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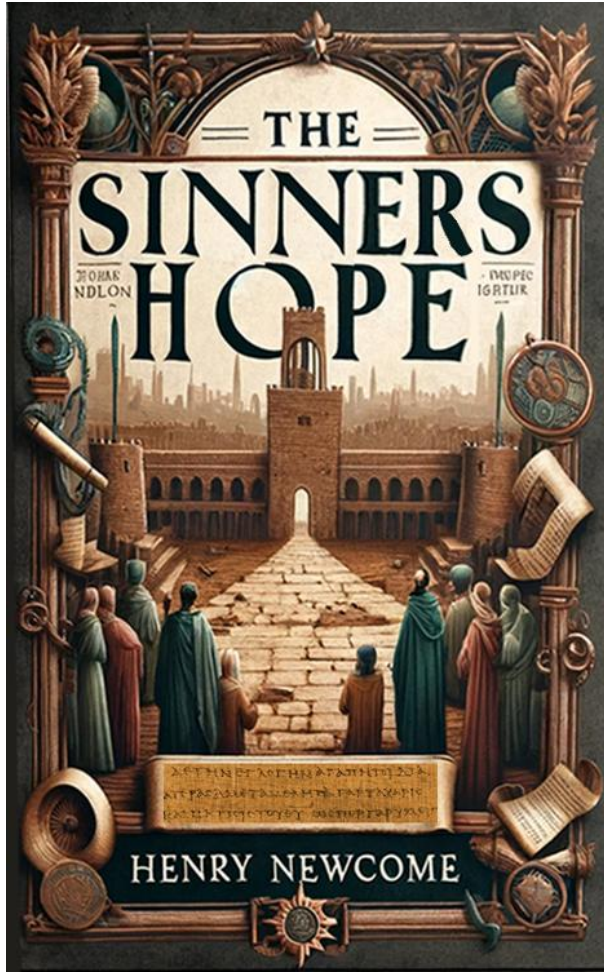
SINNERS HOPE

ΣΟΦΙΑΣ
ΝΔΛΟΝ

— ΤΥΠΟΓΡ.
ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚ.

ΣΤΗΝ ΠΡΟΛΟΓΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΔΟΣΕΩΣ
ΑΠΟ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΔΟΣΕΩΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΔΟΣΕΩΣ
ΕΝ ΤΗ ΕΚΔΟΣΕΩΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΔΟΣΕΩΣ

HENRY NEWCOME



The Sinners Hope

**As his Privilege, and Duty, in his Worst
condition, Stated, Cleared, and Improved.**

Henry Newcome

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Editor's Note – During the EEBO-TCP Transcription Process, all the text was hand transcribed according to visual representation; and as such, sometimes the letters s, l, f & t are misconstrued with each other, these letters regularly being almost illegibly similar in the original facsimile script. Though it is rare for these errors to remain post-edit, unfortunately they may remain if uncaught. My apologies in advance where such errors occur. Also, the symbol <H&G>, when included, signifies omitted Hebrew & Greek. Lastly, some archaic words may be updated to more contemporary terminology; but changes have been kept to a bare minimum.

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TO THE REVEREND PT. I

To Henry Newcome

SIR,

I Have been earnestly entreated, to importune you to the printing of those Sermons, which in your preaching of them, were so greatly approved of, and so signally successful. The Text was, Ezra 10:2. You have since your coming amongst us, preached upon several necessary and seasonable Subjects amongst them, though many of the others might have cost you as much pains, and have been very profitable and useful, yet these by some of your best and most judicious Auditors, are desired to be the first fruits to a future harvest: I should not engage you to this work (knowing the burdens that lie upon you, not only in your public ministry, which is very great, but the multitude of private concernments, wherein you are pressed above strength, and if not wisely moderated will shorten your days) but that my own judgment concurs with others for the publishing of them; Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. Alexander the great he had all; when he had nothing, because he had Hope. The Poets feign that in Pandora's box, which was stuffed with all the woes and miseries that might be, the God's placed

Hope in the bottom, the Prophet calls the people of God Prisoners of Hope. It was this that made the Rebell come in, when a thousand pound was proclaimed to be given to whomsoever could bring his Head: the Hue and cry will make the Traitor run, when Hopes of pardon will bring him back. I shall add no more but that my Hopes are, you will answer our Hopes, and my prayers shall be for God's blessing on them.

Your fellow Laborer in the work of the Ministry, and your real Friend and Brother. Richard Heyrick

TO THE REVEREND PT. II

His much esteemed Friend Mr. Henry Newcome
Minister of the Gospel, at Manchester.

WORTHY SIR,

I Have by a providence (God so ordering it) seen and perused your painful, profitable, powerful work; Enough (through God's grace) to startle and awaken the wicked, and to encourage Saints: well it is for the former that they have any remote hopes of heaven: but sure it is in respect of a possible change, for otherwise, they are at present, without Christ, without Hope, and without God in the World. The hope they usually harbor in themselves is indeed no hope, at least no true hope, for such a hope, as a handmaid, follows faith. The Hypocrites hope shall perish, it shall be cut off and his trust shall be as a spider's web, or as a puff of breath, or as the giving up of the ghost; The hope therefore you give them is not in respect of their present state: Christ's rule is infallible; verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Know ye not (saith the Apostle) that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, &c. shall inherit the Kingdom of God. The Souls of men, as such, do wave

up and down without any anchor at all, only if they will come in, lay hold on the covenant, embrace the offers and tenders of grace, there is then Hope in Israel concerning this Thing. And as for the Saints, that are often beset with darkness, sin, affliction, you have opened such a door of Hope to them, that if they will but enter, they may take a view of that building, whose stones are laid with fair colors, and the foundation with Sapphires, whose Windows are of Agates, and the Gates of Carbuncles, and all the borders of pleasant desirable stones. The Hope of the righteous shall be gladness, Saith Solomon; it may be for a time the Lord may rear out of Zion, and utter his voice to Jerusalem, and the Heavens and the Earth may shake, yet for all this, the Lord will be the Hope of his people, and the strength of the Children of Israel: there is no reason that God's people at the lowest should let go their hold; are not the promises of victory and defense to the Prisoners of hope? Yea surely. The Lord their God shall save them in that day, as the flocks of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a Crown lifted up. Now that the unregenerate may be won, and that the Saints may know their privileges whilst they are yet in the valley of Achor, my advice and desire is that these things may be published, not only to a great congregation, but to the Church throughout these Nations. I hope much good will be in the publishing of these Hopes, that although we have all trespassed against our God, even from Dan to Bersheba, Yet now there is Hope in Israel concerning this thing. If a Blush of modesty should stand as a temptation to keep back the publication of this piece, I cannot but say to you as Schecaniah to Ezra, Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee, we also be with thee, be of good courage and do it. The Lord bless these papers, and the labors of all the learned to the good of his church and the Glory of his grace. So prays,

Garstang Jan. 2, 1658.

Your unworthy Brother and fellow Laborer in the Lord's Vineyard, Isaac
Ambrose.

TO THE REVEREND PT. III

Mr. Richard Heyrick: Warden of the late College at Manchester, his much honored Brother, and faithful fellow laborer in the Congregation there.

Dear and much honored Sir,

If my appearing thus in print be no wonder, it need be none to yourself, or any that knows us, That I prefix your name to these papers: you well know with what fear and sense of unfitness for it I undertook any part of the charge of this great congregation (wherein God hath so long a time to mutual comfort continued you) upon the Death of that eminent servant of his, and Dear Brother of Yours Mr. Hollinworth, as judging the place too public for one of my mean Abilities, though encouraged thereunto by your affectionate invitation and the unanimous call of the congregation; And that I should yet make this adventure to be more public, You are not unacquainted with, (being a principal accessory to) the Occasion of it. The importunity of sundry of this people, whom the Lord hath made dear to yourself, as to me, Headed and set on by your respective Letter, having much against my own inclination and former intention pressed this from me. Their request was to you in the first place, who have been their ancient Pastor, to have revised and published some of your many Elaborate

discourses, whereof they have been made partakers in your constant ministry amongst them, that they might have had the profit of your former pains by this means revived unto them. You have declined, at least at present waved, the motion, upon the too just grounds of your age and some bodily weaknesses, which might make the work somewhat tedious and more burthensome to you: I cannot say much of my bodily strength, at least that it exceeds, or is proportionable to the constant burden of this great Congregation, (wherein I should bear a part with you) the Work now lying upon three of us, which heretofore hath had Seaven to undertake it) and to which you are so ready to express a tender Testimony upon all occasions (which I thankfully acknowledge) that I should for that be less excusable. And on the contrary, my want of Age, and that gravity, which should have put authority upon such a Work, might have pleaded much for me. But since it is come to this, and that I am not like to be excused (as you are, as yet) from Printing, you will pardon me, If I excuse not your name in this Dedication. It may be of no small advantage (and so of no little weight with me in this Application of myself and these papers to you) that being conscious to myself of my own meanness every way, and the little that my own name can add to the acceptance of this Discourse, be the matter never so of the greatest and highest Importance, that yet I appear to the World, under the notion of any special relation to you, sufficiently known for your eminency in birth, place, parts, service and printed labors, which yet had been sufficiently manifest without this by our affectionate lines, which I have made bold to publish herewith: But being really sensible of your many kindnesses to me, and much refreshed in my poor endeavors in this Congregation, in your comfortable and entirely affectionate condescension to, and conjunction with me, I could do no less, then in this public

appearance, make this known to the World of you by this Dedication, as a thankful acknowledgment of my heartiest respects unto you. May the Lord have mercy on us in continuing your health still unto you, and preserving you long amongst us, as an Ornament and rich blessing to this place, a helpful and useful instrument to this part of his Church, and a singular part of the comfort of his life, Who is,

Your unworthy (yet truly Affectionate) Brother, and fellow-laborer in the Lord's work, Henry Newcome.

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER

Especially to those of the Congregation of Manchester, in the County of Lancaster, To whose Service The Lord hath at present appointed him in the Ministry of The Gospel.

DEAR FRIENDS,

It is the Judicious Observation of one, that it is no marvel if many things in nature, which are unknown in their causes be very wonderful, when many natural things, that are known, are no less wonderful, if the commonness did not prevent our consideration of them, and they would be no less admired and questioned for preternatural, if not so commonly known as they are. And amongst some others this of Letters, whereby men speak with one another by their hands, and a man may discourse with him that hath been dead some hundreds of years by taking up his book and reading, as if he were raised from the dead to spake with him. It was the great goodness of God that directed some instruments at first to this most necessary help, upon many accounts to mankind in all the Affairs and concernments of life, and as an high improvement of this, no less admirable and gracious was that providence of God that set this way of printing on foot, which as it is such in the thing itself; so in that (as it is observed) it

was in such a time when much use was made to a bad end of the writings of men, wherein the vulgar were much abused and misled by the false quotations and glosses upon the more rare and hard to be gotten written copies, that were then extant; as also, that when the light of the gospel began to break out again after a dismal night of ignorance and superstition, there should be such a ready means prepared for the transmitting and dispersing of this light all over the Christian Churches; the benefits of which blessed providence we and our forefathers have abundantly tasted: And though I cannot but bewail the manifold mischiefs and inconveniences of a licentious unlicensed press, the horrible abuse and adulterating of this excellent benefit; yet the profit of printing, whereby we are made partakers of the labors of the Godly and learned in former times and the labors of others may be transferred to posterity, must needs be acknowledged as a glorious Mercy. I must needs confess it was far from my thoughts ever to have said thus much on this matter upon so feeling an occasion as this is, but my desire is to be serious in this undertaking, and to have an eye at God, and the special end wherein I might be useful in this matter, how poor and mean soever the attempt be, or whatever it shall please God the success shall be.

The manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal. And there are differences of gifts, but the same spirit: To one is given by the same Spirit, A word of Wisdom to another a word of knowledge by the same Spirit. A word of Wisdom to speak Parables, A word of knowledge, to open and explain parables as a learned Annotator and Paraphrast upon that Scripture. Calvin makes this knowledge to be, more mean attainments in the more mysterious things of God, and that of Wisdom to be more penetrating into more high and hidden things. As therefore men's gifts do differ, so must

needs the Books that are written by men of by differing gifts; I must needs confess, my share in this rich bounty in the things that are freely given us of God hath been, in what measure soever it is, of this second kind; having attained (and desirous to be heartily thankful for it too) but to that of some Word of knowledge, at the utmost, that *Mediocris cognitio*, that meaner knowledge in these glorious mysteries; a word to explain, open, and endeavor to set on, what is plainly set forth in Scripture for man's salvation. And whatever I am of this (more I am not suspected of, I am sure) it is a special gift of the Spirit to be a plain preacher, and upon this consideration being conscious to myself of my own weakness, I should have resolvedly kept myself retired, if I had known that none but the fruits of the gifts of Wisdom, in the more accurate and judicious labors of men of higher parts and abilities, could be of use to the Church of God.

I am (I bless God) content with that part the Lord hath called me to act in his Church, and for which he hath in any measure furnished me, though much burdened and unsatisfied, that I do not what I might do to the utmost therein: and yet I oft think of what a judicious Divine once said of one very famous for a practical preacher, that we were in a sad condition, if we had no abler Ministers in England to deal with gain-sayers, then such as he. And I do bless God that he hath furnished out many excellently qualified, and enabled to manage the controversies of the times with much strength and clearness, and to defend the truth against all Opposers. And though the multitude of Polemic discourses hath bred some inconvenience, and many of these worthy Champions well skilled at their weapons have been too apt to fall from the public service, to engage in unhandsome and some unwarrantable duels, making many controversies and engagements wholly personal, and so the fruit of this hath no way answered the time, parts and

pains that have been used in it upon many occasions: yet to nauseate or under value parts and labors this way, were for a peaceable people to throw away their defense and bulwarks in a trained military power for their preservation. If we would have no Soldiers to defend us, our Enemies will find Soldiers to oppose us, and without resistance by some well experienced Champions, to destroy us: And if we decry all polemic learning, we may soon be overthrown by it in our adversaries, who cherish it to the utmost; and cannot be oppugned, nor the truth defended against them, unless by some eminently skilled in it on our side: Men could not have peace, if it were not for war; few would soon be to live in rest, if none to maintain war upon occasion: Besides, these precious men of God thus specially qualified keep the Bulwarks, whilst others less fit for such service should set on foot and improve the trade of religion, by which we must subsist and live eternally. Every minister should have his competency in both, the word of Wisdom, and the word of Knowledge, though some men's potior pars, may lie more in the one, and less in the other. But controversy maintains the truth, and practical piety improves it, that, without tending on this, defends a shadow, fights for religion while the heart and life is gone from it; this without that, lies open to uncertainty, continual disturbances from opposers, and danger of building without a foundation, these cannot well and truly be the one without the other, so likewise these do one, remotely yet often very effectually, the work of the other: Controversies well stated and cleared in many points lay the foundation solid for the power of Godliness to build on; and the power of Godliness heartily admitted doth notably prepare for the right judging of controversies and tends much to the quieting of them. I have taken leave to commend in these lines that part which here I present not to you: But yet I am confident of it, that I may get leave for the,

whoever thou art that art more in controversies, then the study of thine own heart, to lay aside those things, till this be first done. It is very sad when men read controversies to satisfy the lust and curiosity of their own carnal minds, rather than to inquire into the truth under them, for God's glory and the affecting their hearts therewith which it is possible for thee to have done, read practical books another while, and amongst the rest this, if thou please: I would thou mightst return to those things another man, and less of those matters would serve the turn, Fire may be put out by taking away the fuel, as well as by throwing on water; this study may heal division by diversions and by giving men a truer notion of differences, and of the seed and fuel of them from within us, which while the matter of practical religion's neglected men have not with them. The cleansing the stomach may prevent fumes into the head and cure the disease in that part this way. I have purposely waved such a notion of this very subject, as might have looked towards a controversy, as also the like consideration of it, referring to us as a nation gotten like the people of Israel in Ezra 's time into a great transgression, and under sore judgments for the same, and what hopes might be in this thing I have but touched on the by; and all because I see this other particular course to drive at the root of all diseases amongst us; if men's hopes were founded, secured, and improved about their own souls, it would soon give us a true ground of hope of things succeeding yet well in Church and state. What God may be about to do with us of this Nation I am sometimes desirous to be enquiring after; the tokens of God's displeasure towards us are many as formerly, so of late more especially in the sicknesses, strange, epidemical and of long continuance; sudden death; untimely and sad accidents; the removal of the righteous, the Chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, some hopeful young men prepared for the

ministry prevented with the crown, before the Church had any taste of their labors (a mercy no doubt unto them, but sharpest displeasure unto us) Reformation sadly at a stand; many, senseless of any great evils upon us; many have been crying out of glorious times, till the very shadows of the evening are upon us, and we almost spent, the Nation secretly wasting and consuming under our late brags of prosperity: the sudden and strange revolutions; the turnings upside down; the backward and forward proceedings in the affairs of the state. And what shall we think will become of us? Well may we thus conclude, that if God intend to keep us for his people he will reform us, and before we be reformed, the heart of the people of the land must be prepared to the Lord God of their fathers (for the want of that kept up the high places in good and reforming governors times, and after when Josiah did bring that to pass, the heart of the people was yet unfit for such a state, and so reformation secured them not, as a people may drive off reformation so long, that when it comes it may not cure them) but now what way so like to prepare the heart of the people, as by setting them to this study of their own hearts? My expectation of our reviving in the Nation is, if God restore and revive his work on his people's hearts, if wicked men be turned, and men seriously study these matters about the soul, these close and inward things wherein we are gotten so far wide, as we are, the man that can save a soul is likeliest to be instrumental to save the Land: The general desired reformation must begin, and be carried on in the particular care of every man about his own soul. If these hopes here laid down were improved, as here endeavored to be pressed, we might of the general threatening state of the whole say, that, There might yet now be hopes in Israel concerning this thing.

That I should adventure these papers into the world, it cannot be out of any conceit I can have of anything extraordinary in them, the profit of practical books I have had the comfortable experience of in myself and others; the matter of this is not novel, neither every way common: The things may be found in other treatises of the like kind, the method and particular digestion of them may be new, however all good books of the like subject fall not into the same hands, and this may light where some of these things may be news, at least, where the Children of God may well bear their being put in remembrance of these things, though they may already know them, especially you of my charge, dear to me in the Lord, because several of your conditions I have particularly digested in this discourse, and I judged, upon the importunity of many of you to this publication, that it might be of use unto you to peruse, that so you might be more familiar with these things, which I find many still needing, as if nothing almost of this kind had been delivered.

It is much in my heart to persuade Christians to read practical books, and to study to look after a spiritual provision from the Sabbath days and these helps, for their Souls to live more handsomely upon, then many of us do; to lay in on the market day to live on that week after, and when fresh provision is scarce or spent; or if thou wouldst feast or have variety, it were good to have a store, though of celer-provision, to furnish the Table with: we should not keep such starved houses for Religion, as is too common amongst us, if this course and forecast were on foot. Time were well redeemed in families, to read someone of these books every day, and if this small tract may be helpful to any this way, I shall have much cause to rejoice.

For my credit in this undertaking the Lord helped me over any thoughts at that, before I could hearken in the least to the motion of appearing thus to

the World. It is for thy good (dear Reader) that I have ventured myself in point of credit no little: I shall challenge thy improvement of what is here tendered to thee with no other apology; then thy serious thoughts of accounting for it at the bar of God. It is a weak Minister indeed, that shall either preach or print, if it be but truth, that may not lay enough before thee to heighten thy reckoning at that day.

I cannot (to invert that of Christ's friends to him) do this thing openly and seek to keep myself in secret; some hands this book may fall into, that I had not chiefly in mine eye in the publishing of it, and I shall not persuade them to lay it down, I print not upon your motives, yet I may do it in part for your sakes; I would wish you to suspend your scorn and censure, till you have well secured your concernment in this very matter; look to the state of your immortal souls, which you may soon come to the trial of, and for this book or me do as you please. As it carries the message of the great God and our Lord Jesus Christ to men that must live forever, persuading them to come in, I know it is of that validity and authority that my name can no way diminish it; and I will not derogate so much from the majesty of the embassy, as to ask your leave or pardon, that it is tendered to you. Reject it on your peril; It is the word, not which is, or can be by man, exposed so to you to judge of, but that one day it shall recover its place, and be that by which you shall be judged. For myself I am willing to be in your esteem as you see fit, provided you neither wrong the truth nor yourselves for me. If you receive any spiritual good here from, if you never see me, return thanks to God, who is always with you, and stands by you, and observes your very hearts in the motion, the very title of the Book makes upon you, and to whom, I entreat you, speak a word for your friend (though unknown to you) when it shall be well with you. If you refuse to read or reading refuse to

hearken, you will give me leave to own my name, as one amongst other witnesses, against you, when we meet at the great day; and till then to be known to you, as one desiring to be (as to others) dear to me in the Lord,

Your souls faithful friend and Servant in the Gospel. Henry Newcome.

TO THE READER

Who is spiritually alive, and reads for spiritual nourishment.

GOOD READER:

That the bountiful God might make his afflicted and suffering people great amends, he hath not only broken the iron yoke of Episcopacy, and superstitious ceremonies so pinching and pressing; but hath blessed us with a Covenant, and beginnings of desired reformation (at first the wonder, and still the support of the faithful in the Covenant) since which time the press hath been fruitful in practical treatises, wherein as a Token of Covenant friendship, The Lord hath made a Feast of fat things, a feast of Wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined; That the spirit of Truth and Holiness, might secretly and powerfully increase the power and practice of Godliness in the truly Godly (the only ready way to perfect reformation) by sound and spiritual food, choicely provided and severally dished, not only publicly and weekly in God's own house (where he is liberal and openhanded) but privately and daily in their own Houses, in their families and closets, where this Heavenly Manna is ever ready for them to take, and feed upon, whilst others have been fast turning their

sometimes forward profession of the power of Godliness into a lifeless and lawless form, and the unclean Spirit hath been every way active in practical errors, as separation, first from Churches of God's making, and after of man's; casting down authorities and trampling upon them, as mire in the street, forging commissions for public preaching; cashiering the Christian Sabbath, and listing the Jewish; puddle dipping the rightly baptized in infancy; coal-blackening the stars in Christ's right hand, as worthy to lose their light and place; and openly contradicting and blaspheming that clear and dazzling light of truth, streaming from them all, and especially the last, tending to Gospel banishment. This is one of the rare if not unobserved providences of these late railing and rolling times, the lively workings of Gods spirit, to bring the hidden and deep mysteries of the Word written (and copied out into the hearts of Gods Ministers) into Sermons, and Sermons into printed volumes and printed volumes into the Houses of the godly, that after they have read the exceeding great and precious promises of God in his own Book, they may read the reality of them in the books of them in the books of his Messengers, who have believed and proved, and spoken and written what themselves have read and heard, and seen and learned, that the faith of true believers might be strong, and their joy full. This providence minds us of the seven years of so great plenty in Egypt, when God fitted and raised up Joseph to gather together that plenty, and to lay it up in storehouses, for a supply in the succeeding answerable years of famine. These late years have been years of plenty for heavenly Manna, God's steps have dropped fatness, there have been showers of blessing, the Ministers of God (as the chief shepherds dying as the corn sown) have born much fruit; God hath fitted and raised up many Josephs to gather this plenty into storehouses, I pray God, that years of famine be not to follow, when there will be

no food, or but little food but in such store-houses, when the witnesses shall have finished their testimony and be slain: Certainly books are dishes, wherein Christ serves in food to his Church in the wilderness, to his scattered Church, to single Saints, However providence may order matters, This storehouse and such like are worthy the Christian man's entertainment and welcome, having this privilege, there can be no wast of this spiritual store by the use of it, here is fullness in time of plenty, and will be fullness in time of famine, this plenty though on the increasing hand, breeds no surfeit in healthful and hungry souls. I doubt not the providence and pains of this our Joseph, gathering together and storing up the hopes of all sorts, that are not past hopes, will be acceptable to the Church of God, and especially to my good and loving neighbors in, and about, Manchester, who have already savorily fed upon this store, and for whose sake, in a peculiar sort, this provision is thus treasured up. Their blessings, both in Ordinances and providences, have prevailed above the blessings of their neighbors, God hath turned away the Sword from their gates, limited the pestilence and other fore diseases amongst them, translated their lights, and again filled their candlesticks, cured the pride and power of the spirit of error, increased and twisted the cords of their union, and heightened their hopes of the spreading and increasing of the power of godliness, which God establish. The God of their Mercy grant, that aged Paul and young Timothy (who hitherto hath served with him in the Gospel, as a Son with the Father) may long, and long live and love and labor together, and be blessed in their labors, and remain a blessing to that great congregation, both sowing precious seed, and reaping the labors of those men of God, who have labored with them, and before them to the defeating of Satan's policies, the disappointing of the deluded hopes of the busy spirit of division, the raising

and establishing of the grounded hopes of the righteous, and the united joy and glory of Ministers and people at that great day of gathering together unto Jesus Christ, which for the churches sake is the hearty desire and prayer of

Thy souls friend, who doth rejoice and bless God with thee, for the love and labors of his Servants, John Angier.

CHAP. I.

The Introduction, from the Text, and Coherence, to the Observation.

THIS BOOK, WRITTEN BY that pious learned Priest Ezra, (as it bears his name) doth contain in it an account of the chief passages of History from the return of the people of Babylon, for 164 years: And so you have an account of the steps, by which in that time that work went on, Zerubbabel brings the people up. Ch. 1. and 2. They rear up an Altar. Ch. 3. They begin to lay the foundation of the Temple, In the latter end of Ch. 3. This receives interruption: at last at 2 bouts it gets up, as appears in the following chapters. Ezra is sent, Ch. 7. to restore Sacrifices. This was in the seventh of Artaxerxes, 13 years before Nehemiah came to build the walls of the City. But Ezra coming, and breaking up his commission from the King, and being about to set upon the work with cheerfulness, that he came about, he was suddenly saluted, with the sad account of the people's miscarriage, in their marriage of strange Wives, which struck him into a great terror and consternation. And having sitten silent about this matter, with his cloths rent, after the manner of a bitter mourner, who had his heart broken with this grievous miscarriage of theirs, at the time of the evening Sacrifice, he

makes pathetic lamentation, and confession of the Sin to God, in the Prayer or rather complaint, which you find: Ch. 9 wherein you do not find any petition he could frame to put up for them, the matter he judged so heinous, but all he could say about it, was to aggravate it, and to leave the matter with the Lord, saying, he was not able to stand before the Lord because of this. The people, upon this Lamentation of his, flock together, and Schecaniah speaks to Ezra about the business: and he joins with him in acknowledging the miscarriage of the people, but he would not have it thus left as a matter desperate, but declares his opinion of the case, that it is yet hopeful, and he proposed the way he conceived for cure, which was, by making a covenant for reformation, in that particular, wherein they had so grossly offended.

Who this Schecaniah was, that made this speech: we find no mention of him before, nor after, save only in this place he is said to be the Son of Jehiel; one of that name is mentioned to be one of the Priests, that had sinned in this matter, enumerated among the offenders. v. 21 whether he was his Son or no, is not determinable. If he was he might the better take himself concerned in the business, and take the sin the more to himself, for his Fathers sake; however it is probable he was a man of good place and authority amongst the people, in that he offers to assist Ezra in driving on the covenant for reformation of the sin, and, as a good man, grieves under God's dishonor, as Ezra did, confesses the thing was heinous and sad, yet he tells Ezra, he thinks it must not be so left. But sees that yet there is Hope (yet now) for all this (which is too true of us) that we have sinned thus heinously (now) Now I see the people thus meet together, I have a better heart of the thing.

(There is Hope) the matter is not desperate, there is some Hope in it.

(In Israel) or concerning Israel, or because it is in Israel, as anon we may show Israel's covenant of being the Lord's people, gives them hope upon their repentance yet of Mercy. It is a greater sin for being Israel's, yet in Israel there is more Hope about it, then if it had been in another place, if they repent of it.

(Concerning this thing) this whole matter, the sin that is committed, and the judgment that is feared; this whole matter of the strange Wives, the matter of the present consternation. There is yet Hope about it.

The better to bottom the observation, I intend to raise from the words; I shall preface the larger upon the explication, in making inquiry into 3 things, which yet are all obvious to us in and about the text.

(1) What was the scope of Schecaniah his words here? What is the drift of them?

(1) To comfort Ezra in the business; he saw him dejected about it: he bids him be of good cheer though it was bad, yet it might do well, there was a way yet out; there was Hope in the thing.

(2) To encourage him to set about the duty; Hope puts life into repentance and reformation. Because I see Hope in the thing, let us fall upon the use of means for the people's recovery.

(3) In respect of all in general he asserts his apprehensions of the present state, and that Ezra had left it too short; to conclude, as if there could be nothing to be further done. Hereby implying it was not their duty to despair in the thing, but rather to set upon the means yet left for remedy.

But Secondly wherein was the matter so difficult? Ezra leaves it as almost remediless, and Schecania says, there is but Hopes in the thing. Hope implies a difficulty. The matter was very dangerous. For

(1) It was a matter of sin, that was upon them; if it had been a judgment only, it had not been so amazing, but it was a sin that they discovered; a sin without a judgment as yet inflicted, is more amazing, to Godly men, then judgment without a visible sin. It was not a matter of famine, or oppression and sickness, but it was a matter of Sin, and therefore troublesome:

2. It was a very dangerous sin, in the very nature and proper influence and effects of it, where it takes place. They had married strange Wives, a thing expressly forbidden; the reason given, Because these women would go nigh to draw them to strange God's, exemplified sadly to their constant experience, and in Solomon's case, even him, that wise King, did outlandish women cause to sin. Ezra saw all Religion hazarded hereby; he might think all his labor frustrated by this sin of theirs, and that it was to small purpose for him to set up sacrifices; for these strange Wives would soon draw their hearts from them and God too.

3. He saw so many ensnared in this sin. Many of the great men, the Priests and all, as you see Ch. 9:1. and Ch. 10:18. &c. and therefore more heinous before God, amounting near to a universal guilt upon them, more exemplary and scandalous, and harder to be reformed.

4. He considered this sin they were gotten into to be sadly aggravated, in that so soon after their return from captivity a grievous judgment, wherein they had so heavily suffered for such like doings. To be sinning again upon a new score, when building upon the ruins, which their former sins had immediately made, Alas? Might he think, when will this people mend? When will they be warned to leave sin? Is the iniquity of Poor too little for us? Is the Iniquity of our former Idolatry too little for us? From which the land is not yet purged to this day. But must we so soon begin again? It is very sad; this you see laid the thing sadder on his heart. Ch. 9:7.

5. He considered the sin the greater, in that it was committed by them, that escaped the judgment so narrowly. It was not long since, when it might have been questioned, whether ever this people: should have been a people anymore, and now to find them such a rebellious people! They might have perished in Babylon, as many thousands did, and therefore it is very sad to find them thus grossly sinning here. Ch. 9, v. 13,14, having had such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments? If they would have strange Wives, If they would have strange Wives, they should have tarried still in Babylon. Are they delivered to do all these abominations? Must the Lord save them for such work as this is? Oh! It is very intolerable.

6. Their danger is great, there is no judgment yet on them, the soarer one may be expected; God knows what's coming. The anger of the Lord is kindled against the people upon such a sin as this is, and sure all good will be at a stand about it, and some speedy ruin shall overtake us. Alas! Alas! Who can tell, what may, nay what may not befall such a rebellious daring people? Ezra from this consideration was thus amazed, concludes his confession, he could not for shame tell how to move one word for this people in this case, they had so basely miscarried, and therefore he leaves the Business in his confession before God, not moving one word on the people's behalf, as it were not knowing what to say for them, nor what to think miserable enough, that might be towards them.

3. What were the grounds Schecaniah had of hopes in this difficult case. There is yet hope in Israel concerning this thing. Whence had he this hope, that things might yet frame well?

1. In respect of God.
2. In respect of the people.

1. In respect of God, he confesses to all the causes of fear forementioned in the thing, the matter was dangerous, the people had committed a great sin, and that very unseasonably, and all might be hazarded thereby, yet there was Hopes because they had to do with a gracious God, one that is slow to anger, of great kindness, that is ready to forgive. If we were in anyones hands but God's we were gone, there were no hopes for us. But we have infinite compassions to hope in. There are terms of pardon on God's part tendered to sinners, that have got themselves into plagues for such like miscarriages. If they had sinned, and gotten into captivity for it, and yet should bethink themselves, and turn to the Lord, the Lord would yet show favor to them, why then much more, if we repent and reform, we may prevent the judgment, his infinite bowels and goodness makes me hope. He is a God that can overlook transgressions, that can put up great injuries, pass by great offenses. And therefore there is Hope, he hath been used to forgive ever since he had a people, he knew what ado he should have with the sons of men, when he took any of them to be in covenant with him. He is armed with infinite mercy and patience, when he goes about to deal with us, he is not deceived in us, when he finds much untowardness and frowardness in us. He will forgive us, for he hath been used to forgive in many the like cases, and is a God that can do it.

2. There is Hope in respect of ourselves. I look upon the matter as much more hopeful now, then lately or before, there are some signs of good amongst us.

1. In that the people are generally sensible of the sin. Women and Children are here flocked about thee, it should seem they are sensible of the miscarriage and willing to mourn with thee.

2. In that they are gotten thus forward without a judgment: people that have sinned themselves into the judgment, have yet by repentance gotten off, though they have not sought him till he slew them, yet upon their repentance he hath tried them, and showed mercy to them, but we have the advantage to seek mercy on this side of the judgment. We may better discern the truth of the repentance, in that no judgment is on us to force it from us; we were not quite shut up, though the execution had been served, but there is more hope if we make our peace before the Writ be broken up, and we attached, it cannot but save us much charge. There is very much in it in turning betime, some they seek God, when they have no soar, no sickness, no judgment on them, and yet they tremble before the Lord, assuredly it is a very good sign. If you were afflicted in sorrow, yet your condition might be hopeful, but when only convinced into sorrow, when you have ways enough besides to take, if your hearts would let you, it is much better.

3. There is hopes, in that I believe the people are willing to amend. The Lord that doth not willingly afflict the Sons of Men if he see us so willing to reform without judgment, is very ready to spare the Rod.

I do judge from these grounds that our hopes are yet alive, that there is yet Hopes in Israel concerning this Thing.

CHAP. II.

The Observation and the several cases wherein Sinners may Hope.

THE OBSERVATION, FROM THE example of this good man in the text which I shall raise hence is this.

That men in the greatest straights about sin should yet take notice of, and cherish, the hopes which God hath left them about their State.

Matters that are dangerous should not be counted desperate.

It was a commendable practice in Schecaniah, that he yet took notice of the Hopes God had left in Israel about this thing.

I shall insist on this doctrine, in these three heads. Showing

1. In what case sinners should yet count of their Hopes.
2. How far or in what sense this is to be understood.
3. The reasons why they should thus take notice of their Hopes in the straits they are in about their State.

1. In what cases sinners should yet count of their Hopes.

We shall briefly hint at some heads in the general, to clear the scope of the discourse till we come to the application, where we shall resume the most

material of them, and endeavor to lay more particular weight on them. These cases therefore may be considered.

1. In respect of their outward estate.
2. In respect of their inward estate.

Outwardly, and that. 1. Nationally. 2. Personally.

1. Nationally. Things may be dangerous in respect of the Church. Matters may be out of order, be hindered, gone back, yet if the work be the Lord's, there should be hopes in such cases. The work here went poorly on. First they set up an altar, then begin the Temple, that with much ado is gotten up at two bouts. When that was up, many years after Ezra would restore the sacrifices, this is heavily clogged with the great sin of the strange Wives, after all this Nehemiah comes, and gets but up the walls, so difficultly goes the work on, and yet it is all this while going on, God hath it on foot, and is secretly bringing it on, for all this. And so in David's case. He as soon as he was made King, though Saul in all his reign would never think of bringing up the Ark, he makes it his first design. But now behold in the way God makes a breach upon Uzzah, upon which David is displeased, he thinks it is too sacred a business for him ever to meddle with, so as to have hopes to effect it, he cannot be able to bring it up, it turns aside to the house of Obed-Edom, yet God blesses that house where it was, makes David see the Ark lovely, and they inquire into the matter of the right order: and after all these breaches and discouragements, they bring up this Ark with shouting to its place. And so the work of reformation, though by the means of enemies, and false brethren it seem to receive obstruction, that God seems to refuse the service, that his poor Ministers would do him therein, hath made breaches upon us, on some eminent reformers in the very work, yet there is Hope in this thing: Reformation hath a blessing with it where it is, and

when God hath prepared the heart of his people to seek him in the right way, the Ark of God may yet rest in his own place in the midst of us. This matter hath yet life in it, and there is hopes in Israel, it will revive.

2. Personally. If in great outward afflictions, whatever thy straight is, there is yet a way out. God will with the temptation whatever it is, find out a way to escape, he can still find a way for thee to get out of it. David was in a great straight, yet he encouraged himself in the Lord his God, and the Lord brought him off. Alas! If thou be in a straight, and sayst, thou shalt never get past this, it is no more then what thou hast said many another time, If thou hadst perished and been undone as oft as thou hast said thou shouldst, thou hadst not been alive to have said so now. It seems thou hast been deceived before, and so mayest be now, there is yet Hope in this thing.

2. Inwardly. In respect of some straights sinners may be in about their spiritual estate. They may look on their cases as dangerous, and yet should not count them desperate.

1. In the case of gross sin, upon the instant of the first conviction. The soul is attacked by the Lord's Writ, convinced of the sad course he hath lived in, hath his sin laid before him, set in order before his eyes, he sees himself in an evil case, and is apt, now he is beaten off presuming, to run upon the coast of despair. It is ordinary for sinners, either to count their sins too little to repent of, or too great to be forgiven. So Cain, my sin is greater than can be forgiven; Not my sin is greater than I can bear: but my sin is greater than God can bear, now a soul in this case: though it be hard set (as the securest sinner will be, if God do but open his eyes,) there being nothing but a little ignorance between him and the brink of the very gulf of despair; yet it should take notice of the Hopes which God hath left to such a one: even vile sinners are invited to repent. Let the wicked indefinitely, be he

what sort of wicked man he can be, let him forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, Let him resolve upon a through change, and turn to the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. All blasphemy wherewith soever men shall blaspheme shall be forgiven. There is Hopes for the pardon of all sin, that men can repent of, and therefore a sinner in this straight should take notice of the way God hath prescribed in which such a one may come off.

2. In the case of Apostasy. 1. Great and more general apostasy. Such a soul thinks its case dangerous, and so indeed it is, one that hath backslidden very sore, forsaken his first love, fallen back into his wicked course again, returned with the dog to the vomit again. Or 2. A child of God, that for one particular act hath done untowardly, as David; yet even in these cases, these poor creatures are not shut up. There is a way out for such sinners. A woman that hath done wrong to her husband, cannot come back again; the land would be greatly polluted to have such a one pardoned; the Adulteress is to die; but you have committed fornication with many lovers, yet return again to me, saith the Lord: I can receive when none in the like case, would or can receive; I can do that which none else can do, Return ye backsliding Children, I will heal your backslidings. Ye backsliding Children, I will not plague you for your backslidings but will heal them; the people had sadly sinned, in rejecting God to be their King, God thunders upon them, frights them with reign in harvest, the people were convinced of their sin, saw the justice of God directly against them, what is now to be done? Is there any remedy left for such sinners? Is there any way for such sinners to come off? Is there any way but going on in rebellion? And standing out in the way as long as they could? Or sitting down in despair, waiting for inevitable destruction? Yea, there is another way. For all you had done this

wickedness, yet turn not aside from following the Lord, for then you shall follow after vain things, which cannot profit, for the Lord will not forsake his people. The Father will own his Child yet, if he would come in, only fear the Lord and serve him, &c. and all this evil may be done away; you may yet come off: though the matter be very bad, yet there is hope still for such as you. David is convinced plainly and particularly of a very great and foul Miscarriage: he confesses, I have sinned, I have done very foolishly. Ay, but says Nathan, There is hopes still to come off, The Lord hath done away thy sin; Thou shalt not die. In this difficult case of greater, or lesser falling back, there is a way left to come off in.

3. In the case of Darkness, a Soul is in trouble, the Lord with-draws his favor; nay, may make positive expressions of Indignation against the Soul, and when the Lord makes trouble, who can give quietness? Only yet there is hope, that he himself will make peace again; and a Soul in this dark condition is not to be without hopes: David puts it to the question, whether, and says, God will be gracious no more, yet after he says, This is my infirmity, there is hope in the thing. Let him that walks in darkness and hath no light, yet trust in the Lord, and stay himself upon his God. There is hopes of such a Creatures reviving again, the Case is hard, but not desperate.

CHAP. III.

The Nature of the Sinners Hope, as his Privilege and Duty, truly stated.

2. HOW FAR, OR in what sense is this to be understood, that sinners in such cases as these, should yet take notice of, and cherish their hopes? In this we shall, by the way, endeavor to set out, how far we should give way to trouble in case of sin, in our daily course, and how far we must avoid it. How near we may come to consternation in such cases, and how far, or wherein we must fly from it.

1. How it is not to be understood? We must in these cases hope, yet,

1. Not so, as not to see, and confess our sin, we are not so to clap on the Plaster, as to hide, instead of healing the Sore, the Sore must be opened and searched, before the Plaster be laid on. This else were a way to cover, rather than cure the sin: He that covereth his sin cannot prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh shall find mercy. David while he kept silence, would have hidden his sin, he was in sad distress of Soul, but when he resolved to acknowledge his transgression, then he found ease. It is a weary restless condition of Soul, that any man can look for, notwithstanding all the hopes, if he yet hide his sin.

2. Not so, as not to be under a sense of God's displeasure, for what we have done; this hope is not to be so fomented, as to make a man think, that God is not displeased with what we have done; though there may be hope, he may be again pacified: we are to look at God under conviction of sin, as placeable, yet as provoked at it. It is not to hope that God is not angry, but that his anger may be turned away again. David had contrived and carried on his wickedness; but thus it concludes, The thing that David had done displeased the Lord: the Lord was really offended at it. Jehoshaphat, the Lord would pardon him, yet there was wrath out against him for what he had done. We are to hope, yet not so, as to force kindness from God upon ourselves, to fancy that God looks over our miscarriages, without any distaste of them, to fancy, that such things as these shall never be looked after, as the profane Atheist that says, Tush, the Almighty regards not, he will not require it. Whoever do thus, it is not such a hope that God hath left them; not such an Antinomian fancy, to think, that God loves us so fondly, as to love us in the very act of sin, in our very wickedness. This is not Faith, we ought not to hope thus, which is besides all reason and Scripture grounds: there may be hope, yet displeasure too.

3. Not so to hope, As not to be ashamed truly before God, for what we have done: it is Impudence in us to look upon God as confidently, as if we had done nothing amiss; this setting a Face upon our sins, as if we had not offended at all. Ezra was ashamed and confounded, and could not stand before the Lord; Could not look God in the face, because of that they had done. Shecaniah doth not propose these hopes to take off the shame that was due to them for sin. We are not to hope so as not to be ashamed: Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush. This was a great Complaint, and

God threatens them for it; Therefore they shall fall among them that fall. As a Thief is ashamed, so is the House of Israel ashamed: As a man reputed to be honest, and is caught stealing, is ill abashed; or one that hath used stealing, and is caught so doing, is made to carry his stolen Goods back again in his hand, is fearfully ashamed of it. So is a Sinner that is apprehended by the Spirit of God, with his sin upon him, and so sadly and miserably is to carry in God's presence because of it, and yet hope too.

4. Not so to hope, As not to be very much humbled and vile in his own Eyes. He is not so to run to his hopes, as to save his due humiliation for what he hath done, to think basely and vilely of himself for his miscarriage: we are apt either to despair in ourselves and God too, or else to hope in God and ourselves too; whereas we must divide in this case, and hope in God, yet utterly despair in ourselves. Oh! Upon such a straight, we ought to see the vileness and weakness of ourselves here from. Oh! This is my base and perverse Spirit? This is my folly and wretchedness, this is that which is the best my heart will bring forth, &c. and yet hope in God.

5. Not so to hope, As not to see our absolute need to Christ: to hope so in such cases is sinful hope. The Apostle speaks of Christ Jesus who is our hope. Though sin should not drive us to despair, yet it should drive us to Christ alone to hope in: We are so far to be troubled, as to make suit to our Blastus, to speak a good word for us: Hope, to skip besides, or without Christ to Souls ease, is sad, preposterous, and unchristian hope.

6. Not so to hope, As not to combat and strive to the utmost against the sin: We are not to hope that the sin shall be pardoned, if we still allow it. It is not an hope to let the sin alone: we are not to despair, so neither to hope with the sin still upon us; not to hope, to save us any further labor about the

business, but to engage to the utmost against our sin, upon the ground of this hope which the Lord hath left us in our difficult case.

But secondly, How is it to be understood? We are not in cases of sin to give way to consternation of mind so far; As (1.) in general.

1. To undo any of the conclusions concerning God's goodness, that are made from Scripture grounds. Sin concerns us, but Forgiveness belongs to God; what we have done, we ought to be humbled for, but what he will do hereupon doth not concern us to determine against. Whatever we are, we must leave God as we find him in Scripture; while we bring down ourselves, we must not go about to bring down him too: while we truly discover our own badness, we must be careful we disparage not his Goodness; whatever case we are in, we must still conclude, that God is where he was, A God ready to forgive, a God slow to anger, a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin. Thou art to say, what thou hast done, that thy sin is great, &c. but to say, it cannot be forgiven, this is not left to thee to determine on: what God will do to thee is altogether with him, he is a gracious and a merciful God still.

2. Nor to make any peremptory conclusion about the event and issue of the thing. To say, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul. To say, I am cut off, my hope is perished from the Lord. To say, I cannot be saved; this will bring me to Hell: I am sure I must perish: this is to prevent God. It is not for thee to make Decrees; thou knowest not, whatever thou art at present, what yet God may make thee, and what thou mayst come to before thou diest: With God all things are possible, Sinners ought therefore to be sparing in their final determinations concerning themselves, for secret things belong to God, And many such things are with him. It is a mercy thou art not in Hell already, and it may be hoped, thou shalt not in the end ever come there.

2. More particularly, We are not to let down our hopes.

1. For a Sinner, upon his Conviction he is to hope, that upon his repentance he may yet find mercy. God hath given forth his Son, That whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The vilest Sinner that comes in upon the Proclamation of pardon, is bound to believe he shall find acceptance.

2. For the Godly, upon any failing, or sin, they are fallen into, or discover in themselves.

1. They are to hope, so as not to cast down all their evidences of grace in their Souls, raised and duly gathered before, for this one sin; one sin doth not evidence the want of Grace: He that is born of God sinneth not, The Seed of God abideth in him. This Seed of God, that bringeth him off, makes him humble and turn to God, abides in him. Thy sin may argue a defect of strong Grace, but not of true Grace.

2. They are Not to conclude against persuasions of God's love to them, if ever they had any upon Scripture grounds. I am God, I change not. God doth not cast off for every Offence: God will not forsake his People, for his great Names sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his People.

3. They are Not to conclude this sin less pardonable than another. God can forgive this, as well as he hath forgiven others, and will do it upon their repentance for it. Forgive my sin for it is great: A great Sin, infinite Mercy can forgive: If we sin, he is not only Merciful, but just and faithful, in respect of his Justice so fully satisfied by Christ, and his Truth, of promise whereby he is engaged to forgive us our sins.

CHAP. IV.

The Grounds of the Sinners Hopes as before stated.

3. THE REASONS WHY a Sinner should take notice of, and cherish his hopes in his worst condition.

1. Because of the large footing God hath given for a Sinners hoping in any state almost, he can be in by his sin.

1. The first ground is, the Lord's disposition and nature of mercy and placableness towards a poor Sinner; Which gives him footing for his hope abundantly in any particular case. As,

(1.) From his Name, and Attributes, whereby he hath made himself known to his people. God proclaims his Name to Moses, to be the Lord, the Lord God, the powerful, the mighty Jehovah, which ministers comfort, when annexed to his manifestation of himself in this way of mercy. Merciful, inclined to pity, the sin and misery of his people, ready to relieve them in their distress, and not only just to require the due Service, and punish the defaults; Gracious, of an affable condescending descending nature, not standing upon the distance that he is in, as a great King above all his Creatures; he may be petitioned, sought unto, and prevailed with by his

poor Suitors. Long-suffering, that is, not hasty to use severity with the worst of Sinners, usually taking all other ways first with them, Willing that all men should repent and come to the knowledge of the truth: Trying many that repent not with much goodness to draw them to it. Enduring with much patience the very Vessells of wrath, before he brings Destruction on them. And one that with his own Children bears abundantly, takes them not at the worst in everything they do: Suffers their manners in the Wilderness. Can take great Indignities at their hands, and pass them by upon their repentance, and put them up. That passeth by the transgression of his people. If his people want good things, though they deserve them not at his hands, yet he hath Goodness out of which he is ready to supply them: he can satisfy them out of his goodness, he hath made them promises of mercy upon all occasions of their sin and repentance. And he is a God of truth: He holds himself, though no Debtor to us, yet a Debtor to his own good Word to his Servants, and both these in no stinted manner, but he is abundant in them: We cannot need him so far, but his goodness and truth abounds to us: he will multiply his goodness and truth to us upon occasion: many have had experience of his mercy, but this exalts it not to those that come after; He keeps mercy for thousands, not only shows mercy, but reserves mercy for thousands, and not only in some cases, but in all cases he forgives Iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Now observe, he proclaims himself by this Name, when the people had finned a great and fearful sin, in making a Calf in Horeb, when he was highly provoked, Would have destroyed them, had not Moses his chosen stood in the breach, &c. Yet for all this, this great provocation could not make him change his Name; but though he declares his resolution to visit

for obstinate sin, yet he will, for all that, be known by no name but this, in respect of the truly penitent.

2. He is described to be slow of anger, not easily provoked: men are soon provoked, great men usually expect more punctual observance than others, and are easily incensed, if they be not observed in every circumstance. But God is slow to anger. It were sad for us, if we had such an one of him, so hard to please, so very critical, so easily moved, as some Children and Servants, have Parents and Masters of us. But God is not so, he would have us slow to wrath, for so should we be Children of Our Father which is in Heaven, for such a one indeed is he.

3. Not apt to stir up all his anger, upon any enforcing occasion, or provocation. Moses was frightened over the people, when he saw the Lord's wrath waxed hot, for he saw nothing but a consuming fire in it for them. But many times he turns his anger away, and puts up some peevish untowardness in us: And when he is angry, he doth not stir up all his wrath; it would be sad if he did.

4. Not apt to be long angry, he will not retain his wrath, he will not contend with his Creatures, for then the Spirit would fail before him, and the Soul that he hath made. Many of us for no cause can be angry, and heartily angry, and long angry, but if we have just cause of provocation, we rather study how to express our anger, then how to bear the Offence, and few think at all how to proportion our anger so, as to know how they can bear it against whom it is stirred. But he, though provoked, is considering our frame, and remembering not only what he can do against us, and what we have done against him, to provoke him to it, but what we are, and what we can undergo, of what he might lay upon us.

Now whoever they are, that make it their first work to despair in every difficult case, they must needs have other thoughts of God then what these expressions manifest of him. If he be such a one, what case is there, but one may have some hopes about it?

2. The second ground is, That full and complete way of mercy, that he hath found out and set forth for us in Jesus Christ. He is one, not only with whom, but in whom he is well pleased: well pleased with all that have interest in him. He is every way such a high Priest as became us. In him all fullness dwells; he is one, that the Father will in no wise cast out: Those that come to him in his Name. He is not one that cannot be touched with a feeling of our Infirmities. He hath been in the flesh, and so knows what it is to be a man; though he knows not what it is to sin, yet he knows what it is to be tempted to it, and what it is to bear the weight and burden of it. He knows the company we live with in the world, in the midst of Men and Devils, as Luther phrased it. And so being a man for us, we may look upon the Deity as blessedly accessible hereby, and know that he hath pity and tender respect for our nature and kind.

The third ground, The universal tender of mercy, whoever will, let him come. The great day of the Feast, when most people was there, he makes the Proclamation, That whoever is a thirst, may come to him and drink. Hence (as one says) He was born in an Inn, not in a private House, and crucified out of the City, and not within Jerusalem, because the business and benefit of his Birth and Death was not of private concernment, not to be confined to one place, or one people: the Gospel is to be preached to every Creature.

The fourth ground, The freeness of this tender, Come and buy, and he that hath no money come: I can but have nothing; the worst Chapman that can

come to the Market, can be but he that hath neither money, nor price; and yet such as these may speed well, and go home best provided. They that come hither must have nothing: thou art but in the poor condition beforehand, that every man must be reduced to, that closes with Christ; None ever had him that deserved him, and thou art but undeserving.

The fifth ground, That nothing is required at our hands, but the same is promised unto us. I may come to Christ for the Condition, and upon that Condition for Pardon: the nature of the Covenant is wonderful; he hath promised to perform both parts, there is nothing I can find at any time, that may incapacitate me, or hinder me for comfort; but before I cast off my hopes, I may see that very thing promised that is required: and sure this well considered, doth wonderfully fit a poor Christians turn upon many pinches, that otherwise he should be at a loss in about his comfort. We cannot apply Christ but upon condition, but blessed be God, we are not to find the Condition in ourselves, or at our own proper cost (which would never be done) but we are readily directed, where to have it. If I cannot challenge Christ to be mine for want of an Interest, I may go to him for an Interest. If I cannot apply him for want of Faith or Repentance, or any other Grace, I may go to him for Faith and Repentance, and that Grace; so that still I have something else fair before me to do, then presently to despair, when any such straight is upon me.

2. We are to hope, For consternation doth no good, this like the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Thou thinkest when thou hast escaped thy unreasonable presumption, thou canst not be too low, nor low enough, and that it is thy duty to cast down thyself. There is a Mean of hope between these, which is thy duty; to despair for sin is sin, and to give way to trouble to the utter dejection of a man's heart before God, is to give way

to a sin: you think you do but bring down self hereby, but beware You take not God down with you; this despair brings God no honor, hinders thy doing, makes thee useless, nay, directly reflects upon God, in that thou hast such hard thoughts of him, and actest against his express will and pleasure. It is the Command of God, that you should believe in his Son, that you should believe what God hath graciously revealed, that there is mercy with him, and pardon to be had from him upon repentance. Many in this case count that a duty which is no small sin, extol God's mercy as high as you can, and you glorify him thereby: so be it, you conclude right of the Subject of it; Viz. That you set not up mercy with allowance of sin in yourself, and bring self as low as you can, and it is a like good, so be it, thou include not God's mercy in the thing, to bring that lower than thee.

3. This hope will facilitate thy repentance, and reformation. There is mercy with thee that thou mayst be feared: Men would not ingeniously nor filially fear thee, if thy mercy did not give them hopes. The Assyrians might rather have studied to have rallied their broken Forces against Israel, then have submitted, if they had not known the Kings of Israel to be merciful Kings. Thou sayst there is no hope, I have followed after other Lovers, and after them I will go. I am like, it seems, to be destroyed, past cure, past care: I cannot get off, therefore I will do as I do. Endeavors languish where there is no hope. He that ploweth ploweth in hope; or else the sharpness of the season and the hardness of the labor would make him sit still. Hanun, that had so villainously entreated David 's Messengers, saw he had done so vilely, that his Action stank in the Nostrils of Israel, and all his Neighbors, that he had no way but to prepare for War: So sinners, when they look upon their state as desperate, they are likeliest to go on, as if they were tied to make it out, and to stand, or fall by it. Themistocles would at any time make

his Enemy a Bridge of Gold to fly away upon, rather than force them to fight. When a sinner sees no hope of quarter, he hath much ado to yield to be slain, but rather being desperate, if he be without hopes of life, he will sell his life as dear as he can. A Soldier in the Army, that had a mortal Disease upon him, was observed to look like death, and yet to fight most valiantly, the Emperor took him for his Valor, and had his distemper searched into, and he became cured: After this, he was not observed to be so daring and venturous, as before; The Emperor asked him the reason, he said, Before he looked upon himself as a dying man, and therefore mattered not to have been killed, but now his Disease was cured, he would take more care, for he had a life to save now, as well as another. So when sinners think they have done that already, that cannot be forgiven, that must necessarily ruin them without redemption; it rather makes them more desperate in the charges and on-set in their courses, but if once they see hopes of life dawn, they will not be so prodigal of their Souls, because they think they may escape, as well as another. God hath for the same reason made you way enough to come off upon, golden Bridges to retreat on, which may put life into your resolutions for a sparing course in sin, and to come off by repentance. Thy repentance would strengthen thy Hopes, thy Hopes draw on thy Repentance.

4. Not to hope, or to despair, though in these straits about sin, is so purely fleshly and carnal, savoring of that enmity that is naturally in our hearts against God, as we would little think. Rank flesh it is, as can be.

1. Thou hast sinned, and thou knowest thou hast cause to think ill of thyself, and thou art loath to think so well of God, as that he is notwithstanding ready to pardon. Among Men usually we see a want of Grace in men that do wrong, and so as much want of Grace in others, that

they cannot suffer it: and so the Party offending watches to cover his own vileness in affronting, by the others fury and impatience upon the reception of it. And so thou knowest thyself to have done basely, and thou art loath to aggravate thy sin so far, as to think thou hast sinned against a God that is ready to pardon. Thou wouldst either trample upon patience, or deny it; Not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance. Oh! To see God so ready to forgive, and thou so ready to sin: thou so easily to forget him, and he so hardly forgetting thee; thou so treacherous, and he so gracious: Oh! How unlike are God and we? How might it break thy heart to consider it? But we are apt to study to disparage, at least, we would not honor, the party we injure.

2. Thou art hath to be so beholden to him, as to think of hopes of pardon; hope implies present need and poverty: thou art loath to submit, and standest rather on thy justification, wouldst fain come off upon another score, then that of a pardon on thy knees: men are very loath to submit to free Grace, no small matter to have that inward sense of wretchedness, as readily to run out after salvation for God's sake. There is a carnal enmity in the heart against Christ's sovereignty, thou wouldst not be Conquered, but stand for thy Native Privilege; truly loath to stoop so low as to take a pardon at his hands. And is not this sin of a high nature? Is this a temper to be indulged? There is the highest pride in despair that looks so low.

3. This despair is pure Carnality; for thou oft doubttest at the promise, when in truth thou stumblest at the Condition: thou hadst rather despair then repent; thou thinkest God will not pardon, because thou hast a mind still to sin: thus wouldst thou make thy choice a necessity, to delight thyself in thy course, and cast the blame of it other-where. Thou sayst, there is no hope, when in truth thou hast no mind. There is no hope, and why no hope? For I

have followed after other Lovers, and after them I will go. I have no hope in this way, because I am resolved another, that's the true reason of it. Who is apt to think there is any hope in altering, in a business he hath a mind to be as it is? Obedience is the thing we stick at, we have underneath a love to sin, and so would cover it, with this pretense, that there is no hope, if we should repent. Men that would clear their sincerity in their troubles, might do well to lay aside their sin in the first place, and after to get hopes as they can: but many times persons cry out of their hopeless condition, when secretly they hug their sin still. God says, Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? It is not answered again, we must die, therefore why should we turn? No, you are resolved to live in your sin, and this despair must be your pretense for so doing; of such a nature and savor many times is this our much dejection and consternation in the Soul, such unthought of pride and carnality is cherished and indulged under the notion of self-humiliation: but men should cherish their hopes for these reasons.

CHAP. V.

The Use of the Observation to the un-converted, tending to the startling of Sinners out of their security.

WE SHALL ENDEAVOR TO apply this Observation;

1. To those that are un-converted, and this under a threefold design.
 1. To rouse them from their security.
 2. To inform them of the truth of their estate.
 3. To persuade them from Impenitency.

1. To rouse Sinners from their security. Sinners should take notice of their hopes: now carnal men are not yet come into a capacity of hoping, they least question their estate of any; they conclude their condition good at first, do not question but it must go well with them: to tell them there are hopes about them, is to make them worse than they were, to put a doubt in that, wherein hitherto they have made none at all: to tell you, it is not impossible, but you may go to Heaven, there may be hopes, &c. it is uncouth to you; you wonder we do not peremptorily conclude on the business: like a man that is not sensible of his sickness, and the Physician tells him, that he may happen recover: you doubt your salvation least of all, but let me tell you, if there be hopes of you, that is all: we would by this Doctrine raise up some

men's hopes, so we must take down others confidence: I would all that are above it were brought down to good hopes; so be it, all that are below it, were but brought up so far. And therefore to startle such as you are; take notice that for that great and dreadful case of your eternal Salvation, hopes are all: but there is a world of danger.

1. If you knew but what is in you, you would see that hope was fair for one in your condition. Alas, there is enough done, if you never do more, to make thee miserable at this very present, if God do but open thine eyes: poor Creature! Thou art busy healing thyself out to fin, but God looks on thee all the while; but if God let thee but see, that he hath looked on, how would thy present condition affright thee? This witness would make thee, as in the terror of the shadow of death: If God did but take up thy lying, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, the neglect of the last Duty, and one of these sins set on by the Spirit of God, would put thee into fear sufficient, and it would be well, if the fin that at present is too little to repent of, be not presently too great in thy eyes to be forgiven, whenever God sets thy sin in order, there will fearful matter enough be found against thee, to make thee stoop, and be beholden dearly to a little hope. Alas, take carnal hearts in the wholes, and there is nothing between them and the greatest terror imaginable but a little blindness and ignorance of their miserable condition. If you did but see yourselves just as you are, it is well if you could hope; assure yourselves the root of terror and anguish is in you, and that some are troubled, it is not because their conditions are not so good as yours, but their Consciences are more tender, and they cannot swallow a bad and fearful state as you can: the matter of all terror is ready with thee, thou art ready charged, it is but God's priming, and putting fire to, and thou needs not stir a foot to fetch in misery unutterable; all thy mirth may be at an end,

there is enough done, nothing but the dropping of a Scale from thine eye and thy Flames are ready about thee.

2. Thou mayst be glad of the news of hope, for at present I may blank thee, thou art not in the way that thou canst possibly be saved in: things are so far out with thee, that there is not yet any show of a foundation laid in thee for any hopes of thee, thou dost not doubt at all of being saved, and I say thou mayst be saved; but let this startle thee towards a change, this way thou art in will never do it, men never went to Heaven this way, it is a Road that will never lead thither, there is nothing done yet that will secure thee from eternal ruin: be not deceived, whatever such as you may be so mad to think, be it known to you, you cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. If you indulge yourselves in known sin, this way will put you besides all hopes. He that believeth not; that is, is not converted to believe, he needs do no more for falling into wrath, he is born to it already, the wrath of God never removes from over that person, his estate is of wrath: The wrath of God abideth on him; the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness of men. It is not confidence of your condition that will make it good; sure that man hath no reason to sit still, or to think he hath nothing to do, when he hath yet nothing done towards his salvation, and the way wherein he is will be his ruin; thou hopest fairly for Heaven, when thou art in the way that never any went to Heaven in.

3. Thou mayst soon be at thy Journeys end, and at thy reckoning, to make use of all the hope thou hast; there may be but a step (for ought thou knowest) between thee, and death. Alas, it is but getting a Cold, and falling sick, and dying, and then thou comest to trial, for all the things done in the flesh. It may take thee with a diddering and shaking, and thou mayst (for anything anybody can tell) begin to shake for Hell. Oh! Thou that art at

peace, and dwellest at ease, how soon may thy misery come armed upon thee? Thou despisest so low a rate as hope: why? Alas! If God set but Death before thee, thou wilt see thyself be-set as the Benjamite's; Thou knowest not that evil was near thee, and behold, thou art be-set on all sides; an ill life behind thee, and Hell before thee. Oh! What will become of thee? For the wicked man God hath whet his Sword, he hath bent his Bow, made all ready. Thou mayst not yet be stricken: The Bird yet alive, but fire ready to strike. Alas, it is but God's putting in any of the Creatures into the Writ, to be his Officer, to Arrest thee and to cast thee into prison, and verily thou shalt not come out thence, till thou hast paid the utmost Farthing; and that will never be, if you ever be so miserable, as to make the Experiment of it: therefore thou hast cause to startle, thy death may be near, and thy Death may prove thy Hell.

4. There is but one way in all the world for thee to come off upon, and that a very narrow one; you do not think your condition so dangerous, that you are within one, by many pleas, for your salvation: but so it is, that if Conversion help not, you are sure for escaping, you are undone forever, thou art upon a narrow point, if thou couldst see it. It is God's Record, that he giveth eternal life, and this life is in his Son. No other way but by Christ to have eternal life: Sure you must many of you, either find many ways to Heaven and Happiness, or else you must tremble to think yourselves out of this way, when there is none but this one.

Weigh these things well, and see whether here be not cause for you to tremble, and if that a message of hope would not do well.

CHAP. VI.

Further tending to inform several sorts of Sinners, especially of the dangerousness of their present station; how little Hopes, and upon what terms only, there are any hopes, of sundry sorts of Men.

2. THIS MAY INFORM you of the truth about your Estate and Condition; we may tell you,

1. Of some Conditions that are very and much more dangerous than others.

2. Of some that are very hopeless above others.

3. What our hopes are of any of you.

1. Of some Conditions that are very dangerous, and less hopeful. Oh! There is little hopes, and therefore beware of these Sinners estates, fly from the Tents of these men.

1. Of an old Sinner, such are rarely converted, sin rivetted, and twice natured to them: such as these are many times very ignorant, and deeply conceited of their wisdom, and their parts decayed, and so out of a capacity of attaining saving knowledge; old men are hardly turned, rarely born again: to take Nicodemus his doubt literally, Can a man be born again when he is old? God knows it seldom comes to pass, Oh, therefore look to it in

your young time, this is the sowing time, this is the best season: little hopes of an old Sinner.

2. Of a worldly Professor. Oh, much danger of such a one, the world holds their heart from Christ, and their Profession keeps convictions of their hearts, the World steals the Soul for Hell, and Profession keeps the Watch, that the Theft is un-discovered till all be lost, the World is enough to damn thee, and thy Profession enough to secure thee in the way of damnation; the World satisfies thy Lust, and Profession thy Conscience, and so thou art most certainly bound for destruction, if God do not by strong hand fetch thee out. Our Savior says, How hard is it for a rich man to enter into Heaven? Easy for a rich man to profess Religion, but hard for him savingly to be religious; easy for him to do nothing so well, as to post to Hell and destruction. Oh, look to it all of you, this, by this hath many fallen, secretly and surely stolen their ruin: it is the most quiet, secure, sweet, triumphing sure way to Hell that a man can go. As Mr. Bradford said of Martyrdom for Heaven, so I may say of Worldliness under Profession, if there be a way to Hell on Horse-back, this is it: If thou have taken up Profession, and yet in heart lovest the World, thy Condition is very dangerous; when the Word and Ministry would come to heal thee, thou salvest thyself by thy Profession, and wilt not be the carnal man, when such a one is spoken to, and yet lovest the World carnally and damnably, and wilt ruin thyself this way. And thus covertly keepest thy heart wicked, to go to Hell with them when thou diest.

3. Of an Apostate Heretic. Oh, such as these are hardly saved, if saved at all, yet so as by fire; a stick that is in the fire may escape with scorching, if caught before kindled. They are many of them given up to strong delusions, to the efficacy of Delusions, that they may believe Lies, and all this in the end to be damned. These poor Wretches if saved at all, we save

them with fear, as plucking them out of the fire, Hell-fire being ready to kindle on them, by the light of which they seem to walk, while they are here. O! Fly the Tents of these wicked men, whose state is so dangerous.

4. Of a Death-bed Penitent. Oh! This state is very hazardous, men then to have all their work to do, and undo, when they are unfit to do anything, and can have so little certainty of their own reality in anything they profess, then to desire to do. A man may in fear of Death seem to cast away his sin, and think verily himself he doth do it, and yet if he recover, be as ready to take it up as ever, which evidences the little hold a man can have of his own heart at such a time. Mr. Bolton tells of a Thief that was condemned, and seemed so penitent while under the Sentence of Death, that some, out of hopes of his real Conversion, begged his life: and this man was within two years after Executed for stealing again. These Experiences make us very little satisfied in any professions of Repentance at Death, after a grossly wicked Life; God may honor himself by your acknowledgment of him, and choosing to die in his way, and our Charity is bound up, and we leave you, not determining of your case, but our Charity will not certify for you, to make good your entrance into life, you may be judged for all this according to your life, and be eternally undone: It is good repenting therefore, when a man knows what he doth, what he himself means, which on a sick Bed one cannot do. It is poor going for any man into another World, with that preparation only, that a sick Bed can furnish him with.

2. Yet there be some Conditions, not only less hopeful than others, but quite in a manner hopeless.

1. Of a Professor that turns Persecutor. Oh, this is very high, when men leave God and revolt to the other side; it is no mean wickedness will serve their turn, as the Philistines said of David, How shall he reconcile himself to

his Master, but by the heads of these men? So how shall this man be taken to heart in Satan's Army, unless he recover his Credit by more open Hostility, then ever he did act in before. No Turk so bad as the Renegado Christian, and surely this is such a high Indignity to Christ, and the Spirit of Grace: this is such a despite, such a trampling underfoot the precious blood of the Covenant, that such a one seldom or never recovers. A Back-slider may return, but then he stops there: but a Back-sliding Persecutor he goes so far the other way, that there is scarce any room for him to turn on. Mr. Latimer tells of one in his time that despaired, that had once been a Professor; and after mocked at the Truth, judging that he had sinned against the Holy-ghost, and how he bad him go home to his Prayers, and he would to his Study; and another day tell him what he thought: For (says he) I understood it well enough, but could not well declare it, but I will bungle at it as well as I can: and so he answered, and after asserted in the case: that *Privilegium paucorum non destruit regulam universalem*; This man (says he) I knew that repented, and many to have done as he did; and yet never a one returned but he. We would endeavor to find a Door open for such to get out at, if they got repentance; but usually such engage so far, that they come hardly to repent. A Persecutor at first hand may be converted, but one of these God seldom gives repentance to, that he may turn again: and this is but too common a thing, which I mention, to make men tremble that are secure and careless, as too many are; that at first, when (it may be) they were low in the World, they professed Religion, but when gotten a little great and rich, they begin to slight their Profession, and stick not to mock and scoff at the best people, though (it may be) under the notion of such a Party, dissenting from the worser sort in some Disciplinary Controversy, but this will not excuse their hatred and affront to Religion itself, and men may

soon engage further, then they can easily come off in such a desperate course: and therefore let them that have professed, beware what they do, they bring an evil report upon Religion, they advance the Devils Kingdom, they harden many to their ruin, and fearfully bar out their own repentance: If you do go off, beware to take heed how far you go: of all kind of Sinners beware of being a Persecutor, and of all Persecutors, let the Apostate Persecutor look about him.

2. A man that forsakes the public Ordinances, profanely, or otherwise, there is little or no hopes of: the Ordinances are the Means, which God doth ordinarily use to make men better by; and therefore this is a sin of an high nature, because it is against the Means of being changed. This made Mr. Latimer say, Come to Church if it be but to sleep there, for God may take thee napping; the Minister may awake thee, if there, and God may together with it awaken thy Soul: if you lie in Christ's way, there is hopes; if you be about the Pool, though you cannot get in, yet you may be healed: but when men go quite out of all high ways, their Conditions are heavily marked out for dangerous. Alas! It is some more than ordinary service and security the Devil designs from you, if he prevail upon you this way, to get you careless of Ordinances, and to get a trick of idling at home on the Sabbath day. If men be wicked, yet if they go to the public Ordinances, the Devil is not so sure of any of them: a word set on by Preaching, may drive him out of possession of the very worst of you; and therefore when he designs to have some more than ordinary security of you, that you shall be true to his service, and be his forever, never to over-run his Colors, he would break you off from Ordinances, and then he needs look no more after you, unless it be to set you on some eminent Piece of Work for him, which only such a one is fit for. He may have hopes of many that go to Church; that he shall

light of a good share of them, but this puts him to pains, and he is oft made to be-stir himself, since the Ordinances of God make Batteries on his Holds, and he is liable to be turned at every Sermon, out of some heart, and Sinners by long Sieges may be forced to yield: but when he knows he hath a strong Garrison within, and hath removed them from all Leaguers, he may leave that Soul, and find it at any time safe enough to him.

We in Christ's behalf, what Promises soever any make to us, can have no security of you, if you keep still in loose and bad Company: No more can he have hold of any for Hell, as long as still they are frequenting Public Ordinances.

And those that do thus, he doth not only design to be sure of them, but he intends some more than ordinary Service from them; these men are like to serve him in anything he puts upon them, they keep out of the way of having anything to hinder them. What is there to hinder the vilest thought of taking place? Of Corruption rising to a height in the heart? Go to the Church and some word may meet it, and give check to it, that if men be wicked, yet they cannot afford to be so very wicked: but when he hath you out of the noise, of the word, no Voice behind you, to tell you of another way, you know not what wickedness you shall stop at. Thus have I heard of, and known some, that have ended their days on the Gallows, that have confessed, that the first step towards that Ignominious Death, hath been their Sabbath-breaking. When men dare turn their backs on God's Ordinances, and sit at home, it is hard to think what Meditations they may have at home; nay, what for vileness and wretchedness may they not have? Sure Satan hath a design to take you from God's teaching, that he may have you in secret, and on God's own Day, to teach you wholly at home. If idling at home be thy Sabbath-days work, no marvel, if Thieving, Whoredom, and

what not be thy Sabbath-days Meditations? Alas! It is not a matter of Clothes.

1. God hath enjoined us not to be partial in ourselves, and to judge after evil Thoughts; a poor man in vile Rayment, in case of Contest, is not to be under-valued, but to be equally administered to in a way of Justice, as the rich man in costly Apparel, with his Gold Ring on his Finger, and if you come into these Assemblies, much more, we shall be as glad to see you as greater men, and as much desire the Salvation of your Souls.

2. Sure it is a greater shame to stay at home needlessly, then to appear at Church in the poorest Rayment.

3. The Devil will venture to teach you in Rags.

4. And besides, see what a Design the Devil hath carried on against you: it may be, you have been of better fashion among your Neighbors, and you have drunk yourselves out of your Clothes, your former going to Church hath not hindered your loose living, and now he hath brought you to beggary, and so ashamed to go to Church at all, and now he may do what he will with you.

5. But when you come to die, and find the want of what you should die with, and this upon your Consciences, that you neglected the means of getting it, what a rage will this leave you in?

6. And besides all this, the Damned in Hell, if they might have leave to come to the Ordinances, would make it no matter of Clothes; they would be glad to hear a Sermon for the good of their Souls, though in the poorest Clothes that ever man wore.

But men that do thus, there is the least hopes possibly of them of any again. And those that leave the public Ordinances out of Conscience, their Condition is no better, they are to lead the Devils Van, they are gone

through Profession to the Devils Camp on the other side. They frame mischief by a Law: They forsake Assemblies, and justify it, and doubly affront the Ordinance of Christ; and these are more unlike to return to the Assemblies again, and as sure as any, to feel the damning effects of their neglect of them. This for those that are very hopeless.

But thirdly, We may show, what our hopes are of any of you, that are yet vile and live in sin: Why, truly we may, to affect your hearts with it, open our very hearts to you about your Estate; As indeed it were but reasonable, that you should ask your Ministers advice about your Condition; you are not apt to trust your Assurance for your Estates, without the advice of your Lawyer: For your bodily Health, you are willing to ask the Physician, and very earnestly sometimes desire him to tell you, what he thinks of you, both because you judge the matter is Important and that their skill in the business is rather to be trusted than yours, since better verst in it: and how comes it, that the Minister is so seldom Consulted with in the case of the immortal Soul? Is it because the matter is of less Concernment, or you have skill enough to judge yourselves? Or that Ministers are to no manner of purpose? As for the use that a great many make of them, (they were the needlessest Officers that ever were set on foot) or in truth, is it because you least matter this business of any? But we may in faithfulness tell you, what our thoughts are of you Gratis: Sure we may say of the very vilest that hear us, there is hopes; and we tell you in our God, we have hopes of you, of the vilest Drunkard, unclean, profane person in the Congregation; thus far it may be it pleaseth you, and we shall endeavor your profit, as much in what we shall say further. We have some kind of hopes about you, whilst we consider.

1. That it is out of ignorance, that any of you do as you do, if you knew what you did, you would close with Christ presently. The God of this World

blinds your eyes, that the glorious light of the Gospel breaks not in prevailingly upon you.

2. That yet we may see a day of the worst of you, God may turn you; There is none of you, that most grieve us at present, but God can make you to seek our Beloved with us: God can make us glorify God in you, that you should profess the way, that sometimes you have persecuted: we are thinking sometimes at some of you, that are so zealously set for sin, mad against the people of God, that endeavor so earnestly to serve sin, that you are but cutting out an example, what manner of serious Christians you must be, when God turns you. Oh! This will be a rare Motive to put you on, when you come in, to labor more abundantly than all, because you stand out so long, and have done so much the other way. We delight ourselves in our God, to think what men you will be, when God works this Change upon you: And all this wickedness is but to cut you out a Copy of high Endeavors in the right way when you return. God can send home Onesimus, that he may depart for a season, to return home forever into Christ's possession. This is the worst we wish you, and this we hope in, and it is that which God can by his mighty power work at the turning of his hand; This despised way, God can make any of you a Professor of it, when he pleaseth: And this might by a side-blow in the meantime strike upon your Consciences, if God be pleased to set in with it, what hopes you can have in the way you are in, when our hopes of you is to see you out of it: Ministers, thou mayest say, have hopes of me, but not in the way I am in, how dare I then hope in this way? Or why should I dare to go on in it, if it be a way I must leave, If I design Salvation? The Lord help you and your thoughts herein, for this will verily prove just as we say.

3. This we know of you, that if you repent not, God will own his own way, and you must never do well, if you repent not: We know thus far of the worst of You, that if You knew what You did, You would never stand out, and that if God set for it, it is not You that can stand out: and this we have further for our own encouragement in respect of the event concerning You, whether You will come in, or no, we know not, but this we know, if ever you do well, you must come in: If ever You be saved, You must turn to Christ, we may have Your company yet in God's way, as averse as You are; and it must be so, or Your Souls to all eternity must pay for it; and therefore we resolve to stick where we are, knowing that all that will do well, must take the same course, and seek Christ as we do: but for the course You are in, if You intend to persevere in it, there is no hopes for You, if You will not repent and turn to Christ, we will never ask the Lord to show mercy to You; we will beg repentance for You, or we dare not beg mercy, for he will only show mercy to the Penitent. Be not merciful to any wicked Transgressor: Prayers made by such a one as David, are Prophetic Determinations, God will not be merciful to any wicked Transgressors; Sinners that go on in sin, that will not repent, to give God the Glory, they are sure to reap the fruit of their doings, God will not show mercy on them. For You in this way to be saved. Consider,

1. It is against God's truth, God hath declared the contrary, and think whether You have not cast Your matters on a narrow miserable Point, that you must either be damned, or the most holy One of Israel make himself a Liar.

2. It is against his admirable contrivance, in this way he hath appointed, wherein only Mercy and Justice is reconciled: and is it likely, that he will go out of this Glorious way, to save thee in a way of thine own?

3. It is against all reason that men should be saved in a way of their own, that will not be saved in God's way: Is it reason, that God, or You should appoint a way of Reconcilement? Or doth God so gain by Your Salvation? Or is he sure to lose so by Your ruin? That if he cannot have You up to his term, he must needs come down to Yours. Oh! My Brethren do not You believe this, venture not Your precious Souls on such desperate senseless Presumptions. And therefore now You see what You are like to trust to, if You would know what hopes there is of You. Why, what do You intend to do? It is at Your own selves: If you will frame your ways and your doings, to turn to the Lord: There is riches of Mercy to receive You; and great hopes of You; but if You intend to persist in the course you are in, speak no more of the business, it is impossible. If God can cease to be true, wise, and just, then thou in Impenitency mayest be saved. What! A man be saved in his Impenitency? Do not, Lord do not do it, says the holy man.

But this shall suffice in the second part of this Use, for the Information of wicked men of their several dangerous Estates.

CHAP. VII.

The truth improved against the impenitency of wicked men, to persuade them to come in.

3. LET THIS THEN be improved against your impenitency; Since there might be Hopes if you repent, be persuaded to repent and turn from the sinful wretched course, that you are in, Oh! Leave your sins. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?

1. Consider what a hopeful condition yours might be, if you would turn.

1. How hopeful in respect of your reconciliation.

2. Of the consequences of it.

— Hopes of Reconciliation.

— Hopes from Reconciliation.

Hopes of your reconciliation. In that —

1. Christ stands ready to receive you, if you will but come in, he waiteth to be gracious; he will glorify himself to show mercy: how solemnly he protests! He desires not your death, persuades you to turn, he stretches out his hand all the day long unto you: his heart is not to be wrought to an inclination to be friends with you, it is wrought already; he hath been used to desperate cures, such festered sores, to such worthless adventures; he is

gracious and ready to forgive, this is a great advantage, He stands ready for your coming, there needs no preparing of him, he is always ready, the change is only resting at thee, if thou wouldest be drawn to come.

2. All your former ways may be forgiven unto you; he will not remember against you your former iniquities, you have gone on in rebellion thus long, lay down your arms now, all that is past shall be forgotten, he will remember against you your sins no more. If you will come in, your former ways shall not be remembered, the Lord will make no difference between thee and the rest of his subjects, thou shalt not be oppressed with suspicions and jealousies, nor upon every occasion be attached; but shalt have the freedom of another subject, Micah. 7:18,19. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more, Oh! What a mercy would this be to you, to have all these fearful scores, cancelled, all these debts paid; which if you come to reckon for yourselves, would prove your undoing's: It is such an opportunity of freedom, as you may not meet with again. The Lord is as ready to forget the sins of a convert, as the righteousness of an apostate you shall not be admitted, to have your old services all revived upon every new transgression, but the Lord will pardon all. What a rare thing would this be! They that feel the weight of their sins know, how blessed he is, whose iniquities are pardoned, whose sins are covered; that, blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his sin, and this state if thou wilt come in, may be thine.

3. This matter is committed to the ministers to deal in, the office is on purpose to make tenders of mercy and reconciliation by Jesus Christ unto you. We are ambassadors for God, and we are to entreat you in Christ's stead, as though God did beseech you by us, to be reconciled unto God: they are sent on purpose, to drive on the match between Christ and your

souls, they have full letters of credence, what they bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and what they loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven: They are men of your own selves, subject to like passions, as yourselves are, that are to minister between God and you; who are kept by Christ on purpose in every place, where his Church is, and it is to look to your souls, to heard and gather the lambs in their arms, to invite you to come in, and to help you in your Christian course this is the Ministers, very business: and by that you may perceive, that God is in earnest in the work he sets them on, and that you might be received if you came in, for otherwise this officer was needless, and our preaching were in vain. It would do well if some would think well at it, that if their lives can be right, it were to small purpose for God to keep up his Ministers, as he doth, for such lives are besides the council and design of the Ministry altogether. But come in to these officers, appointed on purpose to invite and entertain you: the cities of refuge were all amongst the Levites still, so Christ is to be found amongst the Ministers, and happy is that poor soul, that hath been pursued by the avenger of blood, that is gotten among the Levites, but as long as the Levites have a City, there will not be a place of refuge wanting for humbled guilty souls: this for the Hopes of reconciliation,

2. For the consequents of this reconciliation, or hopes from it. Oh! Turn, you little think what will follow upon it.

First, In respect of others, or the Latitude of this reconciliation. Turn and

1. The Father will be reconciled unto you Come out of her, touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you, you shall not want a place if you leave that, nor want a Father if you leave your Fathers house for goodness sake. But I will be your Father and you shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the

Lord the Almighty; of Rebels you shall be made the Kings Sons, God will be at peace with you, a friend, nay, a Father to you.

2. The Son will be reconciled, so as to undertake your patronage to be your advocate with the Father: Oh! This is the Jonathan, when the father calls thee in, will love thee (Like David) as his own soul, he will be thy advocate, put his robe on thee; thy precious savior surety and brother, and speak a word for thee when thou art away.

3. The spirit will be reconciled, to be thy comforter: Let men keep Christ's commandments, and God will manifest himself unto them, nay, Christ and the father will by the spirit come into that man, and make their abode with him. A sacred place shall that polluted heart of thine be even a Temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in.

4. The Angels will be reconciled, so as to be friends with you. Some interpret that of reconciling things in Heaven and things on earth, to be thus, that the Angels are against men while they are sinners, not that sin reacheth them, but because of their perfect conjunction with Christ; and as all that are for the King in a City, are against all that are against him, so the Angels are against all the Enemies of Christ: but when a soul is converted, then there is joy in Heaven, then they are reconciled: before they stood ready, if God but speak the word, to destroy any notorious sinner, but now they are friends with them: The Angels are ministering Spirits to all that are Heirs of salvation; all that are for Heaven, though never so poor, so young ones in this way, the Angels of God care not what service they do for them, and unto them: their Angels called so, because ready to attend on them upon occasion, even on the very littles one; the same Angels, that behold the face of the Father in Heaven, are ready to come forth, and attend on any of these little ones. If you turn, you little think, what joy there will be in Heaven

about it, and what a Guard of Angels, of the heavenly host shall be immediately set about you, or frequently be employed from, and to Heaven, on dispatches for you: Oh! A rare alliance this is.

5. Good Ministers will be reconciled unto you. Alas! While you live as you do, be it known we cannot be friends to our Master and to you too; and therefore know it, that while you live as you do we are not satisfied in you, our hearts cannot be towards you, we are not friends with you, we dare not but save our Masters quarrel, however you oblige us, or we carry fairly towards you, you are not the men that we can repose in, or go away from you at any time without regret and sorrow: but if you will turn you will find us your joyful friends, ready to embrace you, council you, pray for you, and more hearty towards you, than any relations can be. When Saul was converted, though they were terrified to hear but of his name; yet when Ananias understood that he was coming in, it was brother Saul at first word; lay down the enmity of your hearts against Christ and our scruple towards you falls therewith; but otherwise (we care not who knows it) we cannot be towards you as towards other men, while we live. But if you take to Christ, we shall soon take to you, and with bowels of love embrace you, you may soon have our warm hearts, if we can see you but once breathing after Jesus Christ, and it is no small matter to have thy Minister one with thee.

6. All good men will be reconciled unto you, you shall have their love and friendship: they heard, That he which had persecuted the way, was now a preacher of it; what? Did they not take him down? Did they not endeavor to be revenged on him; now he was come into their power, for the injuries he had done them? No, but they glorified God in him, they rejoiced exceedingly that he was thus brought in; if thou turn, The righteous will be glad at heart, when they see thee, thou wilt find more true love amongst the

serious professors of religion, then can be found elsewhere. Mr. Dod said he lost one natural brother for Christ, and he had 200 Gospel brethren and sisters instead of him, and so thou wilt find them ready to receive thee into the heart of them, they will help thee with hearty council, their lips will feed thee, thou shalt find thy heart made better and not worse by converse here. When a sinner is converted the lost goat found, the Ministers call in Christians to rejoice here, as Christ doth the Angels to rejoice in Heaven: Oh the mercy to be admitted into the affection and society of God's children! They are men that can help you with a prayer, they have interest in Christ, they can speak to the King of Heaven for you, and these stand all ready to entertain you, if you would come in; turn your own heart towards the Lord, and you turn at once all the hearts of God's people towards you as the heart of one man: the hopes of your being converted will satisfy all the scruples that can be against you in the hearts of any, and they are forthwith ready to receive you.

7. All the Creatures will be reconciled, at present there is enmity between you and them; they grudge to serve you, while you serve not Christ, they groan under your bondage, and take themselves subject to vanity, while subject to you, and you out of Christ: they are willing any one of them to entertain the Office of dispatching you, and to bring you to hell, would venture to attach you, but they would have you in; how willingly would the beer choke the drunkard, and the air poison the swearer, &c. but now if you come in, they will all be in covenant and league with you. You shall be at agreement with the stones, and Beasts and fowl of the Air, all ready to serve thee, and if any of them kill thee, yet they will not bring thee to Hell, if thou be in Christ. This for the latitude of your reconciliation or the consequents of it with respect unto others.

But then Secondly, in respect of yourselves, if you but come in, great advantages will follow upon this reconciliation. First, here. Secondly, Hereafter. Here, 1. You shall have sweetness in ordinances, which you never had before, by which these solemn duties will be made easy and delightful to you, as also you shall receive that true and solid satisfaction, which hither to you had been estranged from: The next to the comfort of Heaven is the joy of God's house and ordinances. Oh how sweet can God make his word to a soul! Oh! The man is blessed whom God chooseth and causeth to approach near to God, that he may dwell in God's house, he shall be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his House, even of his holy Temple; there is the goodness of God's house to delight men's souls in, wherein so much comfort is to be had; and this you shall upon your conversion be admitted unto, you shall now know what it is to be made glad in the House of Prayer, and to have that comfort, that passes that Comfort of Corn and Wine and Oil.

2. You shall have covenant mercies; that is, that which you have, shall come in the tenure of a promise, and not of providence only; your outward good things are like if not to be more, yet to be better than heretofore, of a better kind: these things when they come in love, when they come as tokens of what God will do more for us; when they come as part of the inheritance as having this Motto on them; This till thou comest to Heaven, and Heaven itself annexed, as the upshot of that Mercy, which brings in this unto you; why, this makes outward mercies far more high then before. Isa. 65:21,22,23, Hos. 2:21, to the end.

3. You shall have ready support under all difficulties, be reconciled and you shall be prayer free, the most admirable conveniency for our wilderness travel, that can be thought of: Alas! As you are, you may make much of

prosperity, but if ever you be in trouble you know not which way to turn, you are oft in God's hand, but you know not how to deal with him, to claim the least mercy from him. God heareth not the Prayers of sinners: but now the reconciled, They are made forthwith free at the throne of Grace. To the Godly, God saith, call on me in the time of trouble and I will deliver thee: but to the Wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to take my Covenant into thy Mouth, &c. Oh what a conveniency is it! That still when any trouble or affliction comes, one may turn aside and find that help in our own closet, that all the world cannot afford the like to us: wicked men must abroad and seek their help at second hand, and at many hands, and at last go without it too; when as if thou be reconciled, there is no cross can befall thee, but thou mayest have free recourse to him, that hath the ordering of all matters, and mayest have help from him in every business, and needest no more.

4 Thou mayest have satisfaction to thy heart, whatever comes, godly men have all contracted into one, whatever outward thing they want, they are sure to be satisfied about it, for they are nearer to the thing than anyone else, their God hath the disposing of it, and if they ask it of him if it be good for them he will sooner give it them than any others. Or else 2. they can make shift without it, the fire may as well be put out by withdrawing fuel, as throwing on water, God can withdraw the desire, and it is all one: as if he fulfilled the desire of his people. If God either give him the thing, or give him something more of himself, either will serve his turn. Alas! You, that are at a distance from God, you patch up a content and satisfaction from the creatures, one contributes one part, and another, another, but now if one thing be away, one string out of tune, there is then no music, all the rest cannot join together to make up the place of that one thing, that is away:

Alas! One sick child puts you all into hurries, and imbitters all the other things which you enjoy, and so it will be with you as long as you live as you do. I cannot see how a carnal man can be sure of any content at all, for he must have it out of so many things, and a thousand to one someone thing or other is still away: Now turn to God and you may have content, you may be able to part with many things, for your treasure is not in them, though the ship be lost yet your adventure is not in that bottom, you will less matter; your heart will be fixed, trusting in the Lord, and so you will not be afraid of evil tidings: if many casualties befall thee yet still thou hast God to delight in, and he can soon give thee (either in another thing, or in himself in the light of his countenance) much more than this is.

Secondly, for advantages for the future, if you would but come in.

1. You should have joy in death, and this, when we come to die indeed, were worth creeping on our hands and knees all the days of our lives, to have attained rather than to be without it, in the time of need, in the hour of trouble. Wicked men, Alas! Death feeds on them like sheep the first born of death will seize upon them; but now they that are reconciled shall come famously off, they are by Christ delivered from death, and him that hath the power of death, who is the Devil; and from that bondage which all their lifetime they were subject unto through the fear of death; turn to God and death shall comfort you.

2. You shall have Heaven for your soul; to them that believe eternal life; the other same body is in Heaven already, you come at your conversion to an innumerable company of Angels, and spirits of just men made perfect; these you are associated to already, and you shall shortly be brought to be with them, forever to be with the Lord; many turned proselytes of the gate among the Jews, because of the excellency of their religion above all other

religions in the world for their religions promised nothing for eternity as this did, sure the recompense of reward should fetch you in, many that must never come there would yet count him blessed that might eat bread in the kingdom of God; I am confident you count it happy to be in Heaven, and will you not labor to get thither? To them that by patient waiting and continuance in well doing seek for immortality honor and glory, eternal life, they that look for immortality and glory, and seek it in such a way as by patient continuance in well-doing, they shall have eternal life. Now seriously think of these things which are offered, and think what a deal it is you lose for want of turning, what a world you must part from if you keep your bad heart, Your condition so hopeful, and all frustrated by a base heart is very sad. This for the first consideration at large, in respect of the hopes of and from reconciliation, which might induce you to come in.

2. Consider, these hopes all have them not, you have the hopes that many have not, and if you be not the better for them, your condition will prove worse than theirs that never had them, or are not in your present capacity:
As

1. The Devils never had any hopes afforded them, they were proceeded against at their fall, clapt under chains of darkness, reserved in present to further torment: when God expostulates the business with man for his fall, and reasons it with him, to draw him to repentance, in token of a design of mercy towards him, he proceeds to curse the serpent without any parley with him, and in his absolute sentence and conclusion of judgment against him, lets fall a promise of the seed of the woman for man's recovery: but delivers this in an absolute doom against him. Christ took not on him the nature of Angels, he took not hold of that nature, to save it from sinking, never tried them with a conditional tender of mercy, as he hath done the

sons of men, no doubt, they would not stick to say if they had but the probability of reception to mercy, which you have, if they had but a savior given amongst them as you have, they would have been glad of him, and many of them have closed with him with all their hearts on the worst terms imaginable, much more on such as he is offered to you. As some of the fathers have told us, that the Devil on a time when this scripture was read *et carro factus est*, the word was made flesh, that he should smite some Christians, saying, why do ye not worship at this word? For if he had taken on him our nature, we would have worshiped. The moral of it holds, and certainly for you that have this hope, to get besides it, to be in the same condition, that the damned Angels are in, that never had any, is very sad: It is called the fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels, it was primarily ordained for them. It is not fire prepared so properly for man, for they had a mediator provided, and upon fair terms might have escaped; but for you to partake of the Devils fire, it is but good enough for you, when you willfully put yourselves besides your better capacity, and neglect your hopes, which they never had.

2. Many of the Heathens never had these hopes made known to them; the heathen while such, before the gospel came among them they were without Hope, and so are they still, that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death: what hope there is of a Gentiles salvation, that never heard of the gospel, I shall not here discourse of, and I would be loath ours were no otherwise then theirs is, yet most hold they shall not be proceeded with, in the same manner as Christians shall, Viz. 1. for the contempt and neglect of the gospel which they never had. But certainly, if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, in Sodom and Gomorrah, in India and China and Tartary, &c. which have been done in England; London, Lancashire, and

Manchester they would have repented long ago, they would embraced Christ and closed with him; verily if you stand out, and are never the better for the Gospel, but lead lives for all this light, which good heathens would be ashamed of, it will be more tolerable for those places at the day of judgment then for you. Oh! They will say, if we had had but one of the days of the sons of men, which you have had, it might have been in our way the salvation of many of our souls; and will you be never the better for this privilege?

3. The damned in Hell are past their hopes, Alas? Their day is now over, as Christ says, the time will come when you shall desire to see one of the days of the son of man, and you shall not see it; they would give all the world, if they had it, that they might but have one sabbaths liberty more one day which they have had here; they would hope to put fair for it, that they might prevent thereby their eternal misery, and it cannot now be granted them. Dives would have been glad to have brought his own message if he might as well as to have sent another to his five brethren, to have had so much respite out of torment, but alas! He never moves it as a thing impossible, respite is past; there is a gulf fixed, and there is now no passing to the hoping side. Oh, Sirs; think at it! Will you willfully make void such a special privilege, frustrate this capacity you are in, and make yourselves, who now have hopes in as bad, nay, a worse condition then they are in, that either never had, or never the knowledge of, or are now past these hopes which you at present have? Oh! Look well at it and in the fear of God consider it. This may serve for the second consideration.

3. Consider the concernment of these hopes of yours, the matter is of the weightiest consideration, it is the affairs of the soul, deliver my darling my only one, from the power of the Dog, Oh! It is the case of your darling, your

only one. If thou be wise thou shalt be wise for thyself, the profit of thy repentance will be thine own, of thy nearest concernment within these few days, when a fit of sickness will leave thee all in a soul, and if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it: this soul of thine thou must go out with will be sure to smart for it; and what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what will you give in exchange for your soul? The matter is of such concernment, that if men would regard anything they should not neglect this; Alas! It is not any other thing cared for by thee, can repair thy neglect or loss in this: It is not what you secure; if your immortal soul go for it in the end, I wish you may never know the preciousness of a soul in the loss of one for any of your own parts.

4. Consider the reasonableness of the condition, on which your hopes are offered, you may be happy if you do but repent, the Lord will have mercy, only acknowledge thine iniquity, only repent and turn to God, the Lord is ready to forgive, will not cast off, only fear the Lord and serve him, only be willing to come over to Christ in his ways to be regenerated, to be ruled by Christ, to leave your vain conversation to set into a way of holiness. If you close with this you may be saved, now it is as sad to lose such hopes, and as sad to lose them upon such terms, the thing is not more desirable, then the condition reasonable. For

1. It is the way which the Lord likes, he Loveth the righteous, and the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, you think, if you leave off sin, and turn serious, there are such men, your companions heretofore in sin, you must never look them in the face. Alas! Think at it, and how can you look God in the face in the way you are in? Come, stand not on what the rulers do, or great men do, or most men do, not on what is done, but what should be done: whether is better to obey, so to please, God or man, judge ye.

2. This is the way good men love, the righteous will be glad, when they see you, and they care not for seeing you till you are such. Alas! When they behold the transgressor they are grieved, woe to you for yourselves when a good man cannot see you without sorrow, but now if you turn, this way they love, they that have tried both ways they sit down here, and would not for a world live as they have done, and as you do, I have chosen thy Precepts, says David.

3. Wicked men confess to this way, the very Devils confess Christ. Alas! There is not one wicked man of many, that dares own his own course in sober sadness; and for religion, what have they to say against it, but that they are all hypocrites; Alas! By this they witness that true religion is not to be blamed, they have nothing to charge us with in our way, but that we are not serious and through in it: they will it may be, say, such professors are drunk sometimes, &c. All the fault they can find with religious men, is that wherein sometimes any of them are like themselves; and though woe to those by whom these offenses come, yet these very quarrels will rise up in judgment against them that make them, a scandalous professor is a sad creature, yet we will not allow him so in the mouth of a man that is scandalous and no professor at all.

4. It is a way may be owned before any man: you heed not be ashamed of Godliness or any good duty, whoever stands by. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, as if there were anything amiss in it, you may better do that good duty then they sin, whoever they be that look on: as the Philosopher said, that reprov'd one, whom he sound hiding himself from one that sought him, to have born false witness for him, says he, dares he ask you to do it, and dare not you deny him? So surely you may set a better

face of your way, than they have cause to set on theirs. It is sin that brings shame and these are ways will bring to shame, and so will repentance never.

5. All dying men are for this way, when men are most themselves, then they are seriously preferring the way of holiness, you see the statues of our gallants, they are not set up with the instruments of their pleasure about them, but with hands lifted up praying, oft with their book before them, or their Bible in their hands, and these are things of likeliest requests at such a time, never man repented on his death bed that he had made too much ado and never any (if sensible) but did sadly repent of their ways of sin, this that is required of thee, is that which at death all men desire, and can only with comfort die in, though with many it is then too late to seek for it.

6. It is the work of Heaven, holiness is glory begun, there is no sin in Heaven, and the happiness of Heaven is, that there they never sin against God: there his servants always serve him, Alas! For wickedness, it is a work that will not always last; The way of the ungodly shall perish: It is work that shall have an end; but for the Godly man's course it is the way everlasting, it is the way that endures forever, that is begun here and gone on with in Heaven, you all count heaven the happy place, and there is no sin there, Godliness is work of the same kind, though not in the same degree, as the work of Heaven is, this is work you need not break off when you die.

7. That which you are required to leave for Heaven, is that, which if you go on with, the day will come, when you shall not have one friend left to stand by you in that way in all the world, you are advised to leave that for Heaven, which if you stick to it, you will be left desolate with it one day.
For

1. God will not look at you. sinners cannot stand in the judgment, the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, (he asserts the godly man's way)

but wicked men's ways shall perish from the Lord utterly.

2. Christ will not endure you, he bids such depart from him, he knows them not, they are workers of iniquity; if such, whatever they pretend, away with them, he will not endure the sight of them; you dare never look God nor Christ in the face in this way, you are in.

3. Angels and good men cannot pity you, they shall triumph in Gods justice in your righteous ruin, they cannot afford one drop of water out of Heaven to cool Dives his tongue; when miserably tormented in the flame.

4. The Devils will be against you, they that have been your tempters, will be your tormentors, as much ado as they have made to get you to sin, as forward will they be to hale you to execution for sin, and rather then you should be uncondemned, Satan would witness against you for the very sins which he tempted you to: The man that said to Joab, that if he had transgressed the Kings command in the matter of Absalom, even thou thyself would have set thyself against me: so the Devil, that only presses thee to sin now, Alas! He will set himself against thee in that time of reckoning, and it will vex thee to thy heart, to see him so persecuting thee, for the very ways, he enticed thee unto: the very Devils shortly will be against thee, and it will torment thee to see how thou hast been betrayed by them; the Devil like the hangman, that consents or entices to stealing.

5. Wicked men thy companions will be against them. Alas! You have taken sweet council together, you have strengthened one another's hands in the way that was evil, you have turned off from Christ, to sit down in the bosoms one of another: but the day will come, when ye shall be forsaken one of another. Dives had no mind that his brethren should come to him, when he was in Hel, not as if there was any charity there; but he knew it would aggravate his torment, to have them come together, both to help his

remembrance in the sin they had committed together as also of the mischief he had done, by being accessory to their ruin. And so your intimacy, and love, and sworn brotherhood shall end in this, that you shall curse the time that ever you knew one another, and wish you had never seen each others faces. In this eternal fend and hatred will all this love of yours end; you may with Judas think they that set you on work, should bear part of your punishment for it, but they will turn you off; and bid you look to that yourself, others may help you to sin, but for the torment, you may look to it yourselves, they will be as if you had never known them, when you are in the depth of your adversity (unless it be to torment you with the remembrance of them,) by your sins which lie upon you.

6. Your own hearts will be against you, conscience will then be unmuzzled and let loose upon you, and your heart shall condemn you, and you shall be forsaken on all hands, this is the worm which your sin hath bred, that shall never die in that fire that can never be quenched.

Seriously think at it, and that it is for this, you will ruin your hopes; if you would leave this, you might be saved, you may be eternally happy if you will but repent, and leave that which never did you good nor never will do, this is all that is required of you, and you may be happy forever. Let this fourth consideration have its force with you.

5. It will aggravate your misery another day, when you shall be past hopes, to consider that once there was hopes, and you have thus outstood them: the day will come when you shall be under absolute despair, the door altogether shut upon you, you finally shut in, and then think how sad it will be, that you shall remember, that once the door was open, and you stood out, as you did. God now calls and you will not; you shall then call and he will not; he will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear comes,

when alas! You shall call on the rocks to cover you from the wrath of the Lamb. Oh that you might take warning, that none of you may in hell lament your desperate condition, when you shall there be past hopes, and shall remember, that this hath been preached to you, that there is hope yet for you, if you would repent; nay, that there you should remember that we this day foretold you, what would befall you, if you still stood out.

CHAP. VIII.

The way readied for gross sinners to come over into a condition of Hope.

IF ANY SOUL BE by all or any of these Motives startled as if these words, that so nearly concern you, should amongst so many fall to the ground and none be moved by them, none be stirred in so great a congregation to look after their souls, I know not what to think it may signify towards us. These sermons though by a worthless Instrument, yet as the Lord's message will breed something, either the conversion of some, or else some speedy judgment on you for your impenitency, The removal of the Gospel or the like, which the Lord forbid: but (if any (as I rather desire and hope) do think of turning and since it is declared there is hopes if you turn, you think of so doing, and would know how you might partake of those hopes; if you are of the mind, and would know the next way over to a changed state what course might be taken what is next to be done, that you might set about the work of salvation which you have hitherto neglected, if you would know how to begin, and go on towards a change. Take these directions.

Labor for sufficient knowledge of the principles of Religion, this is necessarily to be laid, where it is not already, as the first step, How shall

they believe in him of whom they have not heard; and what are they the better for hearing of him, if they get no knowledge by their hearing. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. If men be grossly Ignorant of those principles, which we take for granted in our pressing of duty on them, how should they ever frame to do anything, Our Gospel is hid to them that are lost, and men can never be in a way to escape, as long as the Gospel remains hid to them. There are many were brought up in Ignorance, missed catechizing when they were young (the special time of learning) but it cannot be expected that God should be bound to make abatement to us for our parents neglect towards us, we cannot think to skip learning the principles of Religion, because the fittest time was neglected on our part for the attainment of the knowledge of them; If thou art never so old and art ignorant, thou must yet learn or thou canst not be safe. Thou sayest thou art an ignorant body, not book learned, wert never catechized, &c. (beware you do not so by your children as your parents did by you) but alas to all this we can only say, why this is your loss, but not your excuse, the more wrong you had done you, but you are not hereby discharged from a necessary prerequisite if you intend salvation. If thou be old and Ignorant, thou must learn as old as thou art, Talk not of being too old to be Catechized, if thou needest it thou must have it. Thou art indeed too Old to be thus shamefully ignorant, but sure if thou understandest thy danger thou shouldest not be too old to make hast to begin now in what thou art so sadly cast behind, and hast lost so much time in. To say thou art too old to be instructed, is as good as to say, thou art too old to be saved: For there is no way for salvation to those that are grossly Ignorant of the main principles of Christianity, secret things belong to the Lord, but the things that are revealed to us and to our Children. It is observed that this Latter clause in the Heb. is written with

some extraordinary pricks, which the Jewish writers observe to signify, that extraordinary and necessary care should be taken about the knowledge of what is revealed, and that whether poor or rich, young or old, care should be taken that the knowledge of revealed things should abound among them, and be transmitted to posterity. They are revealed and do belong to us, and notice must be taken of them by us, Since God in the riches of mercy and his condescension to us hath not kept all things secret from us, and so all to himself as he might have done, but consulting our good hath mercifully revealed things to us without which we could never be happy, and never but by this revelation have come to the knowledge of; we should not so far neglect this vast privilege as to be ignorant of what we may thus be instructed in; They belong to us. Our privilege and duty is to know the things that are revealed, It is sad that many of you know not what is within you, what sin is, not how full you are of it, and what Christ came for; nor what Ministers work is in the world, and it is impossible you should ever do better if you never know more than you do.

Levi did turn many from iniquity, how was that? Why the Priests lips keep knowledge and they should seek knowledge at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. Ministers then turn men from sin, when people seek knowledge at their mouth, when men inquire of them for the knowledge of the Lord, and do desire and are willing to be instructed by them, we have it in these parts in our hearts, and have proposals of it, to endeavor your personal instruction, for the curing of your bloody soul-killing ignorance, and one would think the stop should not be in you, if we are willing to put ourselves on the pains. If you intend salvation, You will heartily embrace it for there is no other way to salvation. If a man should have followed a trade, wherein he is gotten behind, and finds he cannot

subsist, feels himself broken and undone, and one comes and tells him, there is such an employment men live finely on, there is much gain and little hazard, though some pains, and if he fell into that way, he might recover his ruins, he might supply his necessities, and live plenteously, would he not hearken to it? But then this would be an objection, I know not the mystery of the trade, I was not an apprentice to it; and know not how to set about it, but if one should tell him that there is such a one would teach him all, instruct him in every particular, sure if the stick was not in the friend that should do the courtesy, it should never stick at the party that needs, but he would gladly embrace the motion and without delay set upon the matter which so much concerns him. This is the case of many ignorant souls, it is easy for You to see, that in the way You are in You can never subsist, If you saw your own condition you might easily be aware of it, that this life will never hold, this way will not serve the turn, The way of Sin will undo you, You can never be quiet while You drive this trade, every Sermon will fright you, (as woe to us,) if we speak any comfort to him that goes on in his wicked way, be it known to You, it is against our will and besides our commission and intention, if You have anything from us, in this state You are in to minister comfort unto You. You might fear like a broken tradesman every creature might arrest You for Hell, You are in a sad condition for death, that in these sickly times, may come within these 3 or 4 days. You can never be quiet as long as this life lasts that You live in. O that you might feel yourselves utterly broken of the trade of sin, that you would go on no longer in it. Well then there is a course will serve you, many live preciously of it, many thrive, (the only thriving trade, the only happy life in the world) and that is the way of holiness, here is all the advantage, sweetness, convenience in this way that is imaginable, none ever were

ruined or brake of this trade that ever were perfect Masters of it. There is such a common stock to trade on that it is impossible for thee to fail or break in this. This way would help all your old scores, a Christ would supply all necessities, and lay in blessedly for the time to come. But now may such a poor creature say, I, but I was not born to this privilege, not brought up to this course, I know not how to frame to it, it is a way I cannot skill of; I believe thee. Thou knowest not the manner of the God of the land, (as the Lions made the Samaritans feel they did not;) well now Ministers are sent on purpose to teach you, they are willing to do it, Offer to do it, inquire of the Law at their mouth, they are the messengers of the Lord of Hosts, for this very purpose. They say Come unto me I will teach you the fear of the Lord: If anyone should be appointed on purpose, to teach all that were broken of other trades, the mystery of the gainfullest trade in the town, would it not be counted a great privilege, and could that Officer want either love or custom? Surely This if you knew your need, was a thing to be greatly rejoiced in by You, and we should be glad or be so employed, and you have cause to be glad of the Offer, all sides would be pleased, If men's eyes were but opened, sure if things were rightly weighed the stick in personal Instruction would not be on the people's side. But this is your first step, for any of you that are not come yet unto it, you must labor for knowledge. The knowledge of principles must be had in rich and poor, of all sorts, and Sexes, where salvation is expected.

2. Frequent the means diligently. Be diligent at them and in them. If you would do well lie at the pool side still, lie in the way Christ walks in, It is both a good sign and a good means of doing well. It is said, when Christ came to his disciples Thomas was not there when he came; and you find, Thomas that could not believe unless he saw, he was now away when he

might have seen, And so he was behind in his Faith, to the rest of the Apostles and all was because Thomas was away when Christ came. The way not to miss of Christ when he comes, is not to be away at any time when he could have come. Hanna departed not from the Temple, and David desired that he might dwell in the House of the Lord, not as if there were any Mansions in the Temple for any to live in, but it is only to signify their constancy in attendance on the means, they were never away when any good thing was stirring, when anything was to be done in the Temple and so were as constant as if they had dwelt there. It is good to be one of the Temple dwellers, to be away from no opportunity, that thou cannot excuse it to God himself, for it may be thy part may be dealt when thou art away, the Angel may trouble the waters and thou not ready, something that nearly concerns thee may be likeliest to be spoken, when thou art away. Some think when a Minister may aim at the curing of a particular soul, or God may direct him to what may be suitable thereunto, that the Devil may know by our notes, or otherwise, and prevent the man's coming to the means at that time, when this thing is discoursed of that was so fit for him. However, to make sure, wait upon God at all opportunities; For this is the way thy healing must come, and none knows by what Sermon it must be done. Frequent all opportunities thou canst possibly for failing, that is a good sure way. Men ought not by the late Acts, to travel on the Sabbath day or do anything like a breach of those Laws unless their excuse be such as is to be allowed by a Justice of the peace; do you have a care how you pretend any Excuse for such neglect, that will not be allowed by God himself the royal author of the Law and the searcher of all hearts. And so for opportunities on other days, redeem time for them, approve thy heart to God that no necessity but what he will allow be pretended or practiced upon to neglect a

Sermon at any time, when it might be heard, God may do the more Good at someone Sermon then all: but that may be the Sermon thou mayest be tempted to pass by, and that good may not come by that one, but for thy diligent and conscientious attendance upon all, The life of thy soul may be wrapped up in the due management of one, and thou knowest not which, opportunity.

3. When God touches you at a Sermon, if ever you do well you must get into secret. Take notice how the pulse of conscience beats, let not the word have scope upon you, ty it not just to the time of hearing, walk with it alone, and let it have further conference with you, let it have time to settle and soak in upon you, to water the very root of your souls, and not be like water spilled upon the ground, many are the highway hearers amongst us, the word is but skat upon them, not received and kept at all by them. The Devil catcheth or taketh the word out of their hearts. For it was never in, it was but entering and is by this carelessness oft put by, as one says preciously we give advantage to Satan to steal, as the loose laying of our goods doth to our servants to become thieve. It is noted that the disciples were never the stronger in their faith notwithstanding the miracle and it is because they had not considered it. Many at Church are like sieves in the water as full as they can hold, and when out have just nothing, men would count it a great judgment and be sensible enough of it in their temporal estate to get much and to put it into a bottomless purse, but with many it is thus in the matter of their souls business, in hearing the word they have little abiding with them after Sermons and that for want of digesting the word by secret meditation after hearing. Christ after some parables asked his Disciples If they understood all those things, your work begins when ours end, we have all the scene in public, but yet it is in the nature of a Treaty and Parley with

you; and you are in secret to think of and to return an answer to, what we propose to you. There is but one part of the work done here, the other part is to be done by you. And it is not for nothing that you have so much time besides what is spent on a Sabbath in public, and if this other part of your work be faithfully done there will be no time too much or to spare. Consider what I have said (says Paul to Timothy) and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. This carnal worldly talk after Sermons spoils all, a Minister may come after and say, where he hears no word of the Sermon mentioned, Alas here will be no answer for me, It will be a great while before such talk as this is will bring a Sermon to the heart, or that men should ever profit by Sermons that do on this manner. The Minister speaks in public and then we break off, and now it is at you, what say you? Many complain of bad memories, (The truth is, it may be it is not without cause,) but yet if you cannot remember all, or so much as you would do labor to take good notice of what did most touch you in a Sermon, let that word speaks with you again, He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, when the word drives you into a corner to consider of things in secret, there is more hopes by far concerning you. If the word once wound thee that it singles thee out from the heard, there is hopes thou mayest be hunted down as Naomi said of Boaz? The man will not be at rest till he hath finished the thing this day. But as long as you can heard together after a Sermon, the work will never forward with you: was ever happy match made without private conference to get acquaintance and to settle the affections; we listen to hear the voice of the Bridegroom with you under the canopy, this would make us rejoice indeed. Alas Christians we do not preach before you but to you. It is not for you after a Sermon to say, what we have said, or done or how, but what you intend to do, we preach not for approbation but for an

Answer. What availeth it us to have you cry us up here and curse us in Hell, you might find something else to do after a Sermon more proper and immediate work for you, then to say what you think of the Minister. The woman thought she had obliged Christ much by giving so large a testimony of his doctrine, as to say: Blessed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps that gave thee suck. And she said no more then what was true and just for Christ, yet he returns her an answer wherein he insinuates what would better have becomed her to look after, Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it. The poorest Sermon that you can hear, hath more in it I doubt then you will do, The Sermon that is not worth your writing, will be worth your accounting for. It is good if the word be repeated in your houses, but it never works till it singles you out and gets you into your closets. Make use therefore of this direction, observe wherein God strikes you at a Sermon, and take good notice of it.

4. If one sin be discovered, search to the bottom of it. There is a nest within where this is at the mouth, someone sin is discovered to thee, which thou art checked for and convinced of, but it is not a matter of one sin that thou art to deal in; If this was the word that was so bad, or this the action that was so unreasonable, what is the heart within that bred and brought forth this word and action; Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. There is worse within all along. O what a heart hast thou that would send forth such an unclean filthy word; what a heart hast thou that would let thee lie! What a heart hast thou, that would let thee sin thus quietly! Live thus long without duties! Let thee do on this fashion and let thee sleep quietly at night after all; Paul when God opened his eyes, he saw the Law was spiritual but he was carnal, sold under sin, a sad thing when a man sees this true of himself, (as it is said in this scripture famous Mr. Dod

first saw himself) this every sin thou art convinced of may be driven up into, and the work never goes on to purpose till it be so: alas no sin lies single on a carnal heart. This one thou seest, but it hath fellows, labor to find the rest out.

By one sin labor to find out the sin and disease of nature, or thou wilt never be thoroughly cured.

5. Beg of God to humble thee and to change thy heart, move now thou art doing, for a total change. They that are in Christ must be new creatures, Old things are passed away, all things are become new. Resolve upon it, the Old heart will never do better the Old heart will not serve, thou canst never get through to Heaven with the Old Heart: A man that will repair an Old ruinous house, he knows not what he enters on, he may be at more charges, and it neither handsome, nor safe, but still some piece out of Order, a meet patched business for a while. It were better to pull down the Old one, and build all new: never think to leave only, such and such a sin; but beg of God to put another principle into your heart, and you will find yourself more easy for Duties and your standing will be much more likely. That promise of God giving a new heart and a new spirit, and, writing the Law in the Heart. Lay that upon thy heart, and beg of God to work it on thee or thou canst never make anything of it. God hath promised upon your turning at his reproof, to pour forth his spirit upon you. Move for that or you do nothing.

6. Make choice of good company, The very Heathen could say. How can he be a good man that doth not hate bad company? David says. Depart from me ye workers of iniquity. For I will keep the commandments of my God. I have work to do which I cannot do in your company: Therefore depart from

me. Paul as soon as he was converted assayed to join himself to the people of God still wherever he came.

Let those that fear thee turn in unto me, and I am a companion of all those that fear thee. This is the way to do well, good company if the motion be weak will ripen, nourish, and help it on. Bad company, if it be strong are able to smother it. He must be a strong Christian indeed that loses nothing in bad company. It was Chrysostom's saying, that bad company after a Sermon was like turning Savine into a Garden as soon as it was made, and Dr. Preston's that ill company after a good Motion is like continual dropping on a firebrand. Alas, filthy, frothy, worldly, wicked talk, (and wicked men have no better for us) corrupt the soul, and may make you the worse for it a great while. (And woe to you by the way, when godly men cannot keep company with, you for fear of infection, cannot be with you but they lose by you) if you would do well, join yourselves to those that fear God. Many never get over this temptation; startled they are, but they know not now to forsake their Old companions; If they crossed them, and they were fallen out, they could avoid them: but it is hard to forsake any whom we are not wholly fallen out with; and as hard it is to fall out with them for God's sake, or else you might soon be out with them, we can do that for a lusts sake, which we know not how to do for God's sake. But make thou this step further, thou wilt find much advantage from it, have no needless familiarity with them that are wicked: Intimate society with wicked men, is hardly consistent with the practice of Grace. Our Savior tells us, we must hate Father, and Mother, and Brother, and Friends, for Christ's sake, Therefore this should not seem strange or grievous unto thee to forsake a wicked associate, who is but Obtruded upon thee by the Devil on purpose to keep possession for him and to be a snare to thee: good company is both a

mark and a means of thy being a good man, the man may be known by his companion both to himself and others, that is not known exactly by anything remarkable as from himself; And so a man that shall pretend he loves not the Alehouse, nor loves not drink, but company draws him, to me it is as odious to love drunken company as to love drink, for what can he love such company for! It is one lust to love drink, another to love company, That he loves to sin by, these to sin with, He satisfies his fleshly appetite with that and his carnal fancy and delight with these. But if such a man do not perfectly know his own state, let him look on his company, and see if he know what they are, and then he may know himself. And therefore I would put these companions amongst his marks, and signs to try his state by, And say these drunken idle companions are the marks of the present damnable estate of this man's soul. For whatever wickedness there is in any of them, the lively habits of it are in his soul. He is of the same kind, it is likeness that makes persons love. There is a good liking, or no disliking of those vileness's, the worst amongst them, or you could not out of choice affect their company. One may know your temper that such as these can be endured by you, and upon the early motion of changing your course, you must change your company or it will not be: you cannot keep your old company, and go on this way, nor lightly take better company and not be much furthered in it.

7. Fall upon the present work. The sin you are convinced of, labor to begin in striving against that very sin, and the duty you have neglected; now set about it. Put away lying, and let him that hath stolen steal no more, lie no more, swear no more, be idle no more, drink no more, neglect duty no more, you must begin with somewhat let it appear you are changed by forsaking these sins at present that are next, and so forward every sin that

you meet with. Try the assistance which God will give you in opposing these sins that are next at hand. Suffer not thyself in any sin thou meetest, because thou hast a greater to overcome, the spoil of this may strengthen thy Force against that Other, but be doing, gathering up Forces, clearing the coast as you go, how low soever you take up at first be doing till greater business comes. This may be but little but it may begin a great deal and so be a great thing: loose not thy heart in expectation of someone adversary, but try the next idle thought Or customary bad word, Or family duty, Or instructing thy Children, enter with the next thou meetest, And so

8. Delay not your resolutions. This is the Devils last cast, when he sees he can carry it no other way, he will get you to delay your changing a while. But beware of this thing, the device is to get thee off the present heat that is on thy Soul, and then the matter would die in thee; We are not ignorant of his devices, If thou art resolved Make hast and delay not to keep his Commandments, Let the dead bury the dead, says Christ but follow thou me. Before that should hinder thy following Christ, let the dead lie unburied till the dead could do it. Christ and the soul must be saved first. No business comparable to this business, whatever it is, it must give place to this. Matthew as soon as Christ spoke to him, to follow him, He rose and left all to follow him. Alas do not think of repenting, and not of repenting now. Do not say when such an affliction is over, such a worldly business dispatched I will mend. No this is not the way set upon the duty in the first place, this is the way to have thy worldly business easilyest, and best expedited for thee. Do not say thou art too young? Thou may happen never live to be Old. A young man may have a short life, and eternal damnation. And therefore look about you, delay not, Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Abraham got up early in the morning though it was to sacrifice his

dearest and only Son, and is the day far on before thou can be got forward to the altar with thy darling lust doth spend thy time as the Levite did for the first days, spend the morning so long till it be too late to go that night. Thou must break through all delays: Better go early in the morning then late at night. May thy heart say to thee as was hinted to the Levite, Let the duty alone to night it is but a piece of a day, begin a week with it. Take up these things when thou mayest have a full time to consider them. Alas beware of the design, there will be as much to hinder tomorrow as is today, And therefore it is better to go late tonight then late tomorrow night, for still the refreshment in the morning must put it late if thou stayest till another morning. Thou must never think to embrace Christ, if thou wilt do it at such a time when nothing else shall offer itself to be entertained beside. Thou must break through some difficulties, make some other matters, stay to show thy sincere preferring Christ above all, delay it now, Thou shalt have as much in the way the next day, and thy heart less disposed to stand for it. The design is to lose and put off the present heat, and then a small occasion will do well enough with thee, And therefore oh that while thou lingerest as Lot did when he was to go out of Sodom, the Angel of the Lord would lay his hand on thee (the Lord being merciful to thee) and lead thee out of this wretched condition before the fire and brimstone be about thy ears.

I have now done with what I shall say at this time to the unconverted sinner, I have said what the Lord hath stored me with, both by way of motive and direction for the recovering of thee that yet there might be some hopes of thee. I shall say no more at present, thou hast the same things now transmitted to thee that thou mayest look over them again and again, and consider of them. It may be you and I may live to deal of this business again in other words to the same purpose, but salvation can be had upon no other

terms but your conversion. And if after all that is said nothing abide with thee, God knows where and how sad Our last parting may be, But I must needs pray and hope that God will save you from your Lot, (according to Psal. 49:14,15) as judging your impenitent state a hopeless, a desperate, and wretched estate. If your delights in the world hinder these serious thoughts of yours, and strengthen your impenitency, I must needs pray as the Psalmist, Deliver me, O Lord, from the men of this World who have a few vanishing smoking trifles for their Portion in this life, and have a dreadful portion of Fire and wrath remaining for them in the life to come. We have thus done with the improvement of this point to the ungodly, in all the 3 heads forementioned.

CHAP. IX.

The Observation improved to the Godly, in respect of Peace and Comfort, and that to such as are but setting out towards God: following their Fears and Scruples, and clearing up their hopes unto them.

WE SHALL ENDEAVOR TO improve this Doctrine to another sort, Viz. To those that fear God; and it is to press them to the duty of the Doctrine, and that is to take notice of the hopes that God hath left them, about the several states which they may find themselves in, and may be apt to think their Condition little otherwise then desperate: beware of despairing, where God hath left You hopes; do not shut up Your selves, when God hath yet left You a way out, [and that 1. In respect of Peace and Comfort. 2. Of sin. 3. Of Affliction.]

1. In respect of Comfort: and this,

1. To Souls that are but beginning towards God (For we shall desire to take the Work before us, and leave none out, which God would have us to speak unto.) You begin to be startled, and the old life will serve no longer, The time past suffices, (as the Apostle speaks) You have sinned long enough, You will have no more of it You think it is time to come in, if it be not too sat, You have had enough, if not too much in the way of sin: but You

begin now to be afraid, lest You are the first that shall come too late: You think of turning, but are afraid You shall not now be received. This is an ordinary temper of persons that begin to look towards Heaven. Why?

1. Consider here is a great change in Your mind, erewhile You could hope for Heaven; though you lived in sin, and now You cannot hope for it, though You forsake sin. Then You had so much hope, and saw so much Mercy in God that You left him neither Truth nor Justice, and now You look so altogether at Justice, that You leave him neither Truth nor Mercy. Alas, this is the malice of Satan, and the crossness of Nature. The Devil would hurry thee into another extreme, but the Mean between these two is the right. Sinners should not hope, nor Penitents despair: thy base heart would have no hope, unless such a one as would let thee sin too; As if because thy false hope is routed, in anger thou wilt now have none. And for Satan see his hand: A long time when we persuaded for peace You were not willing, now You are willing, he would persuade You, God is not willing. The truth is, he is not willing the Match should go forward, and all his design is to break it; but if You knew Your humored Corruption, and gratified Satan in nursing these thoughts, I think you would beware of them, and look on them otherwise then You do. But,

2. There is no question in the World but God is willing, if You be willing: God will receive You, if You come in, Penitents shall find Mercy. That you have no cause to doubt of God's showing Mercy on you, upon your coming in, take these Demonstrations of it.

1. His solemn Word and Oath is gone out upon it. Leave your base Company, part with every base thing, come out from the way you are in, and I will receive you; nay, he swears, As I live I desire not the Death of the wicked, but rather that he should repent, and live. And Christ says, That

those that come to him he will in no wise cast out. [In no wise] he will make no fraudulent distinctions to evade his Promise, he will not do it upon any terms, in any case; now thou sayest, the Lord will not receive thee: How darest thou say so? When the Lord says, he will receive thee. Thou sayest, thou mayest go in, but alas, Christ will pass thee by; and Christ says, He will in no wise do it: Will you not believe Truth itself when he speaks?

2. If Christ should not receive Penitents, what did Christ come into the World for, or send his Ministers for? If Penitents shall not find Mercy, then we must say as the Apostle in another case, Christ died in vain and our Preaching is also vain. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, That Jesus Christ came into the world to save Sinners. What was his Incarnation, his life of humiliation, his painful death for? If penitent Sinners find no benefit by it? Why did he take our Nature on him, but to pity our Nature? And that we might behold Mercy brought nearer to us, and more like to be laid hold of by us: and he hath employed us Ministers to invite you to come in; nay, we are Ambassadors for God, and we entreat you, as though God did beseech you by us, We pray you in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God, we entreat you in his Name to come in; nay, in his stead: And do you think, that if it were no more than for the comfort of us, to our labors in this work, that he would send us on such an Errand, and not stand to what he sends in Ambassage by us? Doth he pray you to be reconciled, and when you are willing, do you think that he will go back and not be reconciled? Far be it from us, or you to have such a thought of him?

3. His tenders of mercy to them that refuse him, and the mercy he hath showed to thee in thy former sinful estate, may make thee believe he is not so scant of Mercy, as to have none for thee now thou repentest. Doth he stretch out his hands all the day long to a wicked and gain-saying People, to

them that will have none of him? And will he not embrace him that will have him, that desires after him? Doth Christ so lament over Jerusalem, that she would not be gathered, when he often would have gathered her, and says, If thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace; and brings in this, even thou, even thou rebellious, murderous Jerusalem, even thou mightest have had Mercy: and sadly concludes, that she had outstod her day; and will he not rejoice over one that sees what makes for his peace, and gladly embraces it, and comes in? Do you think he is only earnest for them that will not accept of it, like some of us that have a mind to save our Gift and our Credit too, would offer it earnestly, and invite him strongly, if we thought he would not take it, such things are common amongst men: but certainly the Lord invites none, but those that should find welcome if they would come in: surely if the vilest Sinners are invited to come, Penitents need not doubt of their being received. Besides, thou knowest what Mercies he afforded thee, in the time of thy Ignorance: He may say to thee, I girded thee when thou knewest me not, As he says to Cyrus, Many a Mercy he prepared thee with, that at last his goodness might draw thee to repentance, and will he have no mercy now thou dost repent! It can never be: If he had intended to flay thee, he might have taken the advantage of the time, when thou wert in enmity to him, he might have come on thee in thy blindness, and have destroyed thee, and have had thee speechless; but now to draw thy heart after him, to throw thee off, is the unlikeliest thing that ever was. Oh no, He that could forbear thee when thou sinnedst, sure will pardon when thou repentest. His carriage towards others that will not repent, and towards thee while thou wert impenitent, give thee no ground to have hard thoughts of him, as if he should refuse thee upon thy repentance. He doth not use to cast Souls from him, that ever loved him:

It is not consistent with the Tenor of the Gospel, and his hitherto constant dealings with Sinners in the world, to cast any Souls into Hell, that will hang about him. Most that go into Hell are easilier shaken off, then thy Soul in this state would be.

4. The greatest of the work is done already, Christ hath paid the price already: If Christ were yet to die, thou mightest be more doubtful, thou mightest think it would hardly be that ever he would come into the World; for such a (One) as thou, (though that which did bring him when he came, would again bring him if it were to do again) Thou wouldst have made an ill believer under the Law, to have believed in a Christ to come, that art so hard to believe, now the price is paid, and the Work is completed and done by him, as it is. It is but now his giving thee a part in his satisfaction, which is a small thing towards the painful making of it. A part in that full Price he hath laid down, will serve thy turn, which how easy a matter is it for him to bestow on thee, that stuck not at the main, of laying down his life for thee. The King was offended that when his Oxen and Fatlings were killed, and all things were ready, that they came not to the Marriage. If men should come to their friends to feast with them, when they are not provided, it is some trouble; but when the dinner is provided, and persons are invited, persons provide nothing, but what they would have merrily eaten, and they take it ill if persons do not come. The Feast is prepared, and God had rather you came then not. If Christ died for us when we were Enemies, how much more shall we be saved by his life. If Christ when we were Enemies laid down the Price, now we would be Friends, will he not give us a share in it; shall we not be saved now he is risen, and gone into Heaven, and the worst is over: No more remains to be done, but giving out shares and portions, in that which is done so fully already. Thou wouldst hardly believe he would come

to die for thee, if it were to do now (as certainly he did when he did it, upon as little desert in the Creature as thou canst show in thyself) if thou canst not believe he will give thee a part in the price he hath paid already.

5. He mightily enjoins mercy, and exalts it among men, and he enjoins us to show mercy after his example. Be merciful as he is merciful, and forgive as God for Christ's sake forgives you. He bids you do nothing in this case, but what he will do the like upon yourself if need be. The Servant that pulled his Fellow-servant by the Throat, if he had found God such a one, as thou thinkest him to be, he had not been so dashed as he was, when his Lord called him to account: He might have said, Why should I forgive him, when thou wilt not forgive me, five hundred Pence with me is as great a Sum to lose, as a thousand Talents with thee, if thou wilt have all, I must get what I can in of what is owing me towards paying of thee. But you find the Lord had forgiven the thousand Talents, when he reproveth the exaction of the five hundred Pence upon the Brother. O this pity is to be found amongst Christians, and it is in resemblance to Christ's pity to Sinners, and yet thou doubttest whether it be in Christ, or no! How odious is unmercifulness amongst men? David was wroth with the man that had done this thing, because he had no pity; as if a man, and no pity, was a thing intolerable. The Senator that killed the Sparrow which flew into his hand for refuge from the Hawk, was condemned to die, as unfit to be a Governor, or to live, that would show Cruelty to that which flew to him for refuge. Dost thou fly to Christ pursued by Sin, Satan and thine own Conscience, and dost think, he will slay thee? The Emperor that proclaimed, Who ever would bring in such a Rebel, should have so much money; The man came in, and demanded the Reward himself, and the Emperor gave it him Can such Nobleness be found amongst the Creatures? And will you think the Lord will not pardon and

reward in like manner the Sinner that brings in himself the Rebell unto him. If a man could afford to do thus bountifully, God can much more. Edward 1. King of England, when a Servant of his on the other side of the River, crossed him in his sport, and he said, he would have rebuked him, if he had him on that side; the man seemed to set him at defiance in that he was on the other side: Whereupon he makes his Horse take the River, and ventures his life to revenge himself on him; the man seeing his Rage, never over-ran him, but came and held his Neck to his Sword. This submission of his cooled him, which the River could not, and he put up his Sword and touched him not. Satis est prostrasse leoni. And do you think the Father of Mercies, Graciousness, and Goodness, will come so far behind, as to slay the Soul that falls down at his Feet, and humbly comes in unto him. Certainly you distrust that in God in the present case, which you would not doubt to obtain from many a man in the like case. It is man's Glory (and what not God's too!) to pass by a transgression.

6. He hath showed mercy when he hath declared Judgment: and will he not show mercy when he hath promised mercy! He said plainly? Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be over-thrown. Jonah took it absolutely, thought much it was not over-thrown; there was a reserve still for repentance, a tacit exception, if they repented not. And do we think when he promises Mercy upon this condition expressly, that he will refuse to show it? Mercy rejoices against Judgment. The Penitent hath always such influence on God, that Judgments threatened still must be put by, if repentance come in, and shall Mercy promised to Repentance be denied? Jonah saw God so inclined to Mercy, that (he says) he thought it was no going of a Message of Anger from him, to say peremptorily, Wrath should follow his prediction: Sure then, if Jonah had been sent of our Message, he would have gone merrily

upon it, to show Mercy to the Penitent; this was a Message of a matter of the right kind, and that which the Lord hath evermore been famous for, and never failed the Messenger in performance of it, and fulfilling according to his word. Mercy breaks forth when Judgments are threatened, upon the tacit condition of repentance; can we think Mercy will be denied, where it is expressly promised to the Penitent? Repentance is a thing the Lord hath always so looked at, that he hath abated of a Judgment threatened, for but the show of it. Ahab did but humble himself in Sackcloth, and walked softly, and the Lord shows Elijah this, and defers the Judgment for it to his sons days. Certainly if he had seen Ahab repent in earnest, he that delayed it for a show, would have taken it quite off for true repentance, and would have said, I will not bring this Judgment upon him at all. — O the gracious disposition of God to show mercy, may encourage the Penitent to hope in his mercy, in this plain case he is in.

7. Christ Jesus did never refuse any diseased person that came to him, and needed his help, when he was on Earth. He took on him our Infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. Though this was especially done when he suffered for our sins on the Cross, as you have it applied elsewhere; yet in this place, Christ when he saw the sicknesses of our nature, that came on us for sin, intending to satisfy for sin, he was so pitiful, that he took himself concerned in those pitiful Maladies, he found upon the Nature which he had assumed, and as fellow feeling with us took part with us therein, and stirred up his Divine Power for the release of the several persons so affected. Now if Christ did never turn back any poor diseased Creature, that came to him with their Bodies, but still healed them all, and this further usually began at pardon of sin with all his Patients, and healed the Soul into the Bargain, though seldom that was looked for by them. Do we think that he will turn

off thee, that comest to him with a diseased Soul? And further seekest for pardon of sin in the first and chief, and only place: If Jesus Christ turn a diseased Soul off that comes unto him for Cure, he doth that which he hath said, he will not do; nay, I may say, he doth that which he never yet did: And further thou findest him much changed from that gracious disposition that he had when he was here. And sure that can never be. He is not on the Throne of Mercy in Heaven, an Advocate with the Father for his, &c. to have less pity and mercy then heretofore he had for poor Sinners. It is triumphant Mercy now, and therefore what he did before, he will do that, and much more now; He owes not a Mite to Justice, he is come through all the Demands, goes to the Father, released from the Grave, sin having no more to charge upon him, and therefore now he is in his Royalty of Mercy, and Interest for us, and so sure can want of nothing which ever he showed of pity to poor Creatures while he was here. Now did he ever do as thou fanciest he will do with thee?

8. Will he not show pity? How come men to show pity to you? Ministers that see you in trouble that can pity you, their hearts are turned towards you for all your Aversions and untowardness heretofore, upon a change: You are to them as if you had never rebelled, and never been otherwise. In our esteem and affection, we look upon you in unregeneracy, and converted as not the same persons. Our hearts are opened to you upon your coming in; and do you think that we that are but finite, straightened, hard-hearted Creatures, can have so much affection towards you; and God who is infinite in mercy, that is the Fountain of all pity, that he can want favor for you? Sure if the Masters chief Stewards be so kind to you, they have some Intimation from their Master of his good will towards you: or they are not so good to be so forward of themselves; or sure they do think it is not

against their Masters mind, or they durst never show that favor to you which they do That men should pity you, it is a sign that God then may, or that he doth pity you in their pity. I will show mercies to you, that he may have mercy upon you. God shows mercy in making men show mercy and pity to others in their Distresses. When men show pity, they are set on work by God, The Lord it is that hath moved their hearts to compassion, or they had been unmoved. Surely there is something in it, that thy Minister should say to thee as Samuel, As for me, the Lord forbid but that I should pray for you: nay, the Lord forbid, that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you, I should sin if I did it not; nay, further to say, I will teach you the good and the right way, &c. Sure the Lord hath some mercy himself for me, when his Officers have their hearts so sensibly set and inclined towards me: sure you have high thoughts of us (as much too high, as of him too low.) If you think we could move our own hearts to have any pity towards you, or to take any care of you.

9. Can you be worse than those to whom he hath showed mercy? O what Sinners Repentance hath brought off! The first of the sinning kind as to man is generally believed, were saved: Adam and Eve the Ringleaders of this dangerous course; these escaped. God put forth a trial of his power upon them. The Devil had not the plunder of the first Battle, could not carry it off the Field. Adam and Eve escaped. Thou talkest of great sins. Alas, what was David's? What was Manasseh? That filled Jerusalem with Murders, Witchcraft, and what not? That entangled the people in so much sin, that God would not pardon it afterwards, but Plagued the Land for it when he was gone; yet this Manasseh comes off, and the Lord is entreated of him. What should we say of Mary Magdalene, of the very Jews that Crucified Christ? Saul that persecuted him? If you think he did that only to Paul, did

that once which he will do no more; the Text tells you, he did it for a Pattern to them which should come after. The Lord will show mercy to as great sinners, as any he hath saved yet, if they repent and come in unto him. The Lord hath a design to magnify the Attribute of his Mercy as much in the work of Redemption, as he did the Attribute of his Power in the work of Creation: and therefore it is a dangerous thing to talk of great Sins, before infinite Mercy. Consider, if as much Mercy as brought off these Sinners in Scripture, will bring off thee, thou mayest hope: for God hath done nothing to any, but he will do the like to thee, if thou repent and come in as they did.

10. God hath excepted no penitent sinner, what ever his sin be. And besides, if penitent Sinners be not saved, who shall? God doth not say, if such Sinners come, I will forgive them, and others I will not, but all sorts of Sinners, unrighteous persons, indefinitely, let them come, and I will show mercy unto them.

The very sin against the Holy Ghost, Divines conceive it might be pardoned for the sin, but that God never gives repentance for it. The Devil that tempted the young man, and he fled to Christ's Death; I, says the Devil, How will you prove he died for you? Nay, says the young man, prove that he did not die for me. So how will you prove that mercy doth not belong to you? For if penitent Sinners find not Mercy, what is this Throne of mercy for? It is for somebody, the Angels that stand never needed it, the Angels that fell must not have it, the Saints in Glory they are secured, wicked men on Earth matter not for it: There remains therefore but one sort of men more, and those are Sinners that repent of sin, and these are they this mercy is on purpose for. Thou talkest thou art unworthy, was ever any worthy? Thou art but unworthy, and never any was saved by this Mercy that did deserve it.

It remains therefore clear, that God is willing, that if thou repent, God will receive thee.

3. And sure thou art willing: This is supposed all along in the former head; the matter is at a nearer issue than is ordinarily thought of, we need not solicitously inquire, whether God be willing to save a Penitent, or no? Know but that thou thyself art willing, that thou art a Penitent, and thou hast the answer. It is brought to that now; but if the Fit of doubting be on thee, thou wilt make a shift to get hold here, and thou wilt to pleasure this humor and distemper of thy soul, question this, whether thou art willing or no? Whether thou repentest or no! If the doubt be only here, thou wilt doubt here though till the other was cleared, this on thy part was little doubted of, well then to help thee about what God hath wrought in thee, and to clear thy grounds of hope from hence, and though thou mayest think none knows thy mind better than thou; yet give me leave to desire thy answer to a few questions, whereby I think thou mayest clear to thyself, that it sticks not at thy willingness, not so much to prove what is in thee, as if anything of thy own, as what the Lord hath wrought for thee.

Hast not thou forsaken the old way? Given over some gross sins which before thou couldst have lived in, nay didst take delight in? Hast thou not resolved against them, however thou farest for thine acceptance with Christ upon thy coming in? Just like a rebel that when proclamation of pardon is out, upon his laying down of his Arms, and coming into the King. It may be at present he dares not show his face to the King, to claim the benefit of his pardon and the Kings favor, but he lays down his arms and will fight no more. Why this is a good beginning: so one may take some Souls between their sins, and their actual sense of their application of Christ. Thou hast at present laid aside thy hostility, thou hast done with thy rebellion, Though

thou darest not yet see the Kings face, yet thou hast done fighting against him, as Saul when stricken down in his way to Damascus, why he had done at first dash with his commission from the High Priests and Elders, he had enough of persecuting, and whether Christ would have him or no, he at present had done with his breathing out threatening against the brethren, he would stand by at no more stoning's, nor bind no more for Jerusalem, that followed this way. It is a good preface, a good beginning, that thou art standed in thy former course, that thou hast laid down thy Hostility, wilt fight no more against Christ, Like the man whom a Minister overtook after a Sermon, and asked him how he liked the Minister, and what he remembered, says the man, I know not, but this I am resolved, I will never do as I have done. So thou art resolved never to do as thou hast done, thou hast enough of thy swearing, Sabbath breaking prayerlessness in family, and in secret, drinking, opposing the good way, sitting with the scornful, mocking Religion, using any unjust way of living. Thou wilt no more of that whatever comes of thee, why sure this is something.

2. Art thou not willing to do now whatever the Lord would have thee to do? Art thou not reconciled to Christ's way of Government? The course that sometime thou couldst not agree unto by any means, art thou not now pretty well minded towards it! Canst thou not fancy an Holy life! The time hath been when thou couldst not away with a Holy life of anything, but now thou art better persuaded towards it. Canst thou not say as Paul: Lord what wilt thou have me to do? The time was when thou wantedst no Work of thine Own, thou wouldst not have asked a Minister what course of life thou shouldst follow, thou hadst a way of thine own thou likedst better. The high Priest and Elders should tell thee what to do. But now it is at this. What God will have done. And thou dost not stick at any of the Lord's Commands, If

he will have thee give, forgive, take pains in Religion, strive at the straight gate, whatever it is, thou art willing now of it, so be it, thou mayest find favor in the Lord's eyes. Why a natural heart sticks at many of the Lord's precepts and would come to Christ, but with reservations, some things they have a mind of, they will have liberty for whether they be right or no. And therefore if thou, in thy troubles art brought to an universal desire after the will of God, that thou chooseth the way of his statutes, and art willing of every duty, sure then there is some good thing wrought upon thee.

3. Canst thou be contented without a Christ The time hath been, that if thou hadst meat, and fine clothes, and money, and friends, respect, &c: thou couldst have been satisfied, but now all those things will not content thee, thou art troubled and unsatisfied. What is the matter, is anything taken from thee of what thou hadst? Or must we have more of them? Or rather if one would make a bargain with thee, can these things serve thee? Alas thou sayest take them all for a Christ. I cannot live of them as heretofore, If I have all these things and God frown on me what availeth it me! These are not the things will serve my turn, these are toys for children, that know not what better things mean, but I am undone, if I be put off with these things, I must have a Christ or I can have no ease. Nay I would part with any or all these things for him, rather than be without him. None but Christ, None but Christ, why sure this is a great matter thou art arrived unto. A naked Christ will serve a wounded soul. Thou sayest thou knowest not whether ever thou must have him or no, but thou art sick for him, thou keepest thy love for him, and thou canst not live without him. There is no offering to thee another match, nor any other thing in the stead of him. Now alas there are many a hundred can make a living, of many another thing, and would choose many a thing before they would speak of Christ.

4. What dost think by this very trouble of thine? Thy heart is no worse than it was before, but thou seest it now and didst not see it before, Thou didst as bad before as now, but thou couldst swallow things better then, than now, why sure then there is an alteration in thee. Once thou wouldst have said thy heart was good, and still this was thy plea, and now thou art fallen quite out with it, I tell thee this conceit of our own goodness is a miserable destructive principle, and that thou art thoroughly brought off that, is no small beginning, is no little in thy way towards God. I verily hope it is somewhat better, with thy heart, when thou art not so apt, to speak one good word for it, as heretofore. Thy very trouble is an argument of thy mending condition. Thou talkest there is nothing but what is of flesh in thee. I would allude to that of the blind man. Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and he hath opened mine eyes. And so this is a marvelous thing, that ye know not whence this work upon you is, that you conclude, there is nothing of God in it, when your eyes are thus opened, when the things that before were not noted, are now such loads and burdens to you, that such thoughts as these are made at all conscience of. Sure this is from above, that you are thus troubled for such inward spiritual things as you at. If grace would let you, you might be at ease as heretofore for anything I see. If former principles prevailed this trouble would have no ground.

5. Would you be willing to be as you were before, though you never be better, in respect of trouble, then you are now? If thou be not willing of Christ, will you turn back again? Live in the careless, regardless way you lived in heretofore? If you be indifferent, you will be ready enough to hearken to such a motion. But out of thy very trouble and anguish, thou settest up the head and sayest, nay for the old way, I will never turn back

again unto it, I am sad now, but this wilderness is better than Egypt, I am troubled, but this trouble is better than sin. I had rather be in this condition by far then be turned back to live in security and sin as heretofore: sure thou art better inclined than thou thinkest of.

And if in these particulars thou canst make out thy willingness, thy hopes are pretty clear, and thou mayest believe it will end well with thee.

But 4. Suppose thou scruplest thy own willingness, in some of these particulars, sayst at least thou canst not say these things by thyself. Thou canst not say thou art willing of all the Commands of God, and dost not so soberly desire Christ &c: Thou hast a mind to be dejected, and so thou wouldst put me off here, and conclude there is yet no hope for thee. But pray thy stay; suppose this, yet there is still hope for thee.

For 1. Thou mayst have these things really in thee, and yet not be able to apprehend them. Grace is one thing and sense of grace is another, It is one thing to know God, and another thing to know that we know him. Thou mayest be under a temptation a discouragement of soul, under the prevalency of bodily melancholy, and mayest not be able to see what God hath done for the. Thy face may shine as Moses did to others and yet thou thyself not see it.

2. Thou mayest have some of these if not all one dram of true grace must not go to Hell when signs are given; you must not say you need not the rest, when you find some, nor yet, that you have none because you find not all: but take notice of what you have, and seek for what is behind.

But 3. Suppose thou hast none yet if thou art willing to have them, there is help for thee. Thou mayest come to Christ for these things. Before thou leavest off for want of them, come to him to be supplied with them. If thou be not willing, If thou be willing to be made willing, If thou desirest, to

desire sincerely and more universally, there is something already, and the rest may be wrought for thee. One man comes to Christ doubting in part of his good will (as some imagine) and says, If thou wilt thou canst make me clean. Christ puts up this, and it passes, says he, I will be thou clean. Another comes and says, If thou canst do anything, help, Christ passes by this weakness too, and comes upon terms to that man to afford help unto him. When he says If thou can. Christ turns an if thou can, upon him. I can says Christ If thou canst believe. So thou for the pardon of sin mayest say, Lord if thou canst forgive such a sinner as I am, help me, says Christ, I can if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. The poor man could not say, and not lie, that he did believe, but he burst out with tears Lord I believe help my unbelief. I do believe, that is, I do desire to believe, I have some Faith and I would have the rest, Lord I would not say I had the condition, nor yet let thee go for want of it, there is a middle way, I need neither lie nor die. I come to thee for this Faith Lord I believe help my unbelief. So thy soul stirs a little, cry to God to help thee out with the rest. I desire, Lord help me to desire, I am willing, help my unwillingness, I would serve thee, help me in my great weakness. If I be not, Lord let the day of thy power come, and make me thoroughly willing. The poor man was very generally inclined, and yet with a little of Christ's dealing with him, he was suddenly brought to a notable closing with Christ; says Christ to him, dost thou believe in the Son of God? Alas says the man, Who is he Lord that I might believe on him? Says Christ. Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And the poor man then says. Lord I believe and worshiped him. Thou mayest not have such a distinct knowledge of Christ as thou shouldst have. But thou hast a general good will towards him, and if he would show himself to thee thou wouldst directly and distinctly close

with him, and fall down and worship him. This that is in thee may be made more particular, and instead of despairing with it, labor to have it increased, where it may be increased abundantly. Turn ye at my reproof, I will pour forth my spirit upon you, Do you offer for it, and I will help you, turn you and I will pour out my spirit, that will help you to turn thoroughly Obey the precept; and claim the promise. I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek thy servant. The poor soul cries. Lord I am astray I cannot come back again, I know not where I am, lost I am. I cannot find myself for thee, but thou knowest where to find me, thou knowest how to redeem me, thou knowest my wanderings, Lord seek me out. Lord do not lose me. Seek thy Servant. Why this way is left open to thee, whatever yet hinders thee, thou mayest beg of God to work they heart up unto it. This for the Fourth step.

5. God may suffer they troubles to abide with thee for many precious Reasons of good towards thee. Thou mayest be ready to say, But sure if God did intend to show mercy on me he would have done it before now, he would not have kept me off all this while if ever I must have come on, sure some token for good he would have showed ere now; If he had liked my coming. He would have made me welcome, signified his acceptance of my repentance before this, in some measure or other. But I shall to drive thy trouble past this stop, show thee that God may in love to thy soul at present withhold sensible comforts from thee. Many choice Reasons the Lord may have for his so doing.

1. God may withdraw, to make thee lay a solid foundation, not only for near sins but in humiliation for all former sins. The terror abides to search the sore to the bottom. God may intend to drive up thy humiliation for the very sins of thy youth. Ephraim bemoaned himself till he bore the reproach of his youth. And then God smiles on him, says he is a pleasant child. Alas,

if these sins should not be searched out, and should lie within unrepented of, thy matter would be foully huddled up, and when these things were at after searched for, it would mar all thy comforts again. God would make through work with thee. Thou wouldst it may be quit scores with God, draw gloves with him. That all that hath past should stand for nothing, and if thou mightest have pardon for all that is past, thou wouldst mend for the time to come: But this will not serve, thou must be willing to bring out the old score, thou must undo as much as in thee lies what before thou hast done, acknowledgment must be made, satisfaction to God and man as much as in you lies; or God will not be friends with you. You must be willing to take shame for your former doings, If you would find favor for the time to come, resolve therefore to do thy duty in this thing. Humble thyself for all former sins, hide nothing from God, make clear work, as far as you go, for what is past, and you are so far on your way towards comfort.

2. It may be, to search thy heart for some regarded sin, that God still frowns on thee. And indeed it would be sad for thee, if God should smile on thee, and any sin lodged in thy soul. The sin that troubles thee most, is not always the cause of thy trouble, that sin that is in open view, is not so dangerous, but it is the sin that lies in a corner, that says nothing, the thing thou least suspectest, that keeps thy wound from healing, something that is hidden from the Physician, that makes the physic will not work, something that is a sin, that thou wilt not have to be a sin, as David would be searched and tried, and if there was any way of wickedness in him. So there may be some hidden way of wickedness in thee, and till thou be willing to let Christ come into every room, to throw out what he will, to be absolute Lord in thy Soul, It is not for thy good that thou shouldst have comfort, Christ may have that of thee now that he knows he cannot have afterwards, and

therefore stands off, till thou be of a mind universally to close with him. It may be thou mayst live in passion, in the fashions of the world in the sin of usury, Wilt have something lawful which is not. If God love thee he will never let this way of wickedness remain in thee. The great matter of controversy that would make way for thy peace, is, whether Christ or thou shall make the Law? If Christ be admitted as the complete legislator, he will shortly come to thee, but till then he will stand off, as it is best for thee. And therefore in thy trouble do this duty, desire God to search thee, look to all thy ways, pray the Lord to show thee thy sin, that offends him, in the words of Elihu that which I see not, teach thou me, If I have done iniquity I will do no more, and this will bring the work up with thee.

3. God may withhold his face from thee to bring thee more clearly and universally over unto him, and this is much for thy good: Christ would have men count what it will cost them to be Christians when they come to him. The great question now upon thy turning is, as before said, who must give thee law! Whether thou or Christ, whether thou wilt do in all things as thou wilt or as thou hast been wont, or as the most use, or whether as Christ pleaseth in everything? Ephraim was chastised for he was a Bullock unaccustomed to the Yoke. Would not keep the furrows, nor draw quietly in his gears. God chastises him till he is tamed to his will, and now he says turn me Lord and I shall be turned. Why when he is of the mind that God should have the whole rule of him, then God pities him, and earnestly remembers him still, and will shortly hide himself no longer from him, will be kept no longer off him, I will have mercy on him, saith the Lord. It may be thou wouldst at first turn to him, wouldst leave some sins, and do some duties, but thou wouldst fain have an hand in the bargain, wouldst make one end of it, why this will not be. Christ says we must then each keep our own.

If thou wilt not part with thy estate, give, and forgive, and submit to whatever I require, It must stand as it doth, I shall not declare my acceptance of thee. But now when the soul is brought up to Christ's terms, that it sticks at nothing, (as terrors are the likeliest of anything to bring thee unto it) then Christ will make no long tarrying from thee.

4. He may withhold from thee to make thee a right bred Christian, A Christian of the right kind. There is much difference amongst Christians; some build their house quickly, but it is without foundation, and so stands not. Thou art kept in a condition to lay a good Foundation. Some Men are Christians they know not why, and they become Apostates they know not how. Some have but some overly-sideway preparations for Christ, take up religion as the most convenient way for the present. But now thou payest too dear for Christ, to let him hereafter go for nothing. Thou art brought to see thy need to him, to have the experience of the Gospel mysteries, to find it in thy soul, what it is to be rescued out of the hands of Satan by the Merits of Christ, feels how hardly thou art fetched off, and this is like to lay a foundation of a more mortified, spiritual, lively Christian, then if thou camest to comfort sooner. It is said of Rehoboam. He did evil because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord. He was not fixed in his heart for God. He was not thoroughly foundationed for Religion, his heart was never right set, from a sound inward principle of holiness, and so upon occasion he did fall off to do evil in the sight of the Lord. Certainly those Christians for the most part prove best, that were either bred in the time of persecution, wherein nothing but grace durst have looked out for Christ, and there were daily trials to keep corruption down. Or else that are bred and brought out by inward sharp terrors though in a time of peace. For this makes them know themselves the better ever after. The March birds are always the best

Singers. And therefore thou mayest take comfort in it, that thou art in the way not to be cast off, but to be bred right, to have thy heart set right towards Heaven. And therefore desire to bring up the building with thee. Thou had better have thy troubles continue, then have them not cured. Better be in fears, then have hopes without a foundation.

But then 6. Having brought up thy matters thus far, It may be yet thou mayest have no comfort. Thou art humbled for Old sins, and all sins, and brought to Christ universally and art thoroughly humbled to see thy need to Christ, and wouldst lay the foundation on the rock, yet thou hast no comfort: why soul, Thy duty is not to despair now, nor to vex and fret thyself with doubts about thy estate. There is other work to be done. And labor to do the Duty of this thy condition.

1. It is thy Duty in this case. To study to reform to thy utmost. And to Order thy conversation a right, avoid all sin, walk with God in all Duty. If thou canst not prevail with God for comfort, go to him for strength. In a sense of your utter unability beg of him to enable you to serve him however he deals with you. Cease to do evil, learn to do well, whatever is sin meddle not with it, and what is duty go about it, I will walk with a perfect heart in the midst of my house, says David. O when wilt thou come unto me: till he comes walk so, and this is the way to have him come to thee. Let it be the daily exercise to have a conscience always void of offense towards God and Man. Live like a Subject till favor comes.

2 Be diligent in the use of all means public and private. Lie in Christ's way still, though thou thinkest he hath hitherto passed by thee. Satan would draw many off from the use of means, tells them thy aggravate their Sin, by going to the Sacrament, and that their Prayer is abomination. But let me hint this to thee, that if thou be as bad as may be and thy duties may not be

accepted, yet it is better to do them as well as thou canst, then not to do them at all. It is an excellent observation one hath on Simon Magus that Peter bids him pray though he was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of Iniquity, If it were Lawful and a duty for Simon Magus to pray, then sure thou mayest make bold to do thy duty too, thou canst not be worse than the Apostles says he was. Satan would scruple thee about duties, for he knows that is the way by which virtue and comfort should come from Christ unto thee. But keep close to Prayer whatever comes. And for the Sacrament, alas if thy heart be bad though thou goest it will not mend by staying away, God may in someone Ordinance when thou thinkest not of it, give thee the comfort together of all the Ordinances in which thou hast waited upon him, and hitherto received nothing. He sets up a Portion for every child that is not at present fit to have it, and thou mayest have all together. But be sure to continue in Prayer and hearing, and at Sacraments if admitted to them.

3. Be diligent in your lawful calling. Let every man abide with God as he is called. Work with thy hands the thing that is honest, Lawful work is God's work for the time of it, as well as hearing for the time of that, fall not out with thy business, serve God in thy outward business. Let not Religion be reproached to spoil Servants or Workmen. Let not the World be the worse for it. Believe God is served, and may be enjoyed in those businesses. Many have many troublous thoughts for want of lawful thoughts about their Business. Many people have much trouble for want of better Business. Mr. Ball (as I have heard,) when One complained to him of many sad thoughts he gave them a task of getting Ecclesiastes without Book as an only Remedy. Which when the party looked strangely at, he told him that he perceived much of his trouble was for want of employment, and

that would set him on work. And so certainly diligence in an honest way is good Work for thee.

4. Abide thus in this course waiting for Comfort. He that believeth doth not make hast. Be not too hasty with Christ; set not him a time. But wait till he please to come. It is good that a man should both Hope, and quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord: quietly tarry till the Lord comes. For consider thou may well afford to wait.

1. Christ waited a great while on thee, before ever thou wouldst Offer to come to him. It is not long that thou ever framed for it, and art thou taking off time and quarrelling that he comes not out at first to welcome thee.

2. Christ is worth thy waiting for, It is no inferior business thou tarriest about. One glimpse of his favor is more worth then all the world. Thou wilt never repent groaning for such a birth.

3. Thou art not so good but thou may be willing to tarry. Alas to have thee quarrelling at the foot of the ladder, that the pardon is not absolute, and that it came no sooner: It doth not become thee. The mercy is free. If thou considerest how infinite it is that ever it should come to thee, thou wilt say there is no such equivalency on thy part, but thou may thankfully tarry a time for it.

4. Thou hast no whither else to go. No other work will please thee. We say, when a friend is not just in the way, Come, stay, he will come anon, you have no other Business. You had as good stay here as walk about, &c. If you have any other Work you can do, you had best go about it, you are not yet fitted for Christ. But if you cannot turn aside after vain things. Then stay here. This way of holiness is the best way, and therefore you may afford to tarry in it. And blessed be God thy Heart is so disposed.

5. This condition of waiting may be a very safe condition for thee. Thou little thinkest that there are such difficulties about managing Comfort, as there are. These troubles keep thee out of harms. Thou art now too feared, to do as some do. Though thou droopest, it keeps thee from security and levity, and many a scandal, that some of another temper are put to it to repent of. It saves thee some repenting work.

6. For anything that is done of all this while Christ may cure thee in one moment. Thou thinkest matters are gone a great way with thee, that thou art very far out of sight. Alas thou art within one glimpse of a perfect cure. Whenever the moment comes wherein Christ will appear, he can notwithstanding all that is done, make all clear in thee. It is but causing his face to shine, but setting on one Word, but rectifying thy heart, in someone thing, and thou shalt be whole. One look of Christ can mend all, and prayer may soon fetch it. Who would not wait if he thought he was so near.

7. His time is the best and the fittest time. Your time is always ready, (says Christ) but my time is not yet. He will exalt you in due time. The vision will speak, it will not lie. He that says more than is so, lies in word, he that promises more then he will do, lies in deed. But it will be in its appointed time, Saul waited but not long enough, in worldly matters men must wait to the end of the day in their tenders, till sunsetting, or they cannot escape undamnified. And art thou talking of breach of day, when it is not yet the third hour of the day? Why it is a great while tonight Christ may come yet if it were nearer sunsetting then it is, It may be in this case as in Daniel's Vision, the thing is true, though the time appointed may be long. But Christ will not fail his own in the best and fittest time.

8. The longer Christ tarryes before he comes the longer he may tarry when he doth come. When he hath forsaken a little moment. He gathers oft with

everlasting mercies. He may not come till thou art fully prepared to make him so welcome when he doth come, that he may never leave thee. They that have a small fine, pay a good round yearly rent and they which fine hard pay the less rent. It is hard to say which is better. Here is a conveniency and equality both ways, if thou be not soon comforted as some others are, thou mayst have thy comforts more through and abiding when they come.

9. However Heaven will make amends for all. If thou get it there, it will bear charges abundantly. A waiting soul may get Heaven, as well as a soul ravished with joys in believing, And therefore wait: a man ill mounted riding to such a place, others overtake him and overgo him, but yet this is still his comfort, they tell him he is in the way. To be cast behind and lose the way were sad, but this is comfortable that others can say, I left him on the road, he is in the right way, though he drive somewhat heavily. And when he is gotten to the City, he forgets soon his less pleasant Travel, he is glad he is There, and they that ride faster, and easier can be no more. So though thou thinkest others out go thee in gifts, parts, and abilities for service, yet Thou art in the road, and if at last thou overtake Them in Heaven it will serve thy turn. Thou may be as welcome at thy journeys end as he that came thither with more State, and ease, Then thou hast done.

10. If thou hadst comfort it should not be, to set thee at Liberty ease and idleness. He that would fain have assurance That he might unyoke in his Christian Course, doth not desire it aright, nor is like To have it, surely thou must labor as much from comfort to improve it, as Thou dost for comfort to attain at, Labor we must, and Therefore resolve in it, and patiently wait in this good way. It is a great question whether be the harder work to get, or to use comforts aright, to keep from impatience in the want of them, or

security in the enjoyment of Them. Each condition hath its Exercise; Though the former hath less hazard in it. It may suffice to have said all this, to the clearing of the hopes in respect of comfort to those that are thus spiritually tossed at their first setting out.

CHAP. X.

The doubtful cases of such as have made longer Profession briefly discussed from the Observation.

2. TO THOSE THAT have made longer profession, that are walking in darkness and have no light. Many of these are severally troubled in doubts about their Estate. This doctrine seasonably presses them to hope, and it would find matter for them in their several capacities, but to speak to these particularly, would swell the discourse; I shall therefore speak something in the general, and the Spirit of God is able to melt it into the particular conditions of troubled Souls, that are of this sort.

And so 1. Take notice, That whatever was urged as a ground of Hope to the profane, belongs to you much more. You are as near as one of them if all be to begin now. Thou criest out of a Hypocrite, as if his condition was worse than any ones. But,

1. Take notice, Everyone is not an hypocrite that only wants strong grace, many they try themselves for the truth of grace, by the signs of the degrees of grace. True grace is one thing and strong and grown grace is another.

2. He is not a Hypocrite, that is not a complete Christian. A Christian may be in preparation for Christ, and if not thoroughly come over, yet still he is

no impostor, only in the way to a true settled state.

3. He is not a Hypocrite that hath some hypocrisy in him. None complain so of a bad heart as they who have the best Heart. But if Hypocrisy be found amongst other sins. If it be not allowed nor entertained with delight. The soul shall not be accounted with as the Abettor of such a way. Peter for once dissembled yet not a Hypocrite for so doing.

2. Though thou be a Hypocrite, yet there is hope; for thee, what though nothing but an outside profession? (For that string many one is harping on) yet sure thou art as near as the Drunkard, profane person can be. Never tell me that profession should hinder you in your coming to Christ: Athanasius wished all men were Hypocrites, That they had been all so good as Hypocrites are, For God hath more exemplary honor from external conformity, then from open profaneness. And further it cannot hinder your coming in.

1. Profession hath kept you from many gross sins, which would have been heavy on you if now to reckon for. Alas if thoughts of Evil have been so tedious to you, what then would you have done, if these thoughts had been words, and these Words actions. Therefore your profession hath not hindered you thus far.

2. Profession hath entitled you to many serious Christians who would not cease to pray for you, and would not easily lay their hands off you, for the Hopes they once had of you, you are hereby drawn to God's children who will be sure to stick close to you and pull hard before they loose you.

3. Profession hath inured you to the means. This is the way to get comfort, many a startled soul knows not duties, nor how to frame to them. But now profession hath taught thee the manner of the God of the land and in this thou art beforehand. For this is the way to have comfort, or have the Heart

brought over, if yet thou fall short in this work. Many a new convert knows not how to set upon the duties of Religion whence he might receive strength and comfort, which is a great disadvantage to him. Now thy profession befriends thee with this benefit. Thou art well used to Prayer, and reading, and hearing &c. which is a good Thing beforehand in this matter.

4. All the danger in profession, this very fear of thine about it, takes away. That Hypocrites are in more danger than others, is not as if this sin was more unlike to be pardoned than another, but because this kind of Sinners seldom, or never, repent, and come in, as other sinners do. Hypocrisy hinders not pardon so oft as it hinders repentance. Now if this be thy fear and thy burden, there is not this danger of thee. Profession if not sincere, it is dangerous only in this, when it is rested on, when it is made a Christ, when men are thereby whole, and need not the Physician, and so are hindered from coming to Christ for thorough healing. But when the soul is sensible of it, and strives to come to Christ notwithstanding it, there is no incapacity upon it, more than on any other state for its acceptance with Christ. The Harlots and Publicans that enter into the kingdom of Heaven before Scribes and Pharisees; It is not meant of Heaven above; for Scribes and Pharisees as such, and Harlots and Publicans as such, stand at an equal distance to glory. A profane man dying so, cannot be saved no more than a Hypocrite that dies so. But the Kingdom of Heaven is taken here as frequently in the N.T. For the Kingdom of Grace, for the Kingdom of the Gospel, and so the meaning of it is, Harlots and Publicans, are sooner converted, brought to repentance, to close with the Gospel-Kingdom, than the other are. Now this doth not imply that no Pharisees should come in, nor that they should be less welcome if they did come in, than Harlots and Publicans. Nay sure if professors come to Christ to deny their own

Righteousness, come off the condition that it is so hard to come off from, they should be the rather entertained. It is not profession that hinders acceptance unless it hinder repentance, if it hinder not coming, it cannot hinder your welcome. Paul was a Pharisee a liver without the Law, yet Paul, when repented, was received as soon as any other Sinner. The Similitude in that other place of the two Sons who were asked to Work in the Vineyard. The one denied, the other broke his promise, now as the former repented of his unmannerly denial, and went, so if the other had repented of his unfaithful breach of promise, and had gone too, no doubt he had found acceptance. Thou talkest of an almost Christian. But sure an almost Christian may be an altogether Christian, or else Paul had prayed for this in vain: For that place, Better never to have known the way of God &c. This is not to this purpose.

For 1. It is spoken of such Christians as were turned Seducers, Ringleadres of Heresies, Persecutors, Wolves, that were risen up not sparing the flock. Thine is not any gross apostasy from profession, but only a discovery of insufficiency. And

2. It is meant of them as finally persisting in that state. It may be since thou professedst, thou mayest have fallen by some great sin, but thou hast no heart to continue in it. It lies not quiet in thy bosom, thou hast no rest in thy bones by reason of it, Thy Hypocrisy if such, is not maintained, and thou art weary of the state and willing to come off from it, these very Apostates if they had repented, there was hopes of their yet coming off. And therefore by all this it appears that they fear and trouble doth take off the danger of thy profession, the foolish virgins if they had mist their oil in time it had been happy for them. If thou beest one of them thou hast this advantage that thou missest oil, before they that sell it have shut up their

shops. There is yet hope in this thing. It appears then that all the encouragements that have been given to that other sort, of new beginners, do belong to you much more, you may set in as beginners, and share with them and welcome. All those comforts do belong to you. Besides a gross mistake may hereby I hope in some measure be removed that many a soul thinks their hope is behind them altogether, that they must either evidence it from what is past already or else have none the matter is not so, Thou art as free to take Christ as any other man. It thou canst not clear it from thy profession already that thou hast taken him, thy profession puts no incapacity upon thee but thou mayest set in for him now as well as any man. And

2. There is hopes for you. For God may withdraw from you (as he withholds from the other) for choice ends of good unto you. Though you walk in darkness and have no light, yet this may be for your interest exceedingly.

1. God may do it to fetch some sin out of thee. There is some evil way in thee, some way of lying, some way of false gain, some way of pride, humorsomeness, indulged passion, &c: no marvel if thou be one of a troubled spirit. Much if not most usual trouble of spirit is observed to arise (as occasioned at least) either,

1 Out of melancholy as one in that bodily distemper (Mr. Baxter says) one may as well cure a man of a palsy by a Sermon, as such a man.

2. Or out of ignorance of the nature and mystery of Grace by Christ the tenor of the Gospel covenant.

Or 3. From some disobedience now, it may be for something of this last kind, and it is fatherly in him to withhold from thee till this evil way be rooted out.

2. It may be to fetch thee on to some further degree of Holiness. There are after work of conversion. And the change they make are as considerable almost, as if never any work had preceded. The disciples who had left all for Christ, yet they must be converted again, and more converted to this grace of humility, which yet was wanting in them. God will afford comforts at first on those terms, on which after he will not continue them. He will bear with that in a beginner, that after he will stand upon to have it mended. He will not carry always towards us as babes, he looks we should grow towards strong men in Christ. New wine must not be put in to old Bottles. At first he would have thee spared in some things, but he expects that thou shouldst in time get thy bottles so renewed, as to hold the strongest Wine he hath for them: And so he withdraws from thee now; not because thou art worse than formerly but because thou art not better. He hath a design not to cast thee of, but, to put thee forward by this withdrawment. Some after work is on sort, It is not if I am to be converted now, O I had nothing before; thou art mistaken. Some may have been before, and some may be to be added still; God will have thee of the fashions of the world, more humble, close and serious then formerly, nothing so like to make thee a right mortified Christian, as terrors are.

3. He may design thou shouldst be more established and settled then heretofore. He that hath his comforts dearest, usually hath them surest. Thou knowest how thou camest by Christ, and so art like to keep thy hold of him. The spouse that had lost her beloved when she found him, she would not let him go, she charges by all the Hinds and Roes of the field, that they should beware of awaking him. Christ is gotten into the believers heart, he charges the affections to keep the lumber of the world, and the lusts of the flesh at a distance, that they awaken not Christ, nor disturb his

soul and him together. O such a one came not so easily by him, as to give way to Lusts, to lose him for trifles as many do. Thou art like of any one, To go through the Wilderness leaning on him. Thou hast come to Christ so importantly that thou canst not trifle with him. Thy terrors are like the wind that shakes the tree to make them more rooted. The winter frost nips the trees at present to make them more fruitful: So these troubles of thine will tend to thy greater settlement and make thee more steadfast in the Lord.

If thou hast brought the matter to waiting thou shalt never lose the thing, nor yet thy waiting for it. If thou hast searched thy heart for sin, and about duty, and puttest thyself to God to be searched, and sayest thou shalt search and find none, no sin that I love and delight in. but had rather have it taken away, then to have it tarry, you shall find you shall be considered herein. Now as long as any sin remains in this kind that the soul retains and from which it will not part. Christ may answer such a one, the matter sticks not at me. Thou art not yet prepared thou art not yet resolved on the match for thine own part. But if it become clearly to this, that the matter is at waiting, thou wilt find that either 1. Christ will come speedily; or 2. make it easy to thee to wait for him, (as if he do either, it will serve thee, and be a great mercy to thee,) and 3. When he comes he will abundantly recompense his delay, a small moment I have forsaken thee, but with everlasting kindness will I gather thee. And therefore study to bring it to this and thou wilt have no reason to cease from hoping in such a way.

3. Consider you are not alone of God's children in this affliction. God hath had many of his children in this wilderness, hath made their valley of Achor their door of Hope. David, and Heman, and Hezekiah. &c, now this sure might stay thy heart a little in this condition of thine, to think,

1. That many of God's eminent servants have been thus heretofore. 2. That many of God's children besides thee are so now or have been.

3. That it is a condition many have escaped from, many have blessedly been delivered out of this state. A disease many have been recovered from, and few have perished of: a curable, a comfortable disease.

4. It is the condition, which God hath still chosen to lead his best children through; eminentest Christians, for life, and experience, God hath thus trained them. Therefore this might stay thee at present, thou art under the chastisement of Sons, the discipline of Children, in these bitterest conflicts thou canst be in, as to instance, Jonah said, he was cast out of God's sight, yet he would look again towards God's holy Temple. He thought in the Whales belly he should never have been seen nor found out more, but he would have the other look at Christ (for the Temple was a type of him) before he quite gave up all, and you know he was brought out of that miserable deep, and manifold prison again. Ephraim is bemoaning himself. For afflictions that stuck by him, God chastised him, and he was chastised. God makes afflictions to tarry if he sets them on, he was likewise troubled with an unruly heart, Was like a Bullock unaccustomed to the Yoke. Yet he begs of God to turn him, and this bemoaning Ephraim is a pleasant Child in God's eyes and he remembers him still, nay earnestly remembers him still, and will have mercy on him. The Church concludes herself to be cut off, and laid in the dungeon and a stone upon her, made sure for coming forth, yet she thence cried to God; and though none else could hear her where she was, yet she got the Lord to hear in that place, and he drew near to her, notwithstanding the dungeon and stone, and says, fear not. Nay the Church is gotten into further misery, she is not only in the grave, but rotten, come to dry bones, and says her hope is lost, and she is cut off for her part,

Whatever the Lord will do with others, says many such a soul, I think for my part I may as well sit still as stir any further, I am gone I think for one. But God says, he would come to their very graves and open them, and call them forth and put his spirit into them, and make these very dry bones to live. The soul in a very far gone condition, the Lord will make it to live again. He will fetch it out of the grave and bring it back from corruption, when it says, it is cut off, for its part. The soul now in this condition from these considerations, may move the Lord as David; Deal with me, as thou usest to do to those that love thy name, or according to thy custom to those that love thy name. Men that give freely at their doors shall not want custom, and so if they intend not to be troubled, they will say at first, If we use them to this we shall never be without such guests; now God hath a design to show mercy, and so he hath still used poor people to his doors. They can challenge nothing at his dole door, but only his custom of giving. He hath always been wont to show favor to those that were distressed; and thou mayest hope he will be no worse to thee then to another, and thou mayest be well assured of it. It is a good house, very good to the poor, and therefore if thou be needy call at it, and hope for relief.

4. In this very condition thou art in. The Lord hath tender thoughts towards thee. The Lord, the high and lofty one, whose name is Holy, &c. These are attributes that fright a poor sinner, of any, The Lord, the high and lofty one. If I were righteous I would make Petition my only plea, so infinite is he, and I am nothing before him. But then he is, a holy God, and dwells in the holy place. I, says the sinner, this affrights me, for he will not endure sin, I am unclean, I am a sinful man, my hope is gone to deal with so pure a God; God hath mentioned these affrighting attributes on purpose, and this high God, this holy God, will single out this man also, will look at him,

dwell with him that is of an humble and contrite spirit, that is broken in pieces for sin, and that trembleth at his word. His greatness will condescend to thy meanness, his purity to thy sincerity, and to thee of all other will he look. And so he speaks affectionately of a bemoaning Ephraim, since I speak against him, I earnestly remember him still. The child cries in secret, and the mother that hath beaten it, is ready to cry too. Josephs Brethren are pitifully troubled and Joseph gets into his chamber and weeps too, one would have thought they had been of no kin to hear them talk together, but Joseph did but this to bring them to repentance, Joseph chides to their faces, and weeps in a corner, and at last weeps on their neck as their dear Brother Joseph. The Lord hides great bowels from you all this time of your correction, but you will know he is choice of you while he speaks bitterest unto you, sure thou art one very gracious with God. An eminent divine says, if he were to choose a man's prayers he would desire the prayers of such an one above any man's, O thou afflicted tossed to and fro, and not comforted, &c. The Lord takes notice of all these passages, can call her by the name of all her afflictions and sufferings, which shows how much his heart is toward poor creatures in this condition. Nay he says plainly in all their afflictions he was afflicted. Why thou wilt say then why did he not spare himself and me too; think thee why doth the mother whip the child whilst at the same time she could cry rather than strike it, but she will rather grieve herself then undo the child, and so is thy fathers Wisdom and affection tempered towards thee.

5. Souls in this condition, should not untowardly put off comforts, when they are offered unto them, sometimes the word brings something near you, you know not how fairly you can put it off. And yet you do not take it, you

are afraid of applying any comfort. Take heed you be not willful in your trouble.

1. Corruption and Satan is often gratified in a despairing humor in the hearts of God's children: some they study industriously to evade comfort. Set themselves to doubt, think it good for them, count all them unfaithful, that would tender any comfort unto them. Alas corruption hath gotten an end in these troubles, and this peevish discontented sadness pleases thee, and thou art therefore thus resolved on it. Now this is thy infirmity. So David complained of such an humor in him, he describes how he said God had forgotten to be gracious, &c. After he censures it, says, This was his infirmity. And so this is thy infirmity and corruption in thee, thou studiest to be sad. Never did carnal man study so to presume as some troubled Souls in a righthand-extreme, study to despair.

2. It is a great sin for thee to do on this fashion.

1. It brings up an evil report on the good Land: It is not only thy own suffering or self-denial, but Religion suffers herein. Alas, what will carnal men say of Religion? But that it makes folk mad? Makes them mopish, and they will bless themselves from Religion. As indeed who would not be discouraged from putting himself into that Physicians hands, if all his patients lay languishing, and pining in a pitiful condition. Certainly our sorrow is better than their carnal mirth, but our cheerfulness would be better than our sorrow. I cannot but think some of you that are dejected and resolvedly sorrowful out of hatred to yourselves, yet you would be loath to be so, out of your love to Religion, if you knew you prejudiced others by it.

2. It is disobedience. It is the command of God that we should believe. Yield to Christ and lay hold of him, have honorable thoughts of God's tenderness and mercy, and readily cast yourselves upon him. Though I

judge that in believing there is more than affiance, yet I think affiance is not excluded. He that believeth not, that God will accept of a poor sinner, that desires to come to him, in his way, hath made him a liar. And therefore this unbelief is a matter of high concernment, sure thou wouldst not sin, if thou knewest it, shall I tell thee thy great sin at this day, is thy studied drooping, thy invented tricks to put off the Lord's consolations. This is thy sin.

3. It hinders thy Christian course. Thou criest, O I could be cheerful if I could but do such and such duties. Labor to be cheerful, and that were the next way to be able to do those duties. Thou talkest of deadness and unaptness to anything that is good, why alas, thy soul is under a general discouragement, and this must needs make thee unactive, but if thou hadst comfort, this tree would thrive in the warm sun, and on the back of the chimney if anywhere, The joy of the Lord is our strength, Our joy in God puts us on and makes us much more able for service, then otherwise we could be.

4. It is a dishonor to God not to trust him upon his word: not to believe him further then we see him. We will believe nothing he hath said further then we can find it evidenced upon our own hearts. The vilest usurer will trust when he hath a pledge as good or better than the thing he lends, so thou wilt trust God if he lay in a pledge with his word. Thomas would believe if he might see. Blessed says Christ is he that hath not seen yet hath believed. Herein is the Lord glorified when we believe his word, and rest in that, though we find not things within ourselves as we could desire. In these respects it is thy sin to put off comforts.

3. Put not off comforts, for cheerful holiness is better than sinning sorrow. Thou thinkest thou doest well to be sad: I tell thee no sorrow, even not holy sorrow, is a condition to dwell in, but only to pass thorough. Our aim should

not be at it, though we should be content in it, but the height of Christianity is holy rejoicing in the Lord, To delight in God. Our very sorrows are better than the worlds joys, but our joys are better than our sorrows. This is not the condition we should rest in. To take pleasure in God, to bless him, to serve him in Holiness without fear, is that the Lord delights most in. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him in those that hope in his Mercy. He takes delight to be hoped in as well as feared. Cheerfulness should be aimed at: sorrow is oft our way but not our choice, proper or chief work.

4. Remember and treasure up comforts formerly received, As Mr. Baxter says, what are our memories for, if we will believe God's kindness to us no longer then he is just telling us of it? David remembered the days of old. Art thou in trouble, hath the Lord never comforted thee! Is there never a piece of a ring, nor old Gold, no token of love a great while since given thee? Whom he loves once he loves forever, and therefore think of what is past for thy comfort.

5. In this very condition thou art in, Bless the Lord Surely, there is very much in this thing. Thou canst not pray, it may be, thou art so dark-hearted, so over-pressed with fears, see whether thou canst not praise him. Praise him sayst thou, how! Or for what?

1. For thy life. Though thou art a troubled soul bless him thou art a living soul. Thou mightst have been dead and out of all Hopes, and at the farthest of thy fears.

2. That thou hast an healthful body, if it be so with thee that thou art not taken off the means of thy souls good.

3. That God hath showed many Mercies to thee of old. For all these troubles, those old favors must not be forgotten. The Lord girded thee when thou didst not know him.

4. That he still doth provide outwardly for thee. Many a one is poor and hath much ado to live. If thou wert so it would be a great addition to thy present trouble. If thou wert in doubt about thy soul, and put to it for thy body too. We count oft our troubles great because no greater are upon us. Job was sadly deprived of all, and not spared in soul neither, surely the Lord is good in this to thee.

5. That thou art out of Hell. Many it may be of thy companions are in the condition which thou fearest, and are past fear and hope too. That thou art spared out of hell for a time (if it must be but a time) thou mightest do well to thank God for that. The Devils and damned are not spared a minute from their torture.

6. That thou art kept from gross sin That thou art troubled rather than wicked, better God trouble thee then thou trouble the World as many a Drunkard, Swearer, Cheater, and profane Person doth. Bless God thou art not one of those.

7 That thou hast the prayers and pity of Christians, and thy Ministers.

8. That Christ hath not left off treating with thee, but is dealing with thy Soul and upon terms with thee. That thou art troubled, art sick of Love, he hath left thee, yet such myrrh is on the handles of the door, that thy Bowels are moved for him. It is a Mercy that thou art not secure, if thou beest all out as bad as thou talkest of.

Besides take notice of his hearing thy prayers, saving thee from trouble, his daily passages of preservation towards thee. For all this fancied unkindness take notice of his love and bless his name. And I tell you, you little think how near a way this is, and of how excellent a use this may be to the recovering of thee from thy trouble of mind.

1. It may help thee by diversion, variety of Work may help much under discouragement. Thou art all for numbling, and this hath quite dulled thee, turn thee to the duty of praise, and it may call up other affections, which may change the current of thy heart, and work an alteration.

2. It may affect thee and let thee know all is not wanting: though I have not all, yet I have some. I have a great deal to praise God for, for all my troubles, now thou carriest like one utterly destitute.

3. It might secretly afford some evidence of thine own sincerity. If thou can delight to set up God, though thou fearest thy share in him, sure this is not of the damned kind that is in thee, there is cursing God, but no praising in Hell. There is ingenuity in thy praises, and enough it would show thee of God's grace upon thee.

4. It might affect others with Religion, The spouse that wanted her beloved and spake so in his commendations, it drew the daughters of Jerusalem to desire, to seek him with her. If a Christ wanted be thus lovely, what, is a Christ enjoyed, may the stander by say? And sure in this very fit, thou hast much to say in Christ's commendations.

5. This Service would be hugely well taken from thee. The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit. But sure then the praises of a broken spirit would please much.

6. This might make way to Mercy more than anything, nay may God say, If thou blessest me in this condition, it is pity but thou shouldest be in a better, and then thou wouldst bless me more. The Soul resolves to serve him, if it may not have him, And to commend him to others if it must never enjoy him herself, this is great ingenuity, and this is the ready way to comfort. But thus let troubled souls cherish and improve their hopes about their estate. And thus we dismiss this part of the improvement of this point

to the Godly, both beginners and others, in respect of their darkness or want of comfort.

CHAP. XI.

The truth improved to the Godly in respect of any prevailing Sin.

2. MAKE USE OF the duty of this doctrine in respect of sin: And this will be of use in respect of comfort too. And it may be some Souls sit down in this recess of sorrow, and despondency because of sin, some prevalent sin is still in them, and they think they shall never get the better of it, that there is no hope about that vein and way of sin they find within them. But God hath not shut you up in this thing.

Some sin that is prevalent, and you have long striven against do not conclude that it will never be otherwise, and so to despair about it, either

1. Thence to give over striving, and to make some dishonorable truce, to give some toleration to that corruption, to strike some way to cast that to the latter ends, to put it among thy necessary infirmities, as it is hard to fight long with a Sin. Or,

2. Thence to conclude thy estate to be carnal because of the prevalency of that sin. Do not either conclude for the sin or against thyself, because it is so with thee: there is yet Hope left thee about this thing. For,

1. Thou knowest the badness of no bodies heart but thine own. It may be thou concludest thine to be desperate because thou thinkest none like to it, but thou knowest none but it, that makes thee think so. There are few of God's children, but they can vie for thoughts with the worst thou hast; if thou knew as much as they know. Thou concludest if others knew thy heart they would abhor thee, when as they know enough of their own and cannot abhor themselves, when a young Divine asked Luther what he thought by such a one that did not believe what he himself preached, thinking that Luther would have pronounced some dreadful sentence on such a state. Luther answered, I am glad to hear there is somebody else like me, which did immediately much comfort the young Divine. Thou thinkest nobody else is like thee, when as the best of God's Children, could show the same things thou speakest of, dost not hear thy sins sometimes confessed in public, and if none had them but thou how should others confess them! It seems by that these things are stirring elsewhere as well as with thee, many a one, whom thou thinkest to be free, (or notwithstanding wouldst not conclude that he wanted sincerity for such thoughts) hath the same things in him which thou hast, and thinks the like concerning thee.

2. Thou art the better for thy striving, in that it would be worse with thee, if thou strivedst not at all. Though thou hast not such success as thou wouldst have, yet thy labor is not lost. For that corruption which remains notwithstanding thy striving, how would it prevail much more if thou strivedst not at all? If the wind and water carry down thy vessel notwithstanding thy toile at the Oares, how fast, and how far would it carry thee if thou toiledst not all. Therefore this contest of thine though it hath not a positive yet it hath a privative success. Though, it bring not that good thou wouldst, yet it hinders a greater degree of evil. Thou art not sensibly better

but thou art prevented of being sensibly worse, by this contest of thine. Here is the profit, that thou art kept from being worse hereby.

3. This is thy work, this is the state of the Godly. These are the Canaanites left in the land to prove thee These are to learn thee war, these are left in thee and must be so while here, there is much grace exercised, and left on purpose for this end, viz: about the sin that remains in the Godly. The sin is evil but thy contest with it is part of thy task, thy work which God requires and accepts of thy hands, The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary. Thou thinkest that all should be of one side and one party in thee, but it is consistent with the work of grace, to have twins stirring in the womb. These principles are contrary and no marvel if they strive and lust one against another. This is the Messenger from Satan to buffet thee, to keep thee from being exalted above measure. These very corruptions keep thee out of harms another way. The Canaanites remain to put thee in mind of the native inhabitants of the Land, that thou mayest be humbled notwithstanding any better entrance that is made upon thee. Hezekiah God left him in the matter of the King of Babylon, and it was not to let him know he was an Hypocrite, or because he was one, (as thou art apt to conclude, if thou wert right God would not leave thee as he doth, such a sin should not Lord as it doth.) but it was that he might know all that was in his heart, might know what dangerous seeds there were still remaining with him, that he might understand what his heart might be trusted in, better than he did before, which might make him carry humbly under the signal mercies the Lord had afforded to him.

4. There is room for growth in the best of his Children! They are not so good but they may mend, grace should increase and thrive when it is in truth, now thou must not take that stature to be necessary to denominate

thee a true Christian, that thou art to grow and thrive unto. These may be things to be endeavored for; and not to be had at first setting out. Thou wouldst have it all at first. There is a kind of pain and lameness in young ones, that is called the thrift, which is not a down-right lameness. And so may this trouble of thine, not be so much concerning the truth as the growth of thy grace: many of these things thou complainest of should rather be the matter of thy future endeavors to overcome them, then marks to judge thy present estate by: rather things to be striven against, then despaired from.

5. There is hope about this thing, for thou canst not go to God about a business that doth better please him then this is. The Lord will give to his Children riches, and honor and health, &c: which are not things immediately for their souls good, and yet he will not deny them these things, because they are dear to him: now if thou go to God for power against sin, and strength so duty, These are things the Lord delights in. In these things I delight saith the Lord, and therefore sure thou may hope this petition of thine shall in time find acceptance. It is a great advantage to petition a King for that which he loves to be asked. Thou hast God's will on thy side, thou canst not be so against sin, but God is against it much more. And therefore thou mayest hope that in his own time he will help thee about it, and however that he hath his glory from it, or it must not abide in thee so quite against thy will and his will too.

6. The Lord can easily help this thing, matters are not so far gone in thy heart, but the Lord can with one touch of his hand cure all, If Christ do but look back on Peter, he shall leave his denying, and swearing, and cursing, and fall a weeping. The Spouse that will not stir to let in Christ, if he leave but the droppings of his fingers in the hole of the door, her very bowels shall be moved for him. Alas thou thinkest this heart of thine is far sunk,

that it cannot be recovered, at least in no small time, but thou art mistaken, the Lord can mend all this with one glimpse of his countenance, It is he that strengtheneth with strength in the Soul. He hath a notable hand at these inward cures, and indeed what cannot almightiness do? There is no sin so interwoven with thee in thy constitution and by custom, but the Lord can take thee off it, and no duty thou art so averse unto, but he can bring thee on unto it. It is but the wakening of the wind, (and you know that oft is on a sudden) and the garden spices send forth their pleasant smell. The power is in God there is a root in thee, It is but this power stirring, and the root in thee shall answer to it, and thou mayest soon be of a right temper, and in a right order before him. Saul persecuted David because he feared his supplanting him in the matter of the crown, and no doubt there was not anything in the world, that went so against Saul's stomach, he could down with anything better then to let David be King. But yet Saul in a fit, when overcome with David's kindness, could yield to this, and could covenant with David when he should be King, to show kindness to his family: now he could let David be King or anything; and so God can bring that temper upon thee that thou shalt yield to any Duty. Nothing shall be stuck at by thee, how averse soever thou sometimes wert unto it. The Lord can change habits and customs in thy heart, he can take thee off. The mighty power of God can alter this heart of thine. The man in Gersom that studied against atheism, and could never get the better of it, at last he prayed that God would help him in it, and he was clean rid of all his horrid temptations this way, and was as really persuaded of the truth of unseen things as of the chair he sat in. The heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things, who can know it? Worse than men can think, worse than we ourselves can discover, but he adds, Thou Lord knowest, &c: Is this any

comfort? Yea sure. The Lord can discover and cure this deceit to the very bottom, he knows the heart altogether, thy Soul it may be is like a curious Watch, that at present will not go, the fault thou doest not know, but go it will not, what course is to be taken with such a piece? Why take this heart this Watch to God. 1. Who made it. 2. Who is the best workman. 3. Hath always mended it, and knows the course of it, and he is like of any to set it a going. A heart that hath stood by thee a long time and hath not gone, this glorious artist can set it a going again, make it as perfect and better than ever it was, He can soon see what the matter is with it, whether the fault be in the spring, whether any wheel wanting, whether anything broken, whatever it is, he that made it, can soon discover. It is but his touching it, and he can set it straight and put it into good order as ever it was, and much better: so may thy heart be ordered by God which thou so much complainest of. There is hopes of getting the better of any of these sins for all this.

7. This is to make thee willing to die. Paul cries out to be rid of this body of death. And so some sin will abide with thee, while thou art here, to make thee willing to leave this world to be rid of it. And there is hope we shall one of these days die, and then all this sin shall be parted with.

But in this labor of thine about thy sin thou mayest see there is yet ground for thy hope.

CHAP. XII.

The Observation improved to the Godly in respect of their afflictions.

THE THIRD AND LAST improvement of the point to the Godly is, In respect of their affliction. The godly are apt to be discouraged and dejected about their outward afflictions. We shall make use of the doctrine as to them, that are in this estate. Do not sit down discontented about your state whatever it is, there is yet hope in this thing whatever the trouble is, instead of concluding it remediless and letting down your heart about it.

1. Humble yourselves for the sin that you think brought this affliction on you. The Lord doth not willingly afflict, he doth not do it out of his heart, out of his mere pleasure as the phrase elsewhere signifies, when there is no ground for the thing doth not strike, because he will strike as sometimes our fathers of the flesh, strike children in tyranny, in passion, when angry with other matters, but he doth not strike us so, he doth not usually do it out of a will, though this were to be humbly submitted unto, but he doth it out of some blessed design upon you, search therefore thy heart for former sins as the Church did. Ephraim is chastised and bears the reproach of his youth. And so God may bring thy youthful sin to thy remembrance, or some other

miscarriage, and it is rather thy duty to search for this, then to despair about thy affliction.

2. Labor to part with any sin your affliction discovereth. If it be not the sin, yet part with that which comes next to hand, make clean work as you go, this is worth the finding, and this is the way to find out the rest: God may strike thee to have thee leave this sin, though thou thinkest it is not the sin the Lord strikes at in thee. This is the fruit unto Jacob to purge away all sin, part with all you can find; and then you may be sure you shall part with the right one. If God strike at one, he intends thou shouldst leave all thou findest. If the chief be not yet light on, deal with these thou meetest, to be doing with.

3. Do the duties your affliction requires at your hands. You are willing it may be to think such a business helpless, because you have no mind to be at the cost of using the means for it; Concludest such a friend incurable because thou hast a mind to give over praying for him, and dealing with him: the Church cries there is no hope, because she had another way to go, had other business she minded more than deliverance this way. Thou lettest this thing lie desperately because thou hast no mind to be importunate in prayer, unwearied in thy endeavors about it, unless it would come with ease, it will not come at all, as if nothing that is difficult were possible. Come let this despair of thine save thee no labor take pains about this thing, cry mightily to God in it, leave it not off, unless the Lord hath said to thee say, no more to me of this matter, many would have matters with ease and it will not be.

4. Thou art not alone in thy trouble, There is no temptation hath taken you but that which is common. Many of the precious servants of God have had their sore afflictions and all God's servants still ail something this way. If

you be without chastisement whereof all are partakers, then are ye Bastards and not Sons, would you be privileged as none of God's children are! Alas there are none but have their exercise, someone way and some another, everyone must have somewhat to ballast a heart of vanity with, whilst he sails through this world. The parable of the hares being hunted on every hand and in continual fears, in discontent they would go together and drown themselves; but as they went to the bridge of the river the frogs at all adventure leap into the water before them, whereupon they took courage that they were not the most miserable creatures in the world, in that some were more affrighted than they. And so no doubt some are determinately miserable in the very cases, wherein you a little suspect your condition.

Do not conclude any one child without affliction. For many one may have secret afflictions which they speak not of, nay afflictions about such secret things as is not fit for them to speak of, thou knowest not what sorrow they sup in silence, what they suffer, and commit to God only, no friend hath the knowledge of it. And so this way those thou thinkest to be most free, may have a greater burden then thine is, because they have no ease by complaining as thou hast. Do not say any one is free, unless you hear any one complain for want of affliction. These are rare but if such a one should be, I would say to him, it is time enough yet. There is room for many afflictions to stand, between this and his latter end, and therefore this need not trouble, he may meet with his childes part time enough yet. Mr. Baxter hath communicated to us an experience concerning himself this way. That he was sufficiently helped against such a temptation. But conclude thou art not alone in thy trouble. Socrates used to say, if all men's loads were laid in a common heap, each man would take up his own again. Pittacus when he had invited many strangers to dinner and his shrewd wife came among

them, and overthrew the dishes: he said, no man is without his cross, were it not for this one thing I were the happiest man. This is a grief and I must bear it. Everyone hath some, and this is mine. It is but one bundle and I must make it part of my work to carry it as strongly and patiently as I can, some men are of singular use whose chief work is to carry burdens.

5. Thou hast cause to bless God that it is neither carnal prosperity, nor carnal adversity, the former would not have been so good as affliction, the latter much worse. As long as thou art in the state of a Child no matter what thy condition is. If thou hadst the world at pleasure, and wantedst grace what would it avail thee, and if thou beest in adversity, and yet art not wicked, withal, it is some ease to thee. There are many that are godly may be in prosperity, and so there are many wicked men that are afflicted and wicked too, and therefore herein thy condition is better, thou bearest fruit in this affliction of holiness which is better than prosperity, like the flower in China that in Winter loses its leaves yet hath another flower though not so beautiful, yet sweeter than the summer flower was. So though not so fair in the outside yet thy winter fruit may be more savory, but thou bearest fruit all along.

6. Many of God's children have been brought out of their afflictions. David was brought low and the Lord helped him. The troubles of my heart are enlarged, O bring thou me out of my distresses. The Psalmist when his troubles increased upon him, yet the Lord could free him out of them all. Many of God's children have been brought off in harder cases then these are. *Cum duplicantur lateres tunc venit Moses*. The Hebrews have a proverb, When the Bricks are doubled then Moses comes, when things are at the worst, they may then begin to mend; God hath used to help his Servants in the very time of their extremity, and so he may help thee.

7. As much as thou art troubled the Lord could cure thee at an Ordinance. And that either 1. By diversion, to set thy heart on these great things before thee here. One great thing in affliction is we set our heart on it, read upon it are always about it and this increases it much, but now at an Ordinance thou mayst have thy mind taken up with some greater thing, that this pane shall be swallowed up in it.

2. By showing thee the example of the affliction and patience of the Saints, Rom. 15:4.

3. Or by casting in some better comforts. The Lord can soon give you much more than this, One glimpse of his face, like wine to the man with an heavy heart, would make you forget your sorrows, and remember your miseries no more. This might make us think our afflictions to be less, and Ordinances to have more in them then ordinarily we think at. But the Lord can set thee free in a great measure here.

8. There is help for thee in thy God. David never feared till the Enemy began to say there was no help for him in his God. But the child of God hath this sure enough. The Lord can, and the Lord will help.

1. The Lord can. And 1. The Lord can help in kind there is nothing can hinder his almighty power when means are most unlikely he is not at all restrained hereby, when there is neither wind nor water the Lord can send rain. Their strength is to sit still; when they can do nothing, let them sit still, and God may then show his power for them. To the upright there shall arise light in darkness when it is least looked for, the Lord can for his own children make light appear. The thing is not out of God's reach nor past his power to be effected whatever it is.

2. He can do it in equivalency, he can help you against it, and he can help you with it. It is possible for thee to make a shift to live though this

affliction should tarry The Lord can turn it into good for thee. If this messenger depart not my grace is sufficient for thee. God can make a change in thy mind as well as thy condition, and all may yet be well with thee. David might well say, Lord how are my foes increased! When his Son for lack of worse enemies must rise against him, for the Psalm was penned when he fled from Absalom. This sure was a grievous affliction, many of you think if your children are not dutiful, if they deny you the comfort you look for from them, it is a sore trial, but if they be rebellious and seek to do evil to you, you would count this grievous indeed. The affliction of a child's sin, the parent knows not of anything how to take, yet David, the Lord had dealt with him, that he could take a night's rest in the midst of this trouble, The Lord sustained him and he would lay him down to sleep for all this. The Lord can come in, and stay the heart under the sorest troubles. To read Psa. 89. ult. How the Psalmist complains all along of their afflictions and miseries, and yet concludes with, Blessed be God for evermore Amen, and Amen. Sure the Psalmist saw some what else then afflictions, that could make him conclude these complaints with thanks-giving. But take notice of it, this the Lord can do, he can satisfy thee with it whatever it is. It is reported of Mr. Dod, that when some very sad news was brought him, That fetched Tears out of his eyes, he said notwithstanding he would go bless God for this affliction, for the good he believed it would do him, though at present he did not see it. God can so deal with thy heart for thy ease under afflictions, as Antipater that was blind, and one pitied him, he said, could there be no delight in the night? And another that was working when his gangrened leg was cutting off, That one said Tam aberat a dolore quam ab otic. As if indeed much of our troubles arose from our setting our whole mind on such passages. As he that said his pains were great even to

shouting, but although I feel them in the greatest extremity, yet I yield not myself to them but unto God. If God thus take the heart of thy sorrow it is as much as to take thy sorrow off thee, as one says, The fire may be put out as well by withdrawing fuel as casting on water. This God can do in thy case of affliction. Thus God can help.

2. God will, He is gracious and merciful though thou hast sinned thyself into affliction, yet he will remember thee in the multitude of his tender mercies. Though we have sinned against thee, yet do thou it for thy own names sake. He despiseth not his Prisoners. We usually when men get low in the world are apt to vilify them and despise them. If a man get poor, this of all afflictions is usually looked on as a fault, and men are apt to look strangely at such persons. If a sin be visible they may have repented of it, and we should hope they have, and be glad to be reconciled to them, many a one may have committed the like sin, yet if not brought down by it we do not despise them; well God will not despise them, though men do, the Lord will look at them though they are in affliction and that for sin too. Yet he will have thoughts of pity towards them, hath he forgiven thee sins without afflicting! And will he not forgive though he doth afflict! I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me. God hath a pitiful heart towards thee whatever thy condition is. Ephraim saw his sin under his chastisement, and yet even then God looked at Ephraim as a pleasant child, and earnestly remembered him still. If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. This wisdom is to be able to suffer, to have patience under afflictions. If any man know not how to suffer, and carry not as they should do under affliction, let him go to God for wisdom. I but it may be this affliction comes on me for my sin, and how can I for shame ask the Lord wisdom to

help me to suffer for the punishment of my sin. Yea that thou mayest, thou may ask wisdom of him in this very case; For he giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. He will not dash thee in the teeth with the occasion, he will not upbraid thee but will give thee the wisdom thou needest, whatever the occasion of thy need is.

Thou mayst thus comfort thyself in God.

9. Thy affliction is not great all things considered. Alas thou that deservest hell, to complain of a temporal burden. Mephibosheth never grieved to part with half the land, when David before had given it him all, when he considered he could not have claimed his life nor anything at the first. Alas, says he, what should I trouble my Lord the King anymore with these matters. I consider not what I would have, but what I could claim, and I am well content, half the land is better than dying. When Baruch was complaining, that he had no larger a portion, God takes him in hand, and schools him, and tells him, when God was pulling down, did he seek great things for himself. Let him not do it, come. says he, I must take thee down a little, I will offer thee fair, Thou shalt have thy life for a prey, in all places whither thou goest and that is fair for thee, we are so tender and delicate we complain and murmur, if everything be not fine about our homes, but the time may come when we may be thankful if we can save our lives, and not be kept to any certain place neither. Thou mayest be removed and be in many places, a stranger here and there, but in all places, if thou can escape with life it is well for thee, when we complain under present burdens, God shows us greater, and lets us see how little we can claim, and how glad we may be of lower terms before we part. Come this is well for thee whatever it is, Thy very life thou mayest be glad of, ere thou die, and let all thy great

things go, men may be high in their demands, but the market may bring them down.

10. These afflictions make work for heaven. Then will Christ wipe away all tears. One would not want them when Christ shall come to wipe them off, surely thy glory will be the more for the afflictions thou hast gone through unto it, and it is enough, that they shall end in glory whatever they are. Alas this is but a sick fit for heaven, it may well be born. One day in eternity will make amends for all. These light afflictions which are but for a moment work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Massy glory, glory that you cannot bear no more than the weak eye can bear the glory of the Sun, under which it doth succumber, lie down, as the back or body should bow under an intolerable burden; even such shall this glory be, a weight not conceivable by us. And therefore the thoughts of it should keep us quiet, and much satisfied under our present afflictions, you may hope under all your afflictions since heaven is before you. And till the true Christian shall have attained to the end of his hope, to this glory where hope shall be swallowed up in fruition: Let him make it his study to cherish, and live upon the hopes that God hath left him about his estate in the several changes of it, according to this Doctrine.

The End.

FINIS