

Monergism

# THE RELIGIOUS TRADESMAN



RICHARD STEELE

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# The Religious Tradesman

by Richard Steele

Plain and Serious Hints of Advice

FOR THE

TRADESMAN'S

PRUDENT AND PIOUS CONDUCT; FROM HIS ENTRANCE  
INTO BUSINESS, TO HIS LEAVING IT OFF.

It is a Book admirably fitted by its proper representation of the Tradesman's duties, and the close and warm enforcement of them upon the conscience, to do excellent service, under the blessing of God, to the shop, and to the world. The following sheets contain a rich treasure of wholesome instruction, such as every Tradesman should write upon his heart, and practice in his shop and family. Dr. Watts.

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## **TO THE READER.**

The Reverend Mr. Richard Steele, a worthy Minister in the last century, published a treatise entitled, The Tradesman's Calling; a book admirably fitted by its proper representation of the Tradesman's duties, and the close and warm enforcement of them upon the conscience, from the arguments of scripture and reason, to do excellent service (under the blessing of God) to the shop and to the world. This piece is now very little known; the chief reason of which may possibly be, that its noble matter lies under the disadvantage of an ancient name, and an ancient dress; to relieve which objection, and, if it please God, to do a kindness to the trading world, by setting before them their duty and interest, and thereby preventing those present and future miseries, which negligence, injustice, and irreligion, bring upon mankind; a person into whose hands it fell, from a strong persuasion of its admirable tendency to these ends, determined, after several alterations had been made, to send it abroad afresh into the world.

As it is a pleasure to meet with any opportunity to assist the cause of religion and virtue, and being well satisfied that the following sheets contain a rich treasure of wholesome instruction, such as every tradesman should write upon his heart, and practice in his shop and family, with the greatest readiness I lend my name to the piece; and heartily wish it could borrow much greater advantages, as to its perusal and usefulness, than I am capable of giving it by my recommendation.

As the age in which we live is much degenerated from the virtue and piety of our forefathers, I should be heartily glad if I might see the salvation of God, in a general repentance and reformation: And should this begin in the shop and the exchange, how wide and amazing would be its influence? No more would our eyes be witnesses of the base practices of overreaching, and various other iniquities; nor would our ears be so often shocked with the tremendous bankruptcy and ruin, brought by idleness, luxury and vice, not only upon single persons, but whole families left destitute and wretched forever after. That the following pages may be blest to these purposes, is the desire and prayer of the Reader's hearty well wisher and

Humble servant,

ISAAC WATTS.

Newington, Jan. 24th, 1747.

## **INTRODUCTION**

As trade and commerce employ a very considerable part of mankind, an attempt to render the conduct of those who are engaged in it more happy and successful, will appear to be, at least, a benevolent undertaking; and to this end it is evident, that moral as well as prudential directions may contribute. Certainly to discharge in a



proper manner the respective duties of the common callings of life, which take up six parts of our time in seven, requires greater attention of mind than is usually paid to them, for the regular discharge of their respective duties; and may admit of more assistance than has been yet offered to the world in any treatise now extant. There is, indeed, an excellent piece which has met with considerable and deserved acceptance, called the *Complete English Tradesman*, which I could wish were in the hands of all that are concerned to appear in that character with honor or success; but as it is chiefly employed in considerations of a prudential nature, it leaves room for an attempt of the present kind. Instead therefore of useless speculations, or perplexing controversies in religion, which neither enrich the mind, nor reform the manners of men; I shall endeavour to direct the conscientious tradesman in the duties of his daily calling, wherein he is surrounded with manifold temptations and difficulties, and stands in need of all the assistance he can obtain from God or man. He hath the same depraved nature to bias him, and the same malicious spirit to tempt him as others; and he hath a much greater variety of trials and temptations from the world, than either the scholar, or gentleman. The particular circumstances of trade and the duties flowing from thence, are indeed too numerous to be contained in so small a tract as this; yet I doubt not, but the principles and rules here laid down, being faithfully applied to particular cases, will generally be found sufficient for his direction; though after all it must be owned, that the religious fear of God, and a sincere love to our neighbour, will do more to direct us in many doubtful and critical cases, than can be expected from any treatise whatsoever.

Let me beg that the reader would take into serious and mature consideration the hints that are here suggested, and if he meets with any thing which recommends itself to his conscience, as agreeable to the laws of God, and the nature and reason of things, that he would not fail immediately to put it in practice. Surely, no one can be so absurd as to think it sufficient to appear religious on the Lord's day, or to be serious in the devotions of the closet, and then leave

conscience asleep all the intermediate time; since these religious duties were designed as the means of producing and maintaining those principles of wisdom and justice, virtue and goodness, which are to be in continual exercise; and the infinite Creator and proprietor of the universe, claims our constant obedience to his laws, as well as our devout ascriptions of worship and adoration. It may be fit to acquaint the world, that the substance of this piece is taken from a book entitled, *The Tradesman's Calling*; which though it has lain some time in obscurity, is thought by many judicious persons to be very deserving of the public regard. The publisher could have wished it had been revised, and sent into the world by a more able hand; and the sense he had of its deficiency, was the chief cause of its lying so long unpublished; but he does not absolutely despair of its being in some degree useful, since as a learned writer observes, "Truth influences the mind of man more by its own authority, evidence and excellency, than by any ornaments of wit and eloquence in which it may be drest." And such ornaments are in this case the less needful, as the subjects are chiefly addressed to persons of plain sense and understanding; if the God of the spirit of all flesh, is pleased to smile upon it so far as to render it effectual to reform the practices, and improve the tempers of those that read it, the Publisher will have the full reward he hopes for from this essay of benevolence to his fellow beings; and a thousand encomiums on the elegance of the composition, without these effects, would afford him little satisfaction. He has added some passages of scripture at the conclusion of each subject, that they might have the sanction of divine authority to enforce them; firmly believing that however men may despise it, if ever the blessed God is pleased to reform a sinful world, He will honor His own word as the instrument of producing such a happy event.

## CHAPTER I.

# **The Nature of a Life of Business, and Obligations to it.**

The nature of man designed for action. The wisdom and goodness of God visible in the variety of abilities and dispositions in men. Business to be a constant employ. Obligations to it from nature and reason: The command and appointment of God: Justice to society and families: Its advantage to ourselves. Reflections on the pleas for indolence, by the rich; on account of devotion; the unsuccessful: the incapable. Advice to parents. The folly of neglecting religion, the great business of life. Scriptures suited to the subjects.

The supreme felicity, and great end of man, is to know, love, and glorify God his Creator, Redeemer and Benefactor. But as we are beings endowed with powers and faculties of body and mind, fitted and designed for actions relative to our present state of being; and are placed by divine providence in mutual dependence upon each other, by the perpetual return of wants, which of ourselves we are incapable of relieving or supplying; both reason and religion require, that all, as they are able, should be employed in such a manner as may be beneficial to themselves, and the society to which they relate: and a very considerable part of the beauty and excellence of the Christian life, consists in due affections and conduct with respect to the persons and things of the present state, and in acting upon principles of wisdom, goodness, justice and integrity to one another.

The real and imaginary wants of mankind have created great diversity in their employments. Some are chiefly labouring to support the life, or restore the health of the body. Others to defend men's persons or estates, and secure or promote the private or public peace and prosperity. Some to improve the mind in useful and entertaining knowledge; or in the more important concerns of religion and virtue, which though not always the most advantageous, yet are certainly not the least noble employments. While others, in



vast variety, are contributing to the convenience and delight of their brethren of mankind.

And, surely, the wisdom and goodness of God deserve our reflection here in fitting and disposing men to those various services, which are suited to the necessities and comforts of human life. Some are endowed with extensive knowledge; others with vigour and strength; God hath given to one a penetrating judgment; to another, a curious hand, or a strong arm. Some are disposed to travel abroad; others to manufactures at home; each conducing to the public good; and qualified for discharging the respective offices in which they are engaged. As in the natural body, every member and organ is placed in the situation most suitable to its office, and all are at ease and content; so in the political body, the great Governor of the universe inclines men to choose out of this great variety, what is most acceptable to themselves, and useful to the community; and renders those labours and employments tolerable and easy to some, which to others appear big with hardship and woe. The rich ought to remember that their comforts as much depend on the service of the poor, as the support of the poor does on their affluence or bounty; so that "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you" ; this should induce them to treat the poor with tenderness, and reward them with liberality.

That every one who is capable of it should be constantly employed in some useful station of life, appears a truth so evident that little need be said to support it. Few indeed are so worthless as to be always idle, but that we busy ourselves only now and then, as humour and fancy incline us, can never be sufficient to answer the end of our creation; for this it is necessary we should exert ourselves in some business that may fully employ our time; and that it should be our own proper business; for divine wisdom censures those as disorderly livers who either work not at all, or are busy bodies, trifling intermeddlers in the affairs of others, to the neglect of their own; and requires that they study to be quiet, to do their own business. The wise Governor of the universe has appointed to every one his proper

place and work, and will rather reprove than reward those who are acting out of their own sphere. But as pride and sloth have many pleas, I shall endeavour to enforce the obligations to a life of useful activity, by observing,

1st. That the nature and reason of things require it. There are comparatively few whose circumstances are independent. Now it is highly unreasonable to live upon others without a mutual return of advantage. And to expect that sustenance should drop from the clouds without labour and care of our own is an absurdity so obvious and flagrant, that none are stupid enough to maintain it; yet their conduct is not much wiser, who pretend to live upon providence, while they live in sloth, and do not exert themselves in some proper business for their own support. But let a person's circumstances be what they will, the God of nature, who doth nothing in vain, by having given us capacities and powers for action, plainly intimates, that it is our duty to employ them in a rational and useful manner. Indeed activity is so natural and delightful to man, that if idleness had the sanction of a law to enforce it, no doubt many would willingly pay their fine for liberty to work.

2d. It is the express command and appointment of God. Adam, before and after his fall, was placed in a state of action. In innocency, the wisdom of God chose a calling for him: "The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it, and to keep it." "If a noble birth, as one observes, a great estate, a small family, and a mind fitted for contemplation, would excuse man from labour; none had so fair a plea for it as he." After the fall when labour was more difficult to him and less profitable, he was enjoined, in the "sweat of his face to eat his bread, until he should return unto his dust." The command of Almighty God to all his posterity, is, that six days they should labour and do all their work:" In this is plainly implied, that all should fill up their time with some proper employment, from one season of religious rest to another. For it is obvious to remark, that the obligation to labour six days is expressed in as general terms, and is bound upon us by the same authority, as the religious observation

of the seventh. Nor is the case changed under the gospel, by which men are commanded and exhorted, in the "name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, with quietness to work, and to eat their own bread." That his precepts might have greater force, he has given us his own example; for before his entrance into the ministerial office, we find him labouring in the carpenter's trade: and if so divine a person stooped to a laborious calling to teach us humility, diligence and industry, shall any who call him their master, refuse to imitate him herein? It is not indeed supposed that all should be employed in labours equally low and servile; but what is pleaded for is, that every one should fill up life in a manner becoming reasonable and accountable beings, and members related to society.

3d. Justice to our families and the public require it. The great author of our natures, has implanted in every being, love and affection to their tender offspring, which excites them to study and promote their happiness; but idleness and sloth obstruct those blessings by which the family might live comfortably, and be disposed of happily. And whatever profession of religion there may be, the sacred records warrant us to say, that "if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." How unnatural is the sight, when by the slothfulness of the parent, the children are clothed with rags? Or how can they rise up and call them blessed, who thus make them heirs to nothing but poverty and distress?

Nor is the regard we owe to the public to be overlooked. None should stand as cyphers in their generation, but so employ themselves as to be blessings in it, that their absence may be sensibly felt. How many are employed to furnish us with the conveniences and necessaries of life; and how unreasonable is it to make no returns? The industrious bees drive the useless drones from their little commonwealth; and indeed those deserve not the protection, that add not to the welfare of the public.

On these principles, and from a conviction that idleness was injurious to the constitutions and morals of men, and very unjust and mischievous to society, the ancient Greeks and Romans appointed magistrates to see that no persons spent their time in sloth; and severely punished those that thus offended. It was the general custom of the Jews to bring up their children to manual labour, how plentiful soever their circumstances were, or how polite soever their education was designed to be. On this account we find the apostle Paul, who had a learned education, under the greatest of their rabbis, working as a tentmaker. The same custom is continued in other nations to this day.

4th. Our own safety and comfort much depend upon it. The busy person, like the bird upon the wing, escapes many of those snares to which the indolent are exposed. It is hardly possible that a person should continue absolutely unemployed for any long time; and he that is not doing what he ought, will be doing what he ought not; the destroyer of souls can hardly wish for a fairer mark at which to direct his temptations, than an idle person. The sloth of Sodom is represented as one cause of the wickedness of it; and David's criminal indulgence seems to have been preceded by the same indisposition: but an honest diligence subdues that pride, lust and sensuality, which are cherished by sloth and indolence; and non vacat, I am not at leisure, is sometimes a more powerful restraint from evil, than non licet, it is not lawful. What numbers have been cut off in the midst of life, or had their beings rendered uncomfortable while they lived, by the great variety of diseases which sloth and inactivity bring upon the human frame; as dropsies, consumption, melancholy, and the like, which, according to all human views, might have been prevented by useful activity? The difference of sloth and industry in the acquisition and enjoyment of the good things of life, is too evident to need any illustration here. From hence we may take occasion to reflect—

1. That an indolent life is blameable, whatever excuses may be made for it. It is certainly wrong, that persons in affluent circumstances in

life, should think themselves excused from activity and employment. This is to reflect on the wisdom of God, as if he required the least service of those to whom he hath committed most talents: and it shews great ignorance of the proper use of such gifts, and the best way of relishing and enjoying them. Superior advantages in life are chiefly valuable as they give an opportunity of serving God, and doing good in a more honourable and extensive way; but their design is perverted, when they are made a plea for sloth and luxury. If your own condition does not require the improvement of your fortune, the wants of others do, and the welfare of your soul may render an employment highly expedient. A thousand vices are produced by idleness. The human mind without exercise, like standing water, soon grows corrupt; and a life spent in the cheerful service of God, and usefulness to mankind, will doubtless yield a more pleasant reflection in the decline of years, or the prospect of death, than time trifled away in inactivity and doing nothing.

Devotion is sometimes pleaded in vindication of this; but I fear it seldom is a just and sufficient excuse, even in the case of persons in an affluent state; but it is peculiarly vain, when used by those whose circumstances in life render an employment necessary for the support of themselves and their family. It is a gross absurdity, that any should think themselves excuseable, who neglect the proper duties of social and relative life, through an excessive application to the external duties of religious worship: who live as if they were all soul, and had no body related to the things and persons of the present state; and permit their families and business to languish for want of their presence, while they are indulging the intemperate fervours of an indiscreet zeal, of an unseasonable and mistaken piety. Nor is it a sufficient excuse, that any have been hitherto unsuccessful in business. Let such exert themselves with vigour, and consider their disappointment as a motive to greater diligence and prudence, rather than a reason for indolent despondency. One attempt may succeed, though others have been fruitless. Instead, therefore, of sitting down discouraged, let persons in this case use care and diligence to find out the cause of their unsuccessfulness, and

endeavour to correct it; whether it be imprudence, indolence, unskilfulness, credulity or vice: and having done this, let them endeavour to introduce themselves again into business, with greater caution, with more steady resolution and diligence, and with a humble dependance on God, the giver of wisdom, and fountain of happiness.

If inability is pleaded, take care it be real, and not imaginary. There is no person to whom God has given the exercise of reason, but may employ himself in some way or other; and an industrious mind will break through many difficulties, rather than stand as a cypher in the world. Indeed if we are wholly disabled by infirmities, God himself gives a release from labour. Patience and submission to his will, are the proper duties of that state; which, however, it may and should be borne with patience, will always be considered as an affliction by an active mind. It is to be feared, the cause of persons loitering away their lives very frequently is, that their purses are too low for high and honourable employments, and their spirits too high for those that are low: they would live without labour, and enjoy plenty without pains; and their unwillingness to action, and not their inability, is the true cause of an indolent life.

2. Let parents be persuaded to educate their children for a life of business and usefulness; let not such noble powers and faculties produce such worthless lives, as are a reproach to human nature; for if you are rich, the wealth you give them without an employment, will only be fuel for their lusts; and make their present folly the more conspicuous, and their eternal ruin the more inevitable; as it is next to impossible, in a state of indolence, to enjoy the full means of gratifying the inordinate appetites and affections of depraved nature, without the inclination to comply with their solicitations. If you are poor, the injury you do to your children is irreparable; you direct them in the way to shame and misery, and betray the trust which God has committed to you; whereas, by placing them in some honest calling, they might be happy in themselves, useful in the world, and respected by all about them.



Let the young be excited, by these considerations, to apply with spirit and resolution to acquire useful knowledge, that they may be fit for those employments by which they may credit their friends, and be serviceable to mankind. Though wisdom and knowledge be difficult to attain, and ease and pastime have a more enticing view at present; yet the fruits of industry in riper years, will abundantly recompence your present labour and self-denial. Folly and want are easy acquisitions, but wisdom and wealth are only to be procured under the blessing of heaven, by industry and care.

(2) What egregious folly it is to neglect religion, the great business and end of life; and that in which the safety and happiness of our immortal souls is so intimately concerned? If diligence in common affairs is so important, if negligence there is so culpable, they are infinitely more so here. That the soul should be adorned with the moral image of God; that its beauty in this respect should grow; that by a sincere faith in Christ, and an humble repentance towards God, we should be made meet for final and everlasting glory; and the lively expectation thereof should grow into the full assurance of hope. These are objects that will repay the most assiduous application, the greatest diligence. This is a case so plain, that children, and almost idiots, might seem capable of judging in it. In such a cause, we might expect to find ardour and perseverance even in the most sluggish minds; in those which no prospect of earthly honour or wealth can warm.

But how preposterous is it! These infinite concerns are overlooked; this important, necessary business is neglected, not by the ignorant, the indolent and sluggish alone; but by the prudent and shrewd; by men of business, steadiness and unwearied application. There are those that rise up early, and lie down late, that eat the bread of labour and carefulness for a little, it may be a very little, temporary gain, who cannot find a moment to think of God and their souls, though reason, conscience, and the word of God assure them that the neglect must prove destructive to their eternal happiness. O ye prudent and toiling mortals! Are the unsatisfying, transient

enjoyments and honours of this life worth so much; and is it of no importance that, when these things fail, you may be received to everlasting habitations! Consider your ways and be wise. O may God teach us all to know the things that differ, and prefer those that are most excellent, and by the powerful energy of his grace make us wise and happy for ever!

"And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground, Gen. iv. 2. 1 Sam. xvi. 22, and [[xvii. 15 >> 1 Sam 17:15]].

"The sun ariseth; man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening, Psalm civ. 22, 23.

"The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting; but the substance of a diligent man is precious, Prov. xii. 27.

"In all labour there is profit, but the talk of the lips tendeth only to poverty, Prov. xiv. 23.

"He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich, Prov. xxi. 17.

"By much slothfulness the building decays; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through, Eccles. x. 18.

"Who can find a virtuous woman? She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness, &c. Prov. xxxi. 10, 31.

"Behold, this was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hands of the poor and needy, Ezek. xvi. 49.

"There was a disciple named Dorcas; this woman was full of good works, and alms deeds. And all the widows stood by weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them, Acts ix. 30, 39.

"You yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring, ye ought to support the weak; and to remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Acts xx. 34, 35. Eph. iv. 28.

"Withal, they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy bodies, 1 Tim. v. 13.

"Let ours also learn to maintain good works (or honest trades,) for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. These things are good and profitable unto men, &c. Tit. iii. 8, 14."

## **CHAPTER II.**

### **Of Choosing a Calling.**

I. The lawfulness of a calling to be attended to in the choice of it; and its suitableness to the abilities of body and mind, education and circumstances. Consideration recommended therein. Respect to the advice of others. And the interest of the soul. Dependence upon Divine Providence; and regard to a particular inclination. Scriptures suitable. II. Due dispositions and views, as necessary as a proper choice. Religious principles. Steady resolutions. Humility and

faithfulness. The study of the sacred scriptures. And prayer to Almighty God, recommended, &c.

I. Having considered the obligations to a life of business, and advantages of it; the next thing that presents itself to us is, the proper choice of it. This, at first view, must appear to every one a momentous concern, as so much of the comfort and happiness of an after life depends upon it. As to children and youth, it is commonly under the direction of parents or guardians; but the inclination of the person to be disposed of is not to be disregarded. The directions necessary under this head may be comprised in these two, that the calling we choose be lawful and suitable.

1. Both the disposers and disposed must agree to choose a calling that is lawful. To do a sinful act is bad enough, but to make a trade of sin, and employ our lives in one continued scene of disobedience to God, is a condition that cannot be thought of without the utmost abhorrence, by any one in whom the principles of virtue and religion are not wholly extinguished; as the continual curse of God must necessarily be attendant upon them. The prospect of gain may blind the eyes of men, and carry them on in such a course without reflecting; but it is often seen that the divine resentment follows them, even in this life, by blasting their hopes and aims, and causing wealth thus gotten by vanity to be diminished; but should this not be the case, God does not forget, nor lose the right to punish, those crimes on which he does not animadvert in this world. It is a plain, though a lamentable case, that men are now disposed to take great liberties with their consciences, and make a light matter of religion, as if it was confined to a few outward acts of piety, without having any thing to do with their general conduct; in such an age it would be difficult to point out those callings that come under the character of criminal, without censure: yet every one must acknowledge that those employments are certainly evil, that tend to lessen the reverence and duty we owe to Almighty God; or obstruct the general good of mankind; that are either the necessary occasions of sin to ourselves, or the certain incentives to it in others. Those only are

lawful in which we can reasonably ask for the blessing of God, and expect his favour and acceptance. This, indeed, is the best rule we can form to ourselves by which to judge of every doubtful action.

2. The employment or calling we choose, must be suitable or fit. Rashness and negligence herein, has often been the ruin of particular persons, and sometimes a public mischief. Those who have capacities and endowments above their callings, grow uneasy and discontented in them. Those who have employments above their capacities, after some weak and unsuccessful attempts, are discouraged; and if they are placed in more exalted stations of life, render their weakness the more conspicuous, and prove a shame and reproach unto them. Let, therefore, the abilities of body and mind, be considered. As to the mind; never thrust one of a dull capacity, bad memory, shallow judgment, or ungovernable passions, into an ingenious, especially into a religious, profession; for though some of mean abilities have proved useful in church and state, yet as that seldom happens, so the divine goodness in making them successful, will not justify the folly and rashness of man, in making such an unadvised choice. The Almighty God may do what he will, we must do what we ought; that is, fit the means to the end, and for an ingenious calling, choose an ingenious person. On the other hand, it is great pity to confine a bright genius to a sordid employment. This is like thrusting those to the oar, that might sit at the helm. God, by giving to some excellent and large capacities, tacitly appoints them to employments suited thereto, if other circumstances concur; for his method of calling men now, is not by audible words, but by bestowing real and suitable gifts. The employment should likewise be fitted to the strength of body. A robust and healthy constitution, where the endowments of the mind are small, is fittest for a laborious calling; and those of weaker and more tender constitutions should be placed in easier stations of life.

Let the education and circumstances be regarded. A genteel or liberal education, directs to a genteel or liberal calling, if other things concur. A plain employment, very well suits a plain education; but it

will require uncommon wisdom and humility, for persons of learning and ingenuity, to stoop to low and servile employments, and be easy in them. Those, likewise, who have been tenderly educated, should not be placed under too much severity, lest such new wine, being put into old bottles, it be spilt and lost. The circumstances of persons are also to be considered in the choice of a calling. It is absurd to set those to follow a plough, who, by the fortune they are to receive, might be qualified to fill the chair. But it is to be feared people more frequently err on the other side. Vanity and pride lead persons to choose for themselves, or those they are concerned for, callings superior to their substance, in hopes of some imaginary, fortuitous events, which seldom come to pass; upon this presumption, they either enter into business upon a false foundation, and so sink into ruin at any considerable disappointment; or else, for want of a capital to engage in trade, they are obliged to remain in a state of servitude and dependance all their days. In order to a happy choice, therefore—

1st. Let due consideration be used. It is highly absurd to fix upon such a weighty affair as a condition for life, without the serious exercise of reason and thought; and yet we too often find that humour and fancy are the guides that are chiefly consulted in this momentous concern. Persons promising themselves ease or honour, pleasure or gain, in this or the other employment, rush into it, and their promises exceeding the bound of reasonable expectation, and disappointing their hopes, they grow restless and weary of their choice. Consider then, is the calling I am about to choose lawful in itself, and suitable for me? have I means proportioned to the end, capacity sufficient to attain the knowledge of it; strength and patience to bear its burdens; and substance to support the expenses? Otherwise, like the foolish builder, after you have laid the foundation, you will not be able to finish, and thereby expose yourself to sorrow and shame. If you are fitted for callings of different excellence, it is our wisdom and duty to choose that in which we may most eminently serve God and the community.



2d. Let faithful, judicious persons be consulted, especially of the same calling. They are the fittest judges in their own profession, as they best know the conveniences and inconveniences attending it, and the qualifications requisite for it: great regard, therefore, should be had to their advice, supposing them judicious and faithful. Let the young be persuaded to submit their judgments to persons of experience and fidelity, and steer their course by their advice. Then, should they be unsuccessful, this reflection will yield them support, "that they were not ruined by their own rashness"; and they will find persons ready to assist a man of conduct and prudence in his distress, who would despise the man of humour and caprice.

3d. Choose such a calling and place as may not be dangerous to the mind. There are some callings which are in themselves lawful, and sufficiently gainful, in which, nevertheless, as they are at present managed, none who regard the precious and immortal soul, would fix their children; because the temptations which attend them are so many and great, that it is next to impossible to be preserved from the contagion of vice and immorality in them. There are places also, which, on account of business, would be deservedly preferred, and yet by the supineness and neglect of masters in the government of their families, and the infection of evil servants, who are the bane of youth, they are rendered equally destructive. Deal not worse by your children than you would by the herd of the stall, or the sheep of the fold. Expose not their immortal souls to such imminent hazard for any momentary gain; for "what will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Let them be situated where God is reverently worshipped, and his day religiously observed; where the weakness and impetuosity of youthful dispositions may be under a wholesome restraint, and they may be taught to live for time and eternity. For, permit me to say, that if their lives and manners are not regulated by reason and religion, they will be as far from happiness in this world, as they are from the warrantable hopes of a better.

4th. Let the divine providence be acknowledged, by earnest supplications for direction and assistance. It is God that appointeth the sounds and places of our habitation, that by a sense of our dependence upon him, we might be induced to seek after him. It is part of the reasonable homage which intelligent and dependent creatures owe to the supreme Creator and Governor of all, to acknowledge him in all their ways; in doing this we are allowed to hope that he will direct our paths; but in the neglect of it, as we have no right to expect the guidance or blessing of heaven, so it will be no wonder if we meet with disappointment and distress. God only knows all the temptations and difficulties, advantages and disadvantages of the several situations in life, and our strength and fitness to bear them. He has often directed the honest humble inquirer, sometimes by persons and means unknown and unthought of, into the way most conducive to his present comfort and future happiness. It is our best interest as well as our proper duty, to leave him to "choose our inheritance for us."

5th. In concurrence with the foregoing directions, let the person's inclination be consulted; which if it is strongly and reasonably fixed on any particular calling, is one method whereby we receive the direction of providence, and a good step to a proper choice. Persons generally make the best proficiency in, and most easily bear the inconveniences of, those employments and situations, to which their natural dispositions incline them.

"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause, Job v. 8.

"Then I proclaimed a fast, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way. So we besought our God for this, and he was entreated of us. The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him, Ezra viii. 21, 23.

"Neither know we what to do, but our eyes are up unto thee, 2 Chron. xx. 12.

"In the multitude of counsellors there is safety, Prov. xi. 14.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. Be not wise in thine own eyes: Fear the Lord, and depart from evil, Prov. iii. 5, 7.

"A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps, Prov. xvi. 9.

"I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, Jer. x. 23.

"Let ours also learn to maintain good works (or profess honest trades), for necessary uses that they be not unfruitful, Tit. iii. 14.

"Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good; that he may have to give to him that needeth, Ephes. iv. 28.

Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong, &c. Jerem. xxii. 11.

"If ye will walk contrary to me, then will I also walk contrary to you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins, &c. Lev. xxvi. 21, 28.

"Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished; but he that gathereth by labour shall increase, Prov. xiii. 11.

"Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, Prov. x. 2.

"He that soweth iniquity, shall reap vanity, Prov. xxii. 8.

II. Proper dispositions and views, are equally necessary with a suitable choice of an employment. As we are beings, not governed by

instinct, as irrational creatures are, but possessed of reason, and directed in the exercise of it by a revelation from God; it concerns us that the views and motives of all our actions, and the disposition and manner in which they are conducted, be agreeable to the directions heaven has given to lead us in the paths of duty and happiness, and worthy of the reasonable natures with which we are endowed. Now to this end it is especially necessary that the mind be influenced and directed by the principles of religion. We may justly impute the miscarriage of thousands, to their unadvised and irreligious introduction into life; they go to universities and trades, without any sense of duty or danger, and being unarmed, are soon surprised by those temptations with which an evil world is filled, and which a depraved nature is too ready to embrace, to their utter ruin and destruction. To prevent this, labour after a true understanding of the Christian religion, and regulate your tempers and conduct by it in every scene of life.

1. Let a sincere love and reverence of God, and desire of his acceptance and favour through Christ Jesus, be the governing spring and motive of all your actions. When the mind is devoted to God, and bent on pleasing him, we have the strongest security against present guilt and folly, and future misery and punishment. If we sincerely serve him, he will surely bless us; he will interest himself in our concerns, support us under our difficulties, give us the direction of his wisdom, and the consolations of his grace, and preserve us from a thousand follies and miseries, by which those are overtaken, who make worldly gain, or their own lusts and vicious appetites, the governing principles of their lives. Believe it Sirs, it is as much your interest as your duty, to be early and truly religious, and to "remember your Creator in your youth." It is this for which you were created and redeemed, and are supported and maintained in life; and which the majesty of heaven claims of you as his due. Let the business of your callings be prosecuted, "not with eye service, as pleasing men only, but as the servants of Christ, with good will doing service as unto the Lord, and not to men." This will ennoble the

meanest employment, and secure your highest end and truest happiness, whatever your success may be in other respects.

2. In dependence upon the help of God, let your religious principles be accompanied with steady resolutions. Temptations and difficulties unknown before attend every new scene of life, which soon overcome the unprepared and irresolute mind: but if you discern the hook as well as the bait, and consider the consequences as well as the incentives to evil, by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, you may escape. Of all temptations to which the young are exposed, none is more fatal and pernicious than evil company. Such are to be found every where, who like the fallen angels, having revolted from their allegiance to God, endeavour to draw others into the same guilt and condemnation with themselves. Begin, therefore, no friendship with any, until you have a worthy character of them from a judicious hand or have had a sufficient time and opportunity to be satisfied of their seriousness, from your own observation. Let not former acquaintance only be thought a sufficient foundation for after friendship; for he might be very innocent at school, who is now very vicious and profane. Let no accomplishments of wit or learning, breeding or fortune, engage your heart to an intimacy with any who despise or ridicule a life of serious religion and strict virtue; for the more agreeable they are in other respects, so much the more fatal is their converse likely to be. Herein you must be resolute: two or three positive denials will free you from their solicitations, whereas easiness and compliance will strengthen their importunity, and when once you are entangled in the snare of evil company, you will find it very difficult to disengage yourself. If you are sometimes forced, on account of business or relation, to converse with persons of this character, let it ever be with a prudent reservedness; and if you at any time perceive your mind begin to fluctuate, and your zeal for religion abate by the sneers of folly and profaneness, seriously inspect the word of God, and see what infinite wisdom dictates as the duty and happiness of man, and consider which it is best to follow, the judgment of God, or that of blind and deluded sinners. Observe whether holiness and virtue be any more than the real and vital

influence and practice of that religion which they themselves, however, vainly profess to believe. Consider whether in the prospect of death and at the day of judgment, they not curse themselves and their own folly, for the neglect of that religion which they now impiously and madly deride: and then think whether he does not deserve to perish, who will forsake his God, his duty, and his best interest, for the sneers of such madmen; enquire therefore after the prudent, the wise, and religious of your age, and converse with them; for he that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Maintain also a resolute industry under the labours and difficulties of your callings. Time and use will make that easy and tolerable, which at first appears difficult and burdensome. The powers of the body and mind enlarge and strengthen by practice, and with ease and pleasure perform those things, which once were thought most grievous. Having therefore a tolerable capacity for your business, resolve to apply to it with firmness of mind. Nor be discouraged if you meet with some severities, to which you have not been accustomed; as stern and angry looks, harsh words or unkind usage; divine providence permits these things to humble that pride, and tame that wantonness to which youth is prone; therefore patiently and cheerfully submit to what is sufferable in your calling, and still hope that peace and satisfaction will succeed toil and trouble.

3. Particularly let me recommend to you humility and faithfulness, as most necessary to procure esteem from those you serve, and respect from all mankind.

Humility will make you easy and contented in every condition of life; you will then be ready to be commanded; easy to be pleased; hard to be provoked; and generally beloved. An humble mind thinks every good it receives more than it deserves, and every evil less. It will not think itself too great or too good to stoop to the meanest services of an honest employment; nor be wanting in a modest and respectful behaviour to others. You will not then be disputing when you should



obey; fretting when you should submit; envying those you should respect, or contemning those you should embrace. These are the consequences of pride of heart; a disposition which will make you hateful to God, disrespected of men, and uneasy to yourselves; every labour will be thought too much, every reproof too galling, and every week a year, until the time of servitude expires, and then you will carry your chain with you, for what liberty can he have that is a slave to his pride and passions?

Fidelity is another amiable disposition, which should be ever cultivated. Be true and sincere in your words. Let lying and dissimulation be shunned with the greatest abhorrence, as a vice that is destructive to all friendship and converse among men, by taking away that mutual confidence which is the very bond of society; and is the sure characteristic of a mean and abandoned mind, wherever it is indulged. Let this, therefore, be your resolution at all times, and in all cases, to speak the truth whatever it costs you.

You will find, a fault honestly confessed will be attended with a much readier pardon, and preserve a much better character, than when excused or denied with a lie, which at best will hide it but for a moment. Let your fidelity extend to deeds as well as words. Be punctually faithful and just in every thing you are entrusted with. Diminish not the substance, divulge not the secrets of those you serve, upon any pretence whatsoever. Then though your skill and parts may fall short of expectation, your faithfulness will procure to you love and esteem. A true heart will make amends for a weak head, or a slow hand. Natural weakness will be pitied and pardoned, but falseness and fraud are exceeding odious to God and man. Whatever, therefore, your necessities or temptations may be, never transgress the rules of justice and truth, nor imagine that any degree of skill or dexterity will recommend you in the world without them.

4. Let the study of the sacred scriptures constantly employ some part of your leisure hours: these are the surest guides to duty and happiness. The mind of the blessed God is herein laid open to man,

to preserve him from the worst of evils, and to direct him to the highest good, and shew him the thoughts of his heart towards him for ever. Some parts abound with the most entertaining histories, which are the more instructive, as they not only relate the external actions of men, but the internal motives from whence they proceeded, free from all fiction and falsehood. Here we are presented with a system of the most refined morality, founded upon the most rational and exalted conceptions of God; and enforced by the most awful and interesting sanctions. They are admirably contrived (with God's blessing) to heal the conscience; to purify, to comfort, to ennoble the soul; to inspire it with principles of virtue and goodness, and strengthen and confirm it in the practice of it. In a word, they are able to make us wise to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. When your minds are formed capable of relishing the pleasures and purity of these sacred volumes, a caution will be less necessary against delight in those loose and immoral writings which swarm in the present day; which, however celebrated for wit and politeness, tend to poison the heart, corrupt the fancy, vitiate the affections; and for one useful lesson that can be learned from them, are big with a thousand ills.

5. Let humble, earnest prayer to God for his grace and favour, be as the constant breath of your souls. Never think that good resolutions will secure you from moral evil, nor labour and skill from natural evil, without the concurrence of heaven. Without this, the most excellent parts, the wisest instructors, and the most gainful employments, can never ensure success. The frequent miscarriages of those who have been every way promising, plainly shew that God stands for something, and whatever advantages men may be possessed of, all are but cyphers without his blessing; which those that desire to enjoy, must use this method to obtain. This is not only necessary at the entrance into business, but in all successive seasons of life; because we constantly depend on God for the continuance of present blessings, as well as those we hope for in futurity. Morning and evening prayer, are as the key to open the mercies of the day, and shut out the dangers of the night, and therefore be constant and

sincere in the practice of it; and let not the success of your prayers be obstructed by the irreligion of your lives; for "if you regard iniquity in your hearts, the Lord will not hear your prayers," nor accept your persons.

Thus having chosen a lawful calling in a religious family, having your minds influenced by the principles of religion, and your resolutions steady (through divine grace) for the practice of it, making the holy scriptures your study and guide, and seeking the blessing of heaven by serious prayer to God; you may comfortably enter upon, and vigorously pursue, the duties of your callings, some assistance for the regular and religious discharge of which, is the design of the following essays.

"O that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them. Ye shall observe to do as the Lord your God hath commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand, or to the left. You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days, Deut. v. 29, 33.

"Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, Joshua xxiv. 14,16.

"What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it, Psalm xxxiv. 12,14.

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Walk not thou in the way with them, refrain thy foot from their path, &c. Prov.

i. 10, 15.

"My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee; write them upon the table of thine heart. So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man, Prov. iii. 1-4.

"Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee. She shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace. A crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go; keep her for She is thy life. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not into the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established, &c. Prov. iv. 7-27.

"And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever, 1 Chronicles xxviii. 9.

"Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, 2 Cor. i. 2.

"Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart, 2 Tim. ii. 22.

"Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded, Tit. ii. 6."

## CHAPTER III.

### Of Prudence or Discretion.

I. The nature and advantages of prudence. II. The cases in which it should be especially exercised. 1. In obtaining a full knowledge of our callings. 2. In the prudent choice of the circumstances thereof. 3. By due deliberation in affairs of importance. 4. In proportioning business to our abilities. 5. In regulating our expenses thereby. 6. By a frequent inspection into the state of our affairs. 7. In governing those passions to which we are most exposed. 8. In a due consideration of the contingencies of trade. 9. In avoiding those methods which have ruined others. 10. In disposing the common business of life in subserviency to the duties of religion. III. The neglect of prudence censured. Means to obtain it. A caution concerning it. Scriptures relative thereto.

I. The first thing necessary for a happy progress in business, is prudence or discretion. This, as it relates to trade, is a habit of mind enabling us to conduct our affairs in the wisest and best manner; or, in other words, it is pursuing the proper end, by the best means, and in the fittest time. It is not that serpentine craft, which lies in wait to captivate the unwary, impose upon the credulous, and overreach the weak understanding, and which teaches men to increase their wealth by injustice and fraud. God has given to no man superior wisdom or skill, to be directed to ends so contrary to his own nature and will, and the general good of mankind. But it is that honest wisdom, which is consistent with a good conscience, and an ornament to it. Prudence is subtilty refined from all base and unjust views, as subtilty is wisdom corrupted by them. Wisdom, like light, is pleasant to behold; it quickens the spirits, disposes the mind to a cheerful activity, and makes the passages of life clear and open; under God, it enables us to acquire and enjoy many advantages we could not otherwise attain; and frees from many evils and inconveniences to which we are liable. Whatever good arises from deliberate advice,

sagacious foresight, stable resolution, and orderly conduct, wisdom confers. Whatever evils proceed from blind ignorance, false presumption, unwary credulity, precipitate rashness, and unsteady purposes, wisdom prevents. It begets in us the reasonable hope of success; and quiets the heart in the want of it. God having given to man a considering mind, sagacity, and foresight, which he has denied to other creatures. They who act foolishly so far degrade the man, and resemble the brute: and, many are ruined by their own indiscretion and folly, without any other visible means than that they were themselves rash, wilful, or weak. But when our intentions are good, and the means proper, we may hope that all-wise goodness will prosper us, and our success will then be doubly pleasant: or, if we are disappointed, we shall disarm the affliction of what makes the deepest wound, the reflection that it was produced by our own folly. It is not supposed, that our wisdom and prudence can control the events of divine providence, or make our dependence upon the blessed God unnecessary. But it will hinder us from being our own destroyers, and is the means which the great Governor of the world uses to bestow prosperity and happiness, where he is disposed to vouchsafe the enjoyment of them. A considerate head is often more successful than the laborious hand; though both should be united in most employments.

II. Having considered the nature and advantages of prudence and discretion, we come now to instance the particulars wherein the tradesman is called to the exercise of it, namely—

1. In getting a full insight into his calling; so as to know all the parts, and lawful arts and methods of it. The nature and quality of the commodities he deals in; proper times and places for buying and vending them; the quantities of each that are most likely to produce advantage; the best method and art of manufacturing goods, and the certain nostrums which are in most callings, and on which much of the success of them depends: these, and every other part, should be well studied, and fully understood. Leave it to others to pride themselves in the knowledge of callings foreign to their own; or to be

curiously prying into the conduct and concerns of others; and remember that "the wisdom of the prudent is to understand his own way." Your trade or calling is your proper province, for the improvement of which your mind and capacities should be employed; and neither God nor man will condemn you for inexperience in the business of others. Let the time of your apprenticeship be carefully improved to this end. Treasure up all the knowledge you can attain by observation and instruction, and never be ashamed to continue learning any honest skill; for no fortune or application will support a man who is remarkably defective in knowledge. Your success is likely to be that of a rich vessel guided by an unskilful pilot, in danger soon to be shipwrecked and lost. On the other hand, all masters should make conscience, honestly and faithfully, to instruct their apprentices in all the lawful and gainful mysteries of their callings. This they are bound to do by their own agreement, and by all the rules of justice and honour.

2d. In the prudent choice of the several circumstances of trade.

For time. Choose that which is most suitable for your business; "for to every thing there [[Page:49]] is a season, and a time to every purpose." And among the rest, "a time to buy, and a time to sell," which every wise tradesman will observe. The future contingencies of business, and the rise and fall of the value of commodities, often depend upon such uncertain or unknown causes, that the deepest penetration is not able to fathom; but to buy goods when they are cheap, and sell them when they are growing dear; and at all times to be cautious of overcharging yourselves with dear or changeable goods, are maxims of prudence that never vary. Futurity is hid from us, but discretion is given to direct us, and those of the best discernment and sagacity are most likely to be successful.

For place. Prudence will direct the tradesman to consider which is most suitable and proper for his calling, and fix there. The conveniences of his family must give way to the conveniences of his business, and his fancy be regulated by his judgment in this affair.

That place may be exceeding proper and advantageous for one employment, which persons of a different one must starve in; and a fine house, or a pleasant situation, or even a small rent, will not make amends for the want of customers.

For persons. Great prudence is necessary in the choice of these. First, whom to trust: for it is not the metal that glitters most, that is always the richest; men are often deceitful, and too many make it their business to deceive, and enrich themselves with the spoils of the unwary and credulous. It is better, therefore, to be at the pains of a diligent inquiry after their abilities for the trust which we repose in them, than endure the grief of sad experience that we were mistaken in our apprehensions concerning them. Certain it is, that as there is prudence in trusting some, and charity in trusting others; so there are many whom it is neither prudence nor charity to trust at all. Whom to deal with; to wit, with men of conscience, or, at least, of common honesty; for these may be relied upon with more security than others, and it is at all times more creditable to correspond with men of virtue than with knaves. Common fame will generally acquaint you who and where they are. Lastly, whom to be familiar with. For though we should be friendly to all, yet familiar only with a few; and they should be such as we may either receive good from, or do good unto. And even of these not too many; for the tradesman's employment will not allow him time sufficient for performing the necessary offices of friendship to a great number. Let, therefore, the wise and the prudent, the virtuous and good, be the persons of your intimacy and choice; for nothing has a greater influence on our present and future happiness or misery, than our chosen companions, as was before observed. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

3d. This prudence should appear in using mature deliberation in affairs of importance. It is too visible, that even men of ingenuity are often ruined by their rashness. Not considering the circumstances that are necessary to direct them in a proper conduct, nor viewing the consequences that flow from them, they are carried on by a



plausible appearance of things or a hasty impetuosity of spirit, to the irretrievable ruin of themselves and families; fancy or passion, not reason and judgment, being the guides of their actions. Others lose their opportunities of advantage by an unsettled, dilatory temper of mind, suspending their determinations, till the proper season of acting is past. Due deliberation is therefore recommended, according to the importance and difficulty of the affair, and the limits of time it will admit of. If the case will allow of it, take a night's time to think of it, for that which is weighed over night, and reviewed in the morning, will be in some degree ripe for a judicious resolution. Indeed, as to trifling concerns, it is childish and unnecessary to spend much time in determining concerning them; but of the two, a circumspect slowness in words and actions, is preferable to too much speed, as being less dangerous and hurtful.

4th. In proportioning the affairs of your trade to your abilities.

Of mind. So as not to overcharge your understanding or memory. The mind of man, like a spring overstretched, loses its vigour. A ship that is well built, rigged, and balanced, will carry a heavy burden; but if overladen it sinks. The capacities of some are stronger and larger than others, but none are infinite. And, therefore, when you are so far overburdened with business, as to unfit you for the service of God, and the enjoyment of yourselves; when you can neither eat, nor sleep, nor be cheerful, nor pray, it is time to abate, and draw your business into less compass.

Of body. That you undertake no more, than the strength of that is able to perform; for this usually proceeds from covetousness, which is grasping at every thing; it makes men slaves in their callings; and either injures those that employ them by disappointments, or themselves by too much labour; thereby disturbing the peace of their minds, and impairing their health and strength. But let such remember that God and an eternal world call for some proportion of time and vigour of spirits; and that our bodies were designed to be "the temples of the Holy Ghost," and not drudges and slaves to the

world. And as divine providence seldom makes it necessary for any thus to labour in the very fire, so he can cause it to be for very vanity, to those whose avarice prompts them thereto.

Of estate. That you launch out no further than you can feel ground under you. For though in some cases, where the gain is certain or extremely probable, it may be lawful and prudent for persons to enlarge their stock and trade beyond the limits of their own foundation; yet every wise man will be very cautious in this matter; and I do not see how an honest man can answer it to God and his own conscience to go far this way, without acquainting his creditors beforehand with the nature of his adventures, and gaining their consent; for unexpected losses and disappointments may happen; and what right have you to endanger the ruin of others, or at least their sustaining a considerable damage without their own consent? Pride or covetousness, are usually the motives to these hazardous enterprises, and should be watched against by every prudent tradesman; for as that water will turn one mill briskly round, which will cause two to go heavily; so that credit with which a person may cheerfully carry on a moderate trade, will fill the mind with confusion and anxiety, when it is extended to a greater degree. The story often ends sadly, and he that was not contented to trade with his own stock, must be glad to live upon another's charity.

5th. In regulating your expenses by your abilities. As men should not on the one hand, from a sordid disposition, live too much below their incomes, and deprive themselves and families of what may contribute to the comforts of life; so, on the other, great caution should be used that their expenses do not exceed their due proportion; for without the gift of prophecy it is easy to foretell the unhappy consequences of such a conduct. "Expensive living is a kind of slow fever that preys upon the spirits and vitals of the tradesman, and when it is considerably increased is as fatal, and as sure to kill: it feeds upon the two most essential branches of his trade, his credit and his cash; whereby the languishing tradesman is overwhelmed. There is a load of pride upon the temper of the nation, which,

notwithstanding all the inconveniences of trade, prompts people to a profusion in their expenses, that I think may very properly be called a plague upon them; the poor will live like the rich, and the rich like the great, and the great like the greatest; and thus the nation runs on in a kind of distraction at this time; and where it will end, time will discover." Some are such slaves to their appetites, that the belly devours what the head and hands have laboured for. The pride of others, in the expensiveness of their houses and furniture; the costliness of apparel for themselves, their wives, or children; or the number and luxury of their entertainments; destroy their substance, and leave their creditors and workmen exclaiming against their injustice and extravagance; and multitudes are continually ruined by the excessive love of pleasure, which necessarily produces expenses of many sorts. The tradesman will find all his resolution little enough to withstand the torrent of this evil: but prudence will teach him to live rather below, than above his income, not knowing what casualties and disappointments futurity may produce. "He that begins to live as he should end will soon end worse than he began."

6th. Prudence will direct the tradesman to a frequent inspection into the state of his affairs; that he may know whether, and how much he thrives or languishes therein. This is especially necessary with respect to your souls; and he must live very uncomfortably, or be a very bankrupt in religion who neglects it. But it is of use also in temporal concerns; and to this end a regular method should be kept in your books of account, that you may readily and certainly view the posture of your affairs. If you find that you improve in your way, this will afford you satisfaction and pleasure, and should excite your gratitude to God for his goodness, in blessing your labours. If you perceive things to be at a stand, you will be quickened to greater frugality and industry before it is too late. And if you are declining in your estate, it will oblige you to search for the cause of your decay, to examine what excess or imprudence you are chargeable with, and rectify your conduct for the future; and especially to inquire whether any criminal conduct towards God, the neglect of his day, or worship; uncharitableness to the poor, or injustice to others; does not provoke

the divine providence to blast your gains, and render your labours abortive. "For if ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart," &c. Inspect therefore your conduct both to God and man; inspect the state of your own affairs; for it is better to survey your own accounts, than that commissioners should do it for you; and give me leave to add this advice, that if you find your condition so low, as not to be more than sufficient to satisfy your creditors, prudence and justice require you to stop in time; hereby your reputation will be preserved as an honest man, and you will find even your creditors ready to assist your future attempts.

7th. Prudence is to be exercised in governing those passions to which our callings most expose us. The passions of the mind are natural to us, and inseparable from us; but the government of them, and subduing their excesses, is the business of wisdom and virtue. To be a servant to them is a misery below a slave; this bondage the Tradesman is in danger of from various causes. Sometimes discontent is ready to seize him because the wind does not favour his merchandise, or the weather his manufacture. He is subject to envy, from the superior prosperity and success of others, whom he observes to have more custom or credit than himself. The passion of fear, which was implanted in our natures to prevent evils, and not to increase them, is apt to fluctuate his mind, and sink his spirits; and it is the triumph of prudence to extinguish the excesses of it. When we have done our duty, and acted according to the best of our judgments, we should no longer torment ourselves about the event of things, but leave ourselves and all our concerns to the wise and good providence of God. But foolish hopes are often more fatal to the present and eternal concerns of men, than groundless fears; these, though uncomfortable, quicken the spirits to vigour and activity, to prevent the evils apprehended; the others leave us in a fatal security and presumption. How many Tradesmen are ruined by their vain hopes! Some enriching scheme, like the ignis fatuus, glitters at a

distance, and leads them through manifold difficulties in the pursuit, but when it is approached, vanishes into air; others have great expectations from the death of rich friends, or some precarious contingency, in the imagination of which they neglect their proper business, live above their present estates, and like the dog in the fable, quit their present possessions to catch at shadows. Yea, many times such is the infatuation, though they feel themselves sinking, they buoy up their spirits with these foolish hopes, until they can neither avoid their fall, nor recover from it.

Another passion too common to the Tradesman is rash anger; to this he is more or less exposed according to his natural temper, and employment; and wisdom and prudence must be exercised to suppress it. A wise man will consider before he gives vent to his anger, whether there is a sufficient cause for it, or it is likely to be attended with good effects; he will make allowances for the circumstances of the action, and the capacity of the agent; and defer the expressions of resentment until the mind is calm and sedate; that his judgment may be just and merciful, and his anger not mixed with sin. Though customers may be provoking; servants and workmen, idle and unfaithful; relatives clamorous and peevish; yet religious wisdom and prudence will so far influence the Tradesman that is possessed of it, that they shall not greatly disturb the peace of his mind, nor disorder the management of his affairs; or render him rude and insolent to his customers; for this is a certain maxim, that the more we are governed by wisdom, the less we shall be inflamed by passion.

8th. This discretion is to be employed in a prudent consideration of the contingencies of our callings. These are exceeding various, and fall under the observation of every Tradesman in his way. The prudent man in these cases considers, what may fall out in this or that country; in this or the other commodity: upon the return of such and such ships, and the like; with the several degrees of probability; and then orders his affairs accordingly. If there was in every trade a certain and constant method, and chain of events, a small degree of

sagacity would serve; but with many callings it is otherwise, which makes it necessary for us to use our reason, observation and experience, to direct us when to extend or contract our sales, and what course to steer; always remembering to regulate our conduct by the rules of justice and charity to others; and not to exercise our penetration and judgment to prejudice and ensnare the less knowing and considerate. On the other hand, what is out of our power should be out of our care; we should consider that present duty is ours, but future events are God's. Whatever disappointments we meet with in our callings, let us patiently and cheerfully submit to his wisdom and government, and still continue to trust in his goodness, to be constant in our duty, and diligent in our employments, hoping that our losses will soon be made up to us, either by the peace and enjoyment of our own minds, or by the blessings of divine providence, or both.

9th. This prudence is especially to be exercised in avoiding those methods by which others have been ruined. Every sinking Tradesman is a lesson of instruction to us, and it is far better to learn wisdom from the fatal experience of others, than our own. Let us cast our eyes abroad, and discern the rocks which they have dashed upon, and the quicksands in which they have been swallowed up, and let our prudence be employed in shunning them. To instance in a few:

Company keeping. I am speaking of it now, not in a religious, but prudential view; in this light, how often has excess herein been the Tradesman's ruin! Business neglected, is business lost; and the Tradesman that can satisfy himself to be absent from his employ, has no right to expect success in it. Much conversation abroad must necessarily take up much time, and is usually attended with great expense. The loss of the first is often more fatal than that of the last; as money may be recovered, but time cannot. In the hours of absence, business presents, a valuable customer comes to buy, who not finding the master goes elsewhere. An unexpected bargain offers to be sold, an advantage which may never return again. Servants are hereby left to themselves, who if they are unfaithful and negligent,

embezzle the cash, disoblige the customers, destroy and spoil the manufactures, and do an inexpressible wrong. It may at first view appear strange, but it is certainly true, that the injury is as great if they are diligent, obliging and faithful. The servant who used to act as master in the shop, and render himself acceptable to the customers in his master's absence; when his time is expired, or he sets up for himself, will necessarily draw the customers with him. The man that was contented with the shadow of authority in his shop, will find only the shadow of business left there, when his ingenious and ruling servant is separated from him. Let your attendance in business be constant, your commodities good, the prices reasonable, and your deportment civil; and I may venture to answer for it that you will find more success in this way, under the blessing of providence, than by a wandering pursuit of business abroad, to the loss of time, expense of money, the neglect of servants and family; and, which is a consequence more to be dreaded than all the rest, and too frequent to be passed by without regard, the loss of the soul, by the contagion of corrupt principles and evil practices. "They that are least sensible of their danger in this respect, are most likely to feel its fatal effects."

Suretiship. Though this may be lawful, and in some cases necessary, it requires the utmost care and caution. Nothing can justify our entering into obligations of this nature, unless we are able to make them good without injury to ourselves and families, or perturbation of mind, and can pay them with the same freedom as we do other debts; for certainly the whole obligation lies upon the surety, both in law and conscience, in case the principal proves insolvent; and who can be content to run these risks? If it be objected, that there is no trading without doing this act of friendship for one another; I answer; although men cannot in all instances, trade so high without it, the desire of which may proceed from pride and covetousness, and end in ruin; yet trade may be carried on in a way more safe, and not less comfortable. If the person is a man of prudence and integrity, the creditor may rely upon his single bond, without entangling another with him; and if he is not so, I am sure he is not fit for your

trust. If a refusal to enter into obligations of this sort is charged upon you, as the want of friendship or gratitude; study to oblige them some other way, and endeavour to convince them that it is not a defect of honor or friendship which occasions your denial; for alas, this person who now solicits you, may be deeper in debt than you are aware of: or he may be bound for others for more than he is worth; or he may be less careful and just than you imagine: or at least he is mortal, and may leave his estate and you so much entangled at his death, as may be exceeding injurious, if not totally destructive to you. These are not idle suppositions; but cases that occur every day. Therefore, "my son, be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts. But if thou art engaged, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast given thy hand to a stranger; thou art snared with the words of thy mouth. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids, until thou hast delivered thyself," &c.

Gaming, is another ruinous practice which prudence will preserve you from. Much time is spent by many in this idle course; and I doubt a pack of cards, or a game at tables, have often occasioned the exercises of religion (private and family) to be neglected. But that which I have principally in view is hazardous games, of which men make not a diversion but a trade, and venture more upon the contingency of success, than either reason or conscience can justify. Make it your rule, to play for no more in any recreation than you may lawfully expend upon your delight; for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil. Though many other vices may certainly ruin you, yet these two follies of gaming and suretiship may very suddenly do it. Many have by these in a few hours undone themselves and their families beyond all recovery. Let no temptation, therefore, of a speedy gain, engage you in a course so opposite to the laws of God, and the friendship and love that is due to man and so ruinous and destructive to those that enter into it; but fix your unalterable resolution against it. "Enter not into this path of the wicked, and go not in this way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." And never reckon your wealth your own, until you have restored whatsoever you have thus injuriously or dishonestly gained.



Prudence will teach you to avoid an excessive curiosity; or a busy intermeddling with the concerns of others. Every tradesman has business enough at home to employ his time and faculties; either in works of piety to God, charity to the distressed, civility to friends and relatives, or the necessary employments of his calling; but there is no wisdom in intermeddling with the concerns of others, without a just cause, and a due call. Much time is lost, and little good is obtained, by this trifling disposition. Above all, be conscientiously cautious of busying yourself with the affairs of state. Many indulge themselves in great impertinency in this respect; that affect to have a profound knowledge of politics ; to be acquainted with private negotiations, and the secret springs of action; to which are often added rash censures of what they do not understand. They can find some fault in every measure of their governors; can tell to whose ignorance or unfaithfulness every disappointment was owing; or to gratify whose pride or revenge this or that step was taken, or law made. By this means they not only discover great folly, but divert others from their proper business, and set them against the most prudent or even necessary measures; and rebellion itself is fomented by indulging this idle humour. Let it be your endeavour to fill up the station in which you are placed with proper duty, and to promote the public good by all prudent and laudable means; but let no pretence how pious soever, nor any prospect how specious soever, nor any pressure how great soever, prevail with you to disturb the public peace, to dishonour your rulers, or embark in any design unjustifiable by the laws you are to be governed by. Let God alone to ride the world; let the lawful magistrate alone to rule his subjects; and let it be your business cheerfully to obey, or quietly to suffer. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: but let none of you suffer as an evil doer, or as a busy body in other men's matters."

10th. Prudence will direct you so to dispose the common business of life, as not to obstruct the duties of religion; but that they may harmonize and assist each other. It is true, the nature of some employments, and the necessity of some tradesmen allow them less time for the worship of God, and the exercises of devotion, than

others: but the pious tradesman, whatever his business or necessity may be, will redeem some time for the noble and necessary employments of religion; and will not so far consider his relation to the present state, as to forget the eternal concerns of another world. His devotion disposes him for his business, and his business makes his devotion welcome. The less time he can spare in the week, the more careful he is to improve the Christian sabbath, when it returns. Thus he draws down the blessing of heaven upon all the labours of life, and gains that wisdom and virtue which enables him to fulfil the duties, and bear the burdens of it. But imprudence, as well as irreligion, often renders the exercises of devotion distasteful; the unfitness of the seasons of it, or the undue choice of other circumstances, occasions confusion in the discharge of it; which, if it were prudently and sincerely performed, would appear the most delightful and beneficial employment of time.

III. To conclude; from what has been said, we learn of what importance prudence is to a tradesman. It may be of more service to him than all his stock or all his friends: it will make him amiable and useful to others, and happy in himself. It should, therefore, be our concern to acquire as much of this excellent quality as may be. It is true, sagacity is a natural gift, and all men do not seem to be equally endowed with it; but it may be improved, as any other faculty of the mind may. Reasoning on the probable consequences of things, with a careful observation of events as they arise, may be of great use; but above all it is necessary we should get the command of our passions; that they may not bias our judgment, nor hurry us on to action before we have deliberated at all, or in proportion to the importance and difficulty of the matter. For, generally, imprudent steps are taken, not for want of capacity to judge of their nature or consequences; but through passion and haste men do what they themselves could see to be imprudent, if they would allow themselves time to think coolly and maturely upon it.

Consider persons and things; whereby your wisdom will be greatly improved: every thriving or decaying tradesman will be a lesson of

instruction to you. Solomon learned wisdom this way; "he looked upon the field of the slothful, he considered it, and received instruction" ; and do you imitate him therein.

Consult wise men. The long observations of others may soon be yours if you are willing to learn: do not think that all the methods and rules of wisdom and prudence, are to be grasped by your own skill; but rather choose to be learning among the wise, than priding yourself among the foolish: for he that hearkeneth unto counsel, as well as he that is able to give it, is wise.

Study the sacred scriptures. These are the words of the only wise God. There you will find precepts of wisdom suited to every state and condition of life; particularly in that excellent collection of proverbs, which was dictated by the spirit of God, on purpose to convey to the "young man knowledge and discretion." A book, therefore, which should often be consulted by every religious tradesman; and would certainly have been preferred, even by the polite world, to the writings of Socrates, Seneca, or Cicero, had it not come to us under the disadvantageous character of divine inspiration.

Pray that the Father of lights would instruct you: for "he giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh understanding, &c." Prov. ii. 6. "He gives it to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." And he has said, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." He knows all the connexions of things; he can influence your mind, and direct your thoughts; can save you from fatal errors in civil as well as religious life, and keep off temptations of one kind and another. God can give more wisdom than man can acquire of himself, and those who most seriously and constantly depend upon him, are certainly the persons that are most likely to be possessed of that wisdom, which God himself will approve.

What I am recommending, is an honest and laudable habit of prudence, not that which degenerates into subtilty and craft. Let none, under the pretence of wisdom, allow themselves to overreach

or deceive others, or make a prey of their easy and well meaning neighbours, to compass their own covetous or ambitious ends. This is wisdom from beneath; and as it comes from hell, so it leads to it: for "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God"; and the Apostle adds, "be not deceived:" a caution that plainly intimates, it is more than possible the prospect of gain may blind the minds of men, and make them insensible of their guilt and danger. Whatever apprehensions these persons may have of their sagacity and prudence, the world cannot produce a greater fool than he that will affront God, injure his neighbour, and destroy his own soul, for the sake of a little momentary gain.

"A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion, Psalm cxii. 5.

"My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow down thine ear to understanding. That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge, Prov. v. 1, 2.

"I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment. That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, Prov. viii. 12, 20.

"Wise men lay up knowledge: but a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding, Prov. x. 13,14.

"He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise of heart. Prov. xi. 29.

"Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly, Prov. xiii. 16.

"Every wise woman buildeth her house; but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands. The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way. The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going, Prov. xiv. 1, 8, 15.

"There is a treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wise: but a foolish man spendeth it up, Prov. xxi. 20.

"Through wisdom is an house builded, and by understanding it is established. And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches, Prov. xxiv. 3, 4.

"Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves, Matt. x. 16."

## **CHAPTER IV.**

### **Of Diligence.**

I. The nature and views of diligence. The extent of it considered, and recommended. In the serious employment of our powers and faculties; and the substance of our time in our callings. In laying hold of opportunities. In a becoming care of those things which are accounted small. In rejecting those avocations which would divert us from our proper business. II. Excitations to diligence. The regard due to divine providence. The necessity of spiritual diligence urged. Scriptures relative to this chapter.

I. Diligence, as it relates to trade, is an habitual employment of our bodily and mental powers about our proper callings, in a just and happy medium between idleness, supineness, and trifling curiosity, on the one hand, and slavish drudging and immoderate care on the other. It differs not in the religious tradesman from the same virtue in other men, but as it flows from a better principle, and is directed to an higher end. The vicious and profane, as they know not God, so they live not to him; all their labours and views centre in themselves, and the indulgence of their appetites and desires is the principal guide and end of all their actions. But the good man considers himself, whatever may be his station in life, as the servant of divine providence, and makes the word of God the rule, and the honour of God the end, of his common employments: he is diligent therein

from a sense of duty, as well as from the prospect of gain. This virtue is chiefly exercised in the following particulars:

1st. In the serious employment of the powers of mind and body, in our callings. Whatever sagacity of mind, depth of judgment, or quickness of invention you are endowed with, should be employed. There is, indeed, less use for these in some callings than in others; but there is room for the exercise of them in all, and they are much better used in the meanest callings, than perverted to the dishonour of God, or the injury of others. Again, have you a firm constitution, a vigorous nerve, an able arm, or a curious hand; serve God with these in your callings; for to this end were you entrusted with them. God hath appointed the honest labours of life to provide support for the body, and prevent the distempers of the mind; sober industry spends those exuberant spirits, which otherwise are apt to break forth in unlawful flames; for the more laborious the less lascivious: indeed, we are not required so to exhaust our strength in the business of the day, as to leave ourselves spiritless in the close of it; but in moderation we should not be backward to exert ourselves in our employments, seeing God accepts of our labour; and will, by food and rest, recruit our strength and spirits again.

2d. In employing the substance of our time in our callings. As the servant's time is his master's, so the master's time is God's, and not his own; which the religious tradesman will carefully improve, and wisely divide between the concerns of this life and the next. Hours have wings, and every moment flies up to the Author of time, and carries notice of our usage of it. The common callings of life necessarily require the constant employment of time, and are not to be attended to as business by the by. The industrious tradesman will, if health permit, be stirring early, and continue with cheerful diligence in his business. His family, and shop, his friends, or the public, teaching or learning, will find him full employment for his time; and he will need no miserable helps to destroy that which flies with so swift a speed. "Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening."

3d. In laying hold of opportunities; for diligence includes watchfulness. Great things may sometimes be done in a little time; and opportunities, if embraced, will reward our care and diligence; if they are let slip, may never present themselves again; for "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose." These are like wind and tide, with which men sail with ease and expedition, and these the diligent tradesman will be careful to observe and improve. Care is as necessary to success as labour; let men be ever so industrious and painful, unless they are considerate and watchful, their success is like to be but small.

4th. In a becoming attention to little things. Many small matters arise, in time, to something considerable: a small customer, attended to and pleased, shews the way to a greater: but the disdain to get or save things of small value, is often punished by divine providence, in reducing such pride and carelessness to indigence and want. It is the remark of a very wise man, "he that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little." The gifts of the Creator's bounty, abused by one man's folly and vanity, are often transferred to another, who will make a better use of them. God forbid that I should encourage a covetous, sordid disposition; what I recommend, is a diligent care to make the best use of things, and to regard those smaller matters on which greater depend, or which by some few repetitions may amount to something considerable. A constant and careful respect to this has raised many persons to a considerable estate, and enabled others, even with a little, to do much more good than the careless persons can do with a large income. Our divine Master has herein proposed his own conduct for our imitation, who, when he had fed five thousand people with only five loaves and two fishes, by which he had shewn how easily he could create food, yet ordered the fragments to be gathered up, that "nothing might be lost."

5th. In rejecting those avocations which would divert you from your business. The tradesman's shop or warehouse should be the place of his delight; from whence he should not wander without some reasonable motive; for here his business and his advantage lies. It

must be something considerable which will justify a tradesman's reposing himself at his country house, or elsewhere, while his affairs and family at home are left at random. Many families have this way been undone; and many servants ruined, by being left masters of their own wills before they have had prudence to guide themselves. Consider, sirs, how is the trust performed to the parents of your apprentices, who, confiding in your personal worth and care, placed their children with you? Nay, how is the trust performed to Almighty God, who by his providence hath given you the charge over them? And as you are the only persons that can inspect and regulate their behaviour, while they continue in your service; it is from you that he will require an account concerning them. If you are grown too great for your trades, or they too hard for you, it is better to resign them to more diligent hands, than to carry them on in a way thus destructive to others, and offensive to God.

This diligence will guard you against consuming your time and substance at houses of public entertainment. It is not easy to say, how far such converse may be permitted; but it is easy to perceive that many tradesmen exceed those bounds which diligence and sobriety, not to say religion, will allow. How many must be sought at the tavern, &c. who should be found in their shops, and are expending that money at places of entertainment, of which duty to their families, and justice to others, call for a different account. And, indeed, this diligence will abridge all unnecessary time wasting pleasures and recreations. Such as are moderate and seasonable, are no doubt very allowable; but when they captivate the mind, encroach upon business, or consume the substance, it is high time to reject, or at least to restrain them. Diversions should be tasted by us, as the dogs of Egypt are said to do the water of Nilus, with great caution, lest the crocodiles devour them.

Needless and fruitless visits will be restrained by this diligence. A due performance of these is necessary to friendship and business; but idle, gossiping visits, which are employed in ransacking the affairs or faults of others; judging or condemning those who by their



absence are incapable of defending themselves; or in censuring the methods of public administration, the reasons and springs of which are entirely unknown to persons in common life; these the diligent tradesman avoids. His visits will be commonly short, serious, and cheerful; whereby he may leave a relish of goodness behind him, and a desire in his friends to see him again.

Lastly. This diligence will restrain all unseasonable devotion. Far be it from me to discourage the exercises of religious worship; our climate is generally, in this respect, cold enough. But there is an indiscreet zeal in some, which causes them to neglect the necessary duties of relative and social life; their families languish for want of their care, and their business for want of their presence; their work is left undone at home, and their debts unpaid abroad, while they are running from sermon to sermon, &c. This can by no means be justified. Not that an industrious tradesman may not redeem some time from his common calling for public or private devotion; for the improvement and delight of the mind, as well as the refreshment of the body; but then he will take care that it is consistent—1. With the abilities of his mind; for if the bucket be broken, it will hold no water. 2. With his lawful calling; for therein God is truly served. 3. And with time to reflect upon, and practise what he hears; for the great end of devotion is, to "teach us to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world," and at last arrive with safety and joy to a better state.

II. Let the religious tradesman be excited to the practice of industry. It conduces much (under the favour of providence) to our temporal prosperity: the diligent are usually blessed with plenty; and no doubt affluence is a blessing, notwithstanding the frequent perversion of it, or else it had never been made the subject of so many divine promises; if riches and honour are good for you, this is the way to attain them; for, as there is no calling so great but sloth will impoverish, so there are few so mean but diligence will improve. But whatever our success is, I am sure it is most conducive to our comfort. I dare appeal to every one's experience, whether they find not more inward peace and satisfaction when the day has been

diligently employed in their proper callings, than when it has been trifled away in sloth and folly. And it heightens our relish for the rest and refreshments of life; for the food, as well as "the sleep of the labouring man is sweet." But then, let us be very cautious that this diligence does not degenerate into covetousness, and we thereby lose the reward, as we extinguish the virtue of it; and contract a curse, instead of gaining a blessing by it.

III. Let the blessed God be owned and honoured, by humble prayer, for a blessing on your diligence; and affectionate praise and gratitude for success therein. "He it is that giveth you power to get wealth." "And without his blessing it is in vain for you to rise up early and sit up late, and to eat the bread of carefulness." He governs and influences the minds of others, and directs all those circumstances which must concur to your success. And his providence must preserve what his bounty bestows, or else a thousand accidents will soon deprive you thereof.

IV. Let us close this chapter with an obvious reflection. Is diligence so much a duty in the common business of this life? How much more is it so in the great concerns of religion and an eternal world? If earthly riches do not drop into the mouths of men while sleeping, nor are to be obtained without labour and care; much less are the habits of virtue and goodness, and the rewards of glory and happiness. God will not carry us to heaven like stones, without any sense or motion of our own; but requires us to shew our esteem of his eternal grace and favour, by running, fighting, wrestling, and striving for it, before he bestows it upon us. As sloth is the evident cause of men's present poverty, so it is of their future misery; they will not be at the pains to be saved, though all the labour in religion is accompanied with real pleasure and sweetness. Shake off sirs, this base distemper of the soul, and let not your diligence for trifles condemn your coldness and dulness in the pursuit of heavenly and true riches. Let the foregoing directions be attended to for the prosperity of your souls, as well as that of your callings: 1. Seriously employ all the powers of nature in the service and love of the ever blessed God. 2. Let time be diligently

improved; let not that be misspent, or run waste, while work of so great importance lies before you. 3. Lay hold of every opportunity for doing or receiving good. 4. Take a becoming care of those things that are accounted small, though nothing that relates to God, and another world, is really so; let no small duty be omitted, and no small sin indulged; for a man may as surely bleed to death by the wound of a lancet, as by that of a sword. 5. And reject those avocations which would divert you from the great business of religion. Let not the world, the flesh, or the devil, draw away your minds from the love and duty which you owe to God, and the concern that is necessary for the salvation of the soul. Only take heed that you do not put your spiritual diligence in the room of the grace and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; for so all your labour in religion will be utterly lost and fruitless; since it is his perfect merits (rested in by faith) and not your good works, that will justify you before God; and it is his grace and strength, and not your vigilance and care, that must enable you to fulfil the duties of the Christian life.

"Pharaoh said unto Joseph, If thou knowest any men of activity amongst thy brethren, then make them rulers over my cattle, Gen. xlvii. 5, 6.

"The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour; and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph, 1 Kings xi. 28.

"He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. He that gathereth in summer, is a wise son; but he that sleepeth in harvest, is a son that causeth shame, Prov. x. 4, 5.

"He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding. The hand of the diligent shall bear rule; but the slothful shall be under tribute. The substance of a diligent man is precious, Prov. xii. 11, 24, 27.

"He that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster, Prov. xviii. 9.

"The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty. Open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread, Prov. xx. 4, 13.

"He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man. He that loveth wine and oil, shall not be rich, Prov. xxi. 17.

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men, Prov. xxii. 29.

"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man, Prov. xxiv. 30, 34.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest, Eccles. ix. 10."

## **CHAPTER V.**

### **Of Justice.**

I. The nature of justice. II. Obligations to it. III. Instances of it, as conscionable bargains. The ready payment of just debts. Using exact weights and measures. The right working of manufactures. The discharge of all lawful impositions, taxes, or customs. Due respect to the laws and orders of societies. An equitable regard to fellow tradesmen. A paternal care of apprentices. Suitable provision for wife and children. Mercy to the poor. A punctual regard to all lawful

contracts. The restitution of unlawful gains. IV. Exhortations to the practice of justice. Scriptures suited thereto.

I. The nature of justice, as it respects men's dealings with each other, is contained in that divine rule of our blessed Lord: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them" ; that is, do ye in all cases to others, whatsoever is fit for you to expect from them in like circumstances. It is an habit of mind that disposes us to render to all their dues; and, as was said of diligence, it differs not in the real Christian from the same virtue in others, but as faith in the Lord Jesus, reverence to God, and a love to goodness, are the springs of it. I say it is a habit of the mind; for it relates not merely to a particular action, but the general series and tenor of our lives. A man may be pale through fear, or red with blushing, yet we do not from hence call him a pale or a ruddy man; because these are not his complexion, they are merely incidental and transient. So he alone deserves the honourable name of just, whose conduct is uniformly upright, and who has such a love to justice, as to maintain its practice, whether it meets with present applause or not, or even though it should sometimes thwart his apparent interest. Psalm xv. 4.

II. Our obligations to this great duty are manifold:—1. The light of nature, and reason of things, enforce it; men are not like the fishes of the sea, made to prey upon and devour one another; but as every one requires to be justly dealt with himself, so reason obliges him to treat others in the same manner: this is a principle so evident to the consciences of men, that it is impossible to obliterate it, however their vicious inclinations prevail with them to act contrary to it. The Roman emperor Severus, so much admired that golden rule of our Saviour, "Quid tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris; what you would not have done to you, do not to others"; that he made it his motto, and caused it to be written on his doors and buildings, and enrolled the divine Author of it among his gods; and would to God it was more legibly inscribed, not so much upon the walls, as in the hearts and lives of those who call themselves Christians.

2. The moral law of God obliges us to the practice of justice: this is the sum of the duties required in the second table; which, indeed, is only a new edition of the law of nature. "Thou shalt not covet," excludes the principles, and "thou shalt not steal," prohibits the practice of whatsoever is unjust or dishonourable in our conduct to others; and these rules are enforced by numerous and repeated injunctions. "Thus saith the Lord, keep ye judgment, and do justice, and speak every man truth with his neighbour." "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour: but that which is altogether just shalt thou follow." He has strengthened these precepts with threatenings of severe punishment, in case of disobedience; many instances of the performance of which are visible in this world, but many more are reserved to the great and solemn day of retribution. The gospel of Christ binds the consciences of all who expect to receive a share in the blessings of it, to the exact performance of this duty; it is the very design of it "to teach men to live soberly, and righteously, as well as godly, in this present world." It deprives the unjust of any present claim to the benefits of it; for "if they are not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to their trust the true riches?" And utterly excludes them from the hopes of the future glories and rewards of it; "know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God?" So that he who allows himself to violate the laws of justice, maims Christianity; and, whatever his profession of religion may be, it is false and insincere; for he can never be true to God, who is unjust to man, nor can he reasonably hope to be accepted of him.

And not only duty and conscience, but present interest, obliges men to the exercise of probity and justice: it is the surest and safest way to prosperity, and has a natural tendency to promote it; the universal practice of it will necessarily establish a good character, upon which much of the tradesman's success depends; every one loves to deal with an honest man; and the credit and reputation that attends it procures many advantages to the possessor of it. Though the indiscretion of some honest and just men may keep them poor; and

divine Providence may afflict others, to convince an unbelieving world of a judgment to come; yet the good God evidently blesses many with temporal prosperity, to shew his love to righteousness, and the goodness of his providence in the present state. "The faithful man shall abound with blessings; while he that hasteth to be rich by injustice and deceit shall be punished." Shame and misery are the natural fruits of injustice and fraud; and when men have increased their wealth, and feathered their nests with the spoils of others, the divine vengeance, like a fire not blown, often consumes them; and it does not rest here, "for it goes ill with them that are left in their tabernacles." So odious is this sin to God, that even the posterity of the unjust and oppressive shall feel the effects of his indignation against it; and we may often observe, that ill-gotten wealth moulders away, we know not how, in the hands of those for whom it was unjustly laid up.

III. Having thus briefly considered the nature of justice, and our obligations to the practice of it, we proceed to specify the instances in which the tradesman is to exercise it.

1st. Justice obliges the tradesman to make conscientious bargains; that he neither sells too dear, nor buys too cheap; but does by others as he would be dealt by himself.

1. It requires us to exact only a reasonable proportion of gain from what we sell. The measure of allowable gain for all tradesmen cannot be determined by any particular rule: it cannot always be measured by what the commodity cost, since surprise or ignorance may occasion a dear purchase; and why should others pay for my folly? Or it might by some special occurrence be obtained very cheap; and no reason will oblige me to give away that advantage. The rates at which some others sell, cannot always be the proper measure of gain; for they may be necessitated to sell at under rates, and why should other men's indigence prejudice me? Or they may undersell others to gain customers, taking too little for one thing, and overreaching them in others; and why should that mean artifice regulate those that

are above it? Or else they may be unreasonable and extravagant in their prices, and why must I be governed by their covetousness? What a commodity hath formerly sold for, can be no just rule; for every one knows that prices ebb and flow, and what was worth a guinea last year, may not be worth half so much this. Nor is what will maintain the tradesman and his family, a sure guide; for two shillings in the pound may be profit sufficient for those whose returns are considerable, or their expenses small; whereas twice as much may not suffice for the supply of a numerous, or sickly family. But then the most we can get, is very far from being a just measure for our gains, for it is possible to exact twice the value of a commodity from an unskilful or unwary customer, which is downright injustice and fraud. Nor, lastly, can the intrinsic worth be a constant rule for valuation; since in divers things that cannot be known, and in many others fancy is the only guide: so that the surest rule that can be given is the market price, which as it is the most general, so it is usually the least liable to exception; and less partial than the conduct of particular men. A due allowance is fit to be made for a person's time and labour, hazard and skill; and long credit makes it reasonable for the tradesman to advance the price of his goods, as he is thereby deprived of the improvement of his money, and runs some hazard of losing it; but in estimating the disadvantage on these heads, and making allowance for them, he is always to conduct himself by the rules of justice and honour; and desire no more gain from others when he sells, than he allows reasonable for others to gain by him when he is the purchaser; remembering, that "light gains make an heavy purse, but large gains often make an heavy conscience."

2. Justice forbids the taking advantage of another's necessity in your bargains. Let not the cries of the poor ascend to God against you, for sinking the prices of their labour or goods so low that it is impossible they should live upon the profits of them; nor let the necessity they are known to be under of receiving ready money for what they sell, for the subsistence of themselves and families, ever tempt you to withhold from them the allowance of reasonable gain. "I have known



a sordid tradesman buy manufactured metal of a necessitous workman for the same price that unmanufactured was known to cost, and then glory in his bargain"; but how common or gainful soever such practices may be, I am sure it is horrid injustice and oppression; if there is any providence of God in this world, or any truth in his word, the divine curse must needs attend all such iniquitous courses. If ever your covetousness tempts you to such kind of conduct, consider that confounding question which God, the poor man's King, puts unto you; "What mean ye that ye grind the faces of the poor, saith the Lord God of hosts?" and prevent the shame and confusion that must attend your answer to such an inquiry, by a sincere repentance, if you have been guilty herein; and a more humane and Christian method of trade for the time to come. Nor let their necessities encourage you to encroach upon them in what they want to buy, or in any thing they want to borrow for their necessary use, which is equal injustice and oppression with the former. Or if your fellow tradesman should need some commodity to supply his customer with, shew your generosity and honour by using him as you would be done unto; and in no case wait for an advantage to prey upon the straits of others, for none would willingly be so dealt with themselves: nay, ingenuousness and benevolence should incline you rather to deal better by those whose wants oblige them to make their application to you, than by others who stand in no need of such consideration.

3. Make no advantage of others' unskilfulness in your bargains. Every one is not endowed with knowledge or sagacity alike; persons may easily forget, mistake, or overshoot themselves; nay, it is impossible that any should be a competent judge of the value or goodness of every commodity they may want to purchase or sell: we must be sensible that this is often our own case; therefore if it is unjust and ungenerous for any to take advantage of our ignorance or oversight, it is equally so for us to do the same by others: what is wrong in one case must certainly be so in the other; and no excuse can justify us. Say not, my knowledge was given me to improve these opportunities to my advantage, and let every one look to themselves;

for the just and righteous Governor of the world never gave any one superior understanding and skill to be perverted to such base and ungenerous purposes; and you might, with the same propriety, say, that your power and strength was given you to rob every one that was incapable of resisting you; for if reason or justice hold in the one case, I am sure it will in the other. Neither say, I only deal by others, as others deal by me in such cases; for it is just as reasonable to say, because my house has been set on fire by others, therefore I will burn my neighbour's. The criminal conduct of others can be no plea for your imitation; and the more general the practice of vice, the more honour and virtue there is in dissenting from it. "Let no man therefore go beyond (or overreach) or defraud his brother in any matter; for God is the avenger of all such."

4. Make no bargains with such as have no just property in what they are contracting about. Some care is due in this case in those that sell, that they encourage not children, or other weak people to traffic with them; who cannot reasonably be supposed to be trusted with money. But it especially concerns those who are tempted to buy such goods as they know, or greatly suspect, to be stolen. It is true, thy gains may be large by such bargains, but I am sure thy guilt is greater. You assist and encourage them in their wickedness, and are evidently concerned in that divine censure, "When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst with him." He that knowingly connives at or assists in an evil action, shares in the guilt of it. And if you should be so artful as to escape the laws of man, which are strict against these transgressions; yet the penetrating eye of God always beholds you, who will sooner or later make you sensible of his indignation at your theft and covetousness. Say not, my shop is my market; for what honest man will buy a stolen horse in the market, jif he knows or suspects it to be so? Neither plead, that if you buy them not, others will; for the wickedness of others will be no sufficient excuse for your iniquity. It is strange, that men, who reason and act prudently enough in other things, yet when the laws of their Creator interrupt their vicious inclinations, lose both sense and reason too, and will venture the anger of Almighty God, offer violence to their

consciences, and hazard their reputations, rather than miss of a little sordid gain. Meddle not with such dishonest purchases, but choose even to be poor with integrity, rather than to be rich by unrighteousness.

5. Use yourselves to an honest plainness in your bargains. Ordinary and discernible faults the buyer is supposed to take notice of, but if your goods have any such private or undiscerned defects, as would cause him to relinquish his purchase, or lessen his offers for them if he knew them, it is unjust to obtrude them upon him. It is not sufficient in this case to say, that you sell them at a price proportionable (though I fear this is not always done), for the defects may so far lessen them in the buyer's esteem, or render them so unsuitable to his intention in the purchase of them, that he would not buy them at any rate; and it is not your formal cant, or fallacious harangues, that will alter the property of a bad commodity. If the buyer is censurable in saying, it is naught, it is naught, in order to lessen the price, and when he goeth his way rejoiceth in the goodness of his purchase; I am sure the seller is equally guilty, who says, it is faultless; it is excellent good; when he knows it to be quite the reverse. Ask your consciences, sirs, if this conduct can be justified before God; or if it is doing by others as you would be done unto? If it be replied, we are under a necessity to buy damaged and faulty goods along with others, and we must sell them; I answer, buy as few of them as may be; and sell them to those who understand what they buy, and if you should lose something by them, rather than impose them upon the ignorant; the divine providence can easily and largely reward your self-denial.

2d. Justice requires the ready payment of all just debts at the appointed time. Prudence will direct us to be cautious what debts we contract, but when they become due, justice requires that they be punctually discharged; otherwise we keep the possession while another has the right. The matter is not whether the creditor is rich or poor, for all have a right to claim their own; but it is an aggravating circumstance of guilt when the necessitous, the widow

and the fatherless, are injured. If you plead inability, this will neither justify, nor excuse you, unless God by his providence hath disabled you, in which case you are obliged to use all possible lawful endeavours to make due satisfaction; and both reason and justice require the full payment of your debts whenever you are able, even though your creditors, considering your indigent state, may accept of what your present abilities will allow; for right can never be lost, in conscience, where there is a future sufficiency; though it may be fit to be abated in law. But let not those calamities be charged on God's providence, which are the effects of your own imprudence. Justice also require that debts be paid not only fully, but speedily as they become due. If we are not to say to our neighbour, go, and come again, if we have it by us, when he comes to beg or to borrow, Prov. iii. 28, much less when he asks only for that which is his own; you know not what necessity he may have for it, or what dependence he may place upon it, which may involve him in an hundred difficulties upon the disappointment; he may be poor, and set his heart upon it; and it is unmerciful, as well as unjust, needlessly to delay the payment of it.

But the most inexcusable violation of justice, is a tradesman's breaking upon design, in order to defraud the creditors of their dues and enrich himself with their spoils. Such iniquity can have no refuge to screen itself from confusion and remorse, but a seared conscience, or direct atheism. How many heinous sins dost thou wilfully and deliberately commit, for a little momentary gain! Here are repeated lies, if not perjury; stealing, notorious hypocrisy and dissimulation; contempt of God's law and justice, and injury to men. How canst thou hope to escape the righteous judgment of God, who are guilty of crimes like these?

3d. Justice consists in using exact weights and measures; without these, commerce is a perfect cheat: the buyer goes away satisfied, on the supposition that he has the quantity bargained for, when it is no such thing; than which nothing can be more contrary to probity and justice. "Thou shalt not have in thy bags divers weights, a great (to

buy with) and a small (to sell with); neither shalt thou have in thy house divers measures. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, and a perfect and just measure shalt thou have; that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Are there yet the treasures of deceit in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure, which is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights, saith the Lord?" Thus detestable do these instances of injustice appear to God, which should cause all those to shun them, who have any desire to approve themselves as men of conscience and religion. The buyer as well as the seller should be content with just and equal dealings, and not desire or endeavour to obtain more than he agrees for, or by any arts or deceits whatsoever to impose upon or prejudice his neighbour.

Among other frauds, false lights are justly reckoned; when tradesmen so contrive the lights of their shops as to represent their commodities better than they really are; and when the chapman reviews his purchase at home, he finds it quite another thing: now what can be more unjust than this? It is deceiving thy neighbour, and no other than picking his purse of so much as is extorted from him by this means, above the real worth of the commodity.

4th. Justice obliges the tradesman to the right working of all manufactures. Human laws often make provisions for this; but the cases in which fraud may be committed are so various, that it is impossible to reach them all, and, unless men are under the awe of God and conscience, they will find evasions, and trample the laws under their feet. Justice will teach the tradesman to do such work for others, as he would have done for himself; and not through sloth, multiplicity of business, or any covetous view, to render things less serviceable than they ought to be. It is true, it is not necessary to bestow equal care or labour upon every piece of work, the stuff, the price, or the design of it may not require it; but equity requires that every manufacture have the perfection requisite to its kind; and

forbids the deceitful thrusting in of a baser stuff or metal instead of a better, even though it may do the purchaser equal service, or he may never be sensible of the difference; because it is imposing upon his ignorance, and extorting a price from him above the true value of the commodity. Say not the price will not allow that things be made as they ought, for it is the slightness of work that is the usual cause of reduction in the price; and if goods were better, the prices might be better too, as is evident from repeated facts, that they who do the best work have the greatest gains, as well as the most credit.

5th. Justice requires the ready and cheerful payment of all lawful impositions, taxes or customs. As the tradesman enjoys the benefit and protection of government; he should not think much to contribute to the support of it; and to render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom. Justice obliges you either punctually to discharge them, or plainly to deny that they are due; but how can you question this, when they are settled by law, and this law the act of your own consent, by your representatives; grounded upon the plainest reasons, and designed to support the office of magistracy, and protect the rights of the subject? Say not, that the profits of them are transmitted to other hands, it is the officers who gain by these things and their revenues are so large, that there is little hurt in wronging them; for these are invested with an undoubted right from the proprietor, and so cannot lawfully be defrauded, any more than a tenant of what he taketh in lease from his landlord. Neither plead that the end of taxations are not answered, trade and property are not secured, the seas are not guarded, or the like: For it is hard to prove the matter of fact, and the care of the government ought not to be censured without clear and uncontrollable evidence. The neglect of subordinate officers must not be thrown upon the chief magistrate, unless it be frequent, notorious, and after due information. And after all there ever were, and will be some oversights; some unworthy persons employed, who will seek their own and not the public good: whose negligence must be corrected by their superiors, and not pleaded in excuse for the neglect of duty, by every private person. Neither is it enough to say,

that you are ready to stand to the penalty, whenever you are detected in withholding custom, or the like; for there is no common thief but might make this plea, if there were any strength in it. Penalties are annexed to laws to deter those from evil, whom neither conscience towards God, nor justice to man, will hold to their duty; and it would be little to your reputation to come under this character. And as you should "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's"; so should you "render to God the things that are God's." If you expect the blessing of Heaven, withhold not from his Ministers whatsoever by law or equity is due unto them ; for "God hath ordained that they which preach the gospel, should live by the gospel." As they have relinquished the gainful employments of life for the service of God and the interests of religion; they have a claim to be supported in a manner becoming their office, that they may be freed from the anxieties of want, and may be examples, as well as promoters of charity to others; and this is not only a point of religion and charity, but of justice and equity.

6th. Justice requires the tradesman to pay due respect to the laws and orders of his society: to the observation of which, the members thereof are usually obliged by oath. Supposing these laws to be agreeable to the dictates of reason and religion, justice and conscience obliges your obedience to them, although they may sometimes interfere with your private interests. For instance, are you called to any office of charge or trouble? if it is consistent with your concerns, you should readily discharge it; or if not, cheerfully submit to such fines as are duly imposed. Or are you prohibited to import or export some profitable commodity, whereby the poor at home might want subsistence, or public enemies be strengthened and encouraged? Justice requires your ready compliance with such orders. Or are you engaged to employ no foreigner in your service, lest those who have served a regular apprenticeship be discouraged, or left without employment? Justice and fidelity oblige you to refuse all such assistants; especially where the end of those institutions are crost by so doing. In a word, we ought in all things to consult the

good of society, as well as our own; and the future good, as well as the present; if we will be faithful and true to our obligations.

7th. Justice demands an equitable regard to your fellow tradesman. Though every man may use all lawful methods to increase and secure his custom; yet charity should keep us from hindering those that are poorer than ourselves; and justice forbids the gaining customers or chapmen from others, by any dishonourable or indirect means; particularly, let every unjust reflection, and depreciating insinuation on your fellow tradesman's character or goods, be abhorred; and every other mean artifice, to increase your business, at the expense of your neighbour's. But let this always be your governing principle, to do unto others as you would be done unto. And though masters should be content that their apprentices at setting up should carry away some customers from them, being part of the consideration for their time and money; yet no ingenuous apprentice will use any unworthy means to gain customers to himself; or do any thing but what is common and approvedly done in that case, either before or after the expiration of his time; remembering that when he comes into the same circumstances, he himself will not be contented with such usage.

Again, engrossing of commodities, whereby many are impoverished for the enriching of a few; whether it be done by societies, or single persons, is directly contrary to the laws of justice and charity; Which command us to love our neighbours as ourselves; and not to seek our own advantage to the prejudice of others. The law of nature gives to every man a right of comfortable subsistence by labour and commerce. Those that deprive others of these advantages by covetous and self enriching schemes, are common enemies to mankind. Men may "boast when they do well for themselves; and others may bless the covetous whom God abhors" ; but the common and tender Father of all, cannot but hate these gains of oppression, and punish this method of hastening to be rich; and we often see the effects thereof, in the fall and ruin of those who thought to enrich themselves by these gains of unrighteousness.



Neither is it agreeable to justice and equity, for the rich tradesman or artificer, whose estate perhaps may bear him out, in such a manner to undersell his poorer fellow tradesmen, that they wanting his stock and credit, cannot preserve their customers, or subsist upon those prices. This conduct is especially criminal where the very design of it is to weaken and impoverish others.

Lastly. That injustice is intolerable which is offered to your partners in trade; who repose the same confidence in you, as they do in themselves; and to whom you are bound by all the strictest ties of law, conscience, and mutual confidence. For such persons to undermine, or purloin from each other, is a crime that deserves the severest censure; and cannot be practised by any who have not lost all love to virtue, or fear of shame.

8th. Justice obliges the tradesman to a paternal care about his apprentices. Prudence directs to choose such as are of sober characters, tolerable tempers, and capacities fit for business; and not for the sake of a little present money, or to supply an immediate pinch of business, to thrust a thorn into your sides, which may pain you for seven long years; but those whom you see fit to bind and receive into your families, justice obliges you to use in the same manner as you would have your own children treated, when they come into the same condition.

1. Beware of undue severity and rigour towards them; this will discourage them in your service, make their time and life a burden; and it is well if worse consequences do not attend it. Remember that you were once in the same state, and repeat not upon them, what was then justly esteemed an hardship by yourself. Remember that you also have a Master in heaven, who rules by love and just authority, and not by severity and vengeance; and do you imitate him therein. Let the government of your servants be such as may command love and esteem, as well as respect and obedience, that they may feel it to be as much their interest, as their duty to serve you. Maintain your authority over them by a life of virtue and religion: this will produce

reverence, and enforce respect much more effectually than any domineering austerity in words or behaviour; while vice and folly naturally breed contempt, under the most lordly and imperious sway. Impose not too heavy tasks upon them; make not their lives bitter by cruel bondage, lest they cry unto God against you. Remember their years, and bear with frailties and imperfections. Charge them not with faults without cause, nor refuse to hear their just apologies. Remember the reflection of Job in the like case, "if I did despise the cause of my manservant, or of my maidservant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up? And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?" Let them have food and rest convenient for them. For quality, let it be such as is suitable to their condition; for quantity, let it be sufficient for their necessary refreshment; and for time and season, let it be such as is most conducive to their health and comfort. Be full as ready to encourage them when they do well, as to reprove them when they do amiss; that they may be sensible of your good will to them, as well as your authority over them. "Thou shalt not rule over them with rigour, but shalt fear thy God."

2. But then, be watchful against a weak indulgence towards them. Improve your just authority over them, for maintaining in the whole of their conduct a due respect to God and yourselves. Indulge them in no known evil. Recommend to them, both by example and precept, the religious fear of God, and justice and truth to man. Above all, diligently watch over them to preserve them from the infection of evil company; to this end, take an exact account of their time when they are absent from you; for it is then that they contract their pernicious acquaintance. Especially, let your authority be exercised over them for the religious observance of the Lord's day, for many have dated their ruin from the faulty liberties they were then indulged in; and how tradesmen can answer it to God and their own consciences, in leaving their servants at large on that day, while they are regaling themselves in their country retreats, is more than I can say. I scarce believe any thing has contributed more to the

corruption of the rising generation, than neglects of this kind. How justly may God upbraid those with selfishness and hypocrisy, who require a strict obedience to their own commands, but thus overlook the neglects of his holy and righteous laws? Keep them, therefore, under your eye, and rather spare them time from your own business, for an interview with their friends or other lawful occasions, than let any part of that sacred time he spent in a trifling or unbecoming manner. They may think much of this restraint at present, yet future time and better consideration will cause them to bless you, and bless God for your care concerning them. Lastly, be very cautious of sending those to travel, who are not furnished with sufficient wisdom and virtue to preserve them from the manifold temptations to which they are exposed; and by which many youths have been utterly undone.

9th. Justice will excite the tradesman (if in such relations in life) to make due provision for his wife and children. The wife brought a considerable portion, in prospect of a comfortable provision; or else hath been useful in the shop or the family, to preserve or increase your estate, and govern and inspect the affairs of the household; or, however, she is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh, and hath forsaken her parents and friends, to cast herself upon your love and care: you are bound, therefore, by all sacred and humane ties, to secure her comfort, so far as lies in your power. Your children are parts of yourself, whom you brought into the world in an helpless and dependent state; it is unnatural and unjust not to support and provide for them: yet such is the idleness and negligence, such the prodigality and voluptuousness, of many tradesmen, that misery and tears are the only inheritance they leave to their distressed families. The goods are appraised, but they are few or unsaleable; the books are examined, but no comfort is to be found from them; the poor wife is forced to live upon her friends, or pine away in want; and the children to wander desolate and forsaken. O wretched injustice! Can the posterity of such men rise up and call them blessed, who make them heirs to nothing but poverty and distress? Or will it excuse them that they have been just to others, who are thus cruel to their

own flesh? No. Limit yourselves in the expenses of dress, diet and furniture; allow yourselves in no unreasonable or costly pleasures; be diligent in your callings, and prudent in your concerns; that you may leave your families above the charity of their friends, and enable them to live when your period of life ceases; that your exit may not be like the brutes, who have no concern for the offspring they leave behind them. "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever."

10th. This justice in the tradesman, obligeth him to show mercy to the poor; for righteousness containeth charity. Men are but stewards of what they possess to the great God, who is the original proprietor of all things: as much as is needful for their own use, he allows them to appropriate to themselves, and has appointed the poor and necessitous to be the receivers of the rest; we are not therefore "to withhold good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of our hands to do it." We should improve the talent of wealth, as good servants of our great Master; and so regulate our expenses, and employ our skill and care, that we may be assistant to others; working with our hand, or labouring with our heads, "the thing that is good, that we may have to give to him that needeth." The goodness of God is his glory; nor is there a more amiable disposition in his creatures, or any thing that yields greater delight to a humane and pious heart, or is more likely to meet with a generous reward from a good God, than a sincere disposition to imitate him herein. Let the tradesman, therefore, in a course of diligence and prudence, trust God with futurity, and enlarge his heart, and extend his compassions to the proper objects of them.

And here a large field is before you. Either there are some poor relations of your own; or God hath some poor children of his, whose necessities call for relief. Or some poor, faithful ministers of Christ, who instead of living to study and do good, are obliged to study to live and get bread. Or some poor ingenious scholars, who, if supported for a time, might become instruments of public good. Or

some ignorant and uncultivated persons and places, where lectures of religion might be usefully established; or Bibles, and other books of instruction, beneficially dispersed; or some sober youths, whose parents are unable to place them to trades; and others that have skill and parts, but no stock to begin with. Or some poor tradesmen, and housekeepers, that often want work, and therefore want bread; or whose families are large, and their afflictions many; whose patience prevents their complaints, and whose modesty unfits them for asking; and therefore languish and pine in distress. Or some virtuous maidens, whom a little money would settle in employments or marriage; but being indigent and neglected, are exposed to many temptations. Beside schools for the young, relief for the sick or lame, and assistance for the aged and helpless; all which are proper and necessary objects for your charity, as far as your abilities extend.

And that you may be free and liberal herein, lay by for this purpose, in some due proportion, "as God has blessed you," either weekly, monthly, or yearly, as the nature of your incomes are: this method will free you from the uncertainty that those must be under, who only occasionally stretch forth their hands as objects offer: and having thus a stock devoted to sacred and charitable uses, you will be much more free on all proper occasions, to exercise your bounty and liberality: always judging, that well ordered charity is the surest and safest way to thrive; as what is expended this way is lent on the best security, and the largest interest; namely, on the faithfulness and bounty of God.

11th. Justice requires a punctual regard to all lawful contracts. But as this is a branch of that truth which is due from man to man, I shall take notice of it under that head.

12th. Lastly. Justice demands a speedy restitution of whatever may have been unlawfully gained or acquired. This is a duty so evident, that one would think little need be said to prove it necessary. 1. Religion requires it; conscience can never be pacified, nor guilt removed, while the gains of injustice are in our hands; nor that

repentance be sincere, which is not attended with a real purpose and resolution to restore what has been iniquitously gotten. For repentance is the undoing, as far as we are able, what has been done amiss; if it was criminal for you to injure your neighbour at first, the crime still remains, while you continue voluntarily to detain from him what is his due: and therefore God commanded, that "when any trespassed against the Lord," i.e. by defrauding another (and observe, by the way, that though men are the immediate objects, yet God esteems injustice to them as done against himself, because it is the violation of his law, and the contempt of his authority) "then they shall confess their sin, and recompense the trespass with the principal, and add the fifth part thereto, and give to him against whom he hath trespassed," as a satisfaction for the inconveniences that the injured party might have suffered. The moral equity of which law binds the consciences of all men to the end of time. When Nehemiah had engaged the Jews, who had been guilty of oppression, to a promise of restoring what they were unrighteously possessed of, he adds this divine communication: "God so shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not his promise; even thus be he shaken out and emptied; and all the people said, amen." And Zaccheus immediately fell under the conviction of this duty; when our blessed Saviour invited himself to his house, he knew no better proof that he could give him of the sense he had of his past errors, and the sincerity of his present affection, than engaging himself, "where he had injured any man, whether good or bad, rich or poor, king or subject, presently to restore fourfold." This shews, that the natural consciences of men own restitution as a duty; and if ever salvation come to your house, and the influence of religion upon your hearts, you will go and do likewise.

2. Interest requires it. While God is the righteous Governor of the world, the gains of injustice can never be blessings to the possessors of them. They are often blown away by the blast of God, like chaff before the wind; but if they remain, the divine curse remains with them; and, like the leprosy, spreads infection to all that you possess. Now, who would lose the comfort of all the honest gain they have, for

the sake of retaining a little that may be unjustly acquired? Take, therefore, thy ill gotten goods in thy hand, as the philosopher did his estate, when he threw it into the sea, and resolve that it is better that these things be destroyed by me, than I for them; and esteem it a thousand times preferable to live poor and just, and die blessed, than to live and die with a curse. If you are incapable of making restitution, though the will may be accepted instead of the deed, yet surely you ought to mourn with peculiar bitterness, that you have done injuries to others, which you are not able to repair. You should reflect on the hand of God, and knowledge his justice, in rendering your righteousness so unprofitable to you; and remember that the obligation still lies upon you to make restitution; when, and in what degree soever you are capable. If the fear of shame and loss of reputation deter you from this instance of justice, choose some faithful friend to restore the owner his right, and then your name not be known, or your character sullied; and let it be observed, that to sin is shame, and that is past, it is only righteousness and equity which is to be practised now; what shame can it be to do that which is good, and undo that which is evil? But if your foolish shame or base covetousness prevent your execution of justice, remember that it will not be long before your iniquities will be charged upon you in the presence of God, of angels, and men; and what unspeakable shame and confusion will then cover your face, when it shall be found, that after all the remonstrances of reason and conscience, you have lived and died in these sins. If it be objected, that the persons are dead whom you have injured, and you know of none to make restitution to; I answer, the heirs or executors of the deceased have the proper claim to it; and if, after diligent inquiry, they are not to be found, the divine records have prescribed who are to be the receivers. "If the injured man have no kinsman, or heir, to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the Lord." God's church and poor are his receivers of all estates forfeited to his honour and government. As giving to the poor is lending unto the Lord, where it is an act of benevolence; so it is paying unto the Lord what he claims as an act of justice from us.

To conclude:—1. Reflect on your past conduct as to this great duty of justice. Perhaps your injustice has been so secretly managed, that your reputation is not injured by it; but what says conscience? Does not that remember the unconscionable bargains, the faulty wares shuffled off by deceit and falsehood; the unjust weights and measures used in trade; or the oppression and unmercifulness with which [it] has been conducted. Let conscience survey the foregoing particulars, and see wherein you have been guilty; and give it leave to speak, while it acts the part of a friendly monitor, for speak it will, and the more terribly, the longer it is silenced. Shut not your eyes against the light, nor frame any excuses for yourself now, that will not stand the test of the great judgment day. "Break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by shewing mercy." And seek the divine forgiveness by a sincere repentance before God, and an humble faith in Christ Jesus the Lord, while forgiveness may be had.

2. Let all your actions be regulated by the rules of justice for the time to come; and reckon nothing really gained, but what you gain honestly. Be advised ever to take the safer path in doubtful cases; do that which appears to be the most honourable, just, and charitable; and run not always to the utmost extent of lawfulness, for he that always walks as near to the river's brink as he can, is in extreme danger of falling in. In matters of duty it is usually best to do the most, but in matters of advantage to take the least. For we are naturally too much biased by selfishness. Shew favour to the poor, ingenuity to the unskilful, and moderation and equity to all. And let it be your fixed purpose, by the grace of God, that though you may not be very rich, yet you will be always very just. This is the way to a quiet conscience, and a firm estate; you may then enjoy with pleasure, and leave with comfort to your posterity, whatever acquisitions a diligent hand, and a good God has offered you. To which end. 1. Let the fear of God rule in your hearts. Fear of shame may restrain men from many instances of injustice, but nothing less than the religious fear of God, will make them universally just and honest. 2. Conquer your undue love to the world. A covetous and selfish temper is the grand spring of all injustice and oppression.



Men would never expose themselves to the anger of God, injure their neighbours, and hazard their reputation for a little gain, if their love to it was not excessive and criminal. 3. Learn contentment in your present state, and trust in God for futurity. His providence overrules and directs all the conditions of his creatures. He knows what things we have need of, and what would be hurtful to us, and will be sure to secure the best good to those who place their confidence in Him. But men would fain be independent beings; and those whose disobedience and neglect of God, has produced a consciousness in themselves that they have no just title to his favour, are unwilling to lie at his mercy, and desirous, by any means, to procure those blessings to themselves, which they have no claim to ask at his hands. But though justice and equity may in some instances obstruct the Christian's gain, yet let him not doubt but God will abundantly make it up in temporal or spiritual blessings, or both! He is too great and too good to permit his servants to be losers by any thing they deny themselves in obedience to his will. 4. Love your neighbour as yourself, and place yourself in his stead in all your dealings with him; it is certain you will then do nothing that is unjust or dishonourable by him. 5. Lastly, as this and every other virtue and grace must be derived from Christ Jesus, the fountain of all wisdom and grace; so let the practice of it be recommended to God, by a true and living faith in him, as the great Mediator. Then, whatever your success is here below, you will not fail of an abundant reward above, in the presence and favour of the just and righteous God. But let no man be so vain as to think, that the Christian faith and profession will profit him that contradicts the precepts of it: or that the righteousness of Christ was ever designed to justify or save the unrighteous dealer.

3. Promote this justice in others, as far as you are able. Recommend and instil principles of justice and integrity into your children and servants; and suffer them not to offer the least wrong to any. Be, and profess yourself to be, an irreconcilable enemy to all injurious and deceitful dealing. Stand not by patiently, while others are injured and imposed upon; at least, be not partakers with them. In many instances, he that hinders not an injury when he might, makes it his

own. Improve the interest and influence you have in your several societies, to reform what is amiss in this respect. This is the way to honour the gospel, and stop the calumnies of its enemies, to establish a good reputation among men; to live in peace, and die in comfort (through the grace of the Redeemer), and leave a blessing behind you. Amen.

"Their father Israel said, Take double money in your hand: and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight, Gen. xliii. 12.

"Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, or any thing that is thy neighbour's, Exod. xx. 15, 17.

"Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him. The wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in mete, yard, in weight or in measure, Lev. xix. 13, 35.

"For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God, &c. Deut. xxv. 13, 16.

"He that hath swallowed down riches, he shall vomit them up again; God shall cast them out of his belly. Because he hath oppressed and forsaken the poor. Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he hath desired. In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits. A fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, &c. Job xx. 15, 27.

"Treasures of wickedness profit nothing. Blessings are upon the head of the just, Prov. x. 2, 6.

"A man shall not be established by wickedness: But the house of the righteous shall stand, Prov. xii. 2, 7.

"Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right, Prov. xvi. 8.

"The just man walketh in his integrity. His children are blessed after him. Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel. An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning: But the end thereof shall not be blessed, Prov. xx. 7, 17, 21.

"It is joy to the just to do judgment, Prov. xxi. 15.

"He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor. A faithful man shall abound with blessings: But he that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be unpunished, Prov. xxviii. 8, 20.

"As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatched them not: So he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool, Jer. xvii. 11.

"Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work, Jer. xxii. 13.

"Thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord. Behold I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made. Can thine heart endure, or thy hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it, Ezek. xxii. 12, 14.

"Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire which shall devour thee, in the sight of all them that behold thee, Ezek. xxviii. 18.

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. God gave them over to a reprobate mind. Being filled with all unrighteousness, covetousness, deceit, covenant breakers, &c. Rom. i. 18, 29, 31.

"That no man go beyond (or overreach) and defraud his brother in any matter: Because the Lord is the avenger of all such, 1 Thess. iv. 6. Psalm xv. 1, 5. Isa. xxxiii. 15. Col. iii. 25."

## **CHAPTER VI.**

### **Of Truth.**

I. The nature of truth. II. Obligations to the practice of it. Excuses for lying considered. III. Wherein truth, as it relates to trade, is to be exercised. In the performance of all lawful contracts and promises. In not concealing that truth which justice or charity obliges us to divulge. In forbearing all unjust commendations of goods. In shunning unjust disparagements of persons and things. And all equivocations and disguises in our dealings. In restraining a multiplicity of words. In the cautious taking and careful keeping of oaths. IV. Dissuasives from lying. Means to promote a disposition to truth, and the practice of it. Suitable Scriptures.

I. As to the nature of truth, we may observe, that it is either the agreement of our expressions to the nature of things, or to our knowledge, or apprehensions of them. Our expressions may agree with our conceptions of things, but not with their nature; in which case we call the falsehood a mistake or error. This is indeed a soft term, and implies but little blame; yet even this is culpable, when the means of knowledge are afforded us; for the law that requires us to do our duty, requires a care to inform ourselves about it in order thereto. On the other hand, if our expressions do not agree with our

conceptions, it is lying; though they may happen to agree with the nature of the thing. For here is a design to misrepresent it: and as our words are understood to express more immediately our own conceptions, here is in fact an intended false representation. Whatever the thing is, we design another should believe we think it to be what we really imagine it is not. This, however, is not the case when we only rehearse a lie in an historical manner, and make it not our own. And I must observe here, that persons may act, as well as speak a lie; for words are but the mode of expressing our apprehensions, which may as strongly be signified by actions; for instance, "the man that lives as if he had the estate he knows he has not; or was what indeed he knows he is not, doth as truly lie, as if he was continually to express it by words; if it be done with a design to injure and deceive others." So that you may perceive that every mistake is not a lie, nor every doubtful speech, nor every parable or fable, nor the rehearsing of a lie, if we make it not our own: but a lie, is the voluntary falsifying of the truth, and is usually joined with an intention to deceive.

II. Let every tradesman endeavour to judge of things as they are; and speak of them, when he is properly called thereto, according to such his judgment: neither adding nor diminishing; neither depreciating a commodity, nor putting false colours upon it, but "speak the truth in his heart." And this from conscience to God, and a love to virtue. To this he is bound by the rules of reason and religion, of honour and interest.

1. As every man requires to be truly dealt with himself, and hates to be deceived, or imposed upon by falsehood; reason evinces the fitness and obligation of treating others in the same manner. For with what face can we desire that all men should act by the rules of sincerity and truth to us, while we make falsehood and fraud the measure of our conduct to them? If truth is eligible from others to you, why should it not be equally so from you to them? It is manifest that all civil society must be dissolved without it; that falsehood breaks the bonds, and destroys the confidence that is necessary

thereunto; for how can men converse or trade together, if they are not to be believed? And how can they expect to be believed, unless they constantly speak the truth? He that will lie for one thing, at one time, may reasonably be supposed capable of doing it at any time, or in any case. It may further be observed, that truth and justice have such a relation to each other, that he cannot be just in his dealings, that is false in his words. Surely every one's indignation should be awakened against a vice which thus destroys the common good of mankind. It is evident that speech was given us, that we might signify or express our minds to each other; but lying and falsehood, directly contradict this end; so that a dumb man is better than a liar.

2. Religion certainly lays us under the strongest obligations to truth and sincerity. We worship and serve the God of Truth; the revelation, we believe, is the gospel of Truth; the precepts of religion every where enforce the love and practice of truth; it is the very character of all that sincerely profess it, that they hate lying, and love truth. And so contrary is the indulgence of falsehood and deceit to the spirit of our holy religion, that it utterly excludes the practisers of it from any share in the blessings of the gospel, or hopes of salvation. Yea, there is such an evident contradiction between a false man, and a true Christian, that it is a wonder how any can make pretensions to the last character, whose conduct lays them under the censure of the former.

3. And not only reason and religion, but honour and interest should engage men to be exactly true and upright in their words. There is a real nobleness of spirit, and true courage, in speaking the truth. How strongly doth conscience support the man of veracity, so that no frowns can daunt him? Whereas the liar is the reproach of humanity; and the most distant imputation of so infamous a character, is highly resented by every man of honour. He who knows himself to be guilty, feels a sting in his conscience, when none else can accuse him; and shame and confusion fill his face, when he is detected. Nothing but sordid hopes, or sordid fears, can prevent the tongue from being the true interpreter of the mind. Thus does honour plead for it; and

certainly it is not less for a man's interest to be true to his word. It is the most effectual way to maintain and support his credit. Such a person shall be believed in doubtful things, when a solemn oath is not sufficient to gain him credit, who allows himself in lying and deceit. When men of falsehood and deceit have affrighted those that know them from dealing with them, they will find that justice and truth are greater recommendations than the fairest sign they can hang out.

Three excuses are usually made for this base sin of lying.

Some plead the examples of others. They see it daily practised, and find some instances of good men failing in this way; and therefore think they may safely venture upon it. It must indeed be allowed, though it is a sad truth, that multitudes, who even call themselves by the honourable name of Christians, are guilty herein; but by the same plea, treason against the state would become allowable, if the number of rebels was great; and the more contempt is cast upon God and his government, so much the greater sanction men would have for rebellion against him; and every addition to the number of iniquities, would lessen our obligations to obedience. Who is there that sees not the fallacy of such a plea? Can you think that the number of guilty worms of the earth, will be any screen from the resentments of God's infinite power and justice? or that he will forbear to vindicate the honour of his laws, because transgressors are multiplied; when this is the very reason that makes vengeance necessary to be inflicted? Try whether it will reconcile you to the anguish, and minister consolation amidst the flames of hell, that multitudes of the, "wicked, and the nations of those that forget God, shall be turned into it," before you plead numbers as a prescription for iniquity. As to the failings of good men this way, they should be subjects of caution to us, and not of imitation; they shew us the frailty of human nature, and the necessity of constant watchfulness over ourselves; and let it be observed, that in the several scripture examples of falsehood, it was usually produced by fear, and never contrived for gain, as in the cases of Abraham, David, Peter, &c. And

yet no doubt, even for these, their souls were deeply humbled. But what are these unusual cases to you, who make a common practice of this vice? Do you think the omniscient God knows not how to discern the disallowed, unrepeatable weakness of an upright heart, from the perverse and wilful disobedience of a vicious mind? When you are thus encouraging yourselves herein by scripture examples, omit not the cases of Ananias and Saphira, who both ended their lives with a lie, [[Acts v >> Acts 5]].

Another excuse is, the smallness of the sin. Lying, say they, is not swearing, nor killing, nor stealing: there can be no great harm in it, for we do no great hurt by it; to which it may be replied, that the sin cannot be little, which renders men most unlike to the God of truth, and most like the devil, the father of lies; that affronts the authority of heaven, and disturbs the peace of society, and which the good God sees fit to punish with such bitter destruction. But if lying were indeed so small a crime as men would persuade themselves it is, how many little rents can you contentedly bear in your garments? or how many little motes in your eye? or little incisions in your flesh? And is every little injury worthy your watchfulness and care, but those which concern the honour of God, and the rectitude and happiness of your own souls? the only things that merit any great concern. But the smallness of the sin you plead as an excuse, is really an aggravation of repeated crimes; if you think it too much to part with little sins in obedience to the blessed God, how can it be supposed you are willing to part with greater? Surely, he that will not deny a lust to please his God and Saviour, will never lay down his life, or part with his possessions for him, when that becomes his duty. The habitual indulgence of little sins, are more aggravated than the commission of greater, through the hurries and surprise of temptation; because they evidence less love to God, and less concern to please him.

Others would excuse themselves by saying, necessity compels them to it, there is no trading without lying; customers are so humoursome that they make deceit and falsehood necessary. A sad case, indeed, if true! That the lawful callings of life cannot be



exercised with truth, and a good conscience; and that the righteous Governor of the universe has placed men in such situations of life, as to make affronts to his majesty, and violations of their own consciences necessary to their subsistence! We may then, with great propriety, write upon every tradesman's door, as in times of pestilence: "the Lord have mercy upon them"; and confine honour and integrity, religion and salvation, to the nobility and gentry. But who can look on such a representation of things, without discerning the fallacy of it, and being confounded at the base reflections that are thereby cast on the God of truth and goodness! Canst thou indeed lift up thy face to heaven, and say, Lord God of heaven and earth, thou knowest, that from a sincere concern to please thee, and with a steady trust in thy good providence, I have long confined myself to a strict regard to truth in all my words and dealings; and I appeal to thee, that I did not forsake the rules of truth until I found poverty and ruin coming upon me, which I could not in any other way prevent. Canst thou who pleadest necessity for lying, in thy conscience say, that this has been thy practice, and is now thy experience? If not, be ashamed ever to make such a plea more, until thou hast a better foundation for it. But this excuse appears still more vain, from the strict regard that is paid to truth and veracity by persons in your own callings, or at least in callings equally exposed to temptations of this kind; of which hundreds may be found, who yet gain sufficiently by them. I have been the larger upon this, because the same answers will serve to confute most of those vain pleas which men make to silence the conviction of their own minds, and encourage themselves in vice and immorality.

III. We proceed to consider wherein truth is to be exercised. It is not to be strained as to oblige the tradesman always to declare the whole of what he knows; neither the price that his goods cost him; or where or how he furnished with them; nor where his customers may be served cheaper; or any of the lawful secrets of his business, which might tend to his prejudice: for though we may not lie upon the watch to deceive and overreach others, we may stand upon our guard, and not betray or injure ourselves. But,

1st. This truth obliges to the performance of all lawful contracts and promises. Prudence will direct you to be cautious what promises you make, and what engagements you enter to, that they are equitable and convenient, as well as lawful and possible. But when your word is past, though they may be difficult and prejudicial to perform; and none may be witnesses to your promises and contracts, yet God and conscience require you to make them good, unless the party concerned is willing to release you. For these are the bonds of human society, which being dissolved, men can neither securely trust or trade with each other. The righteous man though "he sweareth to his own hurt, changeth not." Who, indeed, can proceed with comfort or safety in business, that depends upon faithless men, who neither regard what they say nor what they promise? And it must be added here that a promise or contract made by a servant whom you are used to trust, is equally binding as if made by yourself; for if you would adhere to his contract if it was advantageous, you ought not to recede from it, though it be prejudicial. Indeed, if you are imposed upon in the substance of the thing agreed for, as copper lace for gold, or the like, the contract is void in itself; for there was no consent, which is necessary in a bargain; the venter sold one thing, and the buyer purchased or agreed for another.

This truth likewise requires workmen and others to perform their engagements in the time and manner they have promised; which is what too many pay little regard unto. The common excuse is, something came in to hinder, other work in more haste, or of more profit or the like: I answer, your promises then should be conditional, and such as the employer will admit, or else you may wrong him to profit yourselves, and please others; and in cases of unavoidable necessity, apply yourself to the person, and endeavour to satisfy him, if you would preserve a good conscience, and a fair character; and be cautious in all cases of making hasty promises.

Again they deviate from truth and justice who agree for a commodity, but the price falling, or some other contingency happening, never come for it, or refuse to have it. And others who

promise to pay their bills or debts on such a day, but when the time comes, there is no money, nor perhaps any message to ask longer time. These omissions, though only made through negligence, or such like causes, are nevertheless very culpable; as society is thereby disordered, and conscience violated.

2. The business of concealing material faults in any commodity has been considered under the head of justice; but if you have any other cause to know that the bargain will turn considerably to the disadvantage of your customer, and the forbearing of it will not be an equal prejudice to you; the royal law of love and equity, obliges you to give him warning of it. By the same rule, you ought not to pay coin that is defective in goodness or value, but plainly tell them your suspicion of it; for otherwise you deceive them in deeds, if not in words: and you will find it an unsound conclusion at last, that you have a right to impose upon others, because others have imposed upon you.

3d. Truth is to be shewn by forbearing all unjust commendations of your goods; either as to quality or price. If you do this ignorantly it is culpable, because you ought to hesitate about that which you are uncertain of; but if you know they do not deserve commendation, or at least, so much as you bestow upon them; it is a manifest breach of truth and justice. For instance, to pretend that a commodity is of one kind or country, when it is of another. That it is faultless, when the faults are only covered. That it was made by such an esteemed workman, and cost such a price; when it is neither one nor the other. That it is new, or the newest fashioned, when it is manifestly old. Or that you have refused so much money for it, when you know it was never offered to you. These and such like falsehoods, which tradesmen often indulge themselves in, must certainly proceed from an hardened heart, and a seared conscience. It is incredible that men who profess to believe an omniscient God, and a future judgment of final retribution, should dare from day to day, to tell an hundred lies, to gain as many pence; and damn their souls, to obtain that which they would not refuse to expend the next moment upon their dogs. I

beseech thee, friend, pretend no more to religion or conscience; especially dishonour not the Christian name by falsely assuming that to thyself, but own thyself to be what indeed thou art, an atheist or an infidel; or else reform thy practice, and resolve by the help of God, that if truth will not maintain you, falsehood never shall. For "the getting treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro only of them that seek death."

4th. This truth also forbids all unjust disparagement of persons and things. It is too common for the buyer to say, it is naught, it is naught, who when he goeth his way rejoiceth. But the gain that is got by such artifices, is far from balancing the guilt that is contracted thereby; and their tongues give the lie to their consciences. Forget not therefore causeless exceptions, things that are manifestly good or cheap, allow them so to be; otherwise you disparage your own judgments or sincerity, more than the goods which you discommend. Things that are evidently faulty or dear, may be plainly, yet modestly, complained of. And those that are doubtful, should only be spoken doubtful of. And let the same caution and tenderness be extended to your fellow tradesmen; discommend not his character or goods without cause, from any selfish or malicious views. Remember that your tongues are not you own, to enhance or depress what you please; but that you are as accountable to God for your words, as for your actions; and the less sins of this nature fall under the notice of human laws, so much the more obnoxious they are to the infinite justice of God.

5th. Truth excludes all equivocations and disguise in our dealings with others. The design of speech, is to signify our minds to each other; but when it is clouded with ambiguities, and mental reservations, with a design to deceive, the end is frustrated, our neighbour is imposed upon, and our words are no better than painted lies. Your expressions are, perhaps, in one sense true, but false in another, in which you believe the person you speak to will take them, and in which you design that he should; or you speak out so much as may deceive others, and reserve so much in your own

mind, as added to the rest, would contradict what you offer as truth. But as the thief disguised, is as hateful and dangerous, as he that is open; so all such sophisticated dealing is as contrary to truth and integrity as plainer falsehoods, and should be as much detested. It is true, we are not always obliged to tell all we know, and some disguises may be allowed, when an impertinent curiosity, or a designing craft, would extort from us truths which we are not bound to discover; but the upright tradesman, as he should be a wise man, so he will usually be a plain one; and speak as he thinks, and act as he speaks. For it has too strong a tincture of knavery, when our speech like Apollo's oracles, may be understood in a fair, or a fatal sense. None are pleased with such deceitful dealing to themselves, and none should practise it with others.

6th. This veracity will restrain a multiplicity of words in our trading or converse. These the sacred scripture every where condemns; it censures it as folly; "A fool's voice is known by the multitude of words." "Seest thou a man hasty in his words, there is more hope of a fool than of him." It condemns it as Sin; "In the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin." And yet what a flood of words are poured out about the smallest traffic? The seller commonly asketh unreasonably high, while the buyer as commonly offers unreasonably low; and a long controversy there is before they come together; the one affirming, he will give no more, and the other as positively saying, he will take no less; and both receding from their words before they have done. Though it is confessed, that every alteration of mind is not a lie, and men may see cause in buying and selling so to do; yet when these positive declarations are made, without the design of adhering to them, which I believe is usually the case, I cannot see how the minds of men can acquit them from the charge of falsehood. Sure I am, if covetousness did not bias men on one side, and injustice on the other, business might be despatched in two words, as well as two hundred. Let the tradesman therefore be persuaded to content himself with a reasonable profit; in small things to fix his price at once, and in greater to come as near to the mark as may be; if he would transact his business with ease and pleasure, establish a good

reputation, and secure a good conscience. A little resolution and practice, will make this method easy; it has been practised by many with good success; and I am satisfied, that none who ever used themselves to this way, from a principle of integrity and justice had ever cause to repent it.

7th. Truth certainly obliges men to be cautious in making, and careful in keeping oaths and covenants. Perjury, common as it is, is almost as great a crime as men are capable of committing. It is a defiance of the God of heaven, to whom the appeal is made; it proclaims the person who can be guilty of it, destitute of the fear of God, or regard to men ; and is utterly destructive to all human society. For what bonds can hold that man that sacred oaths will not? There cannot possibly be any security in civil order or government, where these are broken through, and violated. It is no breach of charity to suppose that person capable of all imaginary evil, who can allow himself to be guilty of perjury and perfidiousness. And as it is exceeding evil in its nature, it is no less so in its consequences, bringing down the judgments of God on nations, families, and persons. And being the seed of self tormenting desperation to those who commit it. Even the heathens thought that man and his family destined to destruction, that was guilty of it. And yet, how does this nation groan under the weight of this evil? What numberless perjuries are continually committed to the horror and amazement of all considerate minds? Arising no doubt, in some degree, from the number of unnecessary, impossible oaths, which are forced upon men, on various occasions. An evil which it were to be wished the legislature would attend to, as none else can provide a remedy for it.

IV. Upon the whole, how absurd and foolish a part do they act, who expose themselves to the just resentment of heaven, violate their own consciences and prostitute their reputations, by deceit and falsehood, to gain that which might more effectually be secured by truth and integrity? And which when it is obtained by such means, can afford no true satisfaction! The God of truth can never bestow his blessing upon it; that were to give a sanction to the rebellion of his creatures

against himself, and to smile on what his soul abhors; and what real comfort or good can men expect from their acquisitions without this? Does wealth when gotten render men independent on God, and raise them above the strokes of his just providence? Cannot he send sickness and losses, blast their designs, and frustrate all their schemes for wealth and happiness; and "cause them to labour in the very fire and weary themselves for very vanity?" And after they have spent a life of sorrow and disappointment here, banish them into hell. Or if he should, in just judgment, permit a lying tongue to be successful; can the wealth gained thereby be considered in any other light, than as a dead weight to sink them deeper into perdition? Where is men's wisdom or sagacity? Where is their love to themselves, in pursuing a course attended with such evil consequences? If you value therefore your external credit; if you value your internal comfort, or your eternal happiness; banish from you lying lips. Let truth and integrity rule in your shops; let them rule in your hearts; and be your constant attendants in every business and company. Recommend them to your children, and charge them upon your servants; for if you permit them to lie for your advantage, they will not scruple to do it to your prejudice. And whenever you have been defective in regard to truth, shew the sincerity of your concern for it by sincere repentance and universal reformation. To which end,

1. Subdue covetousness. He that loveth money better than God and conscience, will for money displease God and conscience, by this or any other sin. Covetousness is the root of falsehood, and many other vices.
2. Learn to trust God and his providence, in the way of duty. This will set you above every mean and unworthy artifice; for he that believes and considers that he depends upon God for all things, will easily perceive that the practice of virtue, and not of vice, is the means to be blest by him.
3. Preserve upon your minds a continual apprehension of the exceeding baseness and evil of lying. Men would not so readily commit sins of any kind, if their consciences were not stupid and insensible of the evil nature of them.
4. Let the presence of God be a curb to you, whenever you are tempted to this sin. Surely

none can dare to tell a deliberate untruth, who seriously considers himself in the continual presence of the God of truth. How can those lift up their faces with comfort to Him in prayer at night, who have thus affronted His truth and omniscience in the day. 5. Especially, seek to God for his renewing and sanctifying grace, and labour to attain an holy frame of mind. It is a vain attempt to purify the streams of vice, while the fountain iniquity, a corrupt nature, remains in all its vigour. But when that is cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the spirit of God; then only will the issues from it be pure and acceptable. "A renewed conscience, is the great preservative from all evil."

Thus I have set before you, the nature and necessity of venerable truth, and endeavoured to excite you to the practice of it; what impression it has made upon your hearts, God only knows; but this I must say, that if these arguments prevail not with you, God has one which will do so effectually, for he hath said "that the mouth of them that speak lies, shall be stopped."

"Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another, Lev. xix. 11.

"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle; who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness and speaketh the truth in his heart. That sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not, Psalm xv. 1, 4.

"What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile, Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13.

"Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but will I reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes, &c. Psalm l. 19, 21.



"He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house. He that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight, Psalm ci. 7.

"I hate and abhor lying: But thy law do I love, Psalm cxix. 163.

"These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him; a proud look, a lying tongue, &c. Prov. vi. 16, 17.

"The lip of truth shall be established forever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment. Lying lips are abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are his delight, Prov. xii. 9, 22.

"A righteous man hateth lying: But a wicked man (or liar) is loathsome, and cometh to shame, Prov. xiii. 5.

"A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape, shall perish, Prov. xix. 5, 9.

"Deceive not with thy lips, Prov. xxiv. 28.

"They bend their tongues like their bow for lies, and know not me, saith the Lord. They will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. Shall I not visit them for these things saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Jerem. ix. 9.

"The inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth, Therefore will I make thee sick in smiting thee, &c. Mic. vi. 12, 13.

"These are the things that ye shall do, speak ye every man truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates, Zech. viii. 16.

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it, John viii. 44.

"Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness, and true holiness (or holiness of truth). Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another, Ephes. iv. 24. 25.

"Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds, Col. iii. 3.

"Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. Rev. xxii. 15."

## **CHAPTER VII.**

### **Of Religion.**

I. A brief description of Religion, as it respects God. The necessity of a renovation of mind in order to it. II. Some instances, wherein it is to be exercised. 1. In the operative knowledge of the perfections of God, and his relations to us. 2. In adhering to the word of God, as the rule of our faith and practice. 3. In living by faith on God in every state of life. 4. In the serious and constant worship of God. 5. In the religious observance of the Lord's day. 6. In useful and serious conversation. 7. In pious meditation and reflection. 8. In vigilance and watchfulness against temptations. III. An inquiry into our own conformity to these rules. IV. An attempt to remove some prejudices against a religious life. V. The singular advantages and necessity of religion. Scriptures suited to the subject.

I. I do not here intend to describe Religion in its full extent; for so it includes all the duties already specified, as prudence, diligence,

justice, integrity of speech, contentment, &c.; but chiefly to consider it as it respects our behaviour to God. Religion, in this sense, consists in having just apprehensions of him, and minds and practices formed agreeable thereto; it is often pointed out to us in the sacred scriptures, by some operative principle, which has a general influence upon our tempers and lives; as the "fear of God"; "the love of God"; "the knowledge of God"; "walking before God"; "uprightness of heart"; "being spiritually minded"; and the like.

But alas for us, these are principles not natural to man: his mind is darkened by ignorance; his affections are estranged from God and goodness; all his powers and faculties are impaired and perverted by sin; and the original rectitude of his nature is contradicted by sensual and evil appetites and affections. Such is the depravity of the human mind, that, when religion takes place in it, men are said to be "born again"; to be made "new creatures"; to be "created again in Christ Jesus unto good works"; "and renewed in the spirit of their minds." Vain is the attempt to heal this or that folly of the mind, or irregularity of the life, until the corrupt fountain of a vicious heart, from whence they proceed, be purified: the tree must first be made good, before the fruit can be so. Our consciences must be "purged from dead works" and our souls united to Jesus Christ, "by a true and living faith," before we can acceptably serve the living God. "How vain are all our confessions of sin, unless they flow from godly sorrow, and are attended with a sincere faith in the great Redeemer's intercession, and an unfeigned repentance before God? What are all our praises and thanksgivings to God, unless they proceed from true love to Him, and gratitude for his mercies? What are our prayers and petitions, but real mockeries of His infinite Majesty, unless they are the true and hearty desire of our souls? And how vain are all pretences to the love and reverence of God, unless they are productive of sincere and universal obedience to His will?" In a word, God's work must be done according to God's mind, if we expect that He should accept it at our hands; and this cannot be without a renewed soul; "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and

is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

II. The foundation of a religious life, being thus laid by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a rectitude of heart towards God, we proceed to consider some instances wherein it is to be exerted. And,

1st. In the operative knowledge of the perfections of God, and the relations in which we stand towards Him. His glorious perfections must have some suitable influence upon us. His Majesty and Greatness must affect us with humble reverence, in all our thoughts and speeches of Him, and in all our approaches to Him in religious worship. Trifling, diminutive thoughts of God; the bold and irreverent use of his name; and careless addresses to Him in worship, are affronts to the infinite glory of His nature. If we would serve God acceptably, it must be "with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." His unsearchable goodness and excellence claim our warmest affection and highest delight; to fix our supreme love on an inferior good is to slight and undervalue his glorious Majesty, and can only arise from a strange perversion of our judgment. He is not only the greatest good in Himself, and the infinite fountain of all that is wise, amiable, and good in the universe; but He is the best good for us; the only satisfying, substantial delight of a reasonable, immortal spirit; and therefore demands "to be loved with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our strength." His benefits too, as well as his nature, claim this our supreme affection and love to Him; as He has given us our beings, and all the enjoyments of them, and we continually partake of His goodness, and depend on His benignity. His purity and Holiness, as they are the foundation of our veneration and esteem, so they should affect us with an humbling sense of our own guilt and depravity, and cause us to fly to the grace and spirit of our adorable Redeemer, for the pardon of our guilt, and the healing of our natures; and never rest, until we attain a nearer resemblance to God in Holiness, that we may be better fitted for the enjoyment of Him. His Omniscience should induce us to watch over the inward dispositions and thoughts of our

hearts; and deter us from all dissimulation and hypocrisy, both in the duties of religion, and in our concerns with men; as being continually in the presence, and under the eye of that God, "before whom all things are naked and open." And, lastly, His wisdom and power, His justice and truth, are to be revered in His threatenings; to be relied on in His promises; to be credited and submitted to in all the declarations of his word, and in every event of his providence.

Likewise his relations to us, and ours to him, must be answered by suitable dispositions and behaviour. As creatures, we are to remember that he is our absolute Lord and owner; that we are His much more than any thing we possess is our own, having only a derived right from him to all that we enjoy; and therefore it is our indispensable duty to yield ourselves to him, and use ourselves and all our capacities for him as our highest end. To pay an universal obedience to his will, render an entire resignation of ourselves to his providence; and, thus, we need not fear but he will preserve and bless us, employ us in delightful and honourable service, and return us to ourselves infinitely better than he found us. "Ye are not your own; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." As our preserver and benefactor, we should trust in his goodness, and resign ourselves to his care; seek to Him continually, for all the blessings we need; retain a grateful sense, and offer him our thankful acknowledgments, for all benefits we receive at his hand; which is also to be expressed by the love and duty of our hearts and lives. These are duties, to which the light of nature confirms our obligations; and which all reasonable beings are bound to pay to God, as their sovereign Lord and Creator.

But then, as we are guilty, depraved creatures, who have, in manifold instances, brought ourselves under the condemnation of God's holy law, and rendered ourselves odious to his pure and unspotted nature; all hopes of his favour and acceptance would have been cut off, if in infinite goodness and mercy he had not offered himself to us, in the new relations of a Redeemer, and a Sanctifier. This is the great design of the gospel of Christ to propose and confirm to all,

who, sensible of their guilt and just demerits, sincerely and cordially embrace him as their Saviour. By these we are obliged, if we would be safe and happy for time and eternity, to reflect with shame and sorrow upon our disobedience and apostasy from God; to "fly for refuge" from his just vengeance, to Jesus Christ, as the only Redeemer of sinners; trusting in his sacrifice and mediation, to procure our acceptance with God; living, as his disciples, in the imitation of his holy life; attending to his doctrines, as the great teacher and restorer of mankind; and obeying his heavenly precepts, as the universal Lord and head of his church. In order to this, we must implore the influences of the holy Spirit of God, to sanctify and renew our natures, to restore the image of God lost in our souls, and give us the temper and disposition of his children; that we may be fitted for his present service, and future enjoyment. Thus the practical knowledge of God must influence us in the whole frame of our hearts and lives.

2d. Religion consists in adhering to the word of God, as the rule of our faith and practice. A reverential regard to the holy scriptures, and an humble subjection of soul to the sacred contents of them, is an inseparable consequent of true religion. He that is of God, will hear and reverence God's word, and be directed by it in every situation and circumstance of life. The more we study it, and the nearer we conform to it, the more wise, reasonable, and happy we shall be; and we never depart from the important dictates of it, but ignorance, folly, and unhappiness take place. It has ever been an invariable rule, without any exception, that the more any have been influenced by a spirit of religion and virtue, the more their esteem and love to these blessed records have increased; and we may venture to affirm, that the neglect and contempt that is thrown upon the Bible, is the nearest cause of all the profaneness and immorality of the present age. This is one instance, therefore, of the tradesman's religion, not to govern himself by the examples of others, by humour, appetite, or selfish views; but by the holy word of God, and such directions as sound reason will deduce from thence. I am apt to believe, that very many of the indiscretions and misfortunes of

tradesmen would have been prevented if they had walked more steadily by this rule. "Bind them then continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee; for the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and the reproofs of instruction are the way of life."

3d. The tradesman's religion lies in living by faith on God, under all the changes and vicissitudes of an inconstant world. This, like an anchor sure and steadfast, will keep the soul quiet and serene in all the storms of life; enliven the Christian's hope, animate his endeavours, and make him easy in every state and condition. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." But how contrary to this is the state of every ungodly, earthly mind? If the world smiles upon him, he idolizes it as his deity; if it frowns upon him, he despairs and dies. As all his hopes and prospects center here, his comfort and security is as fluctuating as the foundation on which it is built; i.e., temporal prosperity. Whereas the good man, though he is not insensible of the difference between prosperity and adversity, yet is not anxiously "afraid of evil tidings, for his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." And then, what are all the great concerns of religion without faith "which is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for." What influence will the word or worship of God have upon us, heaven or hell, God or Christ, without faith? In a word, we must live by faith, and breath by prayer.

4th. The serious and constant worship of God is another principal branch of religion. The same light of reason and revelation which manifests to us the being of God proves that it is our indispensable duty to worship him. This is a truth so deeply imprest upon the mind of man, that scarce any of the human species under heaven, except among the degenerate part of those that call themselves Christians, but in some way or another, pay their adorations to the Deity by worship. This is the tradesman's duty, as well as others, for how can he be said to "abide with God in his calling," who never comes near

him? By meditation and prayer, we draw nigh to God, and by his word he speaks to us; and surely creatures whose happiness for both worlds depends upon God, should not stand in need of arguments to seek continually unto him; for "will not every people seek unto their God?" But the tradesman's religious worship should not be confined to the church or the closet. He has family wants to be relieved, family sins to be forgiven, and family blessings to be thankful for; family worship, therefore, is his reasonable and indispensable duty. Accordingly we find those families represented as the subjects of divine vengeance, "who call not upon God's name." At the fittest time, therefore, morning and evening, let your serious addresses be made to heaven, with all your family; let not company or business tempt you to neglect this duty, or to do it unseasonably. Remember that the most high God claims your first and highest regard, and that nothing can excuse your omission of his worship, but some necessary and greater duty. Say not, you want time for it, for men must find time to eat and sleep, whatever business is left undone: and none of these are more necessary, nor can you be less excusable in the neglect of any of them, than of worship. An hour in twenty-four may be sufficient for this necessary and advantageous duty; as it is not the length, but the sincerity of our services, which render them acceptable to God; and it is incredible, that with proper care you cannot secure so much time for such an important affair. Neither plead that the business of your callings leave you, in the evening, without strength or spirits for it; for immoderate labour may be as criminal as immoderate feeding. God requires, and will accept and bless no such eagerness in business as unfits men for his service; but, however, let it be remembered, that this can be no excuse in the morning; your spirits are then fresh and vigorous. It is to be feared that such pleas as these are rather the effects of a want of inclination than of ability. We should, with much more reason, say, I have laboured all the day for a little food and raiment, &c., shall I not exert myself in the evening for the blessings of God's forgiveness and grace? I have wearied my body for a living on earth, shall I not stretch forth my soul for the eternal crown? O! let not your diligence and solicitude for the treasures of this world condemn your



slothfulness and indolence for heavenly riches, but let each have their due time and place in your hearts and employments.

5th. The religious observance of the Lord's day is another branch of true religion. This is one of the first things which the grace of God reforms in the sincere Christian; no sooner does he begin to look in earnest towards God and heaven, but he values and employs the holy day of God in a different manner than he did before; and as religion more or less flourishes in the soul, so this sacred time is ever more or less esteemed and improved. Remember the sabbath day, therefore, before it comes, and endeavour to clear your minds of worldly cares and incumbrances, that you may be fit for the noble and divine employments of it; fit to adore and praise the majesty and perfections of God your maker; to celebrate and seek the blessings of redeeming love and grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to hear his most holy word, and receive the instructions of it; to acknowledge, with gratitude and joy, the mercies you partake of; and, with sincere sorrow and contrition, to lament and confess the sins and follies of your hearts and lives; in a word, to obtain and strengthen all those holy tempers and dispositions, as may fit you for a wise, happy, and religious life on earth, and the glories of an everlasting state in the world to come. Let not the love or guilt of any sin, enter into this holy day to defile it, but "wash your hands in innocency, and so compass the altar of God." Though cheerfulness and holy joy are especially the duties of this day; yet be careful to abstain from sensual pleasures, and not only vile, but vain and fruitless thoughts and converse. Let no worldly business be either contrived or done, which might have been done before, or may be deferred till future time, but "call the sabbath a delight, as it is holy to the Lord, and honourable; and honour him therein; not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasures, nor speaking thine own words." Consider how great the blessing is that you have leave to approach to God, and time to prepare your souls for an eternal state, and improve it accordingly.

Let your families also partake of the same advantages. This is one reason why the common employments of life are prohibited on this

day; that servants, as they have souls of equal value with the greatest, may have the means of improvement in knowledge and holiness. "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work: that thy man servant and thy maid servant may rest as well as thou." Give them sufficient time for the worship of Almighty God; and let not their souls be starved, for the sake of feasting your bodies. Not only allow your children and servants time for the religious duties of the day, but watch over them to see that they attend upon the same: instruct them in religion and virtue; encourage them in what is good, and seriously reprove what is amiss in them. You deal worse by them than you would by your very cattle, if you suffer them to go on in the paths which lead to misery and destruction, without doing what in you lies to prevent it. Never give them rest, therefore, until you have, with the help of God, either cured their ignorance and irreligion, or find them incurable.

Remember also, that it is "the sabbath of the Lord, in all your dwellings." And therefore let him be honoured and served there, as well as in the places of public worship. Read his word with reverence and attention; sing his praises with understanding and delight; and seek his favour with humility, faith, and sincerity; that by these lower services you may be fitted for the heavenly state, and carry the blessing of God into the labours of the ensuing week; for it was the observation of a great and good man, "that in long experience he had found that a due observation of the duties of the Lord's day had ever joined with it a blessing upon the rest of his time, and the week so begun, was prosperous to him; whereas, when he had been negligent in the duties of this day, the rest of the week was unsuccessful, and unhappy to his own secular employments." And this is far from being a singular observation.

6th. An habitual disposedness unto, and practice of, religious conversation, is another material branch of the Christian's duty. I mean, to employ the noble faculty of speech in a manner becoming reason and religion. "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of God is in his heart."

Particularly, we should abstain from hurtful converse; such as reflects upon the honour of the blessed God, or tends to lessen men's regard to him; such as defiles and corrupts the mind; injures the reputation of those that are absent, or provokes and insults those that are present; or is merely idle, empty, and vain; in a word, whatsoever is contrary to the laws of charity, religion, or chastity, should be banished from our lips. But then, we must aim at something useful, as well as abstain from every thing hurtful in our conversation. A negative goodness is no more sufficient in this, than in other parts of the Christian character; the tongue of man was given him to be employed to his Maker's praise, and to be useful and instructive to those around him; and angels themselves have not nobler or more delightful subjects for the employment of it than we: "the glorious perfections of God; the amiable Jesus; the holy word of God; his wonderful works of nature, providence, and grace; the happiness of the eternal world before us; the means and help to our safe arrival there, and fitness for it; and the dangers, follies, and snares that lie in our way, obstruct our progress to it, and, possession of it." These are topics of conversation, the more interesting and delightful; and nothing but the perfection of madness and folly can sneer at their being introduced on all proper occasions; or think that the shifting of the wind; the nature of the weather; the conduct of their neighbours; and a thousand other impertinences, are subjects so well becoming man's rational soul, and immortal nature.

I am sensible that as we have concerns of a lower nature to regard, while we remain in the present state, they ought to have a proportionate share of our thoughts and words; neither is it proper, at all times, to expose the sacred truths of religion to the contempt of the vile or profane. But that religious converse should be banished from the lips of those that call themselves men and Christians, as melancholy, mean, or improper; is as absurd as to say, that the world is better than God, or money than heaven; and the pleasures of appetite and animal sense, better than grace and glory; and the sneers of a fool, worse than hell or sin.

7th. Pious meditation is another branch of true religion. Much of the temper of our minds may be discerned by the currency of our thoughts. In the covetous, these run out with the greatest constancy and delight after gain and riches; in the voluptuous, various sensitive pleasures and gratifications employ them. Honour and applause engross the thoughts of the ambitious; but as the hopes and happiness of the sincere Christian center in God and his favour, he cannot but employ his frequent, serious thoughts about the securing an enjoyment of it; for this is one of his infallible dictates, who formed the spirit of man, and knows all the operations of it, that "where the treasure is, there the heart will be also." While the hands of the pious tradesman are employed in the common business of life, his heart will be aspiring to God, and delighting itself in his perfections, word, and works. As no ship is so laden but it will contain many jewels more, so no business can so constantly fill up our minds, as not to allow of serious intervening thoughts. There is no need to retire to a cloister in order to preserve a religious disposition of mind or lead a virtuous life.

But our meditations should be considered as the means to a further end; namely, to influence and affect our souls; we should be musing until the fire burns: for which purpose, we should choose those subjects that are most powerful and operative. Great and important truths, as they are usually the surest, and least controverted, so they most effectually impress the mind, and leave an happy influence upon it. Among which are, the perfections of God; his wonderful love and goodness, as revealed in Jesus Christ; the awful solemnities of a future judgment; the importance and certainty of an eternal state of existence; the shortness and instability of time, and all the enjoyments of it. These are included in those mentioned before, which, if attended to, would, by the grace of God, produce a religious temper of mind, and an holy life.

Sometimes we may turn our meditations into ejaculatory prayers and addresses to heaven: such as that of Nehemiah. "Remember me, O my God, for good;" or of the royal Psalmist; "Lord, I am thine, save

me"; and the like. These, when you feel the guilt of sin to press you, or the sense of mercy to affect you, or any danger or difficulty to affright you, will be a present relief to your spirits, until the more stated time for devotion returns. Sometimes our thoughts may be well employed by way of soliloquy, or conversing with ourselves: either rousing up our slothful spirits, or comforting our drooping souls, or pleading with our own hearts by convincing reasons; these methods pious men have often taken to good purpose: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul," says the Psalmist; "why art thou disquieted within me?" Having thus reprov'd his unreasonable fears, his faith revives, and he says, "hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him; who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Lastly, great variety of useful reflections may be drawn from the common occurrences of life, and the various objects which present themselves to our view. Thus the sudden death of others may quicken us in preparing for our own, and shew us the vanity of earthly pursuits. The sight of the deformed and miserable may teach us an useful lesson of gratitude to God for his greater goodness to us. The manifold dangers and excessive labours which others undergo for trifling advantages may shame us out of negligence in our pursuit of heaven and happiness; and, indeed, there is scarce any thing but a serious mind may improve to its great advantage. This, no doubt, was the design of the frequent similes and parables of the word of God, that we might be taught instruction from sensible objects. Thus we are sent to the ant to learn sagacity and diligence; to the potter for submission to the will of God; to the refiner for consolation and instruction under affliction. And our blessed Saviour's gospel is filled with emblems, for the same purposes: among which are, the vine, the fig tree, the pearl of great price, the importunate widow, and prodigal son. Easy would be the task, and great the advantage, if the religious tradesman would thus, like the industrious bee, gather honey from every flower. Surely, the consideration is sad, that Christians should know how to converse with men, and sometimes with God himself, and yet be at a loss to commune with their own hearts.

8th. The practice of religion necessarily includes watchfulness. Wherever the love and fear of God is in sincerity, there will be a constant concern to please him; and this can never be attained by beings whose natures are imperfect, and appetites and passions strong and irregular, amidst surrounding sollicitations to evil from an ensnaring world, and vigilant spiritual adversaries, unless we watch, as well as pray against every temptation. This watchfulness the Christian should especially maintain against the particular sins to which his calling, situation, and constitution expose him. The sure sign of uprightness of heart, consists in keeping ourselves "from our own iniquity;" that which our dispositions most incline us unto; which we find most difficult to resist, and hardest to overcome; for which conscience most frequently reproveth us, and we condemn ourselves when under affliction, or in the apprehensions of death.

But the vices which human nature are most prone unto, are covetousness and sensuality; the tradesman, therefore, should be peculiarly watchful against them. They are the root of all evils; they estrange the heart from, and deaden the affections to God and goodness; they sensualize the very souls of men, and give such a criminal bias to their appetites and inclinations, as produces forgetfulness and contempt of God, a disrelish to the purity and spirituality of his laws and worship, the neglect of their immortal souls, and the concerns of another world; they cloud the understanding, pervert the judgment, extinguish the principles of religion, justice, truth, and benevolence, in the hearts of men, and debase their natures to a resemblance of the beasts that perish: in a word, the prevalence of them is every where in scripture represented as absolutely inconsistent with the Christian life, and destructive of our heavenly hopes. "This ye know, that no covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God." "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then,

they that are in the flesh cannot please God. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die," &c.

III. Having thus considered some instances of a religious temper and life, let us reflect upon ourselves, and consider what our own dispositions and practice have been. Have we ever experienced such a renovation of mind, as has given us a prevailing bias of soul towards God and Christ, heaven and holiness? Or are we the same self-righteous, sensual, dead, and disaffected beings to God and goodness, that ever we were? Have the glorious perfections of the adorable God, and the relations in which we stand unto him, had an habitual, practical influence upon our tempers and our lives? Or have we forgotten God that formed us; neglected to glorify that supreme and transcendent being in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways; and lightly esteemed the Lord Jesus Christ, the Rock of our Salvation? Have we studied and revered the holy word of God, and made that the rule and guide of our lives? Or have we made the customs and examples of an evil world, or our own selfish interests and humours, the rule of all our conduct? Have we lived by faith on God, for all the supports and supplies of life? Or "have we made gold our hope, and said to fine gold, thou art our confidence?" Has the worship of the Almighty been performed with seriousness, faith, and constancy in our families and retirements? Or have we lived as without God in the world, and cast off his fear, by restraining prayer before him? Have we honoured, revered, and delighted in the sabbaths of the Lord? Or have they been esteemed a weariness unto us, and the time thought long, wherein we were detained from the common business and pleasures of the world? Have we set a watch before the door of our lips? Has our conversation been sober, rational, useful, and religious? Have our hearts been frequently aspiring to God, by serious reflection and meditation, in order to animate and strengthen the life of God in our souls? Or has not the vanity and folly of our thoughts and words been too plain an indication that a wise and religious disposition of heart, and temper of mind, have been wanting in us? To conclude: have we been watchful and circumspect in our Christian course; especially against

the predominant sins of covetousness and sensuality? Or have our souls been buried in the earth, or drowned in carnality; and God, Christ, and the eternal world been forgotten and neglected by us? These are questions we should put close to our consciences, while there is time and space for repentance; before we are called to the presence of God, from whose judgment there is no appeal; and whose scrutiny into our hearts and lives will be more particular and exact, than any we can enter into upon ourselves.

IV. I shall endeavour to remove some of those prejudices which arise in the minds of men against a religious life. One is, the difficulties of religion; that the rules of it are too self-denying, and the path to heaven too narrow to be comfortable and happy. To this it may be replied, that there is nothing which God requires but what is conducive to the real happiness of reasonable creatures; and nothing that he forbids but what is consistent with it. The excessive indulgence of animal appetites, and disorderly affections, whatever low satisfactions they may give at present, are as destructive of the true peace, as they are of the purity of the human mind; and are these restrictions of religion then fit subjects of complaint? If our vitiated natures find some of the rules of religion a restraint upon our inclinations, can we think that our appetites and affections are always so wise and reasonable as never to need a curb? Or shall we repent, when we arrive at the regions of bliss, that our labour has been too much, or our self-denial too great, in order to attain that happy state? Surely not. But there is really nothing so hard in religion, but the grace of God, and the habits of virtue, will make it easy to us; the greatest difficulties are usually at first, before the mind is healed of its prevailing distempers; the longer we travel in the paths of religion, the more sweet and delightful they become unto us: as all the employments of life appear difficult, when we first enter upon them, why should difficulties in religion only affright us? If we believe God, and credit those who have made the experiment, they assure us, that "all its ways are pleasantness, and its paths peace," and "in keeping of them is great reward."



If it be said that such strictness and circumspection is more ado than needs, let such only consult the sacred word of God, by which we are to be judged, and see whether "denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously and godly, in this present evil world," is not every where made the qualification for enjoying the happiness of the next: and then consider whether the dark and depraved mind of man, or the declarations of infinite rectitude, wisdom and goodness, are the fittest to determine what state of soul is necessary for his own acceptance and enjoyment.

Some, perhaps, are unwilling to engage in the Christian course, from an apprehension that it may expose them to contempt from others, as being singular and precise. But what, I pray you, is there that can merit contempt in the belief, reverence and love, of the God of heaven and earth; in owning your dependence upon him, and expressing your gratitude to him by humble prayer and praise? What in a strict regard to goodness, truth, and justice to man, and the government of your appetites and passions? Yet these are the substance of religion: it is by these that you are afraid of being made ridiculous; than which nothing can more ennoble and adorn, and bless human nature. It was the observation of one of the wiser heathens, "That virtue was so beautiful, that if it could be rendered visible to the eyes of man, every one would be in love with it." Where religion is not maimed and deformed by its professors, it commands reverence and respect from the observers of it. Certain I am, that there is not the most profligate person now on earth, who would not shortly give ten thousand worlds, if such he had, that his own life had been in every respect as strictly conformed to the wise and holy will of God, as that of the most diligent observer of the divine precepts. Which, then, most deserves our regard, the approbation of God, of angels, and of all good men; or the censures of those who will soon condemn themselves, for the neglect of what they now despise: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall

the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

V. Only let it be further observed that a life of serious, practical religion, is recommended to us by the most weighty considerations.

1. It is the truest wisdom. He certainly is the wisest man who, by serious diligence, and prudent foresight, secures to himself the greatest good, and escapes the greatest evil. As heaven is better than earth, and eternity longer than time, so much more wise is he who, by faith in Christ Jesus, and a conformity to the prescribed rules of the gospel, obtains the invaluable blessings of it, than he that gains the greatest earthly good. If God, the fountain of wisdom, is the proper Judge, we have his decision in these words: "Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding." But how vain is that man's pretences to wisdom, how much soever he shines in wealth, wit, or learning, whose mind is estranged from God, and his eternal felicity neglected, for the dreams and shadows of earthly pursuits and enjoyments?

II. A life of religion affords the most solid happiness. There is nothing so much ennobles and regulates the faculties of the soul, and crowns it with peace and tranquillity, as the faith and fear of God, and a supreme affection to him; a relation to the Lord Jesus as a Saviour, &c. The delights of sincere religion do as far surpass the pleasures of the covetous, the sensual and voluptuous, as the pleasures of a man do those of the brutes. If the blessed God is the most happy Being, then they that bear the nearest resemblance to him, must necessarily be the most happy creatures. They not only enjoy the divine pleasures of a religious life, but have by far the truest comfort of those blessings they possess in common with other men. Religion restrains us from no pleasures which are consistent with reason, and our truest interest; nothing can afford so much support under the unavoidable afflictions of the present state; and I may venture to affirm that even the penitential sorrows of a good

man have more true satisfaction in them than the greatest delights that the vicious and profane ever enjoyed.

III. Lastly, true religion is of the greatest necessity. All other concerns, compared with this, are but as the toys of children to the labours of life. This is "the one thing needful," without which the end of man's creation is lost, the glory of God in his works is frustrated, and the whole existence of reasonable beings is vain. It were infinitely better never to have had a being, than leave this world with the guilt of sin unpardoned, and the power of it unsubdued. And it is also necessary for securing a blessing upon all our temporal concerns. Godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as that which is to come. If we truly serve God, he will certainly bless us. Men may increase their riches by other methods, but "the prosperity of such fools only tends to destroy them." And God can easily blast the most vigorous endeavours for this life, if we neglect the love and duty we owe to him. The tradesman would do well to consider whether many of his losses and decays may not be the chastisement of his neglect of these important concerns.

"This commandment, which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. See, I have set before thee this day, life and good, death and evil. In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live; and that the Lord thy God may bless thee. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear; I denounce unto you this day that ye shall surely perish. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose life that thou and thy seed may live, &c. Deut. xxx. 11, 14-20.

"The Lord God of Israel saith, them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed, 1

Sam. ii. 30.

Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, 1 Sam. xii. 24, 25.

"Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee, 1 Kings iii. 6.

"Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches. Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God. Salvation is far from the wicked, for they seek not thy statutes. Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments, &c. Psalm cxix. 2, 4, 14, 115, 155, 166.

"In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof is no death, Prov. xii. 28.

"Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed. But he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded, Prov. xiii. 13.

"Now also the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Matt. iii. 10,12.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven, Matt. vii. 21.

"Then said they unto him, what shall we do, that we might work the works of God; Jesus said unto them, this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent, John vi. 28, 29. 1 John iii. 23.

"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man, Acts xxiv. 16.

"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. 21, 23.

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness, 1 Thess. iv. 3, 7.

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Tit. ii. 13, 14.

"He suffered. And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him, Heb. v. 8, 9.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, &c. Heb. xii. 14, 15.

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, &c. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Of Contentment.

I. The nature of Christian contentment. II. Instances wherein the tradesman is to exercise it. In cheerfully undergoing the inconveniences of his calling. In a thankful acknowledgment of the advantages of it. In a submissive patience under losses and disappointments. In shunning those vices which are contrary to contentment, as ambition, envy, covetousness, despondency, and invading other's callings. In a steady continuance in his business under all disadvantages. III. Contentment enforced by various considerations. IV. Means to attain it. Scriptures suited to the subject.

I. Contentment, as it relates to this subject, is a cheerful satisfaction in the place and calling wherein God hath set us. As there is a natural stupidity in some persons, so there is a stoical pride in others, who would endeavour to appear indifferent in every state and circumstance of life, from an obstinate and self-sufficient temper of mind: but Christian contentment is a more noble thing, arising from a becoming sense of God's dominion over us, as our Lord and owner, who may therefore do as he pleases with his own; and an humble trust in him as our Father and friend, whose wisdom and goodness directs every part of his dispensations towards us, the low afflicted situations of life, as well as the more pleasurable and prosperous ones; and these persuasions, by divine grace, enable us "to learn in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content." But, alas, where is this amiable virtue to be found? Men are usually unsatisfied with their present condition, longing after some change or alteration, which when they have attained, they are as far from happiness as they were before. The child or servant, weary of restraint, longs for the liberty of the parent or master. The parent or master, weary of his cares and troubles, wishes for retirement and ease. The unmarried are not contented with their condition; and the married often less

with theirs. The poor envy the plenty of the rich; and the rich admire the quiet and health of the poor. Nor is the tradesman free from this restless distemper; often preferring, not only the gown or the sword, but this or the other trade before his own: and, indeed, ever since our father Adam grew dissatisfied with the delights of paradise, all his posterity are infected with the same unhappy disease, until the grace of God renews their natures, limits their desires, and shews them a more durable and substantial good than the pleasures of time, or the acquisitions of honour or wealth can bestow, even the favour and enjoyment of his great and blessed self.

II. Let us consider some instances, wherein the tradesman is called to the exercise of this virtue of contentment. And,

1st. In cheerfully undergoing the inconveniences and difficulties of his calling. There are some inconveniences in a trading life in general; and indeed no condition in life is free from them. One is, that the tradesman is subject to a dependence upon many persons. If it is a mechanic business, it usually depends on many masters; if it consists in commerce, on many workmen, and many customers; some fantastical, some penurious or imperious, others inconstant or idle: which are real exercises of patience to those employed in trade. Another inconvenience the tradesman often meets with, is bad servants. These are idle, careless, unfaithful, or vicious. No sooner is his back turned, but his business is neglected, his customers slighted, or his goods embezzled, and he loses more at home, than, with all his care, he can get abroad. And then, the tradesman's business usually lies among all sorts of men, from whom he meets with disappointment and falsehood in some, treachery and fraud in others. Besides these, there are particular inconveniences that relate to several employments; some of which require hard labour: others continual care; sometimes being overdone with business, at other times having nothing to do. These things meeting with a discontented spirit, make it inwardly to broil, or outwardly to flame; and the man cries out, who would lead such a life? Never was man thus perplexed; this vexation is never to be endured; no man ever

was such a slave! and the like. And seeing he cannot reform others, he torments himself, and can take no rest, and expatiates largely on the miseries of a trade.

But who art thou, O man, that thou shouldest think to be exempted from the common lot of mankind? Canst thou expect that a new world should be created to give thee satisfaction? Or that the tempers and manners of men should be changed, from what they always were? Why should we think to find men without infirmities, who are conscious of so many in ourselves? Or hope to ride through the storms of life, without being tossed by its waves? Does it not better become us to possess our souls in patience, and resolve, that as we cannot make others better, we will be watchful that they do not make us worse, and increase the unavoidable difficulties of life, by fretfulness and impatience: to consider ourselves, as placed by divine providence, on this theatre of action, to exercise our wisdom, patience and humility, in order to prepare us for a better state, and make the enjoyment of it more delightful to us.

2. Let contentment be shewn in a thankful acknowledgment of the several advantages of your callings: for God hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him; that is no just cause to complain of his proceedings. The tradesman's calling, is usually more comfortable for the body, than that of many others. You have, for the most part, less toils than the husbandman, and less danger than the seaman or the soldier; and are not exposed to the inclemencies of the weather, and other inconveniences which many undergo, to support yourselves and families. You are seldom kept from sleep by the aches of your bones in daily labour; nor will you be content with the fare and apparel of the poor labourer. You know best how it is within, but one may easily perceive by your outward appearance, that you have every way the advantage; and therefore should be contented and thankful. And then, your calling is more friendly to the mind. You have usually a more liberal education, than labouring persons; and are fixed early in life in families and among persons, where you have opportunities to



cultivate and improve your understandings. In many trades there is time and leisure, wherein by reading and conversation, you may gain that wisdom and knowledge, which may adorn your minds, and capacitate you for more extensive usefulness, pleasure and happiness. You have generally greater advantages for your internal interest than others. You are often placed where the word of God is preached; the sacred scripture, and other books of instruction put into your hands; the examples of religion and virtue before your eyes; and every help afforded you that can be desired, for the making you wiser and better. Whereas the situations of many others are very distant from the means of knowledge, and very unfriendly to the aids of religion, either as to hearing or converse. And for temporal advantages, yours far exceed the common lot of multitudes. If God is pleased to add his blessing to your diligence, you enjoy more of the comforts of life, and are capable of making better provision for your families when you die and leave them. If others can procure plain food and clothing, and a place to cover their heads; if they can teach their children to read and write, and then advance them to some of your services, it is the highest of their ambition. And lastly, the tradesman has often greater opportunities of doing good than many others; which is man's greatest honour and happiness, next to the beatific vision. You have the opportunity to educate and instruct those youths that are under your charge; and by counsel and example, to direct them in the paths of religion and virtue ; whereby those principles and habits may be implanted in them (through the grace of God), which may make them happy in future life, and blessings to all around them. In divers trades, many poor are employed; whose loins, by mercy and goodness, you may cause to bless you: and, if God prospers your undertakings, you are capable of considerable service to the great interests of religion, and the good of the community to which you relate. And it must be said in honour to the trading world, that most of the noblest charities now existing, owe their foundations, or their continuance, to the benevolence of this useful and important part of mankind.

But then the tradesman should also consider with thankfulness, the advantages of his own particular calling; for every calling has advantages, as well as inconveniences, peculiar to itself. If it be laborious, it is usually more free from cares, and less subject to losses; if it consists in commerce, or buying and selling only, you have commonly more time, and less toil: if it is hazardous, it is generally more gainful than others: in some callings, you become acquainted with the beauties of nature; in others, with the curiosities of art. These and the like advantages, should be observed by the tradesman, and then he will conclude, "I am very happily situated, if I did but know it; and instead of envying the condition of others, or repining at my own, I only need a more thankful spirit for the blessings I enjoy."

3d. Let contentment be exercised, by a cheerful patience under losses and disappointments in trade. Here the tradesman often finds employment for all his patience and virtue. Sometimes his losses are great, by the corruptible nature of the goods he deals in: at other times, chapmen and correspondents fail; or storms and tempests make great devastations in his substance; and it is not little that many suffer, by the frequent changes of the fashions. These, and the like occurrences, fill the discontented mind with uneasiness and confusion; the man falls out with his business; condemns all mankind, because some are dishonest; and, I fear, too often frets at divine providence, if he is not ready to deny it, because it does not favour his designs; and thus, he neither enjoys the comfort, nor gives to God the praise of what he possesses, because he has not all that he desired.

But Christian contentment, though it is not insensible of losses, labours to digest them; and if things are bad, will not make them worse by despondency, or the neglect of proper duty. The good man knows, that constant happiness is no where to be found but in God, and the testimony of a good conscience; and is sensible that afflictive providences, as well as prosperous ones, flow from the wisdom and goodness of his heavenly Father; and that the more humble and

submissive he lies under his losses, the sooner they are likely to be made up to him. Though he suffers by the breaking of others, yet he is thankful to God that he himself is not the bankrupt; and is ready, if he finds no treachery in the case, to compassionate those who labour under that affliction.

4th. Contentment is to be employed in watching against those vices which are contrary to it. Among which are these,

1. Ambition; which is for aiming at things out of the tradesman's sphere, making him restless and uneasy in his present condition, because his mind is too high for his calling, or his success unequal to his desires; and the shoe is uneasy, because the foot is swelled. This distemper ruined our first parents, and has been of fatal consequence to many of their posterity. Many a tradesman, by a foolish ambition, has engaged in enterprises which have deprived him of the comfortable subsistence he before enjoyed. Persons, indeed, may allowably endeavour to raise themselves, as far as the sober improvement of their time and capacities will admit of, but those desires and pursuits are certainly criminal, which render them discontented and unthankful for their present enjoyments, which obstruct the love and duty they owe to God and their neighbour; and have only the motives of pride and fancy, instead of the desires of benevolence and charity, for their foundation.

2. Envy; when men indulge an envious disposition at the prosperity of others. There is one, says discontent, less deserving than I, in more credit; another less diligent, but more successful: there are others, who live without care or pains, and yet riches flow in upon them, and they have all that heart can wish. Sure the world is very unequally divided, that we must have labour and disappointment, and they wealth and ease. See, says envy, what a fine house, what rich furniture, what a flowing trade, and the like, such and such enjoy. And what is all this to thee? "Is thine eye evil, because God is good?" A little more modesty would teach you, that the Governor of the universe knows best where to bestow his gifts. Alas! he sees that

thy neighbour's high estate, and thy high spirit would undo thee. He knows what is fittest both for him and thee, and therefore be content to be at His disposal. The necessaries of this, and hopes of a better life, is happiness enough for you, if you are interested in the favour of the God of heaven; but it is too much, if you are disobedient subjects to God; while therefore you have more than you deserve, repine not at what others possess. But as to those you envy, you know not the burdens they feel; you see their seeming happiness, but not their real misery; and are little sensible of the cares, and fears, and sorrows, which are the attendants upon a splendid state; as well as the powerful temptations to pride, sensuality, and forgetfulness of God, which their prosperous condition exposes them to. So that they are rather the objects of your compassion, than of your emulation. "Be not, therefore, disturbed when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased." For he that rejoices at the prosperity of others, makes it his own; but he that envies it, deprives himself of the comfort of what he possesses.

3. Covetousness is another vice, repugnant to contentment. By covetousness, I mean an insatiable desire of riches; when men will be rich, or else think they cannot be happy. This restless desire, when it is indulged in the tradesman's heart, perpetually torments him; and he can enjoy no satisfaction in what he hath, through his eager desire after more. This causes him to fret at every little loss, and fills him with anguish at every disappointment; he denies himself conveniences, cuts short his family of necessaries, neglects the poor, and destroys his soul, to get money; and his desire of wealth are like the thirst of a fever, the more he drinks, the more he longs. But how unbecoming is this of a reasonable creature? Riches neither make men more wise, happy, or good; and are no further desirable, than they are procured with a good conscience, and employed to good purposes. And is beneficence and charity, the real end of your desires after them? Judge of your sincerity herein, by the use you make of your present acquisitions; for he that is unfaithful in a little, will be unfaithful also in much, and no man can be a good steward of many talents, who does not wisely employ a few. If you dare not trust God

in a charitable and pious use of what you possess, the pride and pleasures of life, or the increasing love of money, will render you as fruitless of good works in larger acquisitions of wealth. I know men aim at satisfaction, but this is not to be obtained by enlarging their estates, but by contracting their desires; for "he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase." And the word of truth, as well as constant experience, assure us, that "the happiness of man's life, does not consist in the abundance which he possesses." Therefore, "if riches increase, set not your heart upon them"; or if they decrease, break not your heart for them; but rather imitate the example of the good man, who said, "I take God to witness to my conscience, I desire of God, to myself, no more in this world, than that without which I cannot keep His laws."

4. Despondency and dejection of mind is another evil contrary to contentment. This commonly seizes the tradesman when business is dull. He furnishes his shop with goods, but finds few customers. He seeks and waits for trade, but little comes. Others, with pains and cost, prepare their work, but know not where or how to dispose of it. Debts are contracted, but little comes in to discharge them; the necessary expenses of their houses and families are constant and unavoidable; and sometimes his future prospects are more formidable than his present discouragements; and he sees not that either care or industry can relieve him. These things sink the tradesman's spirits, and he is ready to give up all hopes, and put an end to all endeavours to mend his condition. Amidst these fears and gloomy apprehensions, let the religious tradesman resolutely persevere in diligence, frugality, and every necessary self-denial; let him use every expedient which prudence may suggest, and conscience approve; and in this course let him strengthen his mind by a steady trust in the divine promises and providence; and assuredly believe, that all things are ordered by God in perfect wisdom and goodness; who will never leave nor forsake those that fear and trust in Him; and though he sometimes brings good men low, to humble and to prove them, and teach them their dependence

upon Him, yet it is always with a design of doing them good in the latter end. The fountain of being and happiness, can easily make up in spiritual blessings, the absence of any temporal good; and in the most proper time and way, supply your needs, and exceed your desires. Rouse up therefore your fainting spirits, attend still upon your callings, and ease your minds of anxiety and care, by a confirmed trust in God. "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." "Therefore, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Behold the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" &c.

5. Lastly, Invading others' callings is contrary to this contentment. Diligence and contentment are no enemies to each other; but when persons endeavour to grasp at all the business in their own callings, or to invade those of others, merely to increase their riches; it is too plain an indication of a covetous disposition. In some cases, indeed, it may be allowable for one person to engage in two or three callings; but then a just necessity, and not an avaricious desire of wealth, must oblige you to it. In some cases and situations, one trade not being sufficient for a comfortable subsistence. Then, they must not be inconsistent with each other. If the one hinder the other, or both together disturb and hinder you from other indispensable duties to God or man, they are to be esteemed and avoided as snares. And further, you may not follow them to the prejudice of the common good. For we are not so to love ourselves, as to exclude all regard to others. Other families may be supported by the trade which you can live well enough without; and the wise and good God, who is the common parent of mankind, will be far from approving such selfish and uncharitable enterprises. In like manner, also, you should beware of invading any thing else, that is proper to your neighbour. If his house or shop be ever so convenient or advantageous to you, you should neither desire nor endeavour to procure them to yourself, to his prejudice; nor use any method in order thereto, which you

would think unreasonable if the case was your own; but govern yourself by equity and charity, in every part of your conduct towards others.

5th. A steady continuance in our callings, under the several disadvantages of them, is another branch of the tradesman's contentment. There are many who, when they meet with some considerable check in their business, or when indolence prevails upon them, are in haste to leave their callings, and engage in some other; and there are others, who are prompted to it by an unstable disposition of mind, which never suffers them to be at rest in any situation of life. But though we may form pleasing chimeras of the advantages attending other employments than our own; yet it will usually be found, that if the calling wherein we have been educated, and with which we are best acquainted, will not answer our desires; we are not likely to meet with better success in those employments, to the nature and difficulties of which we are strangers. And therefore persons should be very cautious how they undertake a change of this kind; and see that they have a proper knowledge of the nature of their new employment, and suitable abilities for conducting it, as well as a reasonable prospect of advantage from it. As to each of which, it will be proper to take the opinion of wise and experienced friends.

The inconveniences arising from the change of a trade, often attend the change of place or situation for carrying it on; a desire of which, many times proceeds from the like unsteady, discontented temper with it to the former, but especially to this latter circumstance that observation of the wisest man may be applied: "as the bird that wandereth from her nest, so is the man that wandereth from his place." And persons of Reuben's character generally meet with his fate: "Unstable as water, he shall not excel."

III. Permit me to enforce the necessity and propriety of this amiable and happy disposition of contentment, by observing that,

1st. The command of God obliges us to it. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave nor forsake you." Than which, no precept can be more plain, nor any reason more powerful. Observe, He says, "be content with such things as ye have"; it is not what others have, that is to be your standard; their steps may be attended with more prosperity, and they may be better fitted to bear it. Nor are they such things as ye have had, that are to produce this contented disposition; you may have lived higher, and fared better, when younger in life; before the fire consumed your substance, or marriage multiplied your family, and the like; but be content with such things as ye now have. Nor is a satisfied mind to be suspended until you acquire such things as you would have; say not, had I more trade, less family expenses, a better house, or fewer losses, &c. I should be content; for there is no virtue in being pleased when every thing is to our minds; but be easy, cheerful, and thankful in your present condition; and consider yourself as placed therein by divine providence; who may have services for you to do, and blessings for you to receive in that situation, which you know not of. It is God that "chooses our inheritance for us." And when he hath chosen it, shall we enter our dissent, question his goodness, or censure his wisdom?

2d. Discontent contradicts the providential will of God, and your own prayers; and is evil in its causes and effects. The blessed God is the Lord of the universe, and the absolute disposer of all persons and things; and we may be assured, from the infinite rectitude, wisdom, and goodness of his nature, that none of his dispensations can vary from these amiable perfections, however they may contradict our foolish desires and expectations; and is it reasonable to expect that he should alter the laws of nature, and the designs of his providence, to satisfy the weak, short-sighted wishes of every worm? That which is hurtful to me, may be beneficial to many others; the wind that dashes my ship against the rock, may, at the same time, blow two others from off the sands, and what cause have I then to murmur? Do we not confute our own prayers, when we say, "Father, thy will be done," and yet repine when he does his will upon us? It either shews



our hypocrisy, in praying for what we do not desire; or our folly, in contradicting our own requests.

Many other evils attend a discontented mind, which should deter us from it. It is evil in its causes; as it proceeds from pride of heart, envy, covetousness, distrust of God, and an unthankful spirit for the blessings we enjoy. It is evil in its effects; it unfits us for the duties and pleasures of a religious life. The discontented person is wholly indisposed for love and delight in God, for praise and gratitude to him; it deforms and disturbs our own souls; like bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke, we gall ourselves the more by struggling against the burden, and deprive ourselves of the true enjoyment of the blessings we possess, by repining at the absence of those we desire; and often make our "troubles longer," by preventing those blessings which an humble, patient disposition would incline our heavenly Father to bestow upon us.

3d. If you are Christians in truth, you have enough to shame all discontent. You have the perfections of God; the unsearchable riches of Christ: the influences of the holy Spirit of God: an interest in the promises of the gospel; the divine image on your own souls; the infallible assurance of all needful good here; and the hope and prospect of consummate blessedness in the life to come, to be your portion and happiness. And if these are not sufficient to content you, I must say, that you shamefully undervalue your high privileges. "Bear thy condition quietly, know that thou art a man," says the heathen philosopher; with much more propriety may I say, be contented with thy state, know that thou art a Christian. Thou professest to live by faith, do not act below reason.

4th. There is no condition of life, how low and mean soever, but in the faithful discharge of the duties of religion God may be honoured in it, and by it. Your prudence and piety, your patience, diligence and integrity, may recommend religion, not only to your equals, but to persons in superior stations of life; and those acts of liberality, however small in their kind, that proceed from a heart so full of

generous benevolence, animated with piety, that a man is willing to deny himself of many innocent gratifications that he may be able to perform them, is more regarded by the Judge of all, than larger donations from the superfluities of the rich. And it should be considered, for the consolation of the poor, that the lowest employments are as necessary for the benefit and comfort of mankind, as those that have a more splendid appearance; as in a well composed building, not the beams and pillars only, but the very pins are necessary to its beauty and strength. Common mechanic trades often contribute more to the well being of a state, than more polite and genteel employments; these often, at best, only serve to the ornament of it, the others are necessary to its subsistence. Let this consideration, especially in comparison with the others, make those content whom providence has placed in the lowest situations of life.

IV. In order to which happy disposition,

1. Impress upon your minds the reality and importance of a future state. The man that considers himself only as a short probationer here for an eternal existence; and is conflicting with enemies without, and enemies within, for the life of his soul; will see the absurdity of a solicitude for trifles. Look into the state of your own souls, and you will find so much mercy wanting for them; and so much rectitude and goodness wanting in them, as will quench your thirst after other things. How deep is the infatuation of sinful man that he can be so perpetually and anxiously solicitous about momentary and empty vanities; while the image of God is lost in his soul; and the anger of God is ready to consume him; and his eternal unchangeable state depends on the brittle thread of human life, which death may snap in sunder the next hour or moment?

2. Get an humble spirit, if you would have a contented one. Pride causes men to be unthankful for their mercies, and impatient under their crosses; but afflictions are easily borne, and benefits are ever gratefully acknowledged, by the mind that is truly humble under a sense of its defects. I have a poor trade, and mean fare, it is true, says

humility; but it is more than I deserve. I might be begging or starving, or pining away in pain and misery. There are others indeed, who enjoy more, but then I suppose they deserve better; however I am sure I merit nothing, and so may well be contented with a little.

3. Restrain your fancies, and moderate your desires, if ever you would attain to this happy state of contentment. "Nature and grace are contented with little, but pride and humour with nothing." Men's real wants are few, and soon supplied; but if our fancies and desires are made the measure of our necessities, we shall find no end to our imaginary wants. The only way to happiness is to bring our mind to our condition, which is in every one's power by divine assistance; whereas the raising our condition to our mind, is what few can attain; and we find that when men have arrived to that state in which they thought happiness consisted, their minds swell as their wealth increases, and they are as far from contentment as ever. So that if our circumstances are moderate, we may as well sit down easy and cheerful now, as then.

4. Lastly, Live in dependence upon the blessed God, and place your happiness in his favour; and then you will easily be contented with what the world affords. The soul that lives with God, and centers in Him as its felicity, enjoys delights so noble and excellent, that it looks with pity on the deluded world, who are pursuing the empty shadows of earthly happiness, and neglecting the only true substantial good of a reasonable immortal spirit. He that knows that God is his, and that all the perfections of God are engaged for his good, will be very easy and satisfied in every state of life. Learn, therefore to be content with His allowance, to acquiesce in his providence; believe Him to be both wise and good, to know what is best for you, and willing to bestow it upon you, if you are careful to please him. He that hath promised glory and happiness in the end to those that love and fear him, will not deny them any real necessary good, in the way to it. Live then upon His infallible word and promises, under all discouragements; and you will certainly find that your hope will not make you ashamed.

"Then Job said, naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord, Job i. 20, 21.

"Job said, what! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also? Job ii. 10.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evil doers shall be cut off. But those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked, Psalm xxxvii. 7-9, 16.

"They tempted God in their heart, by asking meat for their lust. Yea, they spake against God. They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Can He give bread also? Can He provide flesh for His people? Therefore the Lord was wroth, and a fire was kindled against Jacob. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation, Psalm lxxviii. 18, 22.

"Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith, Prov. xv. 16.

"Two things have I required of Thee, deny me not before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me, &c. Prov. xxx. 7, 9.

"Better is the sight of the eyes, than the wandering of the desire. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. See there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better (for them?) Eccles. vi. 9, 11.

"I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things. Wo unto him that striveth

with his Maker. Shall the clay say unto him that fashioneth it, what makest thou? Isaiah xlv. 7, 9.

"He said unto them, take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, &c. Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them. How much are ye better than the fowls? &c. Luke xii. 15, 31.

"I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content, Phil. iv. 11.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have been seduced from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, 1 Tim. vi. 6, 11."

## **CHAPTER IX.**

### **Of Leaving our Callings.**

Consideration to be used therein. Cases wherein it may be allowable. As when superior authority requires it; when persons are totally disabled by diseases of body or mind; when insurmountable difficulties attend our callings; or age obliges, or estate enables us to quit them. Preparation for death urged, in person and estate.

We come, in the last place, to consider in what cases it is allowable and fit for persons to leave their callings. Necessary and important occasions may detain or divert the tradesman from his business, as the restoration of his health, and various other occurrences which happen in life; or he may, for wise reasons, contract his trade, and lessen the cares and labours that attend it: but what I mean is the wholly forsaking of business, which is a great and important affair and should never be done without due consideration and advice. Present impulses, or the tolerable inconveniences of trade, can never justify such a conduct, unless the rules of wisdom and prudence concur. How far wealth, or the love of a retired life may justify it, was considered in the first part of this essay. In some cases no doubt it is allowable, of which I apprehend are these that follow:

1st. When superior authority requires it. Thus a wife may allowably forsake the calling wherein she has been educated, when her husband finds any considerable inconveniences therein, or needs her assistance some other way. The citizen, being called and advanced to some place of honourable employment and trust in the government, may lawfully leave his former calling, because this is supposed to tend more to the public good. In like manner, when persons are put under restraint or confinement, either by the magistrate, or by the suit of an adversary, he is so long at least discharged from his former calling, and possibly rendered incapable thereby from ever following it again.

2. When persons are totally disabled by the diseases of body or mind. It is not every distemper or pain of body which will justify the deserting our stations in life; for diseases are inseparable from some constitutions and from some callings too. And considering the curious frame of the bodies of men, and the irregularities of their appetites and passions; we have more cause to admire at one day's vigour and health than an hundred days' sickness and pain: but the aged or infirm tradesman may, like the pilot in the ship, be serviceable in his profession by his advice and direction, when he cannot employ his active powers of strength and labour. That

disability only releases the tradesman from his calling, which renders him incapable of following it to those ends for which they are managed. When his body suffers on the one hand, and his employment on the other, and there is no rational prospect of being restored to a capacity for it: in this case, God by his providence releases him from his calling; it becomes a necessary cessation, and not a criminal indulgence. Let the younger tradesman consider this, and be provident for the future; let him not spend his income as fast as it arises, but in dependence upon the divine providence, and in a prudent and charitable use of what he possesses, let him remember the days of evil, for they may be many. Particularly let him be watchful against that intemperance and vice, which ruins both health and substance too.

3d. Incapacity of mind may also discharge persons from their stations and callings. Not that every trouble of mind or melancholy humour will excuse us from attending to the proper business of life: the means must be used, and remedies applied; the divine and the physician consulted, and it may be no remedy is more successful for the cure (under the blessing of heaven) than an honest diligence in our callings. But when reason is utterly clouded, or the faculties so enfeebled, that there is no prospect of future capacity, that is a sufficient discharge. Since this is an affliction so grievous in its nature, and hurtful in its consequences, let the tradesman beware of those things which introduce it. Subdue high passions, either of love, anger, or fear. Provoke not God and conscience, by violations of truth, justice, and religion. Beware of worldly sorrow, pore not upon losses and disappointments. Grasp not at more business than your minds or circumstances can bear. Abuse not your parts, nor meddle with abstruse speculations, or things that are too high for you; but be humble. Maintain an innocent cheerfulness in every condition; labour to ensure to yourselves the comforts of religion; and habituate yourselves to temperance and exercise of body, and you will be safe from this calamity, which renders so many a terror to themselves, and a grief to all around them.

4th. When misfortunes in trade have rendered them incapable of being carried on. It is not every loss or abatement of trade or substance that will justify the forsaking our callings; many have been reduced to a very low ebb, who by the blessing of providence, and their own care and industry, have recovered themselves, and made considerable acquisitions of estate: but when business requires that substance to carry it on, which by losses and other occurrences we are dispossessed of, and the maintenance of our callings oblige us to contract debts which we are unlikely to repay, justice and prudence require the cessation from them. In these cases, a person does not properly leave his calling, but his calling leaves him. Under these circumstances, it becomes a tradesman to review his past behaviour, and see whether a criminal neglect of God, injustice and oppression of others, or some sinful indulgences or extravagance has not procured this evil to him; lest those sins which have driven him from his shop exclude him from heaven also.

5th. Tradesmen may allowably leave their callings when a considerable degree of age and estate inclines and capacitates them so to do. It is not only lawful, but becoming in those who are advanced in wealth, and declining in years, to make room for the increase of younger tradesmen; and not like aged trees, stand to obstruct the growth of those below them. An increasing love of wealth in the decline of life is a sight shocking to human nature. But then the retired tradesman should remember that though he is discharged from the fatigues of life, he is not so from the duties of it. His leisure should be employed in preparing his mind for another state, in acts of benevolence and kindness to others; in pointing out to younger persons the paths of virtue and prosperity, and not used only as an indulgence to sloth and sensuality, lest he come under the character of the fool, who said to his soul, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years" and knew no other use of them than to "eat, drink, and be merry" instead of being rich towards God."

6th. Lastly, any of these appear to be sufficient causes for resigning a trade, and there may be others; but while the tradesman meets with



nothing to recommend or warrant a voluntary retreat from business, while he is pursuing it with the greatest cheerfulness, diligence, and success, let him ever bear it in mind, that death will soon discharge him from his employment, whatever it be. This puts an end to all our cares and labours. "Our breath goeth forth, we return to the earth, and in that very day all our thoughts and concerns for this life perish." This day will surely come, and it often comes when it is least expected. Therefore let the tradesman be advised to set his soul in order for it. What madness and folly is it to live unconcernedly in a condition which we know not but the next day or hour may introduce us into inevitable misery and destruction! What senseless stupidity has seized the minds of sinners, that they can stand secure on the brink of such a precipice! For to use the words of an eminent divine, "When God hath been pleased in infinite mercy, so clearly to reveal the happiness of heaven, and the miseries of hell; if men were not amazingly stupefied by sin, they could never possess a moment's ease until they had some comfortable certainty of enjoying the one, and escaping the other. How can persons preserve their minds from terror and amazement, when they think of a just and holy God, and know not but he is their enemy? How can they open the Bible with comfort, when they know not but they read their own condemnation in every page? One would think that the uncertainty of their own salvation should keep them waking, or amaze them in dreams, and disturb their sleep; when they know not if they shut their eyes, but they may awake in torments. And that the prospect of death and judgment, as near and sure, should fill them with horror and astonishment. Indeed, if the uncertainty was constrained, or the case remediless, it must then be borne as other unavoidable evils are; but when the kind offers of mercy and grace through Jesus Christ are made to repenting and believing sinners; and the characters of those who are in a state of salvation or condemnation, are so plainly described in the gospel, that if men would with seriousness first search the scriptures, and then faithfully examine their own hearts by them, they might see which state they belong unto; nothing but unaccountable stupidity can cause persons to live negligent of their great concern, or content themselves in uncertainty of the awful

consequences of death." Never rest, therefore, until your peace be made with God through Jesus Christ, and your heart purified from every corrupt affection by his Spirit of grace, and then death may be viewed with peace, and embraced with joy.

And, to conclude, the same prospect of death, and uncertainty of life, should induce every considerate tradesman to set his house in order. Let your books and accounts be kept as clear and even as may be; suffer not long reckonings to lie dormant between yourself and others; for these will prove very troublesome, or it may be very prejudicial to those you leave behind. And after you have computed, as near as may be, the true value of your estates, make your will. Death will be more easy, but not a minute the nearer for doing this. After you have settled a reasonable portion upon your wife and children, if God has so far blessed you, let your poor relations be remembered by you; and forget not to acknowledge the goodness of divine providence, by dedicating some part of your gains to pious and charitable uses; this, if it is done from a principle of faith and love, will be the best means to entail a blessing upon what you leave to your posterity. Being thus prepared by internal piety and external prudence, death may be expected, but need not be feared. You may then cheerfully leave your calling on earth, to receive "the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord." To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

"If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come, Job xiv. 14.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest, Eccles. ix. 10.

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death; and Isaiah the prophet came unto him, and said, Thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live, Isaiah xxxviii. 1.

"I am now ready to be offered; and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day, and to them also that love his appearing. 2 Tim. iv. 7.

## **APPENDIX.**

Shewing the only way to obtain power for Christian duties, or the necessity of a change of state and nature, before we can acceptably serve God, and practise the precepts of Religion.

It is the common error of many, when their consciences are convinced of the excellency and necessity of Christian duties, to rush immediately upon the practice of them in their own strength and natural state; and not attending to the method and order, which the infinite wisdom and mercy of God has established in the gospel for obtaining holiness and happiness through Christ Jesus, they often labour long and zealously in religion without effect. Whereas until the persons of sinners are reconciled to God, and justified by his grace through Jesus Christ; and then by virtue of union to the Lord Jesus and faith, in him, they derive from him the Spirit of life and holiness, it is impossible they should please God, or find acceptance with him, Rom. v. 1. John xv. 5. For,

1st, (as was before observed) our natural state is a state of enmity against God, and is not subject to his holy and spiritual government, neither indeed can be, Rom. viii. 6, 8. And there is an evil inclination in us by nature which tendeth powerfully to sin, subduing and captivating us to the love and practice of it, Rom. vii. 20, 23. Insomuch that we must be born of the Spirit, before we can live a spiritual life, John iii. 3, 6. And be created again in Christ Jesus unto good works before we can have power to perform them, Eph. ii. 10.

2d. While we remain in our natural state, we are under the curse of God for all our sins, John iii. 18. Eph. ii. 3. The benefit of remission of sins, and freedom from condemnation, is not given unto us in our unrenewed state, but only in Christ Jesus, through faith in him, Rom. viii. 1. Eph. i. 7. How can we imagine, therefore, to subdue sin, and practise holiness, while God is against us, and curseth us?

3d. As we are by nature children of wrath, so we are under the power and influence of the devil; that evil spirit, who secretly worketh and ruleth in all the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2, 5. From which spiritual bondage and captivity we are only delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ, through faith, Acts xxvi. 18.

So that if you aim at pleasing God, or obeying his will, without first seeking justification by Christ's precious blood and righteousness, and sanctification by his holy Spirit, you will find both wind and tide against you. Your corrupted natures, guilty consciences, and Satan's power and malice, will certainly defeat and bring to nought all your purposes and attempts to love God and serve him in sincerity and truth, Luke xiii. 24.

This glorious privilege of fellowship with Christ Jesus, whereby believers are enabled to perform acceptable obedience to God, is most freely offered to all sinners of mankind, who, sensible of their necessitous, helpless, and lost state and condition in themselves, are sincerely willing to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as their only and all sufficient Saviour, and all wise disposer and governor, Isa. lv. 1, 5. John vi. 37, 40. If you thus seek to please God through faith in Christ Jesus (in the diligent use of the means of grace), hoping for all wisdom and strength only from him, 1 Cor. i. 29; trust assuredly, that he will enable you to do every thing that is necessary for his glory and your own happiness; pardoning your failings, and comforting your hearts by his love and grace, 1 Cor. i. 7, 9. Gal. v. 17.

When you have done all you can in the service of God, be sure to look for salvation and happiness only as the free gift of God's grace in

Christ Jesus; and not as merited or deserved by your obedience, Rom. iii. 24, 28, Gal iii. 18, 22. Those who endeavour (either in whole or in part) to procure for themselves a right to salvation and eternal life, by their obedience to God's commands, do seek salvation by the works of the law, and not by the faith of Jesus Christ, and will never obtain it by these means. For this is a great and fundamental error in religion, destroying the souls of men, Luke xviii. 9, 14. Gal. iii. 10, 12. For,

1. It directly opposes the design of God in man's salvation, which is to glorify his own free mercy and rich grace in Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 9.
2. It makes void the precious sacrifice and justifying righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whosoever thus seek to be justified by the law, they are fallen from grace: Christ is become of no effect unto them, and profiteth them nothing, Gal. v. 2, 4. [[ch. iii. 11 >> Gal 3:11]], [[22 >> Gal 3:22]].

Depending on our own obedience for salvation is a very sinful, as well as a fruitless, confidence. It is despising and contradicting all the infinite perfections of God displayed in man's recovery. His glorious mercy, unsearchable wisdom, awful justice, &c. Rom. iii. 21, 26. It is contemning the authority of God, who commands us to believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be saved, 1 John iii. 23. It is denying the truth of God, in not believing the record which he hath given us of eternal life in his Son, 1 John v. 10, 11. It is trampling upon the unsearchable riches of the Redeemer's love and goodness in his great undertaking; and setting up our own perverse wills and foolish conceits in opposition to the counsel of God.

Let every one be persuaded, therefore (as they value their present comfort and everlasting happiness), to seek for salvation and holiness in this way of faith and self denial; receiving them as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus. By faith laying hold on the infinite grace, mercy and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to justify and sanctify them. Which hath this excellent property, that it is a sure,

and effectually powerful, easy, and comfortable way to all holiness and happiness; being prescribed by the unsearchable wisdom and goodness of God himself. All other ways being weak and insufficient; strengthening rather than subduing sin, and ending in despair. And thus doing you will be blessed for ever. Amen.

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