before. Why? because we cared more for our own credit, than for the peoples profiting; a sin for
which

which the Lord hath judged us not fit to bear office in his house.

4. We may be charged with self-seeking and envying others, that were like to darken us; though we have seemed to be blyth to hear such a man commended, yet it hath stuck to our heart, and hath afterward vented itself in our censures, which tells, we never desired another to come our length, at least to out strip us; so far have we been from that disposition to rejoice, if Christ were preached, and at the encreasing of others, though we should decrease. This amongst others hath helped to shut us out of our ministry.

5. We may be charged with much worldly mindedness. we have not given ourselves wholly to these things of our ministry I do not say, that every one is alike guilty of this, or of the rest; yet some are guilty of one thing, and some of another; some in one degree, and some in another, and there hath been a great deal of carnality amongst us all. Can any of us say, that the care of the church hath lyen upon us, or that the care of souls, that we have had under our charge hath had the weight on us it should have had. We have not commended ourselves to every mans conscience, nor have we become all things to all men, that we might gain some; nor have we made it our work to seek that which is driven away, and to bind that which was broken; neither have the souls conditions of these who were going over the bray lyen heavy upon us, till they
were

were reclaimed; we were not burnt nor scalded with the stumbling of any, that was the least part of our work; since once we got a gate of them by publick censures, we troubled not our head with them any more.

6. Whatever hath been our diligence and duty, it hath not been our meat and drink to do will of our master, and to finish his work with delight and pleasure; we have wearied of it. And many precious ministers of the gospel longed for dimission, and would have been glad many times to have been laid by, therefore God hath granted them the desire, and hath laid them by, and though they would be glad to speak again in his name, they are justly deferred of that opportunity, till they know and acknowledge their iniquity, and be ashamed of it.

7. May it not be said, as the word is. Jer. x. 2. The pastors generally were become brutish, therefore have they been smitten, and the flocks scattered; so little religion hath appeared in the practice of many ministers, that ye should not have known them by other men, by their carriage, if their habit had not spoken it. Would God that sad word might not be applyed to many ministers in our time, that profanity hath gone out from them, which hath taught the people to be profane.

8. We have been more busy in strife and contention to strengthen factions, and to hold up our side in controverted things, than busied with the work of converting souls to God. These and many more things may be charged on us; but

But there is enough here to make us ashamed and therefore you who are the ministers of Christ, and have the honour to speak in his name, know that unto you is that word spoken. Jer. xii. 10. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, and have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. Take time a part and together to think on these things. Charge yourselves with them, and confess them to God when you meet, and your alone mourn over them before him, who hath justly shut us out of his house, as unworthy to bear office therein, and yet acknowledge; that the Lord hath dealt mercifully with us in this matter, for when he might have done it on some horrid account, for scandalous transgressions, he hath laid us by on an honourable account of sufferers for him, because he hath found some sincerity in us. And when he hath humbled the ministers of Scotland, who are laid by, as useless; I hope he shall yet take service off their hands; but we would know, that his voice, and the voice of his rod now is ministers; go preach to yourselves, because ye did not preach to yourselves before, and if we take with our sin, and get our peace made with him, it may be he may make us yet polished shafts in his hand; and if not, here we are, let him do to us what seemeth good to him; however, sure I am, it is present duty to set some time apart for confession of, and mourning over sin; and if we do so, it shall be well with us, however matters go.

2. The second sort I would speak to, is to you who are elders and deacons; ye have helped

to destroy the Lord's people. and to lay his pleasant portion desolate, therefore God hath loosed your cords by your sin, and made void your authority, and remarkably he lighted first on you, and shut you all to the door together, not that I aim at your guilt more than our own, but I would have you lay to heart your transgressions, and wish I could further you to a through conviction of your sin in order to your peace, and God's being pacified towards you, and his people. Can ye say that the souls and bodies of the Lord's people hath lyen upon your heart? that it hath been a part of your business to hold up their case to God, and to have them reclaimed, and brought in to him? did ye think it not enough, if ye delated a fault, when it came to your knowledge, and when ye had done, ye thought yourselves exonerated and free? did ye not mannage your work with carnal weapons, mixing your wild fire with the zeal of God, boasting of the people of the Lord, ruling over them with rigour and force, disengaging them by your counsels and reproofs? have ye taken consciencious inspection of these places respectively put under your charge? have ye distribute to the poor with bowels of mercy? what account could many of you give of their condition, if ye should be put to it? and give me leave to tell you, that your worldly mindedness, your greed and covetousness, your lying and deceit, your breach of promises and engagements, your tipping, and carnal walking hath taught the people prophanity. When ye made no conscience of your words

how should they? when ye abstained not from a tavern, was it not a snare to them to follow? and therefore, I nothing doubt, I do you any wrong to charge you with destroying the Lord's vineyard. I shall not insist on your sins; but if ye would search yourselves, confess your sins, set time apart to mourn over them before God, ye might comfort yourselves, that this day ye suffer not as evil doers, but for his names sake; and happy are ye, if ye continue in adhering to him, his truth and cause. But let me obtest you, let men speak of conventicles, we have another thing to look to than their acts, and things of that kind: set time apart, yourselves apart, and your wives apart, and meet together and confess and mourn over your sins. O if I could persuade you to this, I do nothing doubt, but ye should yet live to bear honourable charge in the house of God.

A third sort I would speak to are those who are more eminent amongst the people. We have not any nobles, and God be thanked for it, they have little credit who have most of them; neither would I have you to think, that I mean of any particular gentleman, in what I am to speak. We have not a considerable gentleman in all the parish; but any of you that are more eminent than others, take it to you, and I would charge you with some things, that I would have you (in so far as ye are guilty) convinced of and mourning before the Lord and amending. The first thing, that I charge on you gentles is, that when ever Christ or his cause had ought to

do, ye sent out the blind, the halt and the lame, the prophanest runagates to fight for the cause, and I wish that there were not ground to say of some, that they should have some males in their flock, and yet send out the blind, the halt and the lame in their room; and the consequence of this was often told you, the miscarriages of the armies did so stumble the Lord's people in other lands that it hath holden up, and yet holds up jealousies betwixt the godly in both nations to this day, that they can think on nothing unanimously. 2. I charge you with oppression, and grinding the faces of the poor. I know ye will startle at the naming of this, but I cannot help it. I dare say ye have used your brethren as your slaves, and made their lives bitter unto them. I do not justify their undutiful carriage to you here, neither would I have you think I reflect on your credit, to tell you your sin: your consciences will justify your ministers, that it hath been a part of our work to hold up your credit and conscience, and would have sweetned the lives of the poor bodies under you. I know ye will say, they would not be the better, though ye should give them down of their rent; but will ye once use this mean to better them; convince them that ye are merciful, and if they be not better, put them from you. Is it not lamentable, that every bit of land ye have racked to the utmost value, so that your tenants cannot get your rent payed, and bread to keep in their lives for their labour. I know ye will be loath to be convinced of this; though God's dealing with
you

you may convince you more than my speaking to you, had not your forbears less rent, and less land, and richer tennants? and yet ye are blind and will not see God threatning to cast out of your lap your dishonest gain; yea to cast yourselves out of the land, and from your habitations. O that ye would be perswaded to look to God in this, and lay your heads together, and consult how this ill might be helped. 3. I may justly charge you with this, that ye bring up your sons in vanity; will your gentles now put their children to callings? no, as if that were a discredit to them, and their credit that they should live in idleness, and then they turn malignants, and persecutors of the godly, drunkards, thieves, and whore masters, men that will neither do well, nor let others do well where ever they come, but are a pest in every society where they come. Sure I am, it were more credit for you and them both, to have them bred at some honest calling, than to have them slaying men in other countries, or trailing a pick to fight against the Turk, or coming through the country, as some of them are daily with their testimonials seeking our charity, or begging from door to door 4. May I not charge many houses of our gentry, for being nests of uncleanness, cages of unclean birds, so that if any sober man should come into them, they should not think they have been bred under gospel light: and is not this a horrid reproach upon you? 5. May I not charge you with this, that now and then ye fall out in your unhappy fits of passion, in cursing, banning and

swearing, and are not ashamed of this? there are not many of them now a days, but ask, what he is. He is a gentleman indeed, but he is very passionate, and given to banning and swearing, and one that can let an oath flee. But I have not skill of that man's religion, who bridles not his tongue; sure I am, the spirit of God calls that man's Religion vain Jam. i 26. It is true ye have had a respect to ministers, and some of you have carried a great respect to them on some account but did ye lay as great respect to their message? Hath not that been undervalued by you, as if there had been another gate for you to heaven, than for poor folk; and what care we for your respect to us, whilst ye slight our message? 6. May ye not be charged for want of charity? Have ye opened your hand to the poor and needy? I fear your charity may be soon counted and reckoned from one year's end to another; ye will give your plack at the church door, and your alms at your gate, but have ye searched for poor and needy objects; this should have adorned religion more than many other things, that better might be forborn. 7. May ye not also be charged for want of zeal to the cause of God? especially of late have ye not been so afraid for your lives and states which was impawnd for the cause that is now overthrown? nay, I lay it upon your conscience, if ye thought this a duty incumbent for you, the Lord knows I intend not to lay open your nakedness, but rather to set you in a way to make you honourable; and what is that? even to lay to heart your sin, and take time to

mourn

mourn over it, and make your peace with God, ye get now and then visits from ministers, make use of them, set some-time-apart, and make earnest of it, for words will not do it; and when ye have mourned over your evils, set about the mending of them, as I fear your sad days be but coming yet. I know, ye will think ye know the worst of it, and that is compliance. I confess, that is the worst of it at present, but there is worse coming; if ye comply, ye shall not escape God's wrath, and if ye mourn not, though ye comply not, ye shall not escape that wrath that abideth impenitents, and ye may ere long be shaken out of your worldly inheritance. And is there not much need then that ye should have your peace made with God, and the lively hope of heaven as an antidote against that?

4. A fourth sort is the body of the people. I know you have assented to all that have been asserted against ministers and gentlemen, and it is like ye are glad to hear such doctrine, but have ye not also destroyed the Lord's vineyard, and laid his pleasant portion desolate by your sins. 1. I charge you with deceitfulness, and overreaching one another, with covetousness and worldly mindedness, and a spirit of contention flowing from your covetousness, so that for a pluck of grass, and a beast going over the march, ye have taken up a standing quarrel for year and day. And have they not taken ten times more off you to whom ye were not so much beholden, and ye durst not say it was ill done? and yet ye did not consider, nor take it from

the Lord, as a chastisement for your contention on so feckless grounds. 2. May I not charge you with complaining, grudging, whining and whispering, for the little that was taken from you, for upholding the cause and covenant of God, and for paying ministers stipends, and it may be ye shall lay more out on a worse account to them who will give you no thanks for it. It may be, ye would now give out your money to keep up the gospel, but it will not be bought with money. 3. I charge you for not taking the gospel off our hands, we tell you, that God is now giving up treating with you for this, ye have come to hear, but ye have returned your prophane gates. I know your tipling, lying, banning and swearing, your scorning of the godly, your Sabbath breaking, envy, malice, disrespect to ministers, for all your fashions, and will ye not be convinced and ashamed for these things? 4. I charge you for having a cruel hatred at gentlemen, and for contempt of them and others above you; your fretting and undutiful carriage hath been palpable. I wish you had subjected yourselves more cheerfully. Take time and meet together, and your alone, and mourn over these sins, and many more, and seek God's mercy. I have known several of your meetings, when there was less reason. I know not how ye have fallen from them now. Will ye fall to them again, and do all seriously with God, that he may pity you and yours.

5. I have somewhat to say to servants; do ye know, that ye have destroyed the Lord's vineyard,

yard, and have had a hand in all the evils lying on his people. I charge you with these things. 1. That ye have not received the gospel, though we have mourned over you with tears; ye have never made earnest of making your peace with God; and know ye not that he is now giving up treating with such rebels? 2. Think upon your prophane carriage, your filthy words and sports, your lascivious, wanton and graceless way of conversing, your pride and vanity occasioned through God's goodness, and a cheap year; fullness of bread hath so puffed you up, that ye misken your station; ye must have word about with those that are over you, and the world cannot bear your pride, which appears in your apparel, other things we will not name. I put it to your conscience, have ye done your masters work as your own? have ye taken their rebukes and reproofs without snuffing and answering again? nay rather, was not, and is not your pride such, as that ye cannot bear a word? but ere long ye shall bear more with them, to whom ye were not so much obliged, and dare not speak again. In a word, ye was well, and wist not, ye say, ye had no liberty to serve God, but lye not to God; in all the world there is not a place, wherein servants have had more liberty to serve God, than in this West-country. 3. May I not charge you men-servants, who were pitched upon, that ye shifted to go out and fight the Lord's battles, for the cause and covenant of God, to which ye were bound as well as ministers and gentlemen, and it may be, ye be forced to harle
a pick

a pick to a battle, where the quarrel will not be so clear. Servants, I speak to you, have ye not reason, considering these things, and many more, to take time and mourn for your sins, whereby ye have destroyed the Lord's vineyard? Ye will say, ye have no time; but let me say it, I fear ye shall get time enough ere long, God will give you the Sabbath-day, ere ye have that excuse, and on your silent Sabbaths mourn, if ye have a heart to mourn.

6. And lastly, I shall speak a few things to the godly, And O that I could persuade you, that ye have helped to destroy the Lord's vineyard. And it is the provocations of his sons and of his daughters, that have brought this destruction on Israel. It is true, he is angry at ministers, elders and deacons, gentlemen, commons and servants as such. But it is as true, that he hath another quarrel at all in these stations and relations, who are godly, and as such; and who knows, but he hath reserved you for such a day, that ye might venture your life as Hester, in going to the king: that which I mean is, that ye may go in and wrestle with God for removing of wrath. Ye are persons, who have had moyen with God, but it has not been improved; and I have more to charge you with, than memory can reach, or time will permit to lay before you. But, 1. I charge you with falling from your first love, evidenced by falling from your former diligence. 2. I charge you, that ye are turned formal in all your religious performances: Alas! that ye understand not better.

better the voice of that late rod of sectaries upon you, who cryed down all forms, to make you more cordial, rather than to turn more formal in all duties of worship. 3. I charge you with slothfulness, in giving to the Lord the refuse of your time; he gets but fits and starts of you, after or betwixt turns. It was a great word in that man, *I will not serve the Lord with that which cost me nothing*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. Is not religion one main clause of the covenant? why then are ye so slothful and overly in all religious performances? 4. I charge you with worldly mindedness, so that I defy any to draw a straw betwixt you and many others that know not God, as to this thing. Covetousness hath overwhelmed all, so that it is turned into a common saying, he is a godly man, but he is right greedy; there is no halt as to the gathering of gear, except in the poor, who cannot get it. 5. I charge you with prevailing passions, and inordinate affections to every idol, that comes in your way. Are ye not as soon fadled, and as soon angry and in a passion and dow bear as little, as these in nature? are ye not ready to flee in fire at every word that thorters you? 6. I charge you with pride and self-conceit, and despising them that comes not up to your measure, therefore God threatens to level you ere long. 7. I charge you with unbelief and ignorance of God and his word, so that I dare say, there's not a Christian among an hundred that believeth this Bible to be the word of God, so as to lay more weight on a threatenng and a ground of challenge
from

from it, than on the bark of a dog, notwithstanding of a large dispensation of means, and for so long a time. You have sitten down on poor probabilities of an interest in Christ: but there is not one among many fixed in it. How many of you are under heart-condemning? Though God hath been telling you the evils every day, wherefore he contends, whiles by his word, and whiles by your conscience, yet ye amend not. And do ye think that God can abide with his gospel? Ye may make din and say, what will we do, if we want it? But what have ye done with it? It is to be feared that many of you would live as well without it as Atheists. 8. The true substantials of religion are decayed, as 1. True tendernefs under challenges: the time has been when ye would have been challenged for an idle word, and mourned over it, but now not for fourteen idle deeds, neither can ye mourn. 2. Tendernefs in conscience is much decayed, ye are not so tender as to start at a straw, as ye were wont to do: 2. Where is that searching out of promises, and the application of them to events, I dare say, many of you some few years ago had ten times more promises than ye have this day, and for applying of all that fall's out to some scripture, to make out that all his ways are mercy and truth to his own. Is not that much gone, though by it ye used to hold in your life? 4. There was also a benfil to edify others, but where is that gone now? 5. Where is that wonted zeal against sin, and for the glory of God? Surely in this trial, God hath ta-

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ken us with our back at the wall. 6. Add the abuse and neglect of your Christian fellowship, which hath provoked God to scatter you. But I insist no further. May I think ye will set time apart to mourn over these evils, and seek for grace to get them helped? And O that I could persuade you. Sure I am, considering these things, all ranks will justify the Lord in all that he hath done: but what will all we have said, avail, if it be not taken off our hand, however I shall take heaven and earth to witness, that I have charged these things upon you, and yet, I say not, on you, but on us all; and I would fain hope, that we will take sometime to the through conviction of them on our spirits, and mourn over them before the Lord. If ye do, I dare promise in his name, he will hear, and give an outgate; if not, your bands shall grow stronger. I shall say no more; but if Israel were thoroughly convinced, that he hath destroyed himself, there were hope that in him were Israel's help, which, if we get time and opportunity to speak, shall be shewed to you, even that notwithstanding we have destroyed ourselves, yet there is hope of help in him.

S E R M O N II.

HOSEA xiii. 9. *But in me is thy help.*

IT would seem that the Lord in his providence hath so ordered things, and drawn them to
such

such a period, that he intended I should close the scripture of Matthew, before I should leave you, that thereby you might learn somewhat of the doctrine of the cross, and of the hazard of relinquishing his cause. I did scarce look to have got leave to give an account of that scripture to the end; and when that was done, that he had but two other words to speak to you by me; one word anent your sin, and that ye are your own overthrow, and that God is not to be blamed for it: and another word anent your help and relief, that though it be so, that you are the cause of your own ruin, and that you have destroyed yourself, yet you are bound to hope for relief in him, when there is no other to help you. It seems that God had these two words to speak to you, which no man or power could hinder, till these were delivered.

Ye have heard to what a low condition the church may be brought, and whatever hand God may have in it, and adversaries that are instruments of it, yet her members are chiefly to be blamed for their own overthrow: And God will have all sorts and ranks of persons noblemen and gentlemen, bond and free, rich and poor, ministers and people, godly and ungodly particularly convinced of these sins, whereof they are guilty, whereby they have destroyed themselves, and the church; so that he hath not left himself without a witness, and happy shall he be, who shall bear the impression of these till he come.

Now the other word he hath to speak to you

is, *But in me is thy help.* If the first word have left a deep impression upon your heart, I could with much confidence speak to the second. These words are not only a ground of encouragement to the poor people of God, the remnant in their low condition; but they are also a vindication of the majesty of God, that he is free of their destruction, and not to be blamed for it.

We shall speak of them, first, as they are a vindication of the majesty of God, that he is not to be blamed for their destruction, *but in me is thy help.* The words may be rendred in the bypast time, *but in me is thy help:* so any evil that is upon you, ye may blame yourself for it, for in me thy help hath been, and yet still is.

Here observe, that the Lord hath left abundant testimonies and witnesses at his peoples door, that he is not to be blamed for their destruction, or for any misery, calamity or sorrow, that is upon them, for in me thy help hath been, I have been always good to you, I appeal to your own consciences, whether or not I have helped you many times, when ye have been low; and whether or not I have given you many favourable casts of my hand, so that ye have no cause to blame me. God is flyting free with his people. that he is not to be blamed, these scripture and the like prove it, wherein have I wearied thee? have I been a wilderness to you? hitherto hath God helped.

In prosecuting this doctrine I shall shew you.
1. What ways people do reflect upon and blame him in their condition. 2. What testimonies

God hath to produce for himself at the hand of his church, especially at the hand of his church of Israel, that he is not to be blamed, which will be very applicable to us. 3. Why did the Lord (who is not tyed to render an account of his ways) condescend so far as to satisfy his people, in shewing them that he is not to be blamed.

Object. To the first, What ways do people reflect upon God and blame him.

Answer. 1. When they reflect upon his providence, when they are under any stroke or misery brought on themselves by their own sin; as thus, if the Lord had not done such things to me, it would not have been so with me, this did befall me in his providence, and I could not win by it. This was that which Adam began with, and is a clause irritant in his family since. *Hast thou eaten of the tree saith God, whereof I commanded thee thou shouldst not eat? Who is to be blamed for that? The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* I am not to be blamed, but you, and her; thou gavest me her (indeed, I got a bonny bird that morning I got her) and she gave it me. So we blame God when we blame his providence for what we do. 2. When they reflect upon his predetermining counsels, as thus, this was even ordained for me, before coat or shirt were shapen for me. It is the language in the ix chapter to the Romans, *who hath resisted his will: who could help it, since he decreed it? I say the plague of God shall be upon you, though*
you

you cannot resist that will, for your blaming it.

3. When they reflect upon his free grace and mercy. Something of this is hinted at Psal. lxxvii. 8, 9. *is his mercy clean gone for ever? hath he forgotten to be gracious?* Free grace might have helped this: though I be an undeserving man, what the matter; if free grace had given me a cast by the common? I have no more grace than God hath given me, which is as much as to say, if grace had done its part, I might have been kept from this evil hour.

4. When they reflect upon the faithfulness of God, though some dare not speak it out, yet it is in their heart; there is a word to this purpose Psal. lxxvii. 8. *doth his promise fail for evermore?* When folk do question the truth of his promises; this ye would beware of now: For folk are in hazard to question the truth of his promises, in reference to his public work. This purpose is that of Jeremiah, Jer. xx. 7. *O Lord thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived, and why art thou unto me as a liar?* These are dreadful words of the creature to the Creator, as if he had not infinite ways to make out his promises, that we cannot take up.

5. When they reflect upon his justice, severity and peremptoriness in smiting of his people. There is a word in one of the prophets that runs to this purpose, if we be destroyed, how can we live? which is on the matter this: If God so deal with us, there is no living, or being with him? he will not let folk away with the knot of a straw, but he dings them down. When folk hears that God smitteth for this and for that,

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their heart riseth in passion, and faith, that there is no dallying with him, let him alone, for many have lived with him, and stood before him, and he will not make new laws, nor ordain new ways to follow, neither for your pleasure nor mine.

Object. 2. What hath the Lord to say for his own vindication at the hands of his church, especially at the hands of Israel, to prove that he is not to be blamed for their destruction, and the misery that comes on them?

Answer. 1. God had this to say to Israel for his own vindication, that he had chosen them out of all the nations of the world, without any thing in them previous to that choice, that might have engaged and influenced him, so did he reason with them, Deut. vii. 7, 8. *The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you.* If the Lord had a mind to drag you down, and destroy you; and had delighted in that, he would not have brought you out of that blind condition, wherein ye were lying with the rest of the world, but he would have left you a few blind moles drowning yourselves in your sin.

2. He had this for himself to say, that he had brought them from the slavery and bondage of Egypt, in which they had ruined themselves by their sin, after that he had chosen them, he had always this to say for his own clearing, whatever came upon them; that he was their God that redeemed them from the land of Egypt, so that if he had delighted in their destruction, he would have

have left them there, and suffered them to run to the devil with the Egyptians, and never owned them nor delivered them. 3. He had this to say for himself, that he had entred into a covenant with them in the wilderness, after he had brought them out of Egypt, which priviledge he had denied to any considerable incorporation before that time; whatever he had done to some particular persons and families, yet he never formally entred in covenant with any great incorporation, but with them. 4. He had this to say for himself, that he had done many miracles, and wrought many wonders among them; he had shewed them marvellous and strange acts and great signs and wonders, after he had chosen them in Egypt, and before and after he had formally entred into covenant with them, for their confirmation and establishing, that he dang down every power that had lift up itself against them; what need him have done this, if he had delighted in their destruction? 5. He had this to say for himself, that he had delivered them from many inconveniences; that he reprov'd kings for their sake, and suffered no man to do them wrong; that he smote kings, and mighty kings, Og king of Bashan, and Sihon king of the Amorites; he never spared great nor small, whilst they abode with him, but he carried still as their husband and Lord; this sufficiently clears him from bearing the blame of their ruin. 6. He had this to say, that he kept abundance of light amongst them, for to shew them their duty, that they might know what was the way of peace and life;

many prophets did he send them, who late and early did admonish, rebuke, and teach them, so that it was not for want of light and counsel that they went wrong, they had enough of that, this sufficiently cleared him. 7. He had this to say, that many times he had forewarned them of their skaith, whence it should come, and by what, and had made them consent and submit to their own destruction, if ever they should go that black gate he had forewarned them of. Now, saith God, I have told you the right way, and ye may lippen to me in walking therein, and I have also told you the wrong way, that will bring you down, and bring you under these folks feet that are your enemies, if ever ye make covenant with them, I vow and swear, I shall be full of your flesh, and they were so far convinced of the equity of this, that they consented to their own ruin, if ever they should do it, if ever we join with the people of these abominations, let God consume us from off the earth. If ever we take these thieves again by the hand, let the wrath of God pursue us, the heavy hand of God be upon us, that is a strong vindication of him. 8. He had this to say, that notwithstanding of all they had done against him, he took heaven and earth to witness, he would accept of a little small thing at their hands. *Run ye to and fro, through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment and seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it, Jer. v. 1. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, Jer. iii. 13. Do*

13. Do but this, I will pass by all by-gones, will ye do but this, and I shall defy all the thieves to get you down, but I shall be about with them.

Object. 3. Wherefore doth the great God of heaven so confess, and as it were to vindicate himself so at the hands of poor unworthy worms? He is not bound to give an account of his matters, or to render a reason of his ways; for who may say unto him what dost thou?

Answer. 1. He doth it for the glory of his justice. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.* I clear thy justice of all that is come upon me. God will not leave any ground to reflect on that. 2. For the glory of his grace and mercy, which his people are ready to reflect upon: but I refer to yourselves to judge, whether or not I have been merciful, O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. I refer it to yourselves and all the world, whether or not you deserve strokes, and whether or not I can spare you longer. 3. That he may the more effectually bind his peoples sin upon them, whereby they have destroyed themselves, and convince them of the evil of their own way, and of their folly.

Use 1. Lo here the daring boldness of the corruption of men, that dare reflect upon God, and blame him for the miseries, calamities and sorrow that befall them; we have this legacy left

us by our father Adam, who blamed the holy God for his fall; we have a spice of this from him, although we will not speak it out: yet we think it often in our hearts. If God had not carved out things to be so and so, they could not have been; you are not to meddle with that, for he is holy in all his counsels, though it be so, but you are to be ashamed of your fits, for it is they that are the cause of your destruction. Take heed of blaming the majesty of God, if there be any apprehension in you to do it, suppress it and bear it down.

Use 2. Know that the Lord hath abundant testimonies lying at our doors, as well as at Israel's, that he is not to be blamed for our overthrow, but we ourselves are to be blamed; he hath this to say, that he did set his love upon us, and gave these ends of the earth to his Son, for his inheritance, and that he took inheritance of them, and that he took us by the hand, not for any thing in us, for we were but a pack of poor beggars, in respect of other nations, and that he brought us out of Egypt from heathenish, papistical, and prelatical bondage: and when we were all running the black gate, with the bishops, and running to black darkness, he brought us back again; and that he entered in covenant never more formally with any nation than with us; and many great and glorious things he wrought for us, that he gave us many victories and reproved many both great and small who opposed us, for our sake, all which we hope to be but an earnest of what is to follow, and that he told
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us of our duty, and of his way, and warned us what would be our ruin. He told us, if ever we brake covenant, and joined with the malignant party, and put them in places of trust, and made them captains and officers of our armies, they should be our ruin; and we consented to this, and put in our declaration, that even when there should be scarcity of men, we should not do it, not only in offensive wars, (as some do distinguish) but in defensive wars. We said, God forbid, that even in the scarcity of men we should split upon that rock, and that we should join with these abominations, and yet we never rested till we made them captains and officers of our armies and joined with them; God forgive them that brought them in, and forgive us also that suffered them to be brought in. I dare say also, that God would take little off our hand, that he may be about with these thieves; fain would he be at them, and have a fair occasion to be full of their flesh, who have so shamefully broken his covenant, and spit upon his face. Well I wot he would take little off our hands; however he hath many testimonies lying at our door, that he is free of our ruin. O but we had been a happy people, if we had bidden by him. Many things also hath he to say to vindicate himself of at the hands of his people, which would take a long day to tell. He hath this to say, that he hath holden out to you many a time, what is the way of truth, and the way of peace, and piety wherein ye should walk, and that clearly; you have not fallen in an evil condition for want of light,

and that your idols have overmastered you. For want of that he hath this to say, that he hath not ceased to be a reprover to you, though ye have trampled upon reproofs, yet hath he made your conscience challenge you out and in. He hath this to say, that you never set yourself seriously to seek God, but ye got worth your pains, and met you mid way and more; you never set yourselves so, that ye were at a point; ye would have somewhat in this prayer, or else ye should lay it by: but he met you; *he meeteth him who rejoiceth and worketh righteousness.* No sooner put ye up the sails, but he puts wind in them. That is a testimony, that he is not to be blamed. He hath this to say, give me the tithes and offerings, as ye were wont to do, and see whether or not I will rain down a blessing. Give me the ancient tale of duty, and see whether or not I will come and bless you. He hath this to say, that he hath sufficiently discovered the vanity of that, which is the ground of the quarrel betwixt him and you: he hath convinced you that he hath made your business thrive, as well when ye gave him the due tale of duty, and did not clip them, and better too, than when ye did otherwise, it is but dassing for folk to slip prayer, that they may win soon out to the plough, or harvest-rig; if they do, God may break some soome or coulter, or some other thing in the plough, or the hook wherewith they shear, or make some accident to befall them, that they shall lose more time for their worldly gain, than all the time that prayer would have taken up to them

them. It is in vain for you to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows, for so he giveth his beloved sleep. God can give his people that make conscience of the duties of religion their full of rest, and make their work go on also. Again, he hath this witness against you, that there is something he hath been contending with you for, and desiring you to quit and forsake, and yet ye would not do it for him. Ye know well enough what it is, 'tis even the thing ye know of, what is the reason ye will not mend it? it is some thing that hath cleaved to you this year, and the other year, and several years, had ye done but this for me (as if the Lord would say) and forgone this little petty thing for me, I should have made your peace run down as a river; upon your conscience be it, whether or not I offered it good cheap to you, if ye would give but a little more pains, and forgive a little small thing that ye know well enough what it is for, I will not tell you what it is, I think it not worth the naming, ye should have had peace and perfect peace. It is a fore matter, that we should still keep in our vexation and disquietness, which is all, because we will not forsake the thing we know of; I say then, God hath the right end of the string, come of us all what will, he is free of our ruin. Let us therefore justify him, and vindicate his justice, and free grace, for it hath done what it could do, with credit and honesty to the court of heaven. Let us therefore take with our sins, and blame ourselves, for we have destroyed ourselves.

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We come now to the words, as they are an encouragement, and a ground of hope for the future, but in me thy help shall be; so the word may be rendered, not only have I ay done you good, but I can yet help, and I will help you, for all that is come upon you. I shall once help you in spite of their hearts that would bear you down. Here observe two doctrines, 1. In the lowest condition the church of God and Israel can be in, God can help, there is help in God, if he please to put it out for Israel. Thou by thy sin hast destroyed thyself, and these folk as instruments have broken you all, and dung you all down, and they think ye can never be raised up again, but for as low as ye are, I can help you, for all things are possible with God, even these things, that are impossible with men; he doth whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven and in earth, being King of kings and Lord of lords; he is higher than the highest. Our God can deliver us, say the three children, yea, he will deliver us; they were as low as we are; they had the King and all his court about them, and ready to cast them into a fiery furnace made ready also for them, which also they did, and yet God delivered them. I do not think that ye question this in your judgment, that God can deliver; yet before I speak to the other doctrine, that faith God will deliver you, I will shew you some ways wherein God can help his people in their lowest condition, and in any of these ways God can help us, if he please. 1. He can help his people by destroying them, by that he makes them happy evermore; in death he makes them conquerors; he makes them

them say of the bitter afflictions and strokes, that it is good for me that ever I was afflicted. He teacheth and instructeth them out of his law by his chastning them. 2. He can help them by his admirable bearing them up, and supporting them in their condition; by staying his rough wind in the day of his East wind, correcting them in measure and judgment, even when he seems to make the waters run over them and overflow them, though he brings them through the fire and water, yet he brings them through: he takes away the sting of the rod and affliction and bears them up under it. 2. He can help them, by casting their help in the ordinary channel, by ordinary means and instruments, even when their case is very low, and seems to be desperate, as to an outgate, and there is no man for help appearing, within a short time he can cast their help in the ordinary channel. Ye are, it may be, thinking, that God must work a miracle before we can be helped; but he can put our help in the ordinary channel very soon, as he did in the year thirty eighth, when he threw down the prelates. He can cause the spirit descend upon his people, and great favours on mount Zion, and put it in the hearts of his people to arise, to the raising of his interests, cause, covenant, ordinances and work; he can raise up seven shepherds, and eight principal men. 3. He can do it in an extraordinary manner, he can create help, he shall create help for me, saith David, create deliverance for Israel, is a prayer of faith that it should be, and God shall send down help immediately from heaven,

heaven, he will order all things as they are remaining, God will work wonders, but he will be about with these folk, and help his people.

Use 1. The people of God should not despair; though their condition seems to be irrecoverable. It seems so to you, but it is not so to God; the things that are impossible to men are not impossible to God. What the matter, though God ding us all down, if he will do good to our souls, and teach us out of his law? what the matter though we ly under these folks feet for a time? he will make our worst condition best. What the matter though we want the publick ordinances for a while, if he prove a little sanctuary to us? and if ye get your lesson taught by Master himself, who is an interpreter, one of a thousand, not only amongst the threes, but above them all. What the matter, though he blow up all outward wordly helps, seeing ye have a proof of their emptiness, and seeing he can help either in an ordinary, or extraordinary channel? let us never be discouraged, and lose heart; if the heart be gone, all is gone.

S E R M O N III.

HOSEA xiii. 9. *But in me is thy help.*

I Come now to the third doctrine, that the church of God in her lowest condition, may arrantably look and wait for help from God.

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Not only can he help, but she is obliged to wait for it. Take only that scripture to prove it. Psal. cxxx. last v. Let Israel hope in the Lord for ever and ever, that day can never dawn; neither can that case befall Israel, wherein he is not obliged to hope; and if to hope, then to look for help from God.

In speaking to this I shall speak to these things.

1. Shortly to the low condition whereinto the church may be brought. 2. What grounds of hope hath the church in her lowest condition to look for help from God. 3. What conditions are required in a church, which may warrantably look for help from God. 4. How far was this promise verified to the church of the Jews. 5. Whether or not it be applicable to the church of Britain and Ireland.

To the first, the low condition into which the church may be brought. 1. She may be defaced both as to her civil and ecclesiastick government, the authority of both may be loosed, and the people of God may be as scattered bones about the graves mouth, and few of their own resent this.

Object. 2. What are the grounds upon which the church is to expect help, when thus made low, and there is none to help.

Answer. The covenant is one ground, you must understand, that God hath made a covenant with this church, which is everlasting and perpetual, that he will do such and such things for her, even a covenant of peace, which shall not be removed. And of the tribe of Levi he hath said,
that

that it shall not want a man to offer an offering to the Lord for ever: as David shall not want a man to sit on his throne, which is verified in Christ; so the tribe of Levi shall not want a man to minister before the Lord from generation to generation; when they were in a low condition, he said, I will remember my covenant. Many a black thing did the covenant keep off, and in another place, I will do such and such things to you, after all your whoredoms and adulteries, but not by thy covenant. God hath ways of making out his covenant that we have no skill of; he hath a pose, and a little purse keeping in covenant, that many do not see. Indeed folk that have cast off the covenant, and have burnt it by the hand of the hangman, will get sore bones, and sore souls also; but as for these that cleave to it, they may expect help on that ground. Hof. ii. 19. *I will betrothe thee unto me in righteousness, in loving kindness and in mercy, not only in righteousness, I will not only do thee all that law binds a husband to do for a wife, but I will give thee a cast by the common, I will betrothe thee in loving kindness and in mercy. 2.* A second ground is the headship and suretyship of Christ under which he is come by an everlasting covenant of redemption betwixt him and his father, once have I sworn to David (good honest David, understanding Christ who never wronged man) his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne shall last as the sun before me. Psal. lxxxix. 36. as for thee also *by the blood of thy covenant I will send out thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein*
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there is no water. Zech. ix. 11. Thy prisoners, that is Christ's prisoners out of the pit where-
in there is no water, that is, out of Babylon a
comfortless and heartless place, by the blood of
thy covenant, that is, through Christ's covenant
confirmed by his blood. It was through Christ
they were set free. And saith Daniel. Dan. ix.

17. Look down upon thy sanctuary for the
Lord's sake, that is, for Christ's sake, the great
Prince Michael, that is ay for the church. Lo
Michael one of the chief Princes came to help
me. Dan. x. 13. That good honest Angel ne-
ver fails me, but is ay at my back, when I have
any thing to do for you I never miss him. 3.

A third ground is the name and glory of God,
which is mightily engaged for the help of the
church, what wilt thou do to thy great name:
is a strong argument, when all weapons have
failed, that hath force and virtue in it; we must
even have a cast of thy hand for that. seeing
thou hast taken us to be thy people, and brought
us out of Egypt, thou must not suffer the hea-
then to say, for mischief thou did it to slay them
upon the mountains; and that thou wast not able
to bring them to the land thou promised unto
their fathers; and sometimes he saith, I wrought
for my name's sake, and at other times, for my
names sake I will defer mine anger, I will hold
my hand, and not destroy them utterly. 4. A
fourth ground is, that free love, which moved
him to pity them, when they were lying in their
blood, rank, open and avowed enemies to him,
that same love will pity them still; he promiseth

this,

this, I will heal their backslidings, and love them freely. Hof. xiv. 3. I will even do this freely, for ye have neither in you, nor on you, that can help this business. These are most pregnant grounds, whereupon the church may expect help from God.

Object. 3. What are the conditions that are required in a church, which may warrantably expect help from God.

Answer. 1. It is required, that she have somewhat of pure ordinances, otherwise she deserves not the name of a church; for it is not to a land, or such a multitude of people, as such, that God by his promise is bound to, but to a multitude or incorporation having pure ordinances. This is that which made Israel a church, when they were miserably corrupted with idolatry, they having some of the pure ordinances, as the word, and some of the sacraments as circumcision, and until they lost the word, doctrine, worship and sacraments altogether, God did never altogether reject them. 2. There must be a remnant, all the promises have always a respect to the remnant, the remnant of grace, though it be but small; hence it is said, if the Lord had not left us a remnant, we had been as Sodom and made like unto Gomorah. 3. There must be intercessors, the church indeed is in a hard case, that wants them, as is clear Ezek. xxii. 30, 31. *And I sought for a man amongst them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me in the land, but I found none, therefor have I poured out my judgement upon them, I have consumed them with*
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the fire of my wrath, their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord. Yet in some singular cases he helps, when there is none to help, and no intercessor Isa. lix. 16. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor, therefore his arm brought salvation to him and his righteousness sustained him; and if so, much more when there are intercessors, although they were but a few. Jer. v. 1. Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and seek and know in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, that seeketh the truth, and executeth judgment, and I will pardon it. 4. It is required, that that incorporation deserves best the title, and name of the true Israel, and church of God of any incorporation in the world; and that because God hath resolved still to have a church, and we cannot think that he will cast off a better church, and keep a worse. You shall find, that although Israel was oftentimes corrupted, yet evil as they were, they were the best incorporation in all the habitable world: and that was the thing that kept them to the fore, and gave them still a right to that promise, let Israel hope in the Lord for ever and ever. And yet even in their worst case in captivity, and out of it; in well and wo; indeed they were cast off at last, but there was good reason for that, for the christian church came in, and took their rights and priviledges from them. But put out mine eye with any instance, that they were wholly put away, while they came in. Hence I conclude, that that church

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ought to hope in the Lord for ever and ever, and that even in their lowest condition, when they have destroyed themselves; and if so, I hope our case is the better this day.

Object. 4. How far was this promise verified to the church of Israel?

Answer. 1. In respect that he helped them many times, and delivered them when they were very low, even from eternal judgments, how oft did he deliver them when they cried unto him, when under the feet of their oppressors. 2. In respect that he kept alway a little stock and stool, and a remnant among them in the captivity, and out of it, which did bring forth a new brood, and multiplied three times more, especially it was made out at the coming of Christ, and the preaching of the gospel to them. 3. And chiefly, it shall be made out at their ingrafting, when Israel shall return to the Lord.

5. How far may we make use of this promise, and how far is it applicable to the church of Britain and Ireland? In answer to this, we shall first shew how far these conditions, which are required in a corporation which may warrantably expect help, are to be found in the church of Britain and Ireland. 2. We shall shew some additional things, which may further strengthen our faith in this thing.

Object. To the first, what of the conditions which are required in an incorporation which may warrantably expect help, are to be found in the church of Britain and Ireland?

Answer. 1. That a church must have pure ordi-

ordinances; and we say, we have pure ordinances, and much more pure than God gave Israel ground to hope in him for; who will say against it? we have the pure word of God preached, and pure sacraments, and it is not long since we had pure worship, pure doctrine, and pure discipline and government, all very near the pattern. Indeed there are very great corruptions now brought in; but from whence have they come? from the church of Britain and Ireland? we declare before heaven and earth, that these who deserve best the name of the church of Britain and Ireland, that they do adhere to the doctrine, worship, discipline and government sworn to in our solemn league and covenant; but these corrupters have come from a party, whom we have opposed since the year 38. who have violently riven pure ordinances from us. When Israel was cast off, their defection was universal and arbitrary, voluntary and by choice; but we by violence and force are driven from pure ordinances by an ungodly party, whom we have striven with from the womb. They shall find that the church of Scotland wants not pure ordinances, but that ungodly party hath violently rugged them from the true dispensers and stewards of them, and hath intruded a pack of prophane perjured slaves to dispense them; the Lord is our witness, we have not done it by choice. 2. There must be a remnant; I never bade better, for we plead, that there is a numerous remnant in the church of Britain and Ireland, and such a remnant as was never found, for any thing we know in a-

ny nation or kingdom at once. I grant the remnant is far from their duty, but what can ye conclude from that; that God will leave that church? I deny that to follow; I will indeed conclude the cloud to be growing, and that it is not at it's height, but not that God will give up with that church. I will get you scriptures to speak the contrary, particularly Jer. v. 1. and Isa. vi. ult. the remnant shall be as a tile tree, it is a significant word, it signifies the terrass that was on the north of Jerufalem, which kept the storm off the temple, and shall be as an oak, whose substance is in them, the holy seed shall be the substance of the land, and if so, then God and the church of Britain and Ireland cannot shed, for that condition is mightily verified in it 3. There must be intercessors, I grant, that gives a dash to our faith; but although we have been in the sense of our sin, granting that we are far from what we shou'd have been at, yet God and the world knows that there are intercessors for the church of Britain and Ireland, in the land, and out of the land. And if God fought but one, and would have spared for ones sake; I dare say, there are many thousands lamenting over the condition of Britain and Ireland. Do not think that God will shut out their prayer: he will regard the prayer of the destitute, there hath been many a sappy prayer put up, and many a tear shed within these four years; and the people of God have been filling God's bottle with them, and we hope it shall be full ere it be long, every one of his should be helping

to fill it. It is a strange thing, though there be so many godly folk, that we cannot get God's bottle filled up amongst us, when it is full, they will make the wheel of providence go about to the confusion of enemies, and the redemption of his people. 4. The church which may warrantably expect help, must have the best claim to be called the true church of any church in the world. And I presume, that this condition stands mightily verified in the church of Britain and Ireland. I say it, with submission to others who know better the affairs of other churches abroad than I do. We have pure ordinances, and are under covenant with God. We have infest our seed in them, and have laid all to the stake for them, and have been signally owned of God in that work, and the rumour hath gone abroad through the reformed churches, that we are the purest church, wherein we will find the best title and claim: if that will not do it, ye may think men may take their word again in their covenanting, but that cannot be without consent of parties. Ye will say, that the church of Britain and Ireland hath broken covenant with God. I grant, that is a great objection. I grant indeed our rulers have judicially broken covenant to their shame, and the prelatick party hath voluntarily and deliberately done it: but is that the deed of the church of Scotland? I deny; for these that best deserves the name of the one, do abominate that deed of theirs, and do cleave to the covenant, and are suffering, because they will not break it. That the purest remnant may deservedly

vedly be called the church, read Psal. xx. ult.
 a seed shall serve him, and it shall be counted to
 the Lord for a generation. The seed that serves
 him is counted the church, these who adhere to
 him. his covenant and ordinances, and bear tes-
 timony against all that break his covenant, and
 are backsliders, and they shall declare his righte-
 ouness to the generation to come, that he hath
 done this. Hold your tongue; they are not yet
 born, but in their mothers womb, and their fa-
 thers loins, who shall reap the good of this work,
 that we are suffering for. Take up your hearts
 then, and be not discouraged, seeing we have
 such access to these four conditions, for as they
 have advanced, they shall get all we have ere
 they get them, yet let us hold to our claim,
 while a better come, and take it from us. I shall
 in the next room, give you some few items, that
 every lass and lad may make use of for strength-
 ening their faith that God will help 1. We
 have a very insolent party to deal with, who
 have made void God's law, and established in-
 iquity by a law. And shall the throne of ini-
 quity have place with God? No it cannot be,
 they are bloody and deceitful men, and shall
 they live half their days? No, they shall not:
 they have broken covenant, and committed the
 most horrid breach that ever was heard tell of,
 they have not only broken it, but burnt it with
 the hand of the hangman. Shall they break the
 covenant and prosper? Shall they burn it, and
 be delivered? No, they shall not, and their fall
 is like to our rising. 2. They are become griev-

ous oppressors they have little more ado now but draw gentlemen and others to their unhappy ensnaring courts to fine and confine, for the sighs of the poor and the cries of the needy God will arise. 3. This quarrel and controversy betwixt them and us is no new thing, and God hath not yet fully decided it, whether they be right or we. - We have been fighting with them these several years, and have been setting the work of reformation up the brae, and always as we set it up, they dang it down. Now it stands God on his credit to carry the day freely from them without a start of them, for his work is perfect. 4. There is a number of godly, able and faithful ministers in the land. The people of God in all generations did look on that as a sign of an harvest. Alas! if there be no more to follow, It shall be a sign of our ruin. Hath he polished so many shafts, to let them ly by, and hath no more ado with them? That we can neither think nor say. 5. I know no place in all the world, where there is a work of God breaking up. If there were a work breaking up elsewhere, indeed I would be feared, they would come and inhaunce the rights, and take away the inheritance from us; but since there is not a place in the world, where there is a work of God breaking up, but all the powers of the earth are against our Lord Jesus Christ, and nothing but darkness covering the earth. Therefore we cannot think that God hath a mind to throw down his temple here, till we know of a better set up elsewhere. 6. The hopes of the people

of God saith somewhat, they have hopes that cannot fail, though many think little of their hope, and though they cannot give a solid reason of them, yet they cannot be put off it, but God will send help. You must let them alone, for the expectation of the poor shall not fail, God that hath wrought that impression of hope in them, he will not suffer them to be ashamed, if it will but answer their expectation. 7. I apprehend that the name of God is singularly engaged for the church of Britain and Ireland. I will tell you, how I think the name of God is singularly engaged, the word is gone through all the churches, that these three kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland have entred into a covenant with God to reform religion to the utmost pin, and that they have laid all to the stake for that work, and that God did own them singularly in it, and many a carcass fell to the ground for it and many a pound and penny was spent for it. And though many did not what they did with a perfect heart, yet there were many honest. The word now runs again, that that same very party, who did engage their lives and fortunes for that work are brought into slavery and bondage by a prevailing party, the vilest of men, and off-scourings of the land, and that for their adhering to the covenant, they are now brought under contempt by that same very thing, whereby they were made honourable; rid your feet of that my dear hearts if ye can; It may be ye will say, that that party hath fallen from their first love. I grant that, but these
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are cases of consciences we must keep amongst ourselves. What knows the nations abroad of that. I cannot see how he can live and not help us (with reverence be it spoken) without a mighty disparagement to him. O Lord, what wilt thou do to thy great name? I have reckoned it a special providence of God, that hath led me to this text, to fix these two truths upon you. The one is, that you are to be blamed for your own destruction. And the other, that your help is in God. I take them all in hand, be they ministers or people who clear themselves of the first, that they have taken with their sins, that have destroyed them, then God shall clear himself of the second. Let us hope and wait for it, seeing Israel may hope in the Lord for ever and ever.

S E R M O N IV.

MAT. XVI. 25. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: And whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it.

I Have told you, that the natural life of man may come in competition with the cause and interest of Christ, and some men will get a free choice, in this case, to save or lose their life; though every one will not get it to their option. I likewise told you, that the natural life of man, when put to his option, to save or lose as he pleaseth

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eth, with denials, or not denial of the cause, was a mighty temptation.—*All that a man hath he will give for his life.*

But, however, it might be a mighty temptation, and, however, many things may occur in the way to obstruct the man's right choice in the case; yet be it known unto you all, *that whosoever seeketh to save his life, with prejudice to the cause of Christ, and a good conscience; thereby loseth his life.* I was beginning to tell you what ways a man would study to save his life with prejudice to Christ and his cause; and he doth so, either by omitting that which is his duty before God, for fear of his life, or for fear of inconveniencies that might follow upon his doing of his duty; or he doth it by committing that which is positively sinful before God, for fear of his life.

First of all, the man prefers his natural life to Christ and his cause and a good conscience, by omitting his duty: And that is, *1st*, When he forbears to testify for God in his place and station, I mean, by witnessing with the mouth for him; this reaches both minister and people, when they will not speak for Christ's cause, when 'tis reproach'd, for fear of hazard: This is to seek to save their life by omitting of duty.

2dly, Folk may be said to seek to save their life with prejudice to the cause of Christ, by omission of duty in this case, when God lays an opportunity of his service and work before them for the good of his church; but by reason of their faint-heartedness they fear, and will not
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set about it, and so will not rescue Christ and his cause, by opposing what God calls them to oppose.

3dly, By omitting other duties competent for them in their place and station, or by reason of wicked laws made against such duties by the supreme Magistrate, with certification of such and such hazards to occur upon them, By doing of those duties, as ye have already heard.

Having spoken to these things, we come now to speak of the next great head of cases and ways with prejudice to Christ and his cause and interests, and our own conscience positively by doing that which is sinful against God; and this is done several and many ways. There are several and many cases, in which, folk may be said to prefer their natural life to Christ's cause and their own conscience, by committing positively that which is sinful against God. And,

First, Folk prefer their natural life to Christ his interests and cause, when men do disclaim the interests and cause of Christ, and all that party, side and faction, because of Christ Jesus and the truth. I hope 'tis clear, and without controversy to you all, If folk do this for fear of their life, or any peril, or hazard that they may come under, with prejudice to his interest and cause, that they are seeking to save their lives with prejudice to his interest and cause, and to fall in under the hazard of *losing their life*. This was Peter's fault; for, as holy a man as he was, he thought he was something hardly put to it, and he being under the apprehension
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that his life might have gone, if he had confessed his Master; and so judges himself to be in hazard, upon that account, he doth formally disclaim Christ Jesus, and all that faction and party:—*Thou art one of them* (say they) *for thou wast with him in the garden, thou art one of his disciples, thy speech bewrayeth thee*: I vow and swear (saith he) I am not fanatick, if ye will believe me. And thus he formally disclaims Christ and his interests and cause, and foreswears himself. This is a very hainous way of seeking to save our life with prejudice to Christ, his interests and cause. and our own conscience. But,

Secondly, Some can hardly get it denied, but they have been with Christ, and one of that party, side and company, and one of their sect, as 'tis said in the scriptures; but yet for fear of their life, they will not only disclaim that interest, party, side and faction; but to put it out of all question that they do so, they will now put it under their hand in a covenant or declaration, (as ye use to call it) that they do disclaim that party, side and way, and so that they do judge all their former works and actions in that way, and with that party, to be sin, and so will solemnly oblige themselves by an oath that they will never own that interest or way more, if the supreme Magistrate put them not to it. I hope ye are all clear, that this is one of the most heinous ways that can be chosen for folks seeking to save their lives with prejudice to Christ, his interest and cause; yet there are many of this generation, that will not only disclaim that party

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ty, side and faction; (for it may be called a *faction*) but they will also put it under their hand in a declaration that they do judge that way their sin, and so shall never own that interest or way of Christ any more, if the supreme Magistrate put them not to it, though he should turn them all Mahumetans. I have this much charity to give some of these lowns, albeit I have not much to give to any that ever have gone that way, yet I have this much charity to give some of them, that it has been for fear of the loss of their lives, or for fear of the loss of some personal interests, that hath made them do so: If it has been *the wickedness of their principles*, betwixt them and God may it be, my part is clean of it. However, let them do it as they will, they have sought to *save their lives* with prejudice to Christ, his interests and cause. And there are two great witnessess standing against them, that shall stand against them before God and man, and that is their *tongue* and their *hand*; these two shall witness against them before heaven and earth, declaring their unparalleled wickedness. Ye may, perhaps, think the taking of that printed paper, the *declaration*, is but a small trivial business: But I would ask at any serious godly souls, that have the least spunk of ingenuity remaining in them, that have not sinned away their conscience with this pernicious time; Sirs, what would ye think to see a printed covenant, such as our covenant was, having so many mens names at the end of it, as our covenant hath had in many places,

places, men thinking it their glory to have their names at the end of that covenant; I say, what would ye think to see another covenant disclaiming the former printed covenant by the self same men, that owned the former, having their names at the former covenant, vowing and swearing to maintain the cause and Interests of Christ, having their names at the latter printed covenant, vowing and swearing the quite contrary, never to own the interests of Christ any more? What would ye think to see the names of these knaves now at this latter covenant, in sealing against their own names at the former covenant? Truly, construct of them as ye will, I think the world may wonder of them else ye may give them charity and the like; but if God write another Bible, I have none to give them, construct of them as ye will. 'Tis a shame in the sight of the nations for men to falsify their own deed before the sun and moon, heaven and earth, God and man; to put it under their hand, that they shall never own the interests of Christ contrary to their oath, the hainoufist perjury that ever they put upon themselves, or that ever we read of, either in scripture, or in any other history; this is one of the most hainous ways that ever man took for shunning of personal hazards, with prejudice to Christ, his interests and cause, if they lose not their life many of them, we wonder, and that some will possibly see it, ere long, though perhaps we shall not be much witnesses to it, yet there will be witnesses to it, ere
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the dreadful *day of doom*. Folks set always long terms. But,

There's a *third* way that many *seek to save their lives*, with prejudice to Christ's cause, by doing something that's *positively sinful* before God, and that is neither by disclaiming Christ and his cause, and party and side, nor yet by putting it under their hand, that they shall never own that party nor way any more: But it is by joining of interest and issue with those enemies that have so done; there's a joining of their interests with those that have so done, that God looks on as very hainous in his sight. There are many ways of joining interests and issue with that party: There are many plottings and' complottings, and workings to and fro to their hands, among us in this matter. Howbeit we have so much charity to give to some of them that have so done, that 'tis not so much out of malice that they have done so, (perhaps) as the *fear of personal hazards*, which has made them to join issue and interest with that party. But however, here I shall give you some ways and cases, in which men do join interest and issue with the enemies of God; and tho' I will not say, that all these that I am about to name, may be properly applied to those that may be called, *the enemies of God*; yet having these, or any of these, they look with very *black marks*, and tho' I will not say, that one that's guilty of one of them, will be guilty of all of them; yet I judge one of them useth to follow another in a man's practice, so God's judicial plagues brings them to an height.

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Ye will find always of a peoples joining of interests and issues with God's professed enemies, in the prophecy of Obadiah, they run all to the case of Esau there, in the name of Edom, Jacob's bastard brother, a lown *that had sold his birth-right for a fill of his own foul belly*, and he had still an ill-will to the honest lad Jacob: And so whenever he got an opportunity, he joined issue and interest with those that were his professed enemies, and ye will see many things brought in there, that God charges him with. This may be very properly applied to many within our times, that have joined interest and issue with that party that's the enemies of God and his church at this time, to lay their hand to their heart, and see whether or not they speak not their very case.

First, This their charge upon Edom, is, *In the day of thy brother's affliction thou stoodest on the other side.* Now, that ye may understand the matter, ye must take it up thus: There were two parties in that day, standing confronted over against another, *viz.* poor Israel standing on the one side, and Israel's enemies that had invaded them; standing on the other side; Edom is a bastard brother in the house. and he comes in for his own hand, and sides with Israel's enemies. When God had placed the two parties, one against another, Edom comes in, and when he should have sided with the people of God, he sided with the enemies of the people of God; so soon as he knew who were the professed enemies of the people of God, *he stood on the other side:*

side: 'Tis like he declared not himself to be an enemy at the first, but he stood on the other side; and that was enough to declare him to be one of the enemies of Jacob. There are some of you who will speak nothing against the people of God, and ye will not declare to be enemies; but yet ye will speak as little good for them for all that, and that says, *Ye stand upon the other side*, else ye would help when they are in need. Your indifferency, in such a day, will prove you to be the enemies of the people of God, and ere long, in God's righteous judgment, 'tis like you will go the full length, if ye be standing there; else ye will not stand long there, God will declare you to be rank enemies to his cause and people. It is not good to side with God's enemies either in jest or earnest. There is not much word of some of our compliances yet, but we *stand on the other side* for all that. Truly I fear you very sore ere all be done; then 'tis enough to declare any man to be a joiner of issue and interests with God's enemies, and the enemies of his people, because tho' they speak nothing against the people of God, yet they speak nothing for them in the day of their affliction; *Thou stoodest on the other side in the day of thy brother's affliction.*

Secondly, 'Tis charged on them there, that they *rejoiced at Jacob's affliction, and at the prosperity of their enemies*; that's another step of compliance, or joining of interest and issue with them, rejoicing at the enemies prosperity, and at their success, and at the calamity and destruc-

tion of the people of God. Indeed, quoth some, I am not guilty of that, I had rather have them that ye call the people of God upmost; do ye so? What think ye then of the keeping of days of thanksgiving? Then ye may say, ye keep those days on this account, and on that account. Yes, ye may put folk by so, but see if ye put God and your own conscience by so; God knows on what account ye keep those days of thanksgiving: I defy you or any else on any account; but ye justify all the cursed work that the enemies have done for the overthrow of the work of God in these lands. Ye may go about the bush with me, how to find out distinctions, but gang about it as ye will, (my friend) I shall hook you: For the matter stands directly thus, That on one of these *two* accounts ye behoved to rejoyce, either at the prosperity of the *wicked* or at the adversity of the *godly*: For just in the day of our affliction, when our worthies fell, and when our government and ministers were cried down, and all the conjured enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ got up their head, and mischief by our rulers *established by a law*, that day ye stated your day of thanksgiving. Know ye how, and what at ye rejoiced? Lay then your hand to your hearts, and read that scripture; 'tis only Jacob that's in affliction; and 'tis only the wicked crew, Jacob's enemies, that are exalted. Now lay your hand to your hearts, and learn to know on what account ye rejoiced, and know that ye are but bastard brethren, rejoicing at the prosperity of the enemies of Jesus, and at the affliction

of Jacob, and know what hazard ye are in. Indeed, perhaps, you may say it was the fear of the hazard of your life, or fear of inconveniencies that follow on your not keeping of such days; ye may lose your means, or ye may lose your life, or something that belongs to life. Indeed I believe you now, I seek no more of you than that, that's enough to prove, that ye have sought your life, to save it with prejudice to Christ and his cause, by thy keeping of a day of thanksgiving. Indeed I give you that much charity, that it has been for fear of your life, or some inconveniency, that has made you keep a day of thanksgiving with prejudice to Christ and his cause. If it has been but the wickedness of your principles, 'tis the worse of that; betwixt you and God may it be. But I give you the charity, that it has been for fear of your life, or some inconveniencies, that has made you wrong the cause of Christ, by keeping a day of thanksgiving.

Thirdly, There is this charged on Edom, and ye may take it as another degree of joining interest and issue with God's enemies, and it is this, *Neither should they have spoke proudly in the day of his distress.* There are some, that are given to homologate the courses of the time, and yet they have no will to be called the enemies of the people of God, and they have as ill will to be called *fanaticks*; but they are even such fools as are given to take a rant sometimes; and not to give them too much charity, 'tis to be judged they will take some more than ordina-

ry, for fear they be judged *fanaticks*; and when they are taking their rant, they will reproach the poor people of God thus; *It is well wared on them, they were all grown so proud, that they could not be tolerate; they could not but meet with a mischief, they were all grown so proud, so saucy, and so precise, there could not better come of them.* Well, be doing so, talk on so, but remember that this is no small part and way of joining issue and interest with God's enemies, and remember ye are of the black band that hath *spoken proudly in the day of Jacob's affliction.* What is the cause I pray you? Was it not that ye yourselves would not be suspected to be of that party that's called *fanaticks*, that so you might not be under the hazard they are in at this time? Therefore ye have spoken so proudly against the party in the day of their affliction, it had not been so ill for you to have called them so in the day of their prosperity. But in this ye are exceeding guilty, that ye have spoken proudly in the day of Jacob's distress and affliction.

Fourthly, There is this charged on Edom, and ye may take it here as another step and degree of compliance with the enemies of God, *Neither shouldst thou have laid thy hands on thy brother's substance, in the day that strangers carried away his forces.* Will any body, think ye, that profess love to the cause, take an harle of an honest man's gear, when 'tis going for the cause and covenant, and work of *reformation*? Indeed I'll warrant you, that they will. 'Tis true, none I know that has love really to the cause and
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covenant, and work of reformation, will do so. But I know enough of lowns that have professed much love to the work, will be very glad to win a day's wages to draw an honest man's point, when 'tis going for the work of reformation; and many will not hook to put in their hand among the honest man's gear, when 'tis going for the work of reformation, and take a good deal of it: Will ye do so? Then truly it shall be the dearest gear that ever you wan in your life. Will the states take a fine of a man, for promoting of the work of God? And will ye take any off-fallings that ye can get? Will ye lay your hand on your brother's substance, in the day of his distress? Take it as ye will, but ye may as well take God's vengeance; and and if ye take it, ye shall take God's vengeance with it. It shall be the dearest gear in your custody, the thing that you take of them that way, if ye take any thing of the people of God, for the covenant and work of reformation, or for any thing relating thereunto; believe it, ye shall get the broad curse of God with it, that shall crow in your crop, and burst out at your broadside, and turn out that which is in of you, that all the world shall see as well within as without. And withal, know assuredly, this is one of the highest ways of joining issues and interests with God's enemies, the Spirit of God hath left on record in the scripture; and know ye are once scrued up and over among the *black-band*, and God knows when ye shall come off again.

Fifthly, There is this there charged on Edom,

and ye may take it likewise as another step and degree of compliance, and that is, *Thou stoodest on the cross-way, to cut off those of his that did remain.* There is even some folk at this present, that has not gone the full length they resolve, that find the work of God is going over the brae, and the people of God is like to be ruined, as it is, to lend all a put together, to put all further wrong, to reproach any thing that remains. Professed enemies have gotten the one wheel of the work of God over the brae, and ye wait well, under thumb, to get the other put over the brae also; the vote and cause will go against them: Quoth ye, we cannot help it, and need not cast ourselves into needless hazards; since the work be going, let it go, and frae that party be going let them even go; we need not speak for them, for they will over the brae: Be as it will, therefore let us even vote as the rest vote, lest we bring ourselves into hazard. I know there are some of you that would not have taken the lives of those that were execute at this time, nay, but ye will not hook to reproach them for all that; and amongst the enemies of God not care to say, they were guilty of death: 'tis an high way of joining interest and issue with that party; hereby ye seek to save your life with prejudice to Christ, his cause, interests and people. God shall scrue you up among that number that put his people to execution.

Sixthly, There is another degree of joining issues and interests with that party, charged on Edom, and that is *the discovering of those that*
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were hid: And that follows still on the other, the matters of God are going wrong, these have a rant and hand to put it further wrong; the next thing that they will do, if they have opportunity, they will delate and discover any body that they know hid, that they think if they were discovered, would come into hazard for the covenant and cause, and work of reformation; there is not much din of our compliance yet; but we are busy enough else tattling and telling to some others, of some that we know hidden, that we know, if they come to light, they'll come into the chalk for the work of God: Wherefore do ye so? Is it not that ye yourselves should not be suspected to be one of that party? Or is it out of malice that ye do so? This is also an high degree of joining issue and interest with that party.

Seventhly, There is another degree of this evil here charged on Edom, take it also as another part of compliance, or joining of interest with God's enemies, and that is, *drinking upon the holy mountain of God*. There is some folk having come all the lengths, in the end they will even come to this, to drink to the confusion of the covenant, and all that party that will adhere to it; and so when they fall upon their rants among their companions, will say, *Here to the confusion of the covenant, and all the fanaticks*; and some of them will even be so absurd as to say, *The devil clank over with it*. Such of you may read in the 16th verse of the prophecy of Obadiah, and look what it speaks of you, and

throughout all that chapter of Obadiah, you may read it at your own leisure; ye will find many instances there, and degrees of compliance. I shall not speak much more upon it; but remember this general head, that tho' ye do not disclaim Christ nor his cause, nor yet take the declaration, yet that there is a joining of issue and interest with that party, that are the professed enemies of God, that ye have so done for personal hazards, and it goes readily from one degree to another, till it win to the last.

1. They begin and they side with that party, that is the enemies of the church of God, and will speak but little, and debate for that party, and they will speak nothing against the people of God, yet they will say as little for them, but they will stand on the other side; and indeed if they be there, they will gang a little further the next time, and profess that they have reason to evidence something of joy, for the success and prosperity of the wicked; at least to profess joy in that case, for fear of hazard or inconveniencies; once being there, they will not stand much to speak proudly, and testify against the people of God in affliction, and to blame them thus, That it is all justly come upon them; they were all so proud, that they could not stand: Indeed when once they be at this, to reproach the people of God thus, without all debate when they see their gear going for the covenant and cause, and work of reformation, if they get opportunity of any thing that is ado, they will even find in their heart to take a clat of it. Indeed

deed when once they be at that with it, they will take a clat of an honest man's gear, when it is going for the honest cause without debate, they will not spare to stand in the crofs way, to cut off those of his that doth remain. Wo to them! I nothing doubt, if they be cutting off any thing of the work of God that remains, but they will discover any that they know hid, that they think will come into chalk for that work. If they do all the rest, doubtless when they come to their own companions, and have taken a rant, *they will drink to the confusion of the covenant, and all the fanaticks.*

Now ye see there are many ways of joining interests and issues with the enemies of God, and gang from less to more, from one degree unto another, till God in his righteous judgment lay on the last stone, as their plague: It may be ye are but standing on the other side to day yet, and if ye be speaking nothing for the people of God, ye are speaking as little against them. Well, are ye standing on the other side else, in God's righteous judgment, ere some few years go about, ye will be drinking to the confusion of the covenant, and all that will adhere to it.

4thly. There is a way that men prefer their natural life to the cause and interests of Christ, by doing that which is positively sinful, and that by giving obedience to sinful acts and laws, for fear of personal hazard, is such a thing as I know to be iniquous and sinful. But there comes out such a law from the supreme magistrate, that such a thing must be done, or then be liable to
such

such and such hazard; and for fear of that hazard, I give obedience to that iniquous law, and that way seek to save my life, with prejudice to Christ and his cause. This was the case of the three children that were put to it at Babylon, but they did not obey; there came out a wicked law against them, that when ever they heard all the bagpipes blow, they should, without any more, fall down and worship the idol that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, or then take it on their peril to be cast into the firey furnace. O! but then the children made a fair and honest choice. Be it known to you all Gentiles, quoth they, if the bagpipes should blow till they burst again, we will not fall down and worship the idol that Nebuchadnezzar had set up; if our God please, he can deliver us, but whether he will deliver us or not, we will not bow down to your glecks. O! but they made a fair choice! there are many folks now in our days; I think, if the kings commanded the most iniquous law that ever was commanded in a church, I doubt not but they would give obedience thereunto, for fear of inconveniencies that they fear would come upon them for their disobedience: they have given a great proof of this already, and greater proof than this cannot be given, for they have sworn, *That his majesty's will shall be the rule, according to which they shall level all their actions.* I hope it is clear to you all, that these lowns have taken a sinful way to save their life, prejudice to Christ and his cause, as ever was taken. I am sure their lives must be in hazard.

The next thing I proposed to speak to, was, what pretence have men to say for their own defence, for this unhappy way of compliance? what shadow or pretext have they for this? have they nothing to say for themselves, for taking of such an uncanny gate as this? yes, that they have, it is an ill deed, but they will always get some excuse for it, and so they have much to say for their evil deeds too: they have many pretences and reasons for their own defence here, though I hope, ye are all clear, that no pretext or reasons formable can be given, without a rag about the foot of them. No formable reason can be given, why men seek to save their lives with prejudice to Christ and his cause, but such as they are, they have enough of them, and ye shall judge them; for I shall give you an instance of some few of them. Now let every man lay his hand to his heart, and be judge here.

The first pretext that we shall name, which many have for their compliance, is this, *law and authority*; there is law and authority for the thing. When we say, what mean'd ye to comply and take that unhappy course by the end? they choose this goodly pretence, there is law and authority for it: in this they fortify themselves in all their abominable courses, *There is law and authority for such things*. Wilt thou tell me, O man, if thou hast any spunk of ingenuity remaining in thee. Whether or not, was there not law and authority at Babylon for the three children to fall down and worship the graven image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up?

up? though this law and authority came from the king, yet it was not a lawful authority; and therefore they behoved to say to the king, in this, we will neither obey law nor authority. Or wilt thou tell me, Man, of all the martyrs that ever thou heardst of martyred for the cause of Christ, if ever any of them was martyred without a shadow of law and authority, save some that have been killed secretly. Any that were brought to any publick hearing, there was always some shadow of law and authority laid against them. Was it not so from the beginning? all the cruelty that ever was done to Christ, his church, and his cause, since the beginning, it was still set out with some shadow of law and authority; it was still so since the beginning. I think, man, if thou wert a man, and not a beast, thou shouldst resolve not to make thy conscience subject to all the iniquous laws that may come through a land; I mean one that has rational understanding above a beast, should know, that he should not make his conscience subject to all the iniquous laws that come through the world. I had thoughts, that thou art a man *baptised into the Father Son and Holy Ghost*, there is some spunk of ingenuity left within thee, that thou shouldst know this much, that the human laws of the prince do not make void all the divine laws and authority of our Lord Jesus upon the consciences of men. I mean'd when a divine law and a human law had confronted, in opposition one to another, that the divine law was to make void the human; but I never knew that the hu-

man

man laws of the prince made void all the divine laws of Christ before: I never heard that doctrine taught, but within these four years, God be thanked. Short while may the law of the prince last, that makes void all the divine laws and authority of our blessed Lord Jesus. Truly man, thou has a bonny plea of it, thou must sell thy conscience, abjure the covenant, and comply with their iniquous laws and authority for it. If thou art a man, and not a beast, man, I think thou shouldst know this, that it is more lawful to obey God than man. The apostles made greatest enemies judges in this matter, *whether be it most lawful to obey God rather than man, judge ye.* But ye must obey man, though opposite to all commands of God. The king's laws are for this, quoth ye, there is a law and authority for it. Truly ye have a bonny plea of it, a brave pretence of it, forsooth, I think a man baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, should think shame to instance such a pretext: 'tis even like yourself, there is law and authority for it. There are many also who, for their compliance, pretend loyalty to their prince; they must comply, they must abjure the covenant, that they may prove their loyalty, and respect to his majesty's grace. Goodsooth, let me tell it quietly betwixt me and you, there is few good news in the land since the like of you became so loyal. If our king had been qualified with grace, as once we supposed him to be, and had born down vice and prophanity, there had not been so much loyalty in the breasts of a thousand of you as is in the breast
of

of one of you at this day. Always I thought it had been true loyalty to the prince, to have kept him in his own room, and given him his own due, to have kept him subordinate to Christ, and his laws subordinate to the laws of Christ. I thought true loyalty to the prince, had been to have kept his house in the line of subordination to the fear of God. *Fear God, and honour the king*, I judged that had stood well in all the world; but there is a generation now, that has turned it even contrary, *fear the king, and then honour God*: I thought never that that was true loyalty yet: I never heard that doctrine taught before: but I thought always, that was true loyalty, *fear God, and honour the king*. God's vengeance on them that have altered that divine law, ever until they set as good a one in the place of it. They made the rule all wrong, that put the king in the first place; he will never stand well there. I do think men of rational Judgment, that have not sold themselves to this iniquous time, will think it the true honour of the prince, to keep him in the line of subordination to God's honour, *fear God, and honour the king*. He is the best subject, who is the best christian. And ask some, what makes you take such a mischiefous course by the end, for the overthrow of the work of God? O! I behoved to prove my loyalty to my prince; ye understand not, there are many who question may loyalty now. In truth sir, say I, there is many a better man, than ever stood on your shins, or his either, that questions your loyalty now to the God of heaven. Will ye make this once clear, in the first place, that

that ye are a loyal subject to the God of heaven, and then prove your loyalty to your prince, by things that do not contradict the scriptures of truth and the laws of the God of heaven. It is never a soney loyalty that makes folk to quit their religion. Though this religion justled against that which they accounted loyalty, they charged him with this, that his way was a way of *sedition and heresy*; his way did not prove him to be loyal enough. Well, saith he, I am a loyal subject for all that, after that way, so I *worship the God of my fathers*. But albeit ye will quit with your religion, to prove your loyalty to your prince, yet truly ye will not do so. And if ye call such *fanaticks*, that take the way we do, then we are such, *after the way, that ye call fanaticism, so we worship the God of our Fathers*: we may not quit with our religion, albeit ye call it by the name of *treason, heresy, rebellion and division*: hold ye by your thing, and we will hold us by our thing: it is always best for folks to hold them still by their own thing.

3. There is many folks, who for their compliance pretend to the peace of the church, and to themselves. Know ye not what discord and mischief that way, breeds every where? Quoth ye, am even gone the length, I am gone, for peace, in some cases. Peace, man, peace, man, I pray thee, what peace wouldst thou, wouldst thou have peace with God's enemies, that has destroyed all that is precious in our fight? whom with would ye have peace? I hope ye may have peace with all the people of God, without compliance.

pliance. Why then tell ye us, that we should keep peace with a party that has destroyed all the work of God? I weend the scripture had stated the matter thus, *follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no flesh shall see God.* Ye forget still the one half of your tale, my friend. Would ye have peace among us, without holiness? Lord let never that peace be among us. God send us red war, ere he send us that peace: red war, fire and sword be among us, ere that peace be among us. Woful will be the peace of these lands, if peace without holiness be among us. I know not what peace is, for if it have not holiness with it, I know not what ye would be at, if ye would not have *communion betwixt light and darknes, Christ and Belial*, which shall never keep under one roof, one bed, nor one board together. We profess no peace with that party that is enemies to God, we profess no peace with such a party; let red war be betwixt us, but God let never peace be betwixt us.

4. There are many who pretend this for their compliance, even usefulness to the church; in their cases, they say they have done what they have done of that kind, that they may be useful to the work of God in other cases. What moved thee to comply, man, and run with that unhappy party so great a length, for the overthrow of the work of God in others? But ye understand not my drift in it, it was that I might get credit from them, and thereby I will have place and opportunity to speak for the people of God, and for the cause, and so this is a way to be useful

ful for the work of God, by their putting credit upon me; that way I will have a fair opportunity to get many a good turn done in the favour of the honest men. Gang thy way man, the vengeance of God gang with thee, for we will either have God's gate, or will never have good at all, for good is not good, if it come not God's gate: We look never that God will trust us with good through such foul fingers as yours; we will look that God will trust us with good through a cleaner hand. But I never knew that this was your duty to do evil that good might come of it: I never knew that the scripture stated the matter thus, that folk should do evil that good might come of it. I ween'd ay that folk should have done good at present, if they would have had good to have followed on it. But I never knew that folk was to do evil, that good might follow, I never read that in all the Bible, and I have read it all from the one end to the other, and some of it twice over, but I never read that in it all. Go thy way man, the vengeance of God gang with thee; for we look never for good at the like of thy hand. I dare say, if it were not more respect to thy carnal interests, that thou lookest most to, than any respect that thou hast to the cause of Christ and his people, thou wouldst never have gone the length thou hast gone. God reward you for what ye have done to Christ and his cause, and so he will, in his own due time; ye will get the devil to your thanks yet, for the good ye have done to the cause of Christ and his people by compliance.

But there are many likewise who have this

pretext for their compliance, they profess to be keeping their life till a better time: it is a sin to let our life, and what belongs to us go this gate, we may keep our life till a better time: indeed, as I was telling you before, I never heard tell, that that man's life did ever any more good to Christ and his cause, that once did compete therewith, and was preferred thereunto, and so was brought off with prejudice to the same; God will never be in such a knave's common as thine, to prefer thy life with that honour, as to make it useful for the cause of Christ again, who has preferred thy life to the cause. I weened the scripture had airted thee better, man, that *he that is faithful in the little, will be faithful in the greater,* and he that is not faithful in little, will not be faithful in much. He will never honour such as has denied his cause, to make them useful for the cause and work again, such as is faithful in the little, and *keep his garments clean*, in an evil time, God will prefer that honest man with taking a good turn off his hand, for his cause and people. He will take nothing off a lown's hand that has defiled himself, and hath not been faithful in the little. Let still that sound in your Ears, that he that is not faithful in the little, will not be faithful in the much. I'll wad ye shall see these children, that have gone that gate, and are keeping their life till a better time; goodsooth I'll wad that ye shall see an evil time take them. - Goodsooth they will look with clear eyes that ever will see their life do a good turn more in this world. believe the most part of them, if no

all of them, is kept for a black hour. They will look with clear eyes that ever will see them get a good time, or yet be useful to the church in this world again.

There are many likewise that have this pretext for their compliance, that they do what they do that way out of no ill intention, it was upon such good accounts that they did such and such things, we had no ill intention in so doing, we intended to wrong no man, far be it from us to persecute, or bid any body do any thing against their light, we had no ill intention in what we have done. Ye have a bonny pretext of it forsooth! I shall desire any man to search through all the scriptures, and see if any such a thing be to be found in them, of God's stating mens honesty upon good intentions brought forth evil fruit, I never read such a thing in all the Bible, I thought the scripture had said, *with the heart man believes, and with the tongue confession is made unto salvation*: in contending for the matters of God, for his cause and interest, hands, tongues and feet are to be made use of. Good deeds and actions are useful for the cause of Christ, but for your good thoughts and intentions, while they have brought forth such bad fruits, as the apples of Sodom, and the grapes of Gomorah, I have no skill of them. The most part of those knaves that say they had good thoughts and intentions, we will see them the greatest persecutors that the people of God will have: these good intentions of yours, ye will get a black reward for them, for they have wronged the church far,

and so ye are at the loss and the church both, with those good intentions of yours.

A bonny pretence ye have of it forsooth! I never read it in all the scriptures where ever God made a man's foresight of events the measure of his actions in duty. I never heard that a man was to shift his duty upon that account, because he thought his duty would not have good consequences. I never understood that before, that issues and events belonged to us. I ween'd ay, known duty had belonged to us, but issues and events had belonged to God. Indeed the prophets, that the Lord sent forth long since to speak in his name, had a little more ground to shift their duty when God told them the issue and event would not prove good, yet they durst not for their life shift their duty even in that case: *Go, saith he, speak to this people, but they are a stiff-necked and rebellious people, they will not hear.* Will they not hear? might they say, then we will never speak to them, it is but folly to cast ourselves into hazard, when it needs not. We may as well go and speak to stocks and stones, and they will not persecute us, since the thing we speak will have a like effect upon both. *Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, speak ye my word to them, or their blood will I require at your hand:* speak when God bids you speak, whether there come evil or good of it; if ye will not, God will make your tongues to fry and flutter upon the hot coals of hell, he will make it blutter and bleeze upon the burning coals of hell. Speak, Sir, when God bids you speak,

or he will make that tongue that he hath put into your mouth, pabble and play in the how pot of hell. Ye have a bonny pretence of it, man, your bare testimony will not turn the chace. Sir, did those two witnesses in the Revelation, that prophesied in sackcloth, by their testimony turn the chace? yet they were to witness against the abominations of the time, till they were slain; for all that, folk have gotten a brave gate of it now, forsooth, that they will speak nothing for the cause of Christ now, because that will not turn the chace. Speak, when God calls you to speak, or he will make you do worse in a worse time. At last, when folk have made all the pretences they can make, in end, they must even come to this, I dought not stand it out for fear, flesh and blood would not do it, when I considered the hardships, that now the people of God is in hazard of, of ripping up the nose, and cutting off the ears and hands, and losing of the life it was so terrible to me, while flesh and blood would not serve me to stand it out. Indeed it is even the best, and most honest pretence of all that ye have had yet from the beginning; yet there is no consolation to you from this text; I would have you to remember that the text speaks peremptorily, *He that seeks to save his life shall lose it.* I have a dispensation to grant you from these words, but I shall read over the good text of our Lord Jesus to you, that will speak better for itself than I or any body that will speak on it, *He that seeks to save his life shall lose it.* See if that grants you a dispensation,

The man's heart would not serve him to stand it out, yea, but he that seeks to save his life (saith the text) shall lose it. Alas! my flesh and blood dought not do it, my fear moved me to such a course, *He that seeks to save his life shall lose it.* O! I had great temptations, many burdens, wife, and children, which my care was engaged for, I could not get it stood out, *He that seeks to save his life shall lose it:* a dreadful word, that may make you all tremble; *He that seeks to save his life shall lose it!* never make a pretext of your own weakness, never make a pretext of this, that other folk that had more wit than ye, did such a thing before you, though ye were not clear in it; yet that ye thought they behoved to be clear in it, there is no excuse to you from this, *He that seeks to save his life shall lose it.* Ye saw many that ye judged good and godly doing so, that is no excuse for you, fræe ye saw any appearance of evil, *He that seeks to save his life shall lose it.* Therefore I charge you in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye see the cause of Christ on the one side, and your life on the other side, competing and justling against one another, that ye make a right choice, for the good of the cause, or ye shall come under the hazard of this text, *He that seeks to save his life shall lose it.*

A *third* thing we would speak a word to, is this.

1 Wha way doth the folk lose their life, that goeth about so preposterously to save their life, either by committing that which is their sin, or
for

for fear of personal hazard, doing that which is wrong?

2. How do they lose their lives?

3. What sort of life is this that they lose?

4. What is mean'd by losing their life?

Here, *first* of all, they lose their life as they lose life everlasting thereby; for Christ hath in even down terms, said in the words following, *He that denieth me before men, him will I deny before the Father and the holy angels.* In truth then if he deny you, I know not who will own you in that day, none of all that court and side that he is on will own you: But I know another court that will own you, believe, even the court and side of all the devils in hell, they will own you, they will know you well enough; believe, they will gather all together about the poor soul, as so many greedy crows about a gulfhorn, every one gripping it straiter in their cluiks than another. But none of that court will own you, all that court will say, I know you not; altho' ye were their born brother, they dare not say they know you in that day, if Christ know you not: 'Tis everlasting life that ye lose, my dove, by taking such preposterous ways to save it. That's a sore word, O! but that's a great pawn, ye lose life, as thereby ye will lose life everlasting; O! that's a pawn ye shall never exchange again.—*What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Prove your loyalty to your prince, by losing of your soul that way.

Secondly, They lose their natural life as God's blessing to them. Man's natural life, while God

calls him not to lay it down, is God's blessing to him; but if God call for it, and he lay it not down, it is no more God's blessing to him, but God's curse; he holds it no more of God, but of the devil in hell: The saving of his life is God's plague and vengeance on him; his life after that is God's plague and curse to him, he holds it no more of God: And that time, when God calls for his life, and he lays it not down, he forfeits his right holding of his life in God, and so he loseth his life, as he loseth God's blessing upon his natural life; He has lost his life as God's blessing, and he holds it as God's curse, he shall never have power again by his life to commit a good deed; all the actions again proceeding from that life, shall be cursed; cursed in his incoming and in his outgoing, in his basket and in his store, and in every thing he doth; he may build houses, and buy land after that, but all shall be accursed; all the actions, proceeding from that cursed life, shall be cursed; live he long, or live he short, the curse of God shall fall upon him, tho' he should live to be the sinner of 100 years old, he shall be accursed, his life cursed, his actions cursed; all that he doth shall be but fuel to the curse of God that shall light broad slaughter upon him. He shall eat and drink, and wear in the curse of God, it shall feed and live upon him. He shall hold bed and board in the curse of God, and the curse of God shall hold bed and board on him; that way they shall lose their life, they shall lose it as God's blessing.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The man that goes thus preposterously about to save his life, he shall lose his life so, as within a little he shall lose the comfort of his life; within a little he shall be full of hell's sorrows, hell's terror shall seize upon him, the worm that never dies shall begin an inward gnawing at his heart, the worm of ill conscience rugging at his heart, and intrails of him, like a canker-worm drawing at his liver, an inward flame like the fire of hell ready to burn him up within, ere ever death come, to take away the cursed carcase of him; the gnawing worm that never dieth, shall ever draw at the conscience of him, like a greedy glade riving at a gushorn, always as if the devil were within going to rive out the soul at his broad side, and to run away to hell with it. God will kindle the fire of hell in the heart of him, wherein he shall find that hungry worm, like the devil, drawing out the soul and intrails of him, like a few hungry glades riving at a gushorn; thou shalt never have rest henceforth, but an inward gnawing and rugging at the heart, till thou be fully possessed in everlasting flames. Go thy way, man, if thou hast wronged the cause of Christ for fear of thy life, I would not have an hour of thy life for all the gold of *Govry*.

Fourthly, This man loseth his life another way, more formally; as God, upon this account, for the man's seeking to save his life, makes his life go upon a miserable account, and that many times, ere long, as the just reward of his sin; he dies in the midst of his days; God makes
him

him make some tyke's testament: He doth not die properly, he is *cut-off in the midst of his days*: He disowns God, and betrays the cause for fear of his life, ere ever he wit, God cuts him off. He had an honourable opportunity to let his life go, but he would not let it go; so God makes him let it go upon a more miserable account; and very readily God makes his life go by that self same mean that he took to save his life: 'Tis like their eyes are open now, that will see the like of that yet; now, will we ever see that day that the *declaration*, and the *service-book*, and keeping days of mens invention, will be the high way to make some folk lose their life. Will ye have patience a little? Ye shall either see that day, or ye shall say I had no skill of preaching, or of the mind of God; ye will see this, that those folks that have betrayed the people of God, have most of all betrayed their own life: They think they have gotten a safe gate for their life now as ever man had, for they have made the *king the head of the church*, and they shall be of any religion that ever he likes to bring through the land, that they may save their life. Goodsooth, that will not work yet, all that will not hide you, that will even but bring you sooner to the gallows, that will make your bones whistle in the wind some day. Will the taking of the declaration do your turn, think ye? God will make the taking of that declaration, that many a man thinks to be the safety of his life, that way the safety of his life will make his head weigh his tail yet, and his bones whistle

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in the wind. All these shifts will yet the sooner bring them to the gallows, for these shifts that they take against the light of their own conscience. Ye will to the gallows, for all the plots that ye plot against the people of God. Wicked Haman must to the gallows, for all the plot that he plots so deep against the people. Ye think that these laws, that ye make against the people of God, will only bring them to distress, sorrow and bonds; yea, but they will make your bones whistle in the wind, for all. The readiest way to bring folk to a miserable hinder end, is that wicked declaration. What would you think of such a cast of kindness from God's hand, as that to make your mischief turn upon your own head? Wicked Haman's plots, and contriving cruelties against the people of God, most hastened to help him to the gallows. Haman may make many decrees, but he must to the gallows ere he see them put to execution. What would ye think if those laws that they are making against the people of God, to bring them to ruin, bring their own carcases to the gallows? These their acts and laws, that they are making against the people of God, is the way in all the world to hasten themselves to a miserable hinder end. The sinful way, that a man takes for the safety of his life, proves the very mean and way of his overthrow; and so will come of them yet.

Now, what is the reason of this, that he that seeks his life, shall come to a miserable hinder end that way that he seeks to save it?

Answer.

Answ. The reason is, the *righteousness of God*. God is a righteous God, that is even the reason of it; God is a righteous God, he will make it known to all the world, that he is an upright God, and that there is no unrighteousness in him. He is righteous in this, to rain snares on such wicked souls, that lay snares before the consciences of his people. The righteous God loveth righteousness, as ye heard in the morning, upon the hinder end of that Psalm that we lectured on. The way that the man went to save his life, when God called him to lay it down, he is a righteous God to make his life go by that way which he looks to save it. The man that before heaven and earth, sun and moon, and the world, makes such a choice, as God has forbidden, to save his life; God is righteous to hold him at his choice, and that way to bring him to a miserable hinder end. I offered you life eternal, peace of conscience, the way to save your life for ever; ye would not, but ye would have your venture on a way of your own. Well, as I live, saith God, I shall take you at your word, that choice shall you make, which you have made, and that choice shall be your ruin; ye shall take the holding of your life in that choice that ye have made; ye shall never get more of me, ye have no more to crave of me: Now God is a righteous God in this. Well now, for the use of the doctrine.

First of all, Ye would labour to know with yourself, in what hazard your life is in, when
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the cause of Christ is upon the stage; ye would reckon with yourselves, how many ways ye may run the hazard of your life; when Christ's cause is upon the stage, either by not doing and omitting that which ye should do, or by committing and doing that which ye should not do; it were not amiss to consider these hazards, and what the scripture speaks of folks seeking to save their lives any of these ways.

Secondly, Do not hold up, nor satisfy yourselves with any of your broken pretences that I have named, or others that I have not named, they hold no weight before God, ye must be even down in the matter; for *he that seeks any way to save his life, shall lose it.* Ye need not speak of this, there is law and authority for such a false cause; ye need not speak of proving your loyalty to your prince that way; ye need never pretend, that such a way ye thought best for peace; ye need never pretend your usefulness to God's people, by your taking such a gate; ye need never say, ye are keeping your life to a better time; ye need never tell us, ye had no ill intentions, or that your bare testimony would not have done good: These are fools devices; *he that seeks to save his life, shall lose it.* That word hath more weight than all the foolish intentions and pretexts that ye have; *he that seeks to save his life, shall lose it.*

Thirdly, Let me obtest you, as ye love your own life, as ye love the life of your soul, and your natural life, as God's blessing, and not God's curse, and as ye love the comfort of your
life

life, and life itself; then by all these I obtest you to make a right choice: It is like ere long your life may come upon the stage for Christ and his cause, and you may get it in your option, to save or lose your life, with denial or not denial of the cause. Now as ye love the life of your souls, and a blessing upon your natural life, and the comfort of your life, the keeping of your life, make a right choice.

Fourthly, Sirs never covet the life of those that have kept their life by wronging the cause of Christ; covet not their life, I say, therefore. Have they not a brave life of it? God save me, and all that I good would, from a trial of it. For all that, will ye let alone; for all that, if ye had a trial of it, within a little ye would think it worse than the most miserable death that ever a man died. One dying not long ago, may be exemplary for this, 'tis a brave testimony that he gave for this, lying on his death-bed, *I would not* (saith he) *bide one night again as I have had, for that declaration, for all the world.* When heard ye one of our side, that ever said the like of that, for taking the covenant, and abiding by it? God be thanked, we will get some of the other side that will say so for taking of that declaration, albeit they be scarce as yet; nevertheless, I hope, there shall be more of them ere it be long. I say, covet not their life; black and miserable is the life that some of them have of it, a fearful looking for of the soul to be rugged out of them; *the worm, that never dies*, always sitting rugging at the heart of them, where the
life

life sits. The broad curse of God upon their life, and all that they gather together with their hands; as the work of their life: God's curse upon all holding bed and board of them; and it may be that make a sad sight to be seen of some of them, and all that they have, what they are. That is a dreadful thing, besides the inward worm gnawing with terror, like a worm rugging at the maw of them, ready to rug out the very miserable life that they would fain be quit of, which God shall, within a little, cause to go in the favour of the devil, in the midst of their days: Therefore, sirs, covet not their life, they have a miserable life of it; yet, sirs, upon the other hand, ye must pity poor folk in this case, for their temptation was even very great, as I was saying to you before. Now, that we may end this doctrine, observe here the righteous wisdom of God, in destroying mens lives who, for fear of personal hazard, seek to save them with prejudice to Christ and his cause, who love their lives better than Christ's cause, and so wrong it for the safety of their life. Ye may see much of that now a days, and if ye live long, ye will see more of it; there may be much of it seen already. If ye see a man falling into a snare, to enrich himself, as indeed ye will get hundreds not far off, O then admire the righteous wisdom of God; in that ye see a man seeking to save his life, and falling into a mischief by that! admire the righteousness of God in it, if ye see any complying with that wicked party, for fear
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of their life, or for fear of their means! Admire the righteous wisdom of God in this, for making that a snare for destroying of their life, which they made use of for a mean to save their lives! So much for this doctrine.

S E R M O N V.

MAT. xvi. 20. Then charged he his disciples, that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

YE have heard several reasons of this inhibition served upon this truth in the mouth of the disciples, which doth not warrant any man to conceal this gracious truth, unless they have a peremptory command for the doing of it, as the disciples here had. He did it, as a minister, not seeking his own glory; he did it, as much pitying the disciples in their weak and unsettled condition, because they could not well maintain that truth before the Jews and learned Rabbies, which truth was controverted then, they being then unsettled, until the *Spirit was poured out upon them from on high, that the Son of man was risen.* He did it also as a plague upon the Jews, because they abused this truth; therefore, as a just punishment and recompence of their sin, he lays on an arrestment on the truth, that they should tell no man, *that he was Jesus the Christ, the Saviour of sinners, the King, Priest,*

Priest, and Prophet of his people. He did it as a recompence of the sins of many, for the accusing of the truth. But one of the greatest reasons of this inhibition was, to make way for another glorious design, which was on foot in heaven, anent *Christ's suffering at Jerusalem*; for, saith the apostle, *If they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* Jesus Christ knowing that he behoved to go to Jerusalem and suffer, and to redeem the world, and so he sets them at liberty to crucify him, by their not knowing he was *the Lord of glory*; and so he leaves them to a latitude to persecute and crucify him, that so he might accomplish the great design that his father and he had on foot anent the redemption of the world. And the doctrine I shall here hold forth, upon this reason of the inhibition, is this, *That the Lord, by the most uncouth and strange dispensation in his church, brings about the most glorious purposes and works of God, that can be in the world.* There was no dispensation almost, that was more uncouth and more strange, and more dark and more desperate like, than this was, *Let no body know that I am the Christ, let none know that I am the Saviour of the world*; yet all this was done by the burial of the truth. The Lord Jesus Christ brought about the most glorious work that ever was wrought for his church, which was by the *death of a slain Christ*, which was occasioned here some way, by hiding this truth from those that were to crucify him. I say the Lord useth, by the most strange and uncouth

dispensation in his church, to bring about the most glorious purposes, and advantageous works, for the good of his church, of any in the world. In following out this doctrine, I shall speak to these few things; *1st*. We shall speak a little of strange and uncouth dispensations that fall out in the church; and then a word to what those glorious works of God are, that are brought about by those glorious dispensations. *2^{dly}*, We shall give you some instances, by which it will appear, that the Lord, by the saddest and uncouthest dispensations, that ever fell out in the church, has brought about the greatest and most advantageous work for her. And in the close of the doctrine, we shall speak a word of reason, why the Lord chuseth this way, for bringing about such glorious works and purposes, by such uncouth and strange dispensations. For the *first*, we call dispensations uncouth and strange, and dreadful like, when things, as it were, fall out by a kind of *special providence*, yet do juttle with the revealed word of God, and his commandments, such as a lie put into the mouth of Jacob by Rebekah; there was a kind of secret providence in the thing that juttled with the command of God, yet ye know, there came some strange advantage to him thereby. So Esther, ye know, came in the place of Vasthi the queen; this did exceedingly juttle against the command of God, for the Jews should not have entred in marriage with any of that place that was not in covenant with God, this seemed to juttle against the command of God;

yet

yet ye know how this did amount to the good and advantage of the kingdom of Christ: So the sons of Jacob fell upon the Sechemites; that was an uncouth dispensation, the poor man was justled exceedingly for that, living among strangers; yet there came a great advantage for Jacob out of that, Jacob had too long rested in that nest; therefore saith he, *Arise, Jacob, and go to Bethel.* Secondly, We call dispensations strange and uncouth, as they justle with promises, predictions, or prophecies of the Lord's great things towards his people; ye know he endeavoured for the people of Israel to bring them out of the land of Egypt; it makes the burden seven times worse, their task is doubled; this justled with God's promises, or prophecies of coming out of Egypt; a bonny beginning indeed, there is not one of them will come out of it, their task is doubled: Yet, by these things, he brought about their delivery gloriously, for great advantage to them, and great ruin to their enemies. Haman's promotion, with all his followers, to the court of the king, it did directly justle against the oath that he had sworn, He would *have war with Amalek for ever.* Haman is so high, that he is like to overthrow all his church and followers, that was an uncouth dispensation; yet his height overthrew him for evermore. Thirdly, We call dispensations uncouth, as they justle against the people of God, and as they difficult all the people of God, so as they cannot extricate themselves out of that plague, nor know what way to do it; these are

uncouth and strange dispensations. The people of Israel, in their march out of Egypt, instead of liberty, and freedom of march, God straitens them all, betwixt Pharaoh and the Red-sea, with a rock on every hand; there was no escape there; that was an uncouth dispensation: Yet that made way for a glorious out-gate for them, and the utter overthrow of the enemy for ever: Yea, saith Pharaoh and the Egyptians, *They are intangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in; we have gotten you in an hose-net: Yea, goodman, crack at leisure, it will be as good fishing you with a hose-net to-morrow ere this time.* Fourthly, We call dispensations uncouth and strange; as in themselves they are destructive to the purposes and works he intends to bring about; as they are in themselves destructive to these purposes, they are uncouth enough: Why are they not? As for example, the Lord buryeth a truth of great importance, lets men lay a great stone upon it, and say it shall never rise again; then he brings up that truth again more glorious than ever. When he intends to make a truth famous on the earth, then he lets bury it; that is an uncouth and strange providence and dispensation: This was the dispensation here mentioned in the text, *Let no body know that I am the Christ; once, saith he, bury that truth, I forbid you to tell any body that truth.* That's a strange dispensation, it seems to be destructive to the whole covenant of grace; Nay, but bury it for all that, for I shall make it rise with a thousand advantages more than ever yet; he hath
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a sweet sharp hand in these things; yes truly, he has a strange way to make contraries work for good. I confess 'tis a bare moor that he goes over, and gets nothing: That dispensation never fell out in the church, but he gets always an harle of it for the good and advantage of the church and people of God. I say then, that there are many uncouth and strange dispensations, now some of them justling with commands, some with promises and predictions, some of them difficulting all the people of God, putting them all to their wits end; some of them, of themselves, destructive to the purposes he intends; yet by all those he will bring about the most glorious purposes and works for the good of his church in the world. This is the cross-wheel that appears in a wheel, whose spokes are dreadful for height, and full of eyes: This is the wisdom of God in his dealing with his church, going out of all mens sight, whereby he intends to bring about glorious things for his church.

The *second* thing we would speak to, is, What are those most glorious works and purposes of God for his church, that he intends' to bring in by uncouth dispensations. In a word, we mean by those, such works and purposes as do minister occasion for the administration of the glorious attributes of God, whereby they may be gloriously seen for the good and advantage of his church; such works and purposes as do manifestly bear ground to discover mercy to his friends, justice to his enemies: And God disco-

vered thereby his glorious wisdom, faithfulness, holiness and justice, exercised both to friends and enemies; I mean these glorious works and purposes, that offer them a discovery of the attributes of God, an evident discovery of his mercy to his people, and an evident discovery of justice toward his adversaries. These are *the glorious works*, that are brought about by *strange and uncouth dispensations*.

The *third* thing I would here speak a word to, is, to give some instances, wherein ye may see the truth of the doctrine; many instances may be given in scripture. I shall reduce them to these few heads,

1st. Take the dispensation of providence that was first managed in man's fall, and is still managed yet in man's transgressions; and ye shall find, by the most uncouth and dreadful like dispensations, the most glorious works of God fall out for his church. I shall mention but two particulars in all that head of providence, the one was Adam's fall: Adam's fall was a most dreadful dispensation, it juttled exceedingly with the command of God, and with promises, and was destructive in itself to his advantage; yet thereby the Lord brings about a better state for Adam and his posterity than they were in before; thereby he did bring about admirable mercy to his friends, and admirable justice to his enemies, which will be seen for admiration 'till the world's end, and for evermore.

2^{dly}, Consider, even in the ordinary falls of his people into sin; these are uncouth dispensations,

tions, yet I hope ye will all grant, that the Lord lets his people be broken thereby, that he may the more and the surer many times bind them up. 'Tis true, ye should abominate every evil way, and ye may not sin that grace may abound: Yet 'tis as true, in this respect, I may say, that grace has many times *superabounded*; when sin hath *abounded*. The thing wherein it holds true, that uncouth and strange dispensations bring about a most *glorious work*, which, I shall instance, was in that dispensation, which was managed in the church of God, before shewn, in Egypt: There was an uncouth dispensation fell out, yet always glorious in the end. Of all Jacob's bairns, Joseph was the best bairn of all the coupe; he was always thinking on and dreaming of some things, and he is always telling something of them; for anger of that, they will take away his life: Yet, as it fell out, they sold him to the Egyptians into Egypt; where is the dreamer, and all his dreams now? quoth they. There is an uncouth dispensation; what shall become of the church? for the special man, that would keep her alive, is sold a slave. This was an uncouth dispensation, yet a dispensation most useful for the church, of any dispensation that could fall out. Hold your tongues, saith Joseph to his brethren, *God is wise enough in this*; much shame and lack belongs to you for selling of me; but God was wise enough for all that, he brought it about for good. And then ye know the uncouth dispensation that the church was trysted with in Egypt; what sad things they met

with before they went forth from it, that justified against both commands, prophecies and predictions; after promised liberty, their bondage grows always the longer the worse: Then they resolve to slay the *male-children*, but truly they never throve fast till then; there is an uncouth providence: The decree comes out to slay all the *men-children*; but 'tis said, *The more they slew, the more they increased*. Now, but ye may think, they had grown many of them, and they had not slain any of them: In truth ye are all mistaken, there would never have been so many of them. *the more they slew, the more they increased*; and that way God brought them to be above these lowns, wherein they were cruel. Well, yet the dispensation grows always the more and the more uncouth, the king grows always angrier and angrier; angry may he be; even let him burst at the broadside for anger; but if his anger should rive him all abits, they shall come out of Egypt that day four hundred years, that they entred in.

But next, there is many instances of this under the new Testament also; for he is even that same God under the New Testament that he was under the Old, The *first* great and remarkable thing that fell out, under the New Testament, was the destruction of Jerusalem, and *the abomination that makes desolate* set up in the midst thereof. This was a dreadful thing, the place of the public worship of the Lord is all dung down and overthrown. Yea, but we are all obliged to God for that; for all that, the
 Lord

Lord took occasion by that to build many a kirk
 in these lands; the Lord set up a Christian
 church better than ever that was; he brought a
 good turn out of that evil. And there was ano-
 ther remarkable thing fell out there at Jerusa-
 lem, anent the Jews persecution at Jerusalem,
 there is nothing but heading and hanging, drag-
 ging and drawing to prisons; all the twelve a-
 postles are put away, and there be no more pu-
 blic preaching; all the apostles and ministers
 must be banished and put away, no man may
 speak more in the name of the Lord. In truth
 that was a canny gate that they took, for truth;
 for if they had sitten seven years in a general
 assembly, to have spread truth, and made it fa-
 mous thro' the earth, they took the ready way
 and the shortest cut; that was an happy luck that
 that persecution rose; it would have been long
 ere our wit had brought it that way about; that
 way the gospel came to us, we were unworthy
 of it, but God was good that gave us it for all
 that, it was even by that dispensation, and the
 like, whereby God took occasion to send the
 gospel over to these islands. Whenever God
 had a mind to make some truth eminently glori-
 ous, then he let it always fall into some enemies
 hand, to suppress and bury it, and, by the bu-
 rial of it, he made it to rise again, and be the
 most famous truth upon the earth. And the last
 tale I shall tell you about it is this, and it is even
 the last that will be, and that is, Gog and Ma-
 gog will even gather together to root out the
 church, and then when they are all drawn well
 up,

up, and fair on the field, God will even make an end of all together, and soon decide the controversy that way; they will all gather up, and then God will even make an end of them. God hasten that day of their gathering together; for if they were once well gathered together, God will make us quite of them. So goodsooth ye will find the Pope and the Turk take even o-ther by the hand, to drive one design; the Pope and the Turk and Prelates and Malignants, will even all shake hands together, and draw up fair once in the field, for the swallowing up of the church. Lord hasten them all fair a foot on the field, that so the poor sad people of God may see a good sport in the downcome. For if they were once well drawn up, there should be a sudden down-come: God would make us quite of them that gate. We must even wait on a while, until they are all well drawn up, I assure you we would not need to wait long afterward.

Now for reason why the Lord takes such uncouth dispensations to bring about his glorious work and purposes for the good of the church; it is even for this, that he may discover the hearts of all men; much weakness in some, much wickedness in others. He lets poor silly weak things even babble on, and every one tell their own tale, and thereby discovers their weakness; and others, he gives them opportunity to vent the malice that is in their hearts, and thereby discovers their wickedness: *A sword shall pierce through many hearts, that the hearts of many may be disclosed.* He doth it also, that he him-
self

self may be the more seen in his glorious work for the church; that no body may say they have a hand in that work, to ascribe glory to themselves, but that *the Lord alone may be exalted*. Now for use of this doctrine: I would have you all considering with yourselves, that there is now a juncture of strange dispensations concurring together upon the church at this time, as ever was upon the kirk of God. Are not those that should feed the Lord's people with the word of life, sold as slaves? the people of our God under bondage? the sanctuaries of the Lord all thrown down and desolate? the ministers thrust out, a number of them, and the rest of them ready to be thrust away? unrighteous decrees multiplying day after day? this is a clear thing to you all, the adversaries of your Lord Jesus and his church are all at an eminency, and on foot, so that I dare say, the heart of many of the godly are at a stand, about what will become of all, there is such a juncture of difficulties, and dreadful dispensations rolled over upon us.

Now, is there any of you that has a heart to believe, in this case, that the result of this shall be the most glorious work for the good of the church, that ever came about? have ye an heart to believe this truth? I dare say ye want nothing but an heart to believe it. Do ye believe this, that these uncouth dispensations shall bring about the most glorious works that ever our eyes saw? this will be, whether ye believe it or not. God never brought about such an uncouth dispensation, but he brought about a most glorious work

at the back of it. Christ Jesus is, in a manner, now dead and buried: goodsooth, his being buried will make him victorious over them all. The uncouthest dispensation that ever was, brought ay about the most glorious work for the church. Nobody has an heart to believe this. Has any of you an heart to believe this doctrine, that the whole tenor of the Bible holds out, that the Lord, by uncouth dispensations, brings ay about a most glorious work for the good of the church? have ye an heart to believe this? has any of you that charity to give God, that *believes all things and hopes all things, without which, though a man would give all his goods to the poor, and his body to be burnt, it were an unacceptable sacrifice.* Ye must have that charity that bids luck on God's hand, and thinks ay liberally of him. Have ye a heart to believe this, that the generation to come will have the Lord to bless, for strange and uncouth dispensations? every generation yet had the Lord to bless for the uncouth dispensations that were trysted with their forefathers. Has any of you an heart to believe, that the generation to come will have the Lord to bless for these uncouth dispensations that now we are trysted with? the truths of God are now buried, the covenant is buried, that great truth (*that Christ is sole head of his church, and Lord over the consciences of men*) is now buried. Now, has any of you an heart to believe it, that the burial of the covenant will be the resurection and glory of the covenant. Has any of you an heart to believe this? it will be true enough, believe it

it as you will, that the burial of the covenant shall be the resurrection and glory of the covenant. It shall be seen to their everlasting shame, that it was an uncanny gate that they took for themselves, to break the covenant, that day they broke it, and burnt it at the cross of London. If they had sitten seven years in a *general assembly*, contriving how to make it a famous covenant, they fell upon the right gate that day. Have ye an heart to believe this? It will be true whether ye will believe it or not. The burial of the covenant shall be the glory of the covenant.

Now this is a controverted truth: *That Christ is sole head and king of his church, and Lord over the consciences of men.* His laws and officers are rejected, and the king's laws and officers are chosen. Now, have any of you an heart to believe this, that the burial of this truth shall make it the most famous truth on the earth? the most glorious days of the church of God are alway brought about by the most *sad* and *dark days*: therefore let us *rest in hope, and endure patiently.*

The end of the Sermons.

T R E A T I S E

O F

RULING ELDERS AND DEACONS,

In which, these things which belong to the understanding of their office and duty, are clearly and shortly set down.

- 1 Tim. v. 17. *Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour.*
- 2 Tim. iii. 13. *They that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith, which is in Christ Jesus.*

The P R E F A C E.

THE Lord whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem, *hath in the depths of his wisdom* spoken by terrible things in righteousness *against this nation, he hath* brought us down wonderfully, *and hath made* our breach wide as the sea, who can heal us! our bruise is incurable, and our wound is grievous; *for the Lord hath wounded us with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, because our sins were encreased, he hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst of us, which causeth us to err in every work, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit, and we eat every man the flesh of his own arm, for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still,*

still, the yoke of our transgression is bound by his hand, they are wreathed, and come up upon our neck, and in the day of our calamity, he hath covered us with a cloud in his anger, that like blind men in the dark we grope for the wall, and cannot find either our sin or our duty: some cry, that there be many of our prophets who have not discovered our iniquity to turn away our captivity: others complain, that not a few of them, have seen for us false burdens and causes of banishment; what shall we do whilst it's thus with us? surely it is meet to be said unto God, shew me why thou contendest with me, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more, that which I see not, teach thou me, if I have done iniquity, I will do no more; until the Lord shall reveal it unto us, and make us wise in heart to understand this, and speak to us that we may declare it, for what the land mourns. It is fit that in the things of the Lord's controversie, and of our duty whereto we have already attained, we walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing. I do suppose, that all of us are of one mind in this, that our corrupt mixtures in church-members and church-officers, are one main cause, why so much wrath is gone forth from the Lord against us, and doth abide upon us. The Lords design upon Scotland for a long time past seems to have been to purge his house, and as to have his ordinances pure. so to have his people and his officers also pure; "I mean not of a higher pitch than the doctrine and policy of our church doth reach, because (I fear

not to say it) the measuring line of the sanctuary hath been stretched over these, to give unto them due scripture dimensions, concerning the qualification of church-members, and church-officers: if in these things our practice were agreeable to our rule, we needed not be ashamed, but might speak with our enemies in the gate, and answer him that reproacheth us, our sin is, that being weighed in our own ballance, we are found too light; how many church-members are there in Scotland, whom our church discipline (if conscientiously wielded) would cut off as rotten, how many church-officers, whom that discipline would cast out as unfavoury salt?" we have rejoiced in our pride, and been haughty because of the Lord's holy mountain, Zeph. iii. 11. *But have not so zealously cared, that holiness to the Lord might be engraven in all the pots of his house. Zech. xiv. 20, 21. We have boasted of a reformation of the ordinances, without seeking as really to reform church-officers, and church-members, according to the pattern thereof. Pure ordinances are indeed things precious and excellent, (and what soul among us that hath any measure of the true zeal of the Lord's house, can behold the defacing of these, and not make it the matter of their lamentation) yet these are but means subordinate to a more high and super-excellent end, to wit, that we may thereby be brought with open face to behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord and be changed unto the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord, that we may all come unto the unity of the faith, un-*

to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. *It is true, that all members of the church visible wil' not be living and lively stones in the Lords temple, neither doth the rule of church constitution, hold out or cast out all who are not really such; but this is the great scope that all of us ought to level at, that all the Lord's people may be holy, that all who profess faith in Jesus Christ, may walk as becomes the gospel of Jesus Christ. And how shall this be attained, unless these who bear the vessels of the Lord, and to whom the charge of holy things be committed be holy, the sons of Levi must be purified and purged as gold and silver, before they offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, when that is done, then are the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem pleasant unto the Lord. "I acknowledge that we were once upon a fair way for purging the house of God in this land, they who interrupted us shall bear their burden; but what was done in this thing, was not more refreshing to gracious hearts, than it was forely repined at, and opposed by others, (a sin that provoked the Lord to stop the current of so rich a mercy) therefore do many now make haste again to intrude themselves upon the congregations whence they were once justly cast out, and not a few amongst the people love to have it so, as though there were a conspiracy," to return to Egypt, and to build again the walls of Jericho; and repair the ruins of Edom. I do also acknowledge it with thankfulness unto the great*

Shepherd of souls, "that there is a great company of gracious men amongst the officers of his church, who walk in the ways of the Lord and keep his charge, but there be also many that neither do so, nor know how to do it; to say nothing of ministers: it is more than manifest that there is a generation of ignorant, slothful, earthly minded men, who bear the name of elders and deacons in many congregations, and where such bear rule, what can be expected, but that the people should perish for want of knowledge, and holiness be despised, and ly in the dust, and congregations still abide in too swarthy a temper. If we might find grace in the Lord's sight, to be thoroughly convinced of this great church-evil, whence many church-evils flow, and be brought with some measure of sincerity to endeavour the remedy thereof, what a branch of hope might it be, that our reproach should be taken away, and we become a people instructed in the way of the Lord, and walking to the praise and commendation of the gospel, which is now evil spoken of, because of the ignorance and loose conversation of many among us: therefore am I bold as pressed in spirit (albeit one of the weakest and most unworthy) to offer this little treatise, with an eye upon this end; and let me without offence beseech all the ministers, elders, deacons, congregations, presbyteries, and assemblies of this church in the bowels of the Lord Jesus Christ; yea, let me obtest them by the blood of the everlasting covenant, by their zeal of the Lord's honour, by the credit of the
gospel,

gospel, by their love to souls, and " by the fury of the Lord. which he hath caused to rest upon us, because he purged and we would not be purged *and as they desire* the Lord should bring us again, *and cause us* stand before him, and leave us a remnant, and give us a nail in his holy place; *that they would each of them in their stations, endeavour* to take forth the precious from the vile. *and purge the Lord's house in this land from corrupt officers and corrupt members*; Oh, will we not be made clean? when will it once be?

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER.

THE inducement that persuaded me first to write, and then to publish this little treatise of *ruling elders and deacons*, were chiefly these, .1. The sensible impression that the Lord hath made upon my spirit, as also (I know) upon the spirits of the godly of the land, of the great prejudice that comes to this poor church by a multitude of men in these offices, who neither know their duty, nor make conscience to perform it. 2. The vindicating the doctrine of our church concerning these church-officers, that the mouths of such who speak evil may be stopped, and others who stumble may be satisfied. 3. The pressing desire of brethren, ministers, and elders in the presbytery and congregation where the Lord had set me; all which did receive some spirit and life, when I found my name among those to whom the general assembly of

this church did commit and recommend this work long ago.

I have endeavoured to handle it with as much plainness and evidence of truth, and as shortly, without wronging of the matter as I could: it is not unlike that some may think, that I have done no great business, because I have brought no new thing. I acknowledge that it is so; what I have said is for the matter (I trust) and in many things for the words too, the doctrine of the scriptures, and of protestant divines, and of our church in the acts and policy thereof; I have but put together in one, and digested into some method what was lying scattered before, that these who either could not, nor would not be at the pains, to search for such things may now have them at their hand. Others may look upon this treatise as not plain enough, or as not so exact, full and perfect as it ought to be; with these I shall not contend, I have done what I could, at least what I conceived best in order to the ends I propounded to myself; if others shall find favour of the Lord to do better, I shall bless his name on their behalf, and receive and make use of their pains with thankfulness. And some may happily think, that there is here too much laid upon ruling elders, more than they shall be able or willing to undertake; yea, more than the Lord doth require of them, most of the things that are mentioned by us being incumbent to ministers rather than to elders. It is true what is said of elders duty, is also the duty of ministers, for whatsoever the elder ought to do by vertue
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of his calling, that also ought the minister to do and somewhat more, but so far as we know, nothing is spoken here of the elder, that doth not belong to him; if through ignorance or want of ability, or neglect, or custom, elders have not done these things, it is that which ought to be helped, it is now high time for them to awake, and to know and own and follow their duty; and for the church of God in Scotland, to know how much she hath smarted under the hands of ignorant and slothful, yea and scandalous men; we would not always satisfie ourselves “ † with disguised and histrionical men, puffed up with titles or with idols, dead in sins to be elders; but would seek after holy men, who being endued with faith in God, and walking in his obedience, God authorizing them, and the church his spouse choosing them, and calling them, undertake the government thereof, that they may labour to the conservation and edification of the same in Christ; ” neither needs the qualification, or multitude, or difficulties of the particulars here spoken of, discouragement or fear any: It is not so much the measure as the truth of the thing that is to be looked at. We have set down what a *ruling elder* ought to be, in regard to the whole extent of his charge, fundry particulars whereof the most part of ruling elders are seldom called to exercise, and if they be in some measure fitted for these parts of the charge which God calls them to exercise, and follow the same with singleness of heart, they may believe that they shall

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† Junius Eccles. 1. c. 3.

be assisted, and accepted of God in Jesus Christ; the employment is not theirs but the Lord's, from whom they may expect both their furniture, and also their reward; let them arise and be doing, and the Lord shall be with them.

A S H O R T
T R E A T I S E
O F
R U L I N G E L D E R S.

C H A P. I.

Of their Names.

WHAT is necessary to be understood concerning ruling elders may be taken up in the explication of these four, 1. Their name. 2. Their institution. 3. Their calling. 4. Their qualification and duty. † The word elder in the scripture doth signifie divers things, 1. It signifieth old men, or men come to age 1 Tim. v. 1. *Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren.* 2. It signifies those who have lived in the times of old. Mat. xv. 2. *Why do thy disciples transgress the tra-*

† The 2 Book of Dis. c. 6. S. 1. Assert of the Government of the church of Scotland. 1. part. cap. 1.

tradition of the elders. 3. It is taken for honourable and worthy men. Isa. iii. 2. *The Lord of hosts doth take away from Jerusalem and Juda the prudent and the antient.* 4. It is the name of spiritual officers in the house of God, Acts xiv. 23. *And when they had ordained them elders in every city:* In this last signification it is taken in this place, for these who bear rule in the house of God, who are called elders because of the knowledge, gifts, experience, prudence and gravity, wherewith they ought to be endowed.

The officers in the house of God * who in the scriptures are called by the name of elders are of several sorts, preaching elders or ministers, teaching elders or doctors, and ruling or governing elders, all these three are often times in the New Testament comprised under the general name of elder, Acts xv. 6. 22. and xx. 17. 1 Pet. v. 1. It is the ruling elder whom we have now to do with; who is so called, † not because the power of ruling and governing the church belongs to him alone, for it belongs to the preaching and teaching elders, or to the ministers and doctors; but because to rule and govern is the principal and chief part of his charge and employment, it is the highest act of his office; It is not competent for him to preach, that belongs to the pastor or minister, nor to teach, that belongs to the doctor; but his office is comprised within the compass of ruling and govern-

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* The 2 Book of Discipline chap. 6. Sect. 1. † The 2 Book of Discipline chap. 6. Sect. 3.

ing the church; and therefore he is called the governing or ruling elder: The apostle in the epistle to the Romans chapter xii. 8. calleth him, *him that ruleth*, and Cor. xii. 28. he calls them *governments*, putting the abstract for the concrete, governments for governours. Thus then we have the proper or right name of these church officers, which serves to correct a twofold mistake: The first is, of these who either out of ignorance, or disdain, do call them lay-elders, as if they were a part of the people only and not to be reckoned among the officers of the Lord's house, whom the Popish church in their pride, and others following them calls the clergy, that is, the Lord's inheritance, in opposition to the laity or people whom they look upon, as base and much inferior to the other in worth and excellency, whereas all the Lord's people are his portion, *and the lot of his inheritance*, Deut. xxxii. 9. 1 Pet. v. 3. The second mistake is, of these who do call these only ruling elders, who sit in presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies, allowing to others the name of elders, but not of ruling elders: But every elder in the Lord's house is a ruling elder because the power and exercise of rule and government belongs to every elder, though some of them upon special occasions be called to a more eminent exercise of it, than others.

C H A P. II.

Of the Institution of Ruling Elders.

THE * institution of the office of ruling elder is divine, it is not an ordinance of man but of God. The Lord Jesus Christ upon whose shoulders the government is, and who is faithful in all his house, hath in his eternal wisdom thought fit to appoint such an officer in his house, for the right and orderly governing thereof. It is true, that by the sloth, or rather by the pride of teachers, whilst they alone would seem to be somewhat, and by the policy of Satan, and inadvertence of the church, these officers were for many ages together, out of use in the Christian church. But certain it is, that both the Jewish synagogue, and after, the Christian church had seniors, or elders, without whose counsel nothing was done in the church: That the Jewish church had such, appears from 2 Chron, xix 8. Jer. xxix 1. Mat. xvi. 21, 22, 23, 26. 57, 59. Acts iv. 5. † And that the Christian church also had them in the primitive and purest times thereof, appears from the testimony of antient writers, as may be found by these who will take pains

* The 2 Book of Discipline chap. 6. sect. 2.

† Ambros. Com. on 1 Tim. v. 1. Tert. in his 24. chap. of Apol. Basil. Mag. Com. on Isa. iii. 2. Her. on that same place. Aug. ep. 1. 37. Greg. con. Cels. lib. 3. Aug. lib. 3. contra Crescen. chap. 56.

pains to search into these things. But we have a more sure word for the divine institution of elders in the christian church; than any testimony of man, to wit, the testimony of God in the scriptures of the New Testament. The first place of scripture is, Rom. xii. 6, 7, 8. *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophesy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith, or ministry, let us wait on our ministring, or he that teacheth on teaching, or he that exhorteth on exhortation; he that gives, let him do it with simplicity: he that ruleth, with diligence, he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.* In which text, the apostle doth first comprehend all the several kinds of ordinary standing officers in the church of God under two general heads, to wit, prophesy, whereby is mean'd the ordinary faculty of right understanding and expounding the scriptures, and ministry, under which is comprehended all other church officers and employments: To each of these the apostle addeth their general duties, to wit, that he who prophesieth, should do it according to the proportion of faith, *i. e.* according to the measure of the knowledge of the word of faith, that he hath received of God. And he that ministers, let him wait on his ministring, *i. e.* let him not do it negligently or slothfully, but faithfully and diligently. Then he subdivides these two generals, into the special offices contained under them; he divides him that prophesieth, into him that teacheth and him that exhorteth, or into
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the doctor, to whom the word of teaching, or instruction belongs and the pastor, to whom the word of exhortation is competent. Under him that ministreth, he comprehends, first him that giveth, by whom is meant the deacon who is appointed for the supply of the poor. *Secondly*, him that ruleth, by whom can be meant no other than the ruling elder, seeing an ordinary ruling officer in the church, who is different from the pastor and teacher is here spoken of by the apostle.

The second place of scripture that proves the office of ruling elders, 1 Cor. xii. 28. *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, afterward miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, kinds of tongues.* Some of the Bibles of the late English translation read *helps in government*, but cross to the text in the first language that bears *helps, governments*, as two distinct things, and therefore in other editions of that translation, this is helped. In this text the apostle reckons several officers of the church, some extraordinary, which were to continue but for a season, such as apostles, prophets, powers or miracles, gifts of healing, kinds of tongues: Some ordinary, which were to continue in his church to the end of the world and these are teachers, or the ordinary church officers, who are exercised in the word: *helps, i. e.* the deacons, who are appointed for the help and relief of the poor; and *governments, i. e.* the governing and ruling elders; for it is clear from the words, that the
apostle

apostle by governments doth mean a church-officer whom God hath set in his church, for ruling and governing thereof; now this cannot be any other of the church officers, for these he hath named besides, and therefore it remains that it is the ruling elder.

The third place of scripture is 1 Tim. v. 17. *Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they that labour in the word and doctrine.* Which text doth hold forth and distinguish two sorts of elders in the church to whom the Lord Jesus hath committed the power of ruling; one sort who do also labour in the word and doctrine, to wit, pastors and teachers: Another sort who do only rule, and doing it well, are counted worthy of double honour, and these are the ruling elders of whom we speak. From † this that the office of the ruling elder is of divine institution, we gather these conclusions, First that it is not a thing arbitrary and indifferent for such to wait upon their charge, yea or not as they please, or as their attendance may contribute for their own or their friends particular which is the custom of too many elders; but that they are bound in conscience diligently to attend and follow the duties thereof, whether they be such as they ought, to the several members of the congregation, or the keeping of session, or presbytery, and other assemblies

† 2 Book of Discipline chap. 3. sect. 13, 14, 15, 16. Assert of the Government the Church of Scotland part 1 chap. 2. pag. 11. and 17.

blies of the church, when they are called and desired thereto.

Secondly, That elders ought to do their office, not formally and hypocritically for the fashion only, but sincerely and honestly as in the sight of God, by whom they are called unto this holy calling, and to whom they must render an account of their discharge of this great trust.

Thirdly, They ought not to domineer over their fellow-brethren and elders, but carry themselves humbly and serviceably, as these who are appointed of the Lord Jesus for ministering unto, and edifying his body the church.

Fourthly, That they ought to carry themselves with that authority, holiness, gravity and prudence, that becomes these who are called of God to bear rule in his house.

Fifthly, That elders once lawfully called to the office, and having gifts from God meet to exercise the same, (unless they be removed therefrom because of miscarriages) are still elders, though haply in congregations where many qualified men * may be found some may be permitted for a time to surcease from the exercise of the charge, and others be put in their room, as was among the Levites under the law, in serving in the temple by courses.

Sixthly, That people ought to *obey such as these who have the rule over them, and to submit themselves, because they wait for their souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief,* Heb. xiii. 17.

Yea,

* 2 Book of Discipline chap. 6. sect. 3.

Yea, they would know them as these who are over them in the Lord, and do admonish them, and esteem them very highly in love for their works sake, 1 Thes. v. 12. 13.

C H A P. III.

Of the Vocation or calling of Ruling Elders.

AS * no man is to intrude in any employment; without a lawful calling, so much less ought any man to intrude himself without a calling, into any sacred function in the house of God: Heb. v. 4. † Therefore before any take upon him to exercise the office of ruling elder, he ought to be lawfully called thereunto. This calling is inward or outward; the inward calling is the testimony of a good conscience, concerning some measure of ability and gifts for the charge, and a sincere and honest inclination and purpose to employ these gifts, for the honour of God, the advancement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the good of souls.

The outward calling is to be after the same manner with that of other church officers, and it stands in their election, and in the trial of their carriage, gifts and admission to the charge. The election is to be made by the congregation wherein they are to bear charge, Acts vi. 3, 5. and 14. 23.

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* 2 Book of Discipline chap. 3.
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That * it may be gone about in the more orderly way it is fit that a nomination be made by the minister and elder-ship of the congregation of the persons fittest, and best qualified for the employment, and that the names of the persons nominated by them be publickly intimated to the congregation, and they desired, in case of their not being satisfied, as having exception, or knowing others better qualified, to represent the same to the minister and eldership. If there be no eldership in the congregation, a nomination may be made either by the presbytery or by the most judicious and godly members of the congregation; particularly masters of families, together with the minister, or one or more ministers of the presbytery, in case of the congregation's want of a minister.

The † trial is to be by the minister and eldership of the congregation, or in case of the want of these, by the presbytery: And they are to be tryed both in regard of their conversation, that it be blameless and holy, and also in regard of their knowledge and experience in the things of God, and of the affairs of his house, and of their ability and prudence for government; It is true that the trial of elders in their knowledge and gifts required for their charge, hath not been much in use in this church; It being taken for granted, that conscience would be made of making choice of such as had knowledge and
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* 1 Book of Discipline 8. head, touching the Election of Elders and Deacons. † 1 Book of Discip. 8. head.

were able and fit, or that if any ignorant, or not able and fitted, were nominated that some of the congregation upon the intimation of their names would except against them, but by this means it hath come to pass that many ignorant and unqualified men have been admitted elders in many congregations, to the great detriment of religion, and no small reproach of our church: The apostle 1 Tim. iii. 10. speaking of deacons, which is the lowest rank of the officers of the church, requires that these also first be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless: And the same reasons and grounds that plead for the trial of a minister pleads also for the trial of elders in a way suitable to the qualifications required in them. Their * admission is to be by the minister of the congregation, or one appointed by the presbytery, in the presence of the whole congregation, with the preaching of the word, concerning their duty, and with prayer and humiliation, concerning the spirit of their calling to be poured out upon them, and that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in their hands: At which time they are solemnly to engage themselves before the Lord, to be faithful, and diligent and watchful over the flock committed to their charge, and in all the duties of that holy and honourable employment; and the people are also to engage themselves to obey them, and to submit themselves to them

* See the manner of electing and admitting Ministers and Elders prefixed to the Old Psal. Book.

them in the Lord, and to honour them, and highly to esteem them in love for their works sake.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Duties of a Ruling Elder.

THE duties of a ruling elder be of two sorts, some that are personal, and relate to his conversation as a Christian, others that are official, and relate to his ruling as an office-bearer in the house of God. His * personal qualifications, or the duties of his conversation are the same with these which the apostle requires in the conversation of a minister, 1 Tim. iii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. and vi. 11. Tit. i. 6, 7, 8. In which scriptures under the name † of (*episcopos*) or an overseer, he comprehends all these ‡ officers who have the oversight and charge of souls, and sets down what manner of persons he would have them to be in regard of their conversation and carriage: I shall speak of these things with application to the ruling elder. That the ruling elder ought to be of a blameless and Christian conversation is above question, but that it may be more distinctly known what the Holy Ghost requires of such in regard of their conversation: I

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* 1 Book of Discipline 8 head, 2 Book of Discipline chap. 6. † The manner of electing Ministers and Elders. ‡ Jun. Eccles, lib. 2. chap. 2. chap. 3.

shall from these scriptures show, first what the apostle would have them not to be, 2dly, what he would have them to be. The things of the *first* sort are these: 1. A ruling elder must not be given to wine, they must not be lovers nor followers of strong drink, nor debord in riot and excess, nor tittle away time in ale-houses and taverns. 2. He must not be a striker nor a brawler, nor given to quarrelling and contentions. 3. He must not be covetous nor greedy of filthy lucre, for, *The love of money is the root of all evil, which while some covet after, they err from the faith, and pierce themselves thorow with many sorrows.* 4. He must not be a novice, or one newly come to the faith, lest *he be puffed up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil,* the spirits of novices are not yet well ballasted, nor brought low enough by frequent exercises of the cross and so come to be more easily puffed up, therefore there is need that he be an exercised soldier of Jesus Christ, and one who by experience is taught to know the wiles of the devil, and is able to endure hardness. 5. He must not be self-willed, adhering pertinaciously, and without reason to his own judgement, and refusing to hearken to the judgement of his brethren, though sound and wholesome. 6. He must not be soon angry, whether upon real or convinced causes of provocation.

The things of the second sort be these, first, He must be blameless, *i. e.* One who walks without offence towards God and men. 2. If married

ried, *He must be the husband of one wife*; such a one who shuns all unlawful lusts satisfying himself with, and keeping himself within the bounds of the remedy provided of God. 3. He must be vigilant, watchful over his own soul, that no temptation prevail upon him; watchful unto every good duty, and to take hold of every opportunity of well doing. 4. He must be sober, and temperate, of a sound and humble mind, moderating his own appetite and affections, and satisfying himself with a moderate use of the creatures, and of the things of this world. 5. He must be of a good behaviour or modest, of a grave and staid, yet of an affable and courteous carriage, neither light nor vain, to the losing of his authority, and rendring himself contemptible, nor sullen, and self-pleasing, to the discouraging and scaring away of the flock, by his needless distance and austerity. 6. Given to hospitality. ready to receive strangers to his house, especially the poor, and those who are of the household of faith. 7. *Apt to teach, i. e.* A man of knowledge, and able to instruct others, one who hath a ready and willing mind to teach others, which is not so meant as if it were requisite for the ruling elder to be endued with the gift of exhortation and instruction competent to the pastor and teacher, or that he may and ought to imploy himself therein, but of that fitness and ability to teach that is competent to his calling, which he must be ready and willing to exercise so far as belongeth thereto. 8. Moderate, in the first language (*epiekes,*) rendred patient,

tient, 1 Tim. iii. Not rigorous nor exacting the height of the law in his dealings, but in his own particular of a condescending nature, and remitting something of strict justice. 9. Patient, one who without wearying, waits on his duty notwithstanding of difficulties, and doth bear the delays, untractableness, and injuries of others.

10. *One who rules well his own house*, having his children in subjection with all gravity, to which the apostle adds this reason, *If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take a care of the church of God?* 1 Tim. iii.

5. The church of God is of larger extent than one family, and the duties to be performed in it, be of greater eminency and difficulty, and require more skill, wisdom, and courage, than these that are to be performed in a family. The ruling well of his own house, doth import not only ability for doing of it, but also that he make conscience of, and actually perform these duties that are required for the right and well ordering of a Christian family, to teach and instruct his children and servants in the knowledge of God, to take care of their sanctifying the Lord's day, of their profiting in godliness, of their seeking of God, and of their ordering their conversation aright, to read the scriptures, and sing psalms, pray in the family, and to exhort, admonish, rebuke and comfort all that are of his household, as their condition requires; for if these duties ly upon all masters of families who profess this gospel, then in a special way upon elders, who are appointed to stir up and go before others in the per-

performance thereof. 11. A lover of good men, one whose soul cleaves to those who fear God, having such in estimation above all others, cherishing them, and conversing ordinarily and familiarly with them. 12. He must be just, one who is straight and upright in all his dealings among men, deceiving no man, defrauding no man, withholding nothing from any man that is due to him, but giving to every man his own. 13. Holy, careful to express the life of religion, and power of godliness in all his conversation. 14. He must be one who holds fast the faithful word that he hath been taught; one who is stable in the faith, holding fast the truth of God, without wavering or turning aside to error. Lastly, He must be one who hath good report of these who are without, lest he fall into reproach and snare of the devil, *i. e.* he must be such a one whose blameless conversation, and sober and Christian walking doth extort a testimony even from these who know not God, and who doth by well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, that if any speak evil of him as of an evil doer they may be ashamed who speak falsely against his good conversation in Christ. The apostle comprehends all these summarily in two sentences, 1 Tim. iv. 12. *Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity,* 1 Tim. vi. 11. *But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*

C H A P. V.

Of the Duties of their Calling which are more private.

THE * duties of their calling are these that belong to their watching over and ruling of the flock, and they be of two sorts; some that they are to perform by themselves alone, and so may be *more private duties*; † others that they are to perform jointly with the rest of the overseers of the house of God and may be called *more public*. The duties of their calling that be more private, are all these that private Christians are bound to perform each of them unto another by the law of charity and love, and these are, first to *instruct one another*, John iv. 29. Acts xviii. 26. Secondly, to *exhort and stir up one another, to provoke unto love and good works*, Heb. x. 24. 25. Thirdly, to *admonish and rebuke one another*, Lev. xix. 17. First privately, and if they will not hearken, then before witnesses; and if yet they will not hearken, then to tell the church; and if they will not hear the church, then let them be to us as heathens and publicans, Mat. xviii. 15, 16, 17. Fourthly, To comfort the afflicted,

* 1 Book of Discipline 8 head, 2 Book of Discipline 6 chap. † Asser. of the Government of the church of Scotland 1. part chap. 2. 1. part. pag. 15. Jun Eccles. lib. 2. cap. 3. pag. 107.

sisted, and to support the weak, 1 Thes. v. 11.
 Fifthly, To those who are fallen, Gal. vi. 1.
 Sixthly, To reconcile these who are at variance,
 Mat. v. 9. Seventhly, To pray one for another,
 Jude 20. Eighthly, To visit the sick, and these
 who are in bonds and distress, Mat. xxv. 36. All
 these duties elders are to perform to the several
 members of the congregation, by virtue of their
 calling. The scriptures do expressly mention
 some of them as incumbent unto them, to wit,
admonishing these over whom God hath set them,
 1 Thes. v. 12. *Visiting and praying over the sick,*
 James v. 14. *Feeding the flock* by instruction, ex-
 hortation, rebuke and comfort in such a way as
 is competent to their station, Acts xv. 28. The
 rest we may warrantably gather by analogy and
 proportion from these; If private Christians be
 obliged thereto, much more are Christian elders
 who have the charge of souls, in a special way o-
 bliged thereto. These things are well expressed
 in the sixth chapter of the second book of dis-
 cipline. * *As the pastors and doctors (say they)*
should be diligent in teaching and sowing the seed
of the word; so the elders should be careful in
seeking of the fruit of the same of the people. It
appertains to them to assist the pastor in exami-
nation of them that come to the Lord's table. I-
tem, in visiting the sick, they should cause the acts
of the assemblies as well particular as general, to
be put in execution carefully; they should be dili-
gent in admonishing all men of their duty, accord-
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* 2 Book of Discipline chap. 6.

ing to the rule of the evangel; things that they cannot correct by private admonition, they should bring to the eldership.

From what hath been said concerning these duties of ruling elders, these three things follow; First, That they ought to be men of such abilities, as are in some measure able to instruct, exhort, admonish, rebuke, comfort, pray, and do these duties now mentioned. Secondly, That it is needful for them, not only to have some measure of ability for these things, but also to have some measure of dexterity, wisdom, experience, tenderness in following the same. Thirdly, That they be well acquainted with the condition of the congregation, and the members thereof, and therefore be careful to observe their carriage, and frequently to visit and take inspections of families, that they may instruct the ignorant, exhort the negligent, admonish the slothful, and rebuke those who walk disorderly, comfort the afflicted, establish those who waver, visit the sick, encourage these who do well, and see piety and godliness promoted in families, and every one edifying another in love, walking in the fear of the Lord, and comfort of the Holy Ghost.

C H A P. VI.

Of these Duties which are more public, and which they are to perform jointly with others.

THE * duties of elders which are more public, and which they are to perform jointly with others, are these which ly upon them in the assemblies or courts of the church which are made up of preaching elders, teaching elders, and ruling elders: These assemblies are in our church of four sorts; either they are of the elders of particular congregations, which is the church session, or of the elders of more congregations than one, lying near together, which is the presbytery, or of the elders of more presbyteries than one, which is the provincial synod, or of the elders commissioners from all the presbyteries in the land, which is the general or national assembly: To these we may add a fifth sort, to wit, that which is made up of elders from all or divers nations professing the faith of Jesus Christ.

Whilst we speak of elders; of which the assemblies of the church are made up, we mean all sorts of elders; ministers, doctors and ruling elders. It is true, that in the congregations of our church because of the want of maintainance, there

* 1 Book of Discipline 8 head. 2 Book 6 chap. The Office and duty of Elders prefixed to Ps.

there be few or no doctors, or teaching elders distinct from pastors or ministers, who perform the duties both of the preaching elder, and of the teaching elder, only in the schools of divinity are such.

In * all assemblies of the church ruling elders being thereto rightly called, have power to sit, write, debate, vote, and conclude in all matters that are handled therein, Acts xv. 2. and vi. 22, 23.

The † things which be handled in the assemblies of the church, be either matters of faith, matters of order, matters of discipline, or that which concerneth the sending of church officers, according to which they have a fourfold power: 1. That which is called *dogmatick*, whereby they judge of truth and error, in points of doctrine, according to the word of God only. 2. That which is called *diatactick*, by which they discern and judge of the circumstances of these things that belong to the worship of God, as times, places, persons, and all such particulars in ecclesiastick affairs as are not determined in the word according to the general rules thereof, concerning order and decency, avoiding of scandal, doing all to the glory of God, and to the edifying of the church. 3. That which is *critick* or *corrective*, by which censures are exercised upon the scandalous and obstinate, and such as are penitent again admitted to the ordinances, fellowship

* 2 Book of Discipline chap. 6, and chap. 7. † 1 Book of Discipline chap. 7.

ship and society of the church. 4. That which is called *exousiastick*, by vertue of which they send, authorize and give power to church officers to serve in the house of God. All these assemblies are not to exercise all these powers, but to keep themselves within their due bounds, the inferior leaving these things that are of more common concernment to the superior; but in all these powers ruling elders have a share and do put forth the same in exercise, according to the measure that belongs to the assembly whereof they are members, Acts xv. 6. 22, 23. Howbeit the execution of some decrees of the church assemblies; such as the imposition of hands; the pronouncing the sentence of excommunication, the receiving of penitents, the intimation of the deposition of ministers, and such like do belong to ministers alone.

These being the duties and powers of ruling elders in the assemblies of the church, it's requisite that they be endued with such abilities and qualifications as are needful for the exercising thereof; but because all ruling elders are not always called to sit in all these assemblies: but one from every session sufficeth to the presbytery and provincial synods, and a few from every presbytery and from greater congregations or burghs therein to the general assembly, as also a few from the whole church throughout a land to a more universal assembly; therefore, though it is to be wished and endeavoured, that all elders may have due qualifications for all these things, and though special care is to be taken

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every where to choose the most qualified, yet in particular congregations men may be chosen elders who have not such measure of all these qualifications; they being otherwise men of blameless and christian conversation, and having such a measure of knowledge, and prudence, as is fit for governing that congregation, and judging of the things that are handled in the session thereof, which for the most part are matters of scandal, and trying and admitting of penitents; but if there be any who are not of a blameless and christian conversation, and have not some measure of these qualifications required by the word of God in a ruling elder, no congregation ought to choose any such, nor any session or presbytery to admit them to the charge, for it is not seemly that the servants of corruption should have authority to judge in the kirk of God, and if any such have been admitted, they are to endeavour the removal of them, as they would not partake of their sin, and be found guilty before the Lord of the blood of souls, which cannot but suffer prejudice through negligence or ill guiding of such men.

C H A P. VII.

Of the duty of elders in censuring scandals and scandalous persons, and receiving of penitents.

BECAUSE the government and duty of elders in congregations, lyes for most part
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in censuring scandals and scandalous persons, and trying and admitting of penitents; therefore it is fit to speak somewhat of their right of following their duty in these things.

† 1. For the persons about whom their censures are to be exercised, it is all the members of the congregation indifferently and impartially without respect of persons, the rich as well as the poor, the high as well as the low, their friends, kinsmen, alliance, neighbours and acquaintances as well as others. James 2. sharply reproves these who *have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ the Lord of glory with respect of persons*, by preferring the rich to the poor; and Solomon says that *diverse weights and diverse measures are an abomination to the Lord*, must it not then be worthy of rebuke to have the censures of our Lord Jesus with respect of persons, and to weigh the rich and poor, the high and the low in diverse ballances, by taking notice of the one, and passing by the other. 2. It is incumbent to them to exercise their power, not only over the people of the congregation, but also over these of their own number, as all christians, † so they in a special way who are yoke-fellows in the work of the Lord, ought to consider and admonish one another, and if any of them be found negligent or insufficient, or do in any thing miscarry to the offence of the gospel and blaming of the elder-ship,

† 1. Book of discipline concerning persons subject to discipline. 2. Book of discipline chap. i. 7. † 1. Book of discipline 8 head.—The weekly assembly of ministers, elders and deacons prefixed to the old ps.

ship, he is to be censured by the minister, or ministers, and the rest of the elders, as the degree of his offence doth require. The apostle Paul, Acts xx. 28. gives charge to all elders to take heed to themselves as well as to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. 3. As all sorts of scandalous persons whether in the congregation or amongst themselves: so all sorts of scandals and offences are to be taken notice of by them; The apostle 2 Thes. iii. 6. commands that *we withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly*, and amongst disorderly walkers, he doth verse ii. reckon *idle persons*, who do not work at all, but are busie bodies; intimating to us, that even these scandals and disorders, which are by many little taken notice of, and lookt upon as no faults, ought to be taken notice of by the church, that all her members may walk honestly, and as it becomes the gospel of Jesus Christ. The acts of our church doth appoint, that whatsoever it be that might spot that christian congregation, ought not to escape either admonition or censure: so in the order of ecclesiastick discipline, 1567. Two great neglects there be that by ignorance or custom have crept in amongst elders in many congregations. 1. That they do not take notice of the omission of duties, as well as of the commission of faults; as for instance, if there be any member of the congregation who lives idly, and waits not upon his calling, who is not given to prayer, who is not charitable to the poor, who waits not upon the publick ordinances; if there
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be any master of family who prays not in his family, who does not bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; or, 2. That they do not take notice of the commission of faults, and scandals of all sorts, but of some few only; such as fornication, adultery, and prophaning of the Lord's day, and suffering many others, such as tippling, drunkenness, filthy communications, lying, cursing, swearing, oppression, reproaching of piety, and godliness, &c. * to pass without observation. 4. Elders are to take heed, that they bring in no civil questions and debates before the assemblies of the church, and that they do not use nor inflict any civil mulct, or punishment, upon persons convicted of scandal, these being proper to the civil magistrate; the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the censures thereof being spiritual, and not of this world, John xviii. 36.

† 5. In the taking notice of offences, they are to observe this order: If the offence be private, and known to but a few, then are they in the first place to admonish the offender privately, and if he hearken to the admonition and amend it, needs go no further nor be dilated to the church; if he do not hearken nor amend, then is the elder to take with him some of his brethren, and to admonish the offender before witnesses, and if he hearken, the church needs not be acquainted

* 1. Book of discipline chap. 7. Sect. 6. † The order of Ecclesiastick discipline, appointed by the assembly 1561. And in the order of excommunication, commanded to be printed by the assembly 1571.

ed therewith, but if he despise this second admonition, then he is to be dilated by the elders to the church, that he may be called before the session, and convicted and censured by them; this is the order commanded, and prescribed by Jesus Christ, † Mat. xviii. 15, 16, 17. If the offence be publick and open, then is the offender without such previous admonition to be dilated to the session, that according to the apostle's rule, 1 Tim. v. 20. *They that sin (meaning openly) may be rebuked before all, that others may fear.*

6. In these dilations, they are to take heed that they do not, upon every rumor or jealousy, or suspicion, bring men to be questioned publickly as scandalous walkers, but first to be careful to make diligent and prudent enquiry about the truth of the matter, and to see if it can be proven by witnesses, or that the scandal thereof, be common and flagrant, or attended with pregnant likelyhoods and presumptions of truth, before they bring it in publick, that so it may appear to the congregation, and to the party themselves, that they are not questioned and challenged without cause.

7. In the matter of dilation and censure, they are in the fear of God and in the simplicity and sincerity of their hearts, to take heed that fear or favour, or solicitations, or threatnings, or gifts, or bribes, make them not pass by, or wink at the fault of any, and that passion, or malice, or private quarrels, and particulars make them not to dilate, or rip up, or censure the miscarriage of

† 2. Book of discipline chap. 6. sect. 12.

of any, and that they carry with all tenderneſs and compaſſion, and moderation towards the offender, that they may approve themſelves to his conſcience, that nothing puts them on to dilate him, and proceed againſt him, but the conſcience of duty, and a deſire to gain his ſoul, and to purge the church of ſcandals, Gal. vi. 1. 2 Cor. iv. 2. It's a high provocation before the Lord, for a church-officer to abuſe the power given him of God, for edifying of his body the church, unto the ſatiſfying his own paſſions and corrupt affections.

8. They are to take heed, that they do not uſe the cenſures of the church as a bodily puniſhment or penance to ſatiſfie for ſin, but a ſpiritual medicine, for humbling and gaining of the ſoul; all church cenſures, even excommunication itſelf, which is the moſt terrible and deſtroying-like cenſure, being ordained of God for this end, 1 Cor. v. The apoſtle commands to *deliver the inceſtuous perſon to Satan*, not that he may ſatiſfie for his ſin, but that the *ſpirit may be ſaved in the day of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*. The word ſatiſfaction may admit of a tolerable conſtruction in church-cenſures, in order to the removing of the ſcandal before men; but this being ſo much abuſed in the popiſh church and the hearts of men, being ſo prone to turn goſpel repentance, to a meer legal penance, and to conceive, that by meer outward ſubmiſſion and obedience to the cenſures of the church, that the guilt of their ſin is done away before God. Therefore elders would carefully ſhun every thing that

may give occasion to the fostering this pernicious opinion, and take pains to instruct offenders in the true nature and ends of the censures of the kirk.

9. A great part of elders work, † is to travel and take pains with scandalous persons who are now convict, to bring them to repentance, by seasonable and frequent conference; instructing, exhorting and admonishing them, untill they perceive some measure of true and earnest humiliation wrought in them for their sin, and them fitted to evidence and declare the same in publick before the congregation, that so the scandal may be removed.

10. They are not to desire or appoint any to profess repentance before the congregation, untill the signs of repentance appear in them. The incestuous Corinthian sorrowed exceedingly before the apostle did any thing concerning the receiving of him; and the discipline of our church appoints ministers and elders sharply to examine these who offer themselves to repentance, what fear and terror they have of God's judgements, what hatred of sin, and sorrow for the same, and what sense and feeling they have of God's mercies? in the which if they be ignorant, they ought diligently to be instructed; *for it is (say they) but a mocking to put such to publick repentance, who neither understand what sin is, what repentance is, what grace is, nor by whom God's mercies and favours are purchased?* And that after
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† The Form and order of Publick Repentance prefixed to the old Pf.

he is instructed in these things, and brought to have some taste of God's judgements, especially of his mercies in Jesus Christ, he may be presented before the publick church; these things are set down in the form and order of publick repentance, appointed by the assembly 1567.

Lastly, when the signs and evidences of true and unfeigned repentance do appear in these who have offended, elders would shew themselves ready and willing to receive them with all tenderness and compassion, and to forgive and comfort them, and confirm their love towards them, 2 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

* The number of elders in every congregation, cannot be well limited or determined, but it is to be more or less, according to the quantity of the congregation, and necessities and condition of the people, and as men qualified and fit for the charge can be found. It hath been an evil custom in some congregations, that rather than they would want any of their wonted number, they would choose unqualified men, and that in several congregations, the office of elder hath been given to these of the richer and higher sort as due to such (though happily of no experience in the things of Jesus Christ, and in many things of an untender and blameworthy conversation): because of their condition in the world, or conceiving that their secular power and credit was the best means to promote the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and men qualified with knowledge and experience in the things pertaining to souls.

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* 1. Book of discipline Chap. 6. Sect. 4.

and of a christian and Godly carriage have been passed by, because of a mean condition in the world. Better it is, that the number be few, before we choose the ignorant and scandalous; and that they be of a low degree, if godly; than of a high degree, if otherwise.

‡ That elders may the more conveniently discharge their duty; It is convenient that the congregation be divided into so many parts and that some competent part be assigned to the more peculiar care and inspection of every elder; yet so, as he neglect not to take heed to all the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made him an overseer.

C H A P. I.

Of Deacons. Of their names.

THAT we may also understand what doth belong unto deacons, we shall speak of them shortly, after the same order. 1. Of their name. 2. Of their institution. 3. Of their calling. 4. Of their duty and qualification.

* The word deacon, largely taken; signifies any servant or minister, Mat. xxiii. 11. Therefore in the New Testament it doth sometimes comprehend all church officers, even the apostles themselves, 1 Cor. iii. 5. Because every church-officer is appointed of God, for perfecting of
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‡ Acts of the assembly 1646,
discipline Chap. 8.

* 1. Book of Dis-

the saints, for the work of the ministry, (*eis ergon diakonias*) and edifying the body of Christ. When we speak of deacons in the * kirk, it is not taken in this large sense, for any church-officer of whatsoever sort, but for a certain kind of church-officers distinct from pastors, teachers and elders, to whom the collection and distribution of the goods of the church doth belong, for the supply of the necessities of the poor.

C H A P. II.

Of the Institution of Deacons.

THE institution of the office of deacon in the church of Christ, is divine; it is a special ordinance and appointment of Jesus Christ, that there should be deacons in his house, Acts vi. 3. The apostle gives command to the disciples to choose out among themselves men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom, whom they may appoint over the business of the poor, which was accordingly done, as may be seen in the 5th and 6th verses of that chapter: Neither was this a temporary institution upon this particular occasion, for the church of Jerusalem only, † but for all the churches of Christ to the end of the world; therefore the apostle Paul in several of his epistles to the churches,

* 1 Book of Discipline chap. 8. † 1 Book of Discipline chap. 8.

churches, doth mention them, Rom. xii. 8. He exhorteth *him that gives* or imparts (*i. e.* the deacon, to whom the care of giving and distributing is committed) to do it with simplicity, 1 Cor. xii. 28. he reckons *helps* (*i. e.* deacons who are appointed for helping the poor) among these officers whom God hath set in his church: and writting to the Philippians he directs his epistle to all the saints in Christ, with the bishops (or overseers, under whom he comprehends ministers, teachers and elders) and to the deacons, 1 Timothy, wherein he gives rules concerning the qualification and carriage of all church-officers, he treats of the deacon at large, chapter iii. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

From the divine institution of deacons, we gather, 1. * That the deacon is a distinct officer from the elder; it is a defect and fault in some congregations, that they put no difference betwixt these two, but so confounds and mingles them together as if they were both one, either appointing none for the office of deacon, but leaving that charge also upon the elders, or else giving the deacons the same power and employment with the elders. It's true, whatsoever the deacon may do by virtue of his office, that same may be done by an elder, as whatsoever is done by an elder may be done by a minister; because the higher and more eminent offices in the church doth include the powers of the lower. It's also true, that the deacons may assist in judgment with the minister and elders, and be helping to
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* 1 Book of Discipline chap. 2. pag. 74.

them in these things that concern the oversight of the congregation, by information and advice; yet it is necessary that congregations should so far regard the ordinance, and reverence the wisdom of God, in appointing these officers, as to have both elders and deacons, and to preserve them distinct in their actings and operations, not giving to the deacon, or suffering him to assume the elder's office. 2. That deacons are not to count light of this employment, or any others to esteem lightly of them, because they are called thereunto, and do exercise the same; but that they themselves, and all others ought to look upon it as one of these holy and honourable employments, which the wisdom of God hath thought fit to appoint in his house, for supplying the necessities of the saints. The Lord Jesus Christ himself did not disdain to wash his disciples feet; angels are all of them ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for their sakes who are appointed to be heirs of salvation: Why then should any think it below them to serve in the church of Christ, and to minister to the saints in this employment, 1 Tim. iii. 13,

C H A P. III.

Of the calling of Deacons.

NOne is to step into this office, but he that is lawfully called thereto; * Unto their cal-

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* 2 Book of Discipline chap. 9.

ling it is needful, First, That they have abilities and gifts fit for the charge, together with an honest purpose of heart to serve the Lord faithfully in the discharge of the same, by seeking his honour, and the good of the church. 2. That they be chosen by the congregation in which they are to serve, which choice is to be made after the same manner as that of the ruling elders. 3. That trial be taken by the minister and elders, concerning their conversation, that it be blameless and holy: and concerning their gifts, that they have that tenderness, discretion, dexterity and prudence, that is fit for that imployment, and that they be admitted to their charge with prayer and supplication, and opening of the word concerning their duty publickly in the congregation, where they are solemnly to engage themselves to be faithful in the trust committed to them of God, Acts vi. 3, 5 6. 1 Tim. iii. 10.

C H A P. IV.

Of their Duty. First of their conversation.

THeir duty is either that which concerns their conversation, or their office and calling, for their conversation, the apostle shews what it must be, 1 Tim. iii. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. They must not be double tongued, nor liars, nor dissemblers, nor deceivers. 2. They must not be given to much wine, nor tiplers, nor drunkards,

ards, nor lovers, nor followers of strong drink. 3. They must not be greedy of filthy lucre, nor such as are covetous, and whose hearts run after the things of the world. 4. They must be grave men of a pozed and staid carriage, and not of a light and vain behaviour. 5. They must be such as hold fast the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, *i. e.* who do not only know the doctrines of the gospel, but do hold fast the faith thereof without wavering, and study to have a good conscience, in walking answerably thereto. 6. They must be the husband of one wife, such as abstain from all unlawful lusts, satisfying themselves with the remedy allowed of God. 7. They must be such as rule their own house and their children well, such as command and instruct their children and household to keep the way of the Lord, going before them in the practice of piety and godliness, and all holy and religious duties.

C H A P. V.

Of the Duties of their Calling.

THE * duties that deacons are bound to perform in their calling, may be reduced to these heads: 1. That they be careful to take exact notice of such as are poor in the congregation, and have not wherewith to maintain themselves. 2. That they be careful from time to time to collect and receive from the several members

* 2 Book of Discipline chap 8.

bers of the congregation and strangers that come among them, what the Lord shall incline their hearts to give for a supply of the necessities of the poor, and in a seasonable and Christian way to stir up and exhort to charity and liberality, that the more may be given. 3. That which is received and collected by them, be faithfully delivered that it may be put in the treasury of the congregation. 4. That they do timeously make known the several conditions and necessities of the several poor within the congregation to the church session, that provision may be appointed accordingly for each of them, that so the poor may not be put to begging, to the grief of their spirits, and reproach of the gospel. 5. That they be careful, honestly and in simplicity, without respect of persons, to distribute and deliver to the poor what is appointed for supply of their necessities; and if they be orphans and young ones, or such who have no knowledge or understanding, nor ability to dispose and order the things that concern their food and raiment; That the deacons honestly imploy and bestow what is given for their use, that they may be supplied in these things. 6. That they be careful that what belongs to the poor be not dilapidated, nor applied to any other use: and if that there be any stock in the church treasure, it be improven to the best advantage, for the benefit and use of the poor: Yet so that the poor be rather always supplied, than moneys treasured up for a vain show. 7. That they be careful to take notice of these who are sick that they may acquaint

quaint the ministers and elders therewith for visiting of them, and if that they be poor their necessities may be supplied.

That deacons may the more conveniently discharge their duty. It's fit that some part of the congregation be assigned to every one of them, for the better inspection of the poor thereof, and that the dyets of collecting for the poor be divided amongst them.

The number of deacons in every congregation is to be according to the proportion of the congregation, and of the poor therein: and tho' there be no necessity of an equal number of elders and deacons, yet it is fit that each elder have some deacon to be assisting to him in the bounds of which he hath more peculiar inspection, that so both the one and the other may discharge their duty, with the greater facility to themselves, and with the greater benefit and advantage of the congregation.

F I N I S.





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