

CHRISTIAN HUSBANDRY:
OR,

A COMPANION FOR THE CHRISTIAN
IN HIS
FIELD AND GARDEN.

By

Ambrose Serle, Esq.
(1742-1812)

Ye are GOD'S HUSBANDRY, I Cor. iii. 9.

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Recommendation

CHRISTIAN READER,

I HAVE been requested to recommend to you the following Sheets, with which I have very cheerfully complied, in Hopes they will afford you seasonable and profitable Meditations throughout the Year- Of the Author, and of his former Works, I need not profess to you my high Esteem. Read and judge for yourself. Peruse his *HORÆ SOLITARIÆ*, a Treatise upon the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ, far more convincing, establishing and edifying than any Thing published upon the Subject in our Day. Peruse also the second Volume of *HORÆ SOLITARIÆ*, a Treatise on the Godhead of the holy and eternal Spirit: In which his divine Essence, Attributes, and Offices are so clearly proved, as to be a solid Ground for our Faith in him, and for the Experience of our Hearts and Lives on his quickening and sanctifying Influences. If you art desirous of being thoroughly established in these two grand Points of Salvation, namely, the Godhead of JESUS CHRIST, and of the HOLY SPIRIT, you will, I hope, find upon reading these Volumes the Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, and will have Reason to thank the Author for writing, and me for recommending them. I am your Well wisher in our common Lord.

W. ROMAINE.

Black-friars, June 6, 1789.

Introduction.

ALL visible Nature is but a Picture of the Grace of Christ. As every Work of GOD tends to effect or demonstrate the highest Goodness and Glory; so, therefore, the Creation and Arrangement of this World, having no sublimer End, were ordained to express his Bounty in the Salvation of Man. There is not an Object about us, but which declares the Nature, the Necessity, or the Perfection of that Salvation. The Wisdom of GOD is written upon every Substance and Property, or worked into their very Frame and Texture, in the most bright and indelible Characters. We may truly say, with the Poet,

The World's a System of Theology.

The *invisible things of GOD from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made.* It is Man's Ignorance alone, an Ignorance brought in and supported by Sin, which keeps him from those ravishing Contemplations of Truth, Beauty, and Glory, which GOD has placed upon the whole Creation, and which constitute one great Part of Happiness here and hereafter. It is a sad Truth, that Men may be knowing enough in those Things, which rife or have risen from the little Cunning or Power of their Fellow-mortals; that they may reflect upon the Histories of Nations, and the Rife and Fall of Empires; investigate the Science of ancient or of modern Schools, and know all that can be known from *Hermes* down to *Newton*; while, with all this Skill in

things merely human, they may be exceeding ignorant of the most important Purpose of GOD in the Formation of every Object about them. To such the splendid Universe is but a sumptuous Raree-i-hew, having no Use but superficial Speculation, which leaves the Heart as before, or, if in any respect altered, only swollen with the Conceit of its own Importance and Superiority among Mankind. For an End like this, Study is, to say the best, but solemn Trifling; and consequently the most ingenious, without Grace, can but

*See Nature in some partial narrow Shape
And let the Author of the Whole escape.*

How possible is it to know the various Characters and Languages of the most distant Ages, and not be able, at the same time, to understand one single Letter in the Alphabet of GOD? And on the other hand, to the Confusion of Man's proud Understanding, how, truly may it be observed, that the Mind may be extremely ignorant in all human Letters or Learning; and yet be most happily and graciously filled in the Wisdom and Knowledge which endure for ever ?

It may also be justly deplored, that even true Believers, who have obtained some of the Rudiments of this most invaluable Wisdom, make but too slow a Progress after further Attainments; and that they can carelessly pass over thousands of heavenly Lessons, inscribed upon all surrounding Objects in such beautiful Impressions, as might animate their Hearts to love and adore the gracious Hand which drew them.

It is the Design of this little Piece to collect a few of these sacred Instructions, which GOD has marked upon ALL about us, that the Reader, by perusing these imperfect Hints, may be prompted to consider upon what he treads, and, while he passes by a thousand inanimate Substances, may read what is written upon them. He may indeed go forth and read on; for the Lesions are infinite, and the Knowledge is unbounded. It is a large Book which GOD has opened in his Works; and he has given a lively Commentary upon it in his Word. The one consists of living Hieroglyphics; and the other contains the Characters, which explain them. They do not contradict each other, nor talk of different Themes. *Created by CHRIST and for CHRIST*, there is a mutual and delightful Harmony through their respective Frames; and when harmoniously understood, a double Glory is seen in *both*. While the Reader meditates, therefore, let him pray for the Instruction of that Divine Spirit, who formed these sacred Types, that he may both comprehend their Purpose and apply them to Use. With this holy Instructor, his Garden will be like *Eden*, full of delightful Fruit, and his Field become a Spot, which the Lord has blessed.

THE SEASONS.

GO D has placed an Order or Constitution in the Universe, which cannot be broken. Every Thing succeeds in its Series or Course. The whole Progression is invariable. Summer never comes in *January*, nor the Frost and Darkness of *December* in *June*. The Earth glides through its Orbit without a Moment's Variation in *Time*, and, though it pass a Course of many Millions of Miles, never errs so much as the Breadth of a Hair in its *Place*. All Things move, but move with *Certainty*. There is no such Thing as *Chance* in the Ordinations of God. It is a foolish Word, which sprang from heathen Atheists, and is fit only to be used by them. All the Series or Successions of what is called NATURE proceed by an invariable Law, arising from the invariable Mind of GOD. We find this *longus ordo*, this endless Arrangement, of Things, frequently owned by the Heathen Philosophers. They believed, that all Nature was under the *Government of an eternal Rule*. It is so obvious, that the Epicureans themselves could not altogether miss the View. Without it, even their futile System of Atoms could not hang together. It strikes every Man: And it is thought a full Answer to Inquiries upon any natural Object, when the Form or Properties of it are said, or shown to be, *natural*. Men are satisfied when they perceive, that the Object is reduced to an established Rule or Order; and they make it (as indeed it is) a great Point of Learning and Knowledge to comprehend something of that Order and Rule. The wise Man has a striking Passage upon this Subject in *Eccles. iii. 11.* which might perhaps have

been justly translated thus: GOD *hath firmed all Things beautiful in their Time; he hath also placed a Secret in their Heart* [i. e. a hidden Sense or Doctrine in the very substance of all Things], *without which* [or the Knowledge of which] *a Man cannot find out the Construction which GOD hath formed* [the Object of GOD'S Purpose] *from the Beginning to the End.* "The visible Works of the Creation (says " a learned Author) are the *Problem* or *Ænigma*, whereby, through the Ministry of the Senses, *the invisible Things of GOD* penetrate or enter into the Mind, and so *become Objects* of the Understanding." The *Word* of GOD also, as well as his Works, is full of Similitude, Parable, or Enigma, to be understood only (as Christ says) *by those to whom it is given.* 'Pie ever opened his Mouth in Similitude, and he spake Enigmas from the Beginning. (Psalm lxxviii. 2.) The Book of *Proverbs* (or rather *Similitudes*) treats, in this Mode, of Christ and his Graces. And Christ himself, to the World at large, *never spake without a Parable*; and his Sayings, to this Day, are a Parable to the World. JEHOVAH, however, by whom all Things exist and subsist, whatever he speaks or acts, carries on the whole by the Plan of his foreknowing and unerring Wisdom. He guides every Object, precisely and surely, to that particular End, for which he framed it.

There is also an Order or Constitution of GRACE, which, like that of Nature, can never be broken. The same Rule obtains in *both*; and from both, though in different Degrees, GOD effects the same Purpose, which is his own Glory. The Birth of *Abraham* at one particular Period, of *David* at another, and of *Christ* himself at a third, was all

pre-ordained, and could not possibly have occurred at any other Period; because the Period of GOD'S Appointment was the best, and GOD can only do what is best. (See *Acts* xvii. 26.) These Periods are respectively called their *Fullness of Time*, by which Term we are to understand a *Measure*, and a Measure of *Exactness*. The coming either before or after the prescribed Period, would be a *Defect* or *Excess* in that Measure, and consequently must impeach either the Wisdom of GOD in appointing, or the Power of GOD in performing. There is an absolute Necessity for this Arrangement of the Series; because, without it, all Things, spiritual, natural, and divine, could not but run into Confusion. All Wisdom consists in Disposition. We see the Beauty and Force of Order in our own Affairs: And shall we presume to think, that the GOD of all Order has no Direction in his?

To come nearer to ourselves. The Time of every Believer's Birth is appointed, his Dispositions for the Reception of divine Grace are ordained, the exact Moment of its Descent is prescribed, the several Exercises and Progressions of it are ordered; in short, he can do nothing, think nothing, and enjoy nothing of or for GOD, but what GOD, in his Constitution of Grace, has thought fit and appointed for him.

What a Comfort, what a Stay is this, to his Soul? From THE IMMUTABILITY of GOD'S *Counsel* he receives this *strong Consolation*, that he is *appointed, not unto wrath, but to obtain Salvation through Jesus Christ*; that this gracious Designation can neither be perplexed nor broken;

that the Order of Nature is not more sure of its Course, than the Order of Grace of its Progress in him, for the same Omnipotence carries on both; that the Glory of GOD is concerned in his *Preservation* from the Distractions of Sin and Evil, in his *Enjoyment* of Grace and Godliness, and in his *Perseverance* to Life eternal; . and that all Things, however intricate (like many Operations in Nature) to his Comprehension, shall work together and terminate in this great Point—his everlasting Good. A Man, who experimentally knows and enjoys this blessed Truth (for the barren Speculation of it is not worth a Name,) becomes, in some Sense, immutable himself; for he embraces the Immutability of GOD, who supports both him and all things. He is not *tossed about* •with Winds of Doctrine; but *his Heart standeth fast, trusting in the Lord*. Nor can he be lazy or inactive in the Work of Grace; because, being united to Christ, he is actuated by that SPIRIT, which is all Life, Vigor, Animation, and Efficacy. Nothing, under GOD'S immediate Agency, is sluggish or slow. What exceeds the Velocity of the heavenly Bodies? And yet they appear to be only inert Matter in themselves. Shall a Soul then, which has *the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus*, and which is framed for the full Vision and Activity of GOD, be less swift in Obedience, according to its Place in this *spiritual* Constitution; than a Lump of gross Substance in the *natural*? Does not the whole History of the Children of GOD, in all Ages, directly prove the contrary? Whatever lives, acts. So the divine Life is and must be divinely active and alert. Sin and Corruption alone are the *caput mortuum*, the dead Refuse, out of which no

Life can spring, and which are thrown aside from GOD'S Presence, as useless and vile.

WINTER.

I. THIS is the most gloomy and X unpleasant Season of the Year. Every Prospect abroad is uncomfortable; and the Earth wears the Face of universal Barrenness. The Melody of the feathered Race is not heard; but a melancholy Silence prevails over Lawns and Woods and the once delightful Fields, save when it is broken by the plaintive Cries of the Herds, or the harm Murmurs of the Winds. All Creation seems loaded with Distress. Storms and Torrents threaten Vengeance from the Skies: And the distant Sun, often obscured or faintly felt, scatters but seldom an oblique and interrupted Ray, rather to discover the general Waste, than to enrich (as at other Times) the desolated Scene.

WHAT a speaking Picture is here of the Fall of Man! How forcibly described his Misery by Sin, his Unfruitfulness in good Works, his Distance from the Sun of Righteousness, and his utter Alienation , from the Life of GOD! His Heart is cold and barren, to the great End of his Being, like the frozen Ground: His Mind dark and uncomfortable, as the chilling Gloom of Winter; without Capacity to see GOD, without Ability to know him. The successive Storms of Life vex and agitate his Soul. Care and Anxiety perplex his wearisome Way; and Misery and Wretchedness surround him on every Side. *Without, are Fightings; within, Fears.* The Anguish of one human Heart afflicts

another; and raging Passions in Thousands, like angry Torrents, collect for the Distress and Destruction of other Thousands, who oppose them with Passions equally raging and equally excited by Hell, Thus Mankind indulge the malignant Pleasure of spreading that Desolation and Sorrow, which they feel within, and which, by extending, they can only heighten but not remove. The Fall of Man brought Winter into his Soul, and Winter into the World. He is now distant, far distant from the Sun of Righteousness; without Peace in Life, and without Hope in Death. This is his present Position by Nature: And he can no more deliver himself from it, than the Earth can subdue its natural Frost, or emerge from Barrenness and Gloom, by any inherent Virtue of its own. The material Sun is ordained alone to effect this Blessing in the one Cafe; and the Sun of the Spiritual World alone can quicken and replenish, invigorate and restore, in the other.

II. WE may read another important Lesion inscribed upon the Face of Winter. The bitterest Frosts are of immense Service to the Ground; they combine, only to sever more minutely, the Particles of Soil, and to introduce the Supply of Salts, which are necessary to fertilize and repair the exhausted Earth.

*'The frost-concocted Glebe
Draws in abundant vegetable Soul,
And gathers Vigor for the coming Year.*

So, if Man had never fallen, the Grace and Mercy of God had never appeared in the illustrious Triumphs of Redemption, nor the bright Display of his Love in

recovering Sinners to a State of Dignity and Excellence, far superior to that from which they fell. As Sin abounded to Man's Ruin, so Grace has much more abounded in his Restoration to Life eternal.

GOD is often pleased, for the wisest Ends, to suffer likewise a wintry State to pass upon the Believer's Soul. His Comforts are nipped by piercing Frosts; and the howling Calamities of the World, like violent Tempests, are permitted to break in upon his Peace. But they are all necessary, both in Kind and Degree. They manure his Soul for the Fruits of Faith, Patience, and Righteousness; and make the Spring of GOD'S Countenance, in the appointed Time, doubly cheerful and reviving. As the Winter destroys many noxious Weeds and destructive Insects; so these stormy, and (it may be) piercing, Trials, check the Growth of many a baneful Lust, curb the Luxuriance of inordinate Passions, bind the Force of sinful Tempers, check the Love of present Things, and dispose the Ground of the Christian's Heart for the freer Admission of Things eternal.

III. IN the Winter, a careful Husbandman clears his Farm or his Garden of all improper Plants, improves his Fences, prunes or lops his Trees, manures the Soil, and clears away the Rubbish and Decays of the former Year.

IN like manner, Christ, the spiritual Husbandman, prepares his People's Souls by the Winter of Adversity, or the Withdrawing of his sensible Presence, for future Grace and Glory. He cuts up the Weeds and Thorns of the Soul, shows it the Lines and Boundaries of Faith, strengthens its

Hedge which Sin had broken down, and through which the *Boar of the Wood*, with the Fierceness of Rage, had come in to destroy, lays on a deep Manure from his holy Word, and subdues the unprofitable Hopes and Desires of the Flesh, which grew up in the former Days of Ignorance and Unbelief. All this proves the Skill and the Love of the spiritual Husbandman in his favored Garden; for, were he to omit these necessary Instances of his Care, the Soil would lay barren under its own Rubbish, or produce nothing but Weeds.

IV. WHEN the Winter approaches, all tender Plants are removed, from the penetrating Chills of the external Air, into the Green-house or Stove; where they are nourished and attended, with that Degree of Warmth, which is proper for their Preservation and Existence.

AND how often does the gracious Redeemer preserve the feeble among his People from the Oppressor's Hand, and from the Severity of Trial? How frequently does he withdraw them from the trying Scene, either by the Interposition of his Providence, or by a Removal to his Throne? Others, like hardy Evergreens, can dare the sharpest Storms, and are enabled to pass through the severest Tribulations, not only without Loss, but also with the greatest Advantage: While these, through their Tenderness, seem more immediate Objects of his Care, and consequently receive from him a more distinguished Attention. Fainting, feeble Soul! See here your Picture in Nature for your Comfort in Grace. Contemplate the Bowels of Mercies, which move towards you in your

Redeemer; and reproach not his kind Concern, which will not, which cannot, leave you utterly exposed, by any unresigning Murmurs and injurious Distrust. AS may be most salutary for you, he will place you where the Frost mail not pinch, nor the Tempest annoy; or he will give you Strength like an Oak, to sustain and overcome in the End. Cast your Care then upon GOD; for he has set his Care upon you. Pray that *his* End may be answered by *your* Sorrow: And then your Sorrow shall soon have an End.

V. TREES, reduced or pruned in the Winter, grow more vigorously in the succeeding Year.

THE Trees also of the Lord's planting, being pruned of their worthless Branches, shoot forth with greater Strength and bear more rich and abundant Fruit for his Glory. Adversity braces, and the Contraction of wild Desire invigorates the Soul. If this pruning were not necessary Work for the Believer, the Lord would not perform it. He has no Delight in afflicting his People; nor does he ever take from them what can yield a solid Good. And if he only remove Evil, or the Occasion of Evil; what Folly and Unbelief must it be, which urges their Hearts to complain? Let his Will be done; and then Good will be done in them, and for them.

VI. YOUNG Trees are planted at this Season, either for Fruit in the Garden, or for Timber in the Fields.

IN like manner, GOD usually chooses trying Times for planting his Grace and increasing his Church. The dreadful Persecutions of former Ages only advanced the Number

and strengthened the Faith of the true Disciples. " The *' Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of " the Church," said *Tertullian*, who lived when Torrents of that Blood were daily shed. The World does more real Service than it intends, when the People of it *persecute for Righteousness Sake*. They ought to be charitably considered; for they know not what they despise. That Mockery of Wit, which has no Foundation in Wisdom or; Truth, retorts upon itself; as a Shot striking against a Rock gives an imperceptible Blow, but a dangerous Rebound. If the World be disposed to banter, one would not envy them the only Merriment they are likely to have on this Account; nor would it be right for a Christian to retort with the great Cynic of Antiquity, when he was told that the common People laughed at him; *and perhaps (says he) at them the Asses laugh too; yet as they care not for the Asses, so I care not for them*. If they merit nothing else, their Mistake merits our Forgiveness and entitles them to our Prayers And if Good be done to a Christian by their Ill-will; let him be so grateful as to intreat of GOD, that they may {bare it with him.—Brambles and Thistles grow spontaneously and without Culture, and in the Warmth of Summer flourish and abound. And mere Professors, like these barren and worthless Shrubs, never spread their showy Leaves but in the Times of Sunshine and Prosperity. When the Lord lets loose his Frost for their Trial; down they drop with all their Foliage and Glory. Their Place may be sought in the Church but it will no where be found.

VII. The severest Winter destroys not all the Weeds. Many of the perennial Kinds, such as Nettles; &c. survive the sharpest Frosts, and shoot forth again upon the first Return of mild Weather t And the Seeds of the annual Sorts lay secreted in the Mould, till the approaching Spring; when they germinate with their wonted Vigor, and would soon cover the Surface of the Earth, to the Destruction of all good Plants, if suffered to remain.

A STRIKING Representation this of Man's inbred Corruptions, and of theism radical Strength, Fertility, and Rancor! No Trials can perfectly keep them down, no Adversities entirely root them up. Like knotted Grass, every Particle is full of an evil Life, and will spring and spread forth in Despite of human Toil. Often they seem reduced; and the Soul is ready to dream of absolute Victory. But let the Occasion or Temptation appear; and the Conflict must begin anew. In the most mortified Heart, they are only depressed as in a wintry State: The Roots of some are fully alive, and the Seeds of others are but hid. If Ease, and Prosperity, and Quietness, come upon the Soul; up shoot some or other of the pestiferous Evils. And these, if let alone, would soon overgrow and starve the Graces and Virtues, which GOD has planted; would quickly reduce the Mind to its original Turpitude, and render both it, and all that grows within it, the fit Fuel for everlasting Fire.

VIII. FREQUENTLY in Winter great Falls of Snow cover the Ground, and shield many Plants of the Field and Garden from destroying Frosts. This Snow, when melted, penetrates farther into the Earth than common Rain, is

more impregnated with nitrous Particles, and saturates the Soil with an excellent Manure.

THE Word of GOD likewise is a sweet Defense against all the Troubles and Adversities, which can befall the Christian's Soul. While it covers his Head from Danger, it preserves his Heart from the chilling Impressions of Sin and Sorrow. It graciously refreshes his inner Man, supports his tempted Spirit, and prepares him for a more abundant Education of *the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus*. What Injury then can these trying Storms effect against his best, his everlasting Interests? Rather, what Good do they not occasion? What Advantages and Blessings do they not produce, in quickening and directing him to eternal Salvation? The Word and Grace of GOD, like the Rain and the Snow from Heaven, do not return unto him void, but accomplish his every Pleasure, and every Purpose for which he sent them.

IX. AT this Season, the Gardener digs about his young Trees and Shrubs, and dresses or manures the contiguous Ground, that they may grow with the greater Vigor and be disposed to yield their respective Products, either of Fruit or Flowers, the more abundantly.

So, in the Times of Affliction or Trial, the great spiritual Husbandman, meliorates the Ground of his People's Hearts, and particularly that of new Converts, that they may receive Strength and Establishment, and bring forth Fruit to his Glory. Thus, according to the Apostle, *Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope*, with all the happy Consequences

attendant upon it. "Religion (said a good Man) must needs be the best Thing at all Times; for it is evidently the best in a Time of Affliction." To which we may add, that as Affliction drives the believing Soul to Religion; so Religion enables it to rejoice over Affliction. He would have been unhappy, happy, if he had never known what it is to be unhappy. Ministers of the Word, in particular, are usually much exercised in this way, that they may bring forth the Fruits of a sound and strong Experience for the Good of the Church. "Three Things (said *Luther*) make a Divine; *Meditation, Prayer, and Temptation.*" By Meditation he takes Root, by Prayer he shoots upward to bear Fruit; and by Temptation his hurtful or useless Excrescences are cut off, and his Soul is established for Heaven. For the Multitude of Distresses, God has a Multitude of Mercies, which will as far outweigh the other, as the Greatness of the Universe does the Dust of the Balance. The one likewise is *but for a Moment*, as well as *light*; but the other is for *an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*.

X. THE Winter compacts the tender Fibers of Trees, which have been produced in the preceding Seasons, hardens the Substance of Trunks and Boughs, and thereby strengthens the whole Fabric of Plants to sustain the Increase of Fruit, Leaves, and Shoots, in the succeeding Year.

OF the same blessed Consequence, in his believing People, are the afflicting Visitations of GOD. If it were all Summer with them, if they had no Difficulties to encounter, no

Sorrows to endure; their Hearts would grow luxuriant and proud, would run (as it were) into mere Leaves and Boughs, and by Habit would neither be capable of *enduring Hardness*, nor be strong enough to bear up against the least Storm of Visitation, which might descend upon them. There is a *Need be* for every Temptation, not only that *the Trial of Faith might be precious* in GOD'S Sight, but that it might be *made So manifest* in the Believer's, as to appear altogether *worked in God*. Like Winter to the Body, it may give Pangs for the present; but most assuredly it will be the necessary Means of bringing *Peace at the last*.

XI. THOUGH many Trees and Plants at this Season seem stripped and dead, and the Face of the Ground appears sterile and bare; yet we know, that Life still remains in the Stem and Branches, and that the Earth will appear with new Strength and Beauty, at the appointed Season.

GOD'S Garden, which is his Church, has frequently suffered the Winter of Adversity, and sometimes a very severe one. At such Seasons, the Faithful seemed to have perished out of the Land. What a dreadful Winter occurred in the Time of *Noah*? Only eight Plants left alive, and not all of these good and valuable. What an awful Season passed upon the Cities of the Plain? Only three Branches saved from the Destruction. In the Time of *Ahab*, what a Winter did the Church of GOD sustain? That great Prophet *Elijah*, upon a View of the Desolation, imagined that the whole Garden of GOD was perished, and that not a single Plant remained besides himself. In other Periods, both

before and after Christ, how many dreadful Storms has GOD'S Plantation endured? In the Time of the *Maccabees*, and under the Roman Emperors of the higher Empire, it is impossible to read the Church's Extremities without Anguish. And later still, for many Centuries before the Reformation, we may ask; Where were the Faithful? The *Albigenses*, *Waldenses*, *Berengarians*, *Wickliffites*, and some here and there who lived above the Errors of *Rome*, furnish a few Names or Notices of the Life of Grace then extant upon Earth; and yet, considering the long Course of Time, *but* a few. In the Climes of this World, which are not suited to the Plants of GOD (for these are by no Means indigenous, but exotic here), there is but little Sunshine, and much foul Weather. One must wonder at their very Existence in a Region so intemperate for them, and so exposed to the Ravages of wild Beasts and ravening Fowls; was it not recollected, that they are kept by the Almighty Power of GOD the *Preserver*. Yet, notwithstanding all these hostile and unfavorable Appearances, the Garden of GOD is safe, flourishes, and lives, in the worst of Times: And (what should always be remembered) in *those* Times lives most truly. The Prophet could not see *one* Plant of Grace in all *Israel* besides himself; but GOD had numbered *seven Thousand*. David cried out, that *the godly Man ceaseth*, and that *the faithful fail*. Psalm xii. 1. Yet, in a Time of Trial, he found that *many were with him*, Psalm lv. 18. While *Isaiah* prophesied, Mention is made of a *great Forsaking in the Midst of the Land* [or the Church, which is often called *the Land* emphatically in the Old Testament]; but yet *in it there was to be a TENTH* [the Lord's own Portion, his

Remnant, as it is called in Isa. xxii. and Rom. ix. 27. and xi. 5.] *and it was to return and be eaten* [it was to be preserved and accepted]: *As a Teil-tree, and as an Oak, whose Substance is in them, when they cast their Leaves; so the holy Seed should be the Substance thereof.* Isa. vi. 13. The true Life of *Israel* was in *Israel*, or the Church professing, in the deadest Time, and formed the spiritual Substance of it. GOD never forsook his own People; they are preserved for ever. They may not be seen, perhaps, by the Eyes of Men,. who, judging according to Appearances only, often judge most perversely; but they are ever in GOD'S Eye, and are ever regarded too as *the Apple of his Eye*. They, who touch them injuriously, sooner or later touch them to their Cost. These *Plants of Renown* may not *seem* to thrive, but they *do* thrive, and commonly thrive most (like the Palm-tree) under the greatest Oppression, GOD'S *Corn* may appear but a *Handful upon Earth*, and to be growing on very unfavorable Spots, *the Tops of the Mountains*; but *its Fruit* or Increase *shall Shake like Lebanon*. Psalm lxxii. 16. No Blasts can destroy it; no Severity of Seasons diminish its Life,. no Enemy eradicate its Being. GOD has *made an Hedge about it* (as *Satan*, though a Liar, truly said of *Job*); and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

This mould be Matter of Comfort to truly serious Persons at all Times. Let the World be in never so many Commotions, and let all Hell break loose upon it; the best Interests are safe, GOD'S People must be kept, and his Cause shall stand fast; because God cannot lose his Interest in them, nor can their Redemption be paid in vain.

How many restless Minds would be quieted, did such Considerations meet with their due Weight? And, after all, what avail the Bustle and Hurry of Men? Does not GOD ride in and direct: the Storm? Can the Creatures suspend a Drop of Rain from falling, or keep back the impetuous Winds?—A Christian's best Armor is the Armor of GOD, his sharpest Sword is the Word of GOD, his most effectual Artillery Prayers and Tears, These will avail, and have availed, when the Rage of Armies has been buried in Confusion. He would, in the Use of his Privileges, be soon led to see, like *Elisha's* young Man, that they are more that be with him, than they that are against him. 2 Kings vii. 17. Let the Potsherds of the Earth strive; but the Servant of the Lord must not strive. The Profession of Arms is however not unlawful, and it is justifiable for a Nation to rise in its own Defense; but a Christian should consider these as nothing without GOD, and employ far more efficacious Means against the Power of Man. In a Word, his Passions ought not to actuate his Conduct, but Faith should direct his Eye and guide his Hand. And, for his Encouragement respecting the Potency of Faith, let him get by Heart, and *into* his Heart, the whole eleventh Chapter of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. When *Moses* did but lift up his Hand to GOD in Faith, *that* invincible Principle (not the Swords or Numbers of the *Israelites*) *turned to flight the Armies of the Aliens*. It would be safer to meet an Host of Enemies, than to oppose the faithful Prayer of an *Elijah*, an *Elisha*, or a *Moses*.

XII. WHO could suppose, were not the Fact constantly confirmed by Sense and Experience, that, when the

Husbandman planted Acorns, Oaks should spring up from those small Substances, and form Bodies of such Strength and Magnitude? The Substance of an Acorn has not the least Similitude to a Tree. Yet nobody hesitates upon this wonderful Accretion: Nobody doubts of this inscrutable Process. If a Person had never seen or heard of such a Revolution; with what Astonishment would he meet the Discovery? but so it is throughout our whole material System; *ab ovo omnia*, All Things spring from their respective Eggs; Animals as well as Plants; and burst into View from their several Enclosures. The Eggs of Plants, which are their Seeds, are constructed to maintain the *Germen* or Plant in Embryo, during its Confinement, and till it has sufficiently vegetated in the Soil. The far greater Part of the Bulk of every Seed is appropriated to its Nutriment; for the living Principle is exceedingly minute, and, in some of the smaller Seeds, not discernable by the naked Eye. There are many Kinds of Seeds, which are themselves too small to be seen; and their respective *Germina* are not even a fiftieth Part of those little Substances. Yet these burst. into Life, by divine Appointments and afford a useful Produce for Man and Beast.

AND are not the Seeds (if one may so call them) of the greatest Events as surprisingly minute, and as little analogous to what they produce; as the *Germen* of an Acorn, which is scarce equal to the Head of a Pin, is to the Form and Bulk of a full grown Oak? What could be more apparently inadequate to the Design of saving *Israel* and half the Eastern World from Famine, than the Sale of

Joseph for a Slave, and his Imprisonment for above two Years in *Egypt*? What more improbable Means, to human View, for his Advancement to the highest Dignity next a Throne, than his long Series of Depression and Hardship; or the immediate Occasion of it, his unfolding the Dreams of two Wretches in disgrace like himself? Where was the Prospect of a River issuing from a Rock, only by the Stroke of *Moses*' Rod! How improbable was the Support of *Elijah* by hungry, ravenous, Birds?—We might enter upon a long Detail from sacred and profane History to illustrate this remarkable Truth, which, if we open our Eyes, we may read also in every Tree and Plant about us, from the Moss upon the Wall to the tallest Cedar in *Lebanon*.

But sublime and important Lessons of Grace also may be drawn from these providential Objects, by the watchful and attentive Believer. He reads all these Characters of the Divine Impression in their *sacred* Meaning. To him they are *Apples of Gold Set in Lattices*, Net-work, or transparent Cases, *of Silver*. They are bright only as Silver to the World, which views them carelessly and at a Distance; but to his prying Eye of Faith the interior Gold, the rich and spiritual Import, appears in its glorious Luster. He learns, from these things, that he is to confide in his Father's Love in all Circumstances; that he is not to enter upon the Scale of Probabilities respecting the Accomplishment of GOD'S Promises, but to depend upon him for the declared Event, leaving the Means to his Disposal; and that, as the Lord is able of the very *Stones to raise up Children unto Abraham*, so he can produce the

Fulfillment of his Word by the most contrary Causes, and even without any Cause at all. Worldly Hearts stagger here, and say; "O then we may sit with our Arms across at this Rate, and have only to believe."—*Only* to believe! If they knew what this meant, they would see, that they might as soon make another World, as believe aright of themselves. What an incomprehensible Business was the Crucifixion of a poor, forsaken, Outcast, to the chief Priests and Scribes among the Jews, and to such learned Men as *Porphyry, Celsus, Julian, &c.* among the Gentiles? *He saved others (said they in a Taunt) himself he cannot save. Let this mighty King of Israel descend now from the Cross, that we may see and believe.*—"A crucified God (said the Gentiles), what an Absurdity? How is he to save us, when he could not rescue *himself* from a Parcel of contemptible Jews?" Human Reason could never have seen of itself, that, for this very End, Christ came into the World; that, by these very despicable Means, he was to accomplish the highest Purpose, which GOD had designed; and that, by this seemingly opposite Circumstance of Death, he was to introduce Life into the World and Myriads of Souls from the World into Life eternal. To Man's Sense, all this must be the most unlikely Affair, that ever appeared. Yet this certain Fact is confirmed by every Sort of Evidence, circumstantial and direct; by the whole Series of divine Providences from the Beginning of the World; by all the Prophecies in ancient Times; by all the Ceremonies of the Law, which were really Prophecies in Types and Emblems; by Eye-witnesses and Ear-witnesses without Number; by indisputable Miracles, and other-Tokens of divine Approbation; and by (what indeed is a

noble Evidence to the real Christian, though to none beside) the Operation of God's Grace and Love within the Soul. Christ himself describes this astonishing Effect of his Redemption by comparing himself to a *Corn off Wheat*, which obtains its wonderful Renovation of Life by the Death of its outward Substance, and seems to start into Being, almost from the very Loss of Being. *Except A Corn of Wheat (says he) fall into the Ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it Bringeth forth much Fruit.* From him, as the great Seed, the only Principle of Life, do vegetate spiritually the living Branches, all the true Believers in the World. Almost under this Image was he graciously promised to the Church of old. Thus we may read the 17th Verse

of the *ixxii* Psalm; *His Name shall exist for ever; HE THAT WILL BE A SON Shall be his Name before the Face of the Sun* [through all Nature which the Sun enlightens]; *and all Nations shall be blessed in him and shall call him blessed.* It is difficult to convey the full Idea of this assumed Name. It is a collective Word, or Noun of Multitude, including the Issue or Progeny, as a Seed does the Trunk and Branches of a Tree. Admirably it expresses the Inclusion of the Redeemed in Christ, as their great living Head or Seed, their Derivation from and entire Dependence upon Him. O what a manifold Instruction does all this contain for your Heart, O Believer, to commit your Way unto the Lord without Reserve, and to trust in him at all times! He has said, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;* but will *make all Things, probable and improbable, work together for your Good.*

XIII. THE World would be a Wilderness, were it not for Cultivation, and produce Nothing for the Comfort or Subsistence of Man.

AND what is poor Man's Heart, without the Culture of the spiritual Husbandman? A worse, a more barren and noxious Desert, than *any* he can tread upon with his Feet. *The Ground was cursed for his Sake*, and has since brought forth Thorns and Thistles in Abundance, in Token of the spiritual Evils, which his Fall has introduced within. From that Period, his Nature, once fertile for GOD, became a Wilderness and *the Habitation of Dragons*: And it can no more assume a better Form, by its own Vigor than a Desert can change its Soil, or a Waste afford the Vegetation of a Field. GOD has undertaken this arduous Work in him and for him. He, who created at first, to this End creates anew. He alone causes this Wilderness of the human Heart to *rejoice and blossom as the Rose*. Though it was once dry and *parched Ground*, the spiritual Husbandman converts it *into a Pool*, or *raises Springs* of Grace to saturate and replenish, to fructify and delight. This is his Promise; *I will plant in the Wilderness, the Cedar, the Shittah-tree, and the Myrtle, and the Oil-tree: I will set in the Desert the Fir-tree, the Pine, and the Boxtree together; that they may see, and know, and consider, that the Hand of the LORD hath done this, and the HOLY ONE of Israel hath created it.* (Isa. xli. 19, 20.) And again; *Instead of the Thorn shall come up the Fir-tree, and instead of the Briar shall come up the Myrtle-tree, and it shall be to the LORD for a Name, for an everlasting Sign that shall not be cut off.* (Isa. Iv. 13.) This

is a rich Promise of Grace under the Symbols of Nature. If we were to translate the Passage into our Mode of speaking, and looked through the Metaphor, it might be by the following Paraphrase. —“In the Soul of Man, *barren* of all Goodness, Happiness, and Hope, I " will plant such Graces, as shall *testify my Praise*, be *incorruptible* in their Nature, *fragrant* with Delight, and abundant in *Holiness* to my Honor: In his Heart, *void* of all spiritual Life, shall arise the Excellencies of a *sublime Affection*, *fruitful Conversation*, and *everlasting Life*. All this *can* be done by me alone; and I *will* do it for my Glory. *Again*: Instead of vile and offensive Tempers, shall appear an exalted and edifying Renewal of Mind, and, instead of groveling and worthless Inclinations, shall spring up, in the redeemed Soul, all that is beautiful in Holiness, all that is delightful for Praise.

The LORD hath *fixed* it for everlastings nor shall this purchased Blessing, or any of its Objects, ever fail."—This seems, to be the correlative Doctrine of the Trees. To which let it be only added, that, as they appear to have been all Evergreens, they further represent, with admirable Fitness, those undecaying *Gifts*, and that holy *Calling*, *which are without Repentance*.

SPRING

As *Winter* seemed the Death; so *Spring* appears the Resurrection of the Creation. It has been supposed by some, that, but for the Fall of Man, the World would have been delighted with perpetual Spring, and that the Change of Seasons has been appointed as a Part of human Punishment, inflicted by a Variation of the original Constitution, Motion, and Position of the Globe. They have been led to conclude, (as Perfection admits of no Change) that, at the first Formation of the Earth, the most exquisite Spring

*Green'd all the Year; and Fruits and Blossoms blush'd,
In social Sweetness, on the self-same Bough.*

However this may be; upon the Dawn of this Season, what an exhilarating Beauty and Delight pervade the Face of Nature? An universal Gaiety cheers both the animal and the vegetable World. Every Species of Being, wakened into Newness of Life, puts forth its respective Acts, and energizes to display the Wisdom and Goodness of the great Creator. The Fields are covered With the richest Verdure, which at once gladdens and improves the Organs, by which it is seen. The Flowers, in a thousand various and incomparable Tints, which the Art of Man can but remotely mimic, and which throw the most glowing Splendors of a *Solomon* into Shade, discover the surpassing Excellence of an Almighty Hand. The Birds are rich in Melody and loud in Song. They all combine to swell "the Symphony of Spring." The Poet attempts to

celebrate the varied Wonders of this fragrant Time, and has been happy to paint only an hundredth Part of the Beauties, Beauties, which clothe the animated Scene. Consequently indeed are gathered, and may be gathered without End, Subjects for Action, Meditation, and Praise, by all that can see, or move, or think; but chiefly by you, O Believer in JESUS, who art privileged to read these living Hieroglyphics with enlightened Eyes, and to apply them, in a Sense far above the Reach of Nature, to your own Comfort, and your Savior's Praise. You art capacitated to peruse Characters, unseen by the carnal Eye, though impressed upon every Leaf, and Plant, and Tree—Characters divinely drawn, and Lessons sublimely written, of infinite Importance and Delight. Read the beautiful Transcripts of your Master's Loving-kindness and Mercy, and (like the silent and attentive *Mary*) *treasure them up in thy Heart.*

Can you behold the beautiful Spring recovered from the Winter's Frost, or see the Face of the Earth every where renewed, without viewing a sensible Type and Demonstration of that regenerating Life, with which GOD has quickened you from *the Death of Trespasses and Sins*? Christ was born in the Depth of Winter, and perhaps in Winter too—in the Winter of GOD'S Wrath and of his own Alienation from GOD. He has removed the Keeness of this Winter, and introduced an everlasting Spring:—He has mercifully introduced this Spring into your Soul. Consequently arise the Blossoms, the Verdure, the Fruits of Grace. Perceiving this glorious Change, your Heart is full of Wonder and Love; and you art bursting forth in the

seraphic Ardor of the Prophet, *How great is his Goodness! how great is his Beauty* I Dead as you once were in Trespasses and Sins, now you art all alive to GOD, and art calling upon every Member of your Body, and upon every Faculty of your Soul, to celebrate his Mercy and to *make his Praise glorious*. This is the Dawning of GOD'S eternal Spring. Before long you shall enter the full Blaze of uncreated Glory, and taste, and see, and enjoy, in the Realms of Bliss, what mortal Eye has not seen, Ear heard or Heart conceived, below.

II. THE Earth cannot recover itself from Winter; but God alone, according to his Constitution of Things, effects it by an Act of his sovereign Power.

NOR can the Soul of Man spring forth into spiritual Life, bat by the vivifying Agency of the Spirit of GOD. The true Christian is born, *not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of GOD*. The same Omnipotence, which gave all the Creatures their natural Being, must give him his spiritual Being. That almighty Word which spake, and all Things were made, can only make him, by his energetic Voice, a new-born Soul. It is GOD alone effects

—*the second Birth*
Of Heaven, and Earth. Awakening Nature bears
His new-creating WORD, and starts to Life.

And much Quietness and Assurance of Spirit result from this to the believing Mind. For,

III. AS the Spring does not change to the other Seasons, but is preserved, with invincible Certainty, in its own Order;

So the Soul, which is truly *born of God*, is never un-born of Him. He cannot be now an Heir of Grace, and hereafter a Subject of the Devil. As a Man, once alive in the natural World, cannot become a Non-entity, or change himself into an Elephant or other Beast; or as a Plant of one Kind cannot drop its own Properties, and assume those of an heterogeneous Nature; without putting into Confusion the invariable Law of the whole Creation, which has fixed the *Genus* and *Species* of every Animal and Plant: So the Spirit, 'which is once regenerated and born of the Holy Ghost, cannot lose that divine Nature, of which it partakes, and which is its inherent Life as a Child of GOD, without breaking the whole Constitution and Decree of Grace, which, being ordained for higher and more important Ends, must surely be at least as invariable and irrefragable as that of Nature. When the Sun rises, it does not go back again, but passes on to the Meridian and from thence to the West, without the least Delay or Alteration. And if this Order were not settled in spiritual, as well as natural Things *t* upon what Ground could the Apostle mention to Believers the *strong Consolation*, which, he assures them, is the undoubted Privilege, that GOD has appointed for them ?—In short, if Men would read the Word and Works of GOD more, and perplex themselves less with the corrupt Reasonings of their own Minds; we should have fewer Disputes upon this Subject, because the Evidences of this

Truth appear written both in the Word and upon the Face of all Things.

The Spring not only exhibits the important Doctrine of *Regeneration*, but also the *final Resurrection* of the Dead. Here we may admire and adore *the manifold* or *multiform Wisdom of GOD*. In a wonderful Combination of Ideas, all agreeing as reciprocal Parts of one Truth within themselves, he scatters the Rays of his Wisdom outwards to Man, various as the Colors they form in their Appearance and different likewise in the Design; and then concentrates, unites, and resolves them all again into his own everlasting Glory, and the Felicity of his Creatures. He can speak of Heaven and Earth by the same Word, and describe both the visible and invisible Effects of his Grace by the same Thing. His Wisdom is not only *multiform*, but of *every Form*. All Forms, ideal, natural, and spiritual, express this Wisdom, exist by it, and in it are one. He is their *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Beginning of all Things, and their End.

IV. TO see all vegetable Nature bursting forth into new Life, and assuming its beautiful Appearance on the Approach of Spring, would astonish any Person with Wonder and Delight, who had never beheld or heard of the charming Scene. From a State of Torpor and apparent Death, every Plant, by the inscrutable Operation of GOD, dilates its Substance into its proper Leaves, and exhibits the Luster of its peculiar Flowers. The general Vegetation is no less rapid than delightful, and fills the Air with Perfume as well as the Eye with Beauty. The whole

inanimate Creation seems to glow with Joy; and all the animal Tribes, according to their several Ranks and Designations, testify aloud the jocund Sensations which they feel.

WHAT a lively Type is this of the general Awakening of the Bodies, redeemed to an eternal Life? GOD, who made them originally from the Dust, shall then raise them from the Dust again. Nothing shall remain in the corrupted Earth, but what 'was corrupt and impure. The Body of the Christian, like that of the Infidel, fell indeed a *natural Body*, tainted with Sin and gross with Disease; but shall rise up a *spiritual Frame*, meet for the Reception of that holy and sublime Spirit, which is to reside in it for ever. (Eph. ii. 22.) The Believer will be the *same* Being, though he will exist in a *different Mode* of Being. So *Jesus* was the same God-man before his Resurrection, as afterwards; but when his human Nature was fully glorified upon finishing the important Work of Salvation, that same human Nature had a new Kind of Subsistence. It could pierce through solid Matter, like the most sublimated Spirit; and when all *Doors were shut*, invisible to the Sight, unperceived by the Ear, unobstructed by the Walls of the Apartment and even by the Bodies of his Disciples, he *stood in the Midst*. Just such shall be the rarified Bodies of the Redeemed; for they shall be *like* their exalted Master in all Things; and, though now vile and depraved, shall then receive the *Fashion of his most glorious Body*, according to the *Working* of his Almighty Power. They will change the *Manner* of their Being, but not their *Being* itself. When Corruption is extinguished within them,

which is not essential but adventitious only to their Nature they will become pure and spiritual.—Then shall appear the rapturous Scene of Heaven's everlasting Spring; then shall be heard the ecstatic Melodies of the Blest; then shall be felt those ineffable Delights, which no mortal Eye has seen, Ear heard, or Thought conceived—Is this the Prospect, O my Soul! and shall I not long to see it? Shall I not look over the low Impediments of Sickness, Sorrow, and Death, and cry out; *Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly!*—He will come; he will not tarry; he will bless you for evermore.

BUT there are some *among us*, as well as among the wise *Corinthians* of old, who say, *That there is no Resurrection of the Dead*. And yet, if there be Truth in GOD or. his Word, the constant Return of the Spring is not more sure. What should we think of a Man's Understanding, who, looking upon the dreary Face of the Earth in the Midst of Winter, should positively assert the physical Impossibility of a succeeding Spring? And he might argue with full as much Plausibility from the Death, Corruption, and inactive State of the Objects about him, against the Hope of a new Vegetation, as an Infidel can reason against the Resurrection of the Body. They both would object upon one common Principle—a Doubt of the Power of GOD, and a Disbelief of his Constitutions. Indeed, in the former Cafe, the Ordination of GOD returns upon the Senses and Experience of Men so frequently, that, while they might doubt, the Succession of the Season would confute them. But still there is not an Argument, which they can use against the Resurrection, but which may be turned,

allowing for the Difference of the Objects, as strongly against the Revival of the Spring. The Apostle, therefore, in the most excellent Series of Deduction which ever was penned, has taken one very powerful Instance from the Effects of the Spring, to shew the Nature, as well as Necessity, of our corporal Resurrection from the Dead, (i Cor. xv. 35—44.)

Could we admit for a Moment, that there will be no Resurrection; what is the Consequence?—One almost too fearful to relate! It is briefly this: All the Book of GOD is false from Beginning to End; all the Promises made to the Patriarchs; all their Expectation and Deliverances, with all the Mercies they reckoned up and were careful to deliver down to Posterity; are all in vain. All the prophetic Ordinances, given to the ancient Church; all the most beautiful Types, framed with so much Wisdom and Propriety as even to surprise us now, and calculated to shadow forth heavenly and spiritual Purposes, are become Absurdities in themselves, and *lying Vanities* too, because they were said to be directed from God. All the consequent Observation of those Rites, Meditation upon them, and Learning in them, expressly enjoined by the Law, for Ages; and all the Faith and Hopes of holy Men, from the Beginning of the World, are altogether come to naught, and sunk in Oblivion. Ten thousand Times ten thousand Sacrifices, instituted as implorations of Mercy through the Blood of a Redeemer; and innumerable Millions of Prayers, have been offered up to a mistaken Object of Worship, and therefore offered to nobody for nothing. All the wonderful Appearances and Interpositions of

Providence (as they were understood), and all the Enjoyment of Promises from Heaven fulfilled, have been only Matters of mere Chance, which the impious Piety of Men have converted into holy Frauds. In vain have Apostles preached, and in vain have Martyrs shed their Blood. All the Prophets were Liars, and their Inspirations vile Deceit. Nothing ever came to pass, which they predicted; or, if it did, it was only the Result of mere Guess. Of course, their Prophecies of the *Messiah*, and of the Rise and Fall of Empires and States at particular Periods, (notwithstanding the concurrent Evidence of History both sacred and profane) have been vile Impositions upon the Sense and Experience of Mankind. All that Christ claimed to be, all that he did or suffered, with all the Wonders and Miracles worked by himself and his Apostles, were infamous Pretences and abominable Delusions. The History, therefore, which recounts them in the New Testament, and the History of those Times, written both by Christian and Heathen Authors, were absolute Fables. In short, there is no such Thing as History in the World. We are in a Maze of Doubt and Uncertainty; the greatest Unbeliever is the truest Believer; and the most unsettled Scepticism must be the most certain Religion. There is, in, a word, neither Redeemer, nor Redemption; no Reality in the Relation of Things; no Evidence in our Senses; no Hope in Life or Death; no Heaven or Immortality; no Providence, Wisdom, or Truth, in all that *is*, or all that appears *to be*: But the whole Medley of Things is a mere Illusion, and the very Being of God a Lye.—This is the noble Creed of those, who renounce the Gospel: A Creed, which, if ashamed to own, they must

necessarily hold; and so, to avoid what they think the Absurdity of Christ's Resurrection, and the Resurrection of his People, they plunge themselves into this Chaos, this Abyss of Absurdities; and, without Faith to receive the Truth, they have a Credulity which can swallow every Thing beside. Yet this is the Sum of the World's Wisdom, which rejects the Simplicity of the Gospel. Lift up your Heart, Believer, and bless GOD that from this *horrible Pit* you art saved !

V. WE have considered the two important Doctrines of the Spring,—the Regeneration of the Soul, and the Resurrection (or Regeneration) of the Body. But this Season of Spring preaches also many other excellent Truths, which tend to our Edification and Improvement. Let us therefore attend to the Lessons, which GOD inculcates by his Works and his Word.

One great Use of the Leaves of Plants is to imbibe Air and Moisture for the Increase of their Structure, and particularly for the Formation of the Buds, which are the Branches, in Embryo, or the Stems of future Fruits and Flowers. These Leaves are full of Vessels, which are properly ramified for the Reception, Digestion, and Circulation of the vegetable Juices; and consequently, without them, no Plant could obtain Health or Increase. Every Vegetable has also its peculiar Leaf, constructed either broad or narrow, smooth or indented, fine or thick, as will best answer to support its particular Fabric: And, when the full Supply is effected, they fall off and disappear.

LIKE these are all the Dispensations of GOD'S Providence and Grace to Man. They are calculated, with the utmost Exactness, for the present Advantage or future Glory of his People. They can no more flourish without his momentary Sustentation, than a Plant can prosper for a Moment without Air and Moisture. Nor could they receive this spiritual Support, without Faculties spiritually prepared for it. In such a Case, they would not be benefited by all the Blessings of material or spiritual Nature; as the dead Trunk of a Tree has no Capacity of circulating or digesting the natural Fluids about it. Every Believer has also a particular Dispensation, a peculiar Faculty assigned to him, which is fitted for the Purpose he is to answer in this World, or to prepare him for another. All good People are not smooth People. There is many a rough Leaf in the Garden of GOD. But these answer some wise Purpose of the Lord, though they are not very pleasant either to the Eye or Hand of Man. Some of these are commonly used, like *Luther*, against the Foes of the Church. The Understandings and Capacities also of Believers are broad or narrow, as suits their Order, Place, or Purpose. There are many slender Leaves, whose Plants, were they broad, would be encumbered with the Weight of their Moisture, or oppressed by the Fury of the Wind. So a narrow Comprehension often escapes Error, where a Mind of greater Compass is borne down by it entirely. In short, every Sort of Faculty is only a Blessing, as the Lord makes it and keeps it.—The same may said of all providential Dispensations. The broad or narrow Leaves of Riches or Poverty, the rough or smooth Foliage of Sorrow or Joy, are all suited aright, are all Blessings in their Time and

Place, according to the divine Ordination. They last as long, as is necessary to the Object; and then (as none of GOD'S Works are in vain) they withdraw and disappear. The Wisdom of Grace seeks not their Removal for carnal Ease or selfish Views, but the Accomplishment of GOD'S Purpose and Glory by them, without which the Soul would be deprived of its true and lasting Interest. If this Point of Wisdom could be well established in the Christian's Heart, he would escape ten thousand Pangs of Sorrow.

VI. It is a necessary Precaution used in the Garden, to set out the several Species of Plants, which are designed for Seed, very carefully by themselves; lest the *Farina fœcundans*, or seminal Dust, of any degenerated Plants in their Neighborhood, be scattered upon the *Matrices* of their Blossoms, and thereby degenerate the whole future Plantation.

IN every Sense, *evil Communications corrupt good Manners*. In the Education of Youth, no Prudence is to be omitted, in removing, as far as possible, the Contagion of ill Examples. All our Senses have that sympathetic Turn in them, which disposes us to an Assimilation with those, with whom we chiefly converse: And Experience has proved, that, if our Affections are once carried away by any particular Persons or Objects, our Reason and Imagination, as well as the subordinate Faculties of the Soul, generally become subject to their predominate Vices or Passions. If we consider the Matter in a *spiritual* View, we shall find that the Command to GOD'S People is, *Come out from among the Evil doers, and be ye separate*. If a

Christian live much with Men of the World, *he* must imbibe *their* Spirit, or *they* must receive *his*. If otherwise, the Complacency between them will soon be broken. He may and indeed ought to carry on the particular Allotment of Providence with them in Business, or human Affairs, or else he must (as the Apostle speaks) be actually *out of the World*: But here rests the Difference; though he *trans-;* *ails* with the World, he does not *enjoy* with the World. His Affections are not with them; for his Views and Hopes, like his Head and Heart, are lifted above the Earth: His *Feet* only touch, and, while they touch, they trample upon the Ground. As a *Man*, he must live with Men in all the common Offices of Humanity. But, as a *Christian*, he lives with his GOD; and one great Point of his Happiness and Duty consists, in living *above* the World, and as much as may be in a spiritual *Abstraction* from it. If a Plant incline to the Earth, we drive a Stake by it, and tie it up, or else it would rot upon the Soil: And shall we wonder therefore, when GOD'S Plants are prone to kiss the Ground, and to rest upon the Dirt, that their Inclination is hedged up with thorny Providences, that some rugged Bar is fixed close to their very Roots, and that they are tied up fast by Afflictions or Disease ?

VII. IN the Spring, that curious Operation called Grafting is practised by the Nursery-man upon the several wild Stocks, appointed for that Purpose.

AS the Life of the Year begins at this Season, so commonly in Youth (the Springtime of Man) does GOD engraft the Life of the Soul. We are, since the Fall, all wild

Stocks, by Nature, bearing Thorns as well as. Leaves, or at best useless and ungrateful Fruit. The Lord cuts off the luxuriant Branch, cleaves its very Heart, and inserts where he has cleaved, the small Scion or Shoot of his Grace. He binds it fast, and defends it from the hostile Inclemencies around, till the Contact is duly formed, and the Tokens of Life, like the protruding Buds and Blossoms, begin to appear in the Soul.

VIII. THE Nursery-man chooses his Stocks for grafting according to his own Mind, and passes by others at his Pleasure.

GOD likewise selects his *Trees of Righteousness*, according to the Purpose of his own unerring Decrees. They are planted, they are grafted, they are made fruitful; agreeable to the Motives of that Wisdom, which cannot but order what is right, holy, just, and good; and consonant with the Impressions of that Power, which can never be frustrated or over-ruled. Thus saith Christ to his Disciples, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go forward, and bring forth Fruit and that your Fruit should remain.* (John xv. 16.)

IX. WHEN a Tree is grafted, the old Stock is not suffered to shoot out and bear Fruit; but its wild Branches, which are ever budding forth, and especially in young Trees, are cut off with Attention and Care. Thus, though the old Nature remain, it is kept under and subdued; while the good Branch alone is suffered to flourish and produce.

IN the Christian, though Grace be grafted into his Soul, his old carnal Nature remains just as it was before. It is of itself, as it ever was, *carnal, sensual, devilish*. It produces no good Fruit, and can produce none. A Thistle might as soon afford a Fig, or the Thorn a Grape. The Spirit of GOD, therefore, nips its shooting Branches, when they appear; lest they should exhaust the Vigor and Sap of the Tree. Were they let alone, they would soon destroy the most valuable Part of the Plant. The Knife of the Law, with its Sharpness of Duty and Command, is most rigorously to be applied here, both to cut down and keep down the luxuriant Excrescences of Sin.

Thus the old Nature being suppressed daily *with its Affections and Lusts*, the new engrafted Nature is permitted only to rife, and flourish, and bring forth *the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus, to the Glory of God*. By this Cultivation of the heavenly *Husbandman*, the Plants are *made holy, and kept holy*. In their new Nature, they would not sin, if they could: In their old Nature, they must not sin, if they would. By the one, they commit no Sin, because as a divine Nature, it is born of God, is grafted into Christ, and abides in him. (I John iii. 6.) By the other, Sin cannot have Dominion, because they are crucified with Christ, and are circumcised by him; in other Words, he cuts off their natural Branches and their evil Fruits, whenever they appear. By this constant Operation, (for this is a constant Work) the carnal Nature is kept down, and the spiritual Nature rises up; so that the whole Man, from a barren or evil Tree, becomes a fruitful

and a good one, thrives in Grace, spreads to an appointed Stature, and at last is transplanted to Glory.

X. IN the Spring, all the Fruit-trees are covered with Blossoms, and make a most splendid Appearance; but, when the Winds blow and the Rains beat, only those whose Fruit is kernelled within them, remain for Maturity. In the Kernel is that Principle of Life, without which, however minute beyond Conception at first, all the rest is mere Bulk, and for the Support of which, both Flower and Fruit are constructed.

AN EXPRESSIVE Symbol this of the State of GOD'S Church below! When "Religion walks (as one expresses it) in her golden Slippers," her Attendants are numerous, and her Admirers not a few. But let her once appear, like her Master, forlorn and rejected of Men, without the Credit of the World, and without a Place in it where to lay her Head; her unreal Votaries will fall off by Troops, and will find, with very little seeking, a thousand Occasions of Offence. (Mark iv. 17.) When Profession becomes a Fashion, like all other Fashions, it will be followed. But when GOD lets loose the Persecutor's Arm, when his Winds of Trial are permitted to blow, and when to be a Christian indeed is to be odiously singular; alas! how many fair Blossoms fall off to the Earth, and corrupt upon it as their End and their all? How many, that once hung upon the Top of the Tree, or were the highest and loudest in the Christian Profession, have shrunk beneath the Root, and within a while have left their Place to be known no more? The View of this will touch our Feelings as Men, and mould teach us Humility

as Christians. *By Faith ye stand* (says the Apostle); and this *Faith is not of yourselves; it is the Gift, and the Operation, of God.* Amidst, then, all the Shipwrecks we have seen, not *of*, but *concerning* the Faith in the Minds of Men, we have a noble Establishment to rest upon from the divine Promises; *Nevertheless* [let all Things appear as they may] *the Foundation* [the Covenant and Decree] *of GOD standeth sure, having this Seal* [whole Legend on one Side is] *THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS, and* [on the other] *LET EVERY ONE, THAT NAMETH THE NAME* [or possesses the Nature] *OF CHRIST, DEPART FROM INIQUITY.* One Side of this Seal of the Covenant is turned towards GOD, and is impressed invisibly (but to him) upon every believing Soul; but the other Side lays open to all the World; and if the Transcript of it is not legible in the Professor's Life and Conversation, it is because he is unsealed of GOD, and therefore *none of his.* The Lord alone knows his Redeemed by one Mark; but Heaven and Earth may know them by the other. Thus they are all *sealed* (Rev. vii. 3), *sealed to the Day of Redemption* (Eph. iv. 30), *and set as a Seal upon the Heart and the Arm of their Lord.* (Cant. viii. 6.) Their Fruit remains amidst all the Blasts and Trials of Time, and is brought to full Perfection in the heavenly *Eden.*

XI. EVERY Vegetable has its essential Oil, without which it could neither flourish nor live. Upon this Oil, which is extended through the Ramifications of every Plant, and without which it would be as dry and sterile as the chemical *Caput mortuum*; the Rays of Light from the Sun act, generate by it that Motion through the Vegetable

which is called its Life and Increase, and render it the Vehicle of all the imbibed Nourishment by which that Life and Increase are supplied.

IN like Manner, every true Believer has the Oil of Grace, and because of the anointing of this Oil, which runs from the Head of the spiritual *Aaron* to the meanest of his Members, he is called a *Christian*. He is not a *Christian indeed*, without this Oil. The Use of this precious *Unction from the Holy One*, is to fit the Soul for the Impression of those Rays of Light from the Sun of Righteousness, by which it grows and bears Fruit to the Glory of GOD. This glorious Sun might irradiate ten thousand spiritual Worlds! yet, without this Oil, the Spirit of Man would not be the better for its Rays. It could neither prosper nor be happy. But having this spiritual Unction, the Soul has Communion with the Lord of Life, and grows, by his Light and Heat, in Wisdom and Stature, according to the Measure of the heavenly Gift.

XII. AT this Season of the Year, there is much to be done in the Field and Garden. Most of the Crops for the ensuing Autumn are now to be sown; and great Care is usually taken to suppress or destroy the rising Weeds, which will spring up with all the useful Plants, and would injure, if not absolutely choke up, the expected Produce.

So in the Husbandry of GOD, the great Business of sowing the Word or Seed of Life is usually performed in the Spring-time of his People's Hearts. He then *breaks us* their *fallow Ground*, and begins the Preparation of their Souls for the Autumn of Glory. More rarely are his Redeemed

called in riper Age; and such of them, as are so called, more rarely still arrive at that Height and Vigor of Grace, with which more early Converts are blessed, or produce equally excellent Fruit. In the youthful Part of Life, however, many rife and luxuriant Weeds, many strong and baleful Lusts, rife up and *war against the Soul*. These, but for the Providence and Grace of the spiritual Husbandman, would soon over-run and prevail. Did not an invisible Hand conduct the Redeemed in Youth, when Passions and Temptations eagerly solicit a League; they would be more exposed to spiritual Dangers of every Kind, than while Infants they were liable to temporal Injuries without the Guard of a careful Eye. In Fact, GOD'S People are all Infants, respecting the Need of his Protection, and therefore are usually called his *Children*. Some, in respect of others, may indeed appear like *Fathers* and *young Men*; but they never assume their full Growth and become of Age, till they are released from the Bondage and Burden of the Flesh. Like the Field or Garden, they always want Culture and Care. They have a thousand rank Weeds continually springing up, which *Satan* has sown with a busy Hand. These are to be cut down

gracious Redeemer), *which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*. He fulfills this blessed Word by the Agency of his Holy Spirit. These Weeds of Corruption he watches now to suppress, *and, when the Time of Harvest shalt come, will absolutely destroy. He constantly nurtures, on the other Hand, the Plants of his Grace, *waters them every Moment*, attends them through all their Growth, and finally matures them for Heaven.

XIII. IN dry Spring-weather, the Earth, after ploughing, would run into hard Clods, so as not only to deform the Field, but to prevent in great Measure the Success of a Crop. The industrious Husbandman, therefore, at such times, follows up the Plough with Rollers to break in pieces the larger Masses, and with Harrows to pulverize the whole Face of the Soil, for the Reception of the Seed, which by these Means finds Nourishment when it first puts forth its tender Roots into the Ground.

THE spiritual Husbandman deals thus with the fallow Ground of his People's Hearts. He breaks them up first by the Plough of the Law, and follows the Conviction of Sin, through the Law, by weighty Oppression of Spirit, and reiterated Trials of Soul, which break (as it were) in Pieces the Obduracy of Nature, and reduce it to a thorough Sense of its own Littleness and Poverty. This he calls *bringing down their Heart with Labor*. (Psalm cvii. 12.) Then the Seed of the Word grows fast and well, takes deep Root downward and brings forth much Fruit upwards, to the Glory of God and the happy Edification of the Soul. An unbroken Heart is as little disposed to yield the Fruits of Righteousness, as an untilled Field a Crop of Corn. Neither Seed, nor Rain, nor Dew, can penetrate to purpose into the one, nor what these signify spiritually into the other.

XIV. GOOD Plants require Care and Cultivation; while Weeds thrive spontaneous and spread themselves quickly throughout the Soil.

ALL the Principles of Grace are *first* carefully sown by the great Husbandman, and *then* by him as carefully nurtured and improved. *He withdraweth not his Eye*, (Job xxxvi. 7.) from what his Hand has worked, nor suffers his Word of Grace to return unto him void, or without accomplishing his Will. Too true indeed, will Vice and Sin spring up of themselves, and require only to be *let alone* in order to cover the Soul. The Heart of Man, like the Ground on which he treads, is fitly disposed for every baleful Production, and, like its Symbol the Earth, is *cursed with Thistles and Thorns** The Christian finds them to be such, whenever he attempts to attack them: they lacerate his Flesh, and give him many a painful Wound. He has, however, this Comfort; the Spirit of the Lord shall ever long consume them all; and then *instead of the Thorn shall come up the Fir-tree and instead of the Briar shall come up the Myrtle-tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a Name [or Establishment], for an everlasting Sign that Shall not be cut off.* (Isaiah lv. 13.)

XV. THE more delicate and tender the Plant, the greater is the Gardener's Watchfulness and Care over it

THIS but saintly expresses the infinite Attention of the Lord to the weak and feeble among his People. Could they perceive his kind Concern and understand his constant Love for them; how happy and resigned in their Hearts, how holy and regular in their Lives, might they find themselves privileged to be? He does not *drive* the Lambs of his Flock before him, but he *gathers them with his Arm, and* (if they cannot walk) *he carries them*; nay, he carries

them *in his Bosom*, close to his Heart, *and gently leads those that are with young*. (Isaiah xl. 2.) Can the believing Soul doubt of his Love, who is all *Love*; of his Conduct, who is all *Wisdom*; of his Ability, who is all *Strength*; of his Promise, who is all *Truth*; of his Fulness, who is *All in AU*, and who has all Things at his Disposal?—Ponder this again and again, O my Soul, and say unto yourself, what your Lord perhaps would say too; O You of little Faith, for what reason do You, for what reason did You, for what reason can You, doubt! Lord, I may justly have hard Thoughts of *myself*: but, after the Manifestation of so much Goodness and Mercy in Christ Jesus, how can I have any hard Thoughts of *Thee*! O wash me from a Sin, which not all the Unbelievers in the World, nor all the Devils in Hell, ever did or ever can commit! Deliver me from that Distrust of your Faithfulness, which I might not harbor perhaps against the Credit of one of my Fellow-worms!

XVI. YOUNG Trees, newly planted, are usually defended from the Sun and Wind; too much of which would probably destroy them, before they have fully taken Root in the Ground.

AFTER this Similitude, does the Lord defend the Children of his Grace from being over-borne with the Weight of Trial and Temptation. Till they are in some Degree established in the Faith, the Heart is kept from much Oppression, and generally enjoys much Consolation. As *new-born Babes*, they have *the pure Milk of the Word*, something soft and sweet, *that they may grow thereby*. When they become older, they have Trials for their Teeth,

many a hard Crust to digest, and many a scanty Bone to pick. But all is ordered well, and agreeable to the State of their Capacity and the Circumstances of their Situation. No Stomach upon Earth could always subsist upon Sweetmeats. The great Feast of Comforts is reserved for Heaven, where the Frame of the Believer will be perfectly fitted to receive and digest them.

XVII. TREES are observed to strike the stronger Roots, and to lay hold faster upon the Ground, from the Prevalence and Oppression of high Winds.

It is the same in Grace. Adversity and Temptation, withstood by the Help of God, invigorate and establish the Soul, and cause it to depend more simply and more ardently upon the *Strength of Israel*. In a gracious Sense, as well as the moral, it would be a Disadvantage not to have known Adversity. Trials give the Believer convincing Views of his own Weakness and Insufficiency, and lead him to lay hold upon the *everlasting Strength* of his Redeemer. By laying hold of this Strength, he becomes strong too; not in himself, but in the Lord alone, and *in the Power of his Might*. Consequently the Apostle deduces a Series of most reviving Conclusions. *We rejoice* (says he) *in Hope of the Glory of God*. This Hope, employed upon Objects of Life and Immortality, would naturally excite Joy. *But not only so* we can rife above all the Powers of mere Reason and Sensation through the Strength of *Jesus*; for it is our peculiar Privilege to *glory even in Tribulations also, knowing that Tribulation worketh*, leads to, induces, *Patience* or constant Expectation; and this

Patience, Experience, or an approving Trial of the Soul's Love to GOD, and of GOD'S Love to the Soul; *and this Experience, Hope; and Hope maketh not ashamed, because the Love of God is shed abroad, or poured out in our Hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.* (Rom. v. 2—5.) The Christian begins with Hope; and all the Circumstances, which can occur to his Flesh or Spirit below, are meant to increase and establish that Hope in him to the End. Thus the Trial of Faith is *precious*: And thus the Faithful become refined by Trial. They lose none of their Gold: They can only drop their Dross.

XVIII. In choice Trees, Care is taken that the Fruits do not hang too thick or close together; for, otherwise, they would be weak and ill-flavored, as well as injure the Vigor and Fertility of the Branches. A few well-grown and well-tasted Fruits are esteemed more than Bushels of puny or blighted Productions.

THUS, in the Christian Life, it is the Wisdom of Grace to produce its Fruits in proper Order, Time, and Situation. Not the *Quantity* only, but the *Quality* of good Works, is to be considered. Too much Fruit cannot be borne, if it be borne well. —There is an *Order* in all Things; and Christians mould arrange all their Works of Piety, and even of temporal Vocation, in a proper Course; so that *one* Part of Duty may not clash with or hinder *another*. In such a Case, most probably *both* would be ill done.—"*Time* also is to be consulted. Much of Happiness and Success very frequently depends upon the well timing of our good Works. The Lord has appointed an exact Time for all his

Operations, and an exact Time (every seventh Day) for our more solemn Service of Him. And it is our highest Wisdom to copy even the Shadow of his.—There is a suitable *Place* also for every Thing. What is right in one Situation, may be wrong in another. A common Ploughman would be ridiculous, mould he pretend to teach the fine Arts; or a Man that could not read, the Sciences. It may be feared, that half the Errors in Divinity have arisen from the bold Ignorance of Men, whose Views have led them, where their Business never found them. It is a great Duty, therefore, to arrange our Duties: And we should pray for Wisdom to arrange them well; that none may be in Confusion, none out of Season, none out of *their own Place*, or unbecoming *ours*. The Lord once made an awful *Breach* in *Israel*, for a Want of Order. (I Chron. xiii. 10. and xv. 13.) Let us, therefore, as true and wise Believers, look up to GOD, that we may be instructed and enabled, *what* to do, *how* to do, and *when* to do. The Lord regards all this in his Dispensations (Eccl. iii. 2.) and we should diligently attend to this in all our Duties. We are less liable to repent of such Precision, than to miscarry without it.

XIX. THE Spring abounds with Flowers, which scatter in their subtle *Effluvia* a most grateful Perfume, Different indeed are the Scents, and emulous (as it were) to exceed in Sweetness. The delightful Fragrance is diffused by every Breeze, and exhibits, to another Sense of Man, the Vastness and Variety of his Maker's Bounty.

IN the spiritual, no less than in the material, World do fragrant Spices flow. These on Earth are the rich Graces of

Holiness and Praise, imparted by the Divine Spirit to the Believer's Soul. In these the Lord himself is said to delight, and, speaking after the Manner of Men, to enjoy *a sweet smelling Savour*. Of this Holiness and Thanksgiving, 'and of their Gratefulness to GOD, the odoriferous Offerings under the Law were but Types and Shadows. They were sweet Odors to the rather, offered through the Son, and by the Power of the Holy Ghost. And as, both then and now, the Services and Gratitude of Believers were thus full of Fragrance; so their very Persons are said to be unto GOD *a sweet Savour of Chris*. (2 Cor. ii. 15.) But if their Sacrifices of Praise be now so acceptable, ascending from the midst of so foul a Vessel as this *vile Body* of Sin and Corruption; what must they be hereafter, when both Soul and Body shall be perfect in Holiness, like the Body and Soul of the great Redeemer? Their *Vials* shall be *golden*, because pure; and *full of Odors*, because replete with Praise. Thus are the Graces in a Christian fragrant to his GOD. -- They also shed a pleasing Perfume to the rectified Sense of Man. Nothing is more delightful to a believing Heart, than heart-felt Thanksgiving and Praise. It is a Foretaste of Heaven, and an Anticipation of everlasting Joy. Let a Breeze arise, let an Occasion appear; and Christ's holy Garden must yield its precious Perfume. Well then may he command; *Awake, O North-wind, and come, thou. South; blow upon my Garden, that the Spices thereof may flow out!* (Cant. iv. 16.)

XX. MANY Flowers, both in the Field and Garden, when the Light of the Sun is withdrawn, close themselves, as if asleep, [the Botanists do term it *fomrius plantarum*] and

remain in this State till the Light returns, by the Action of which they expand themselves again, rejoicing (as it were) to refract its Rays in their beautiful Variety of Colors. Others again, when the Rays of Light act in particular Directions, hide their little Glories, as if ashamed to dilate themselves before the magnificent Splendor, which beams upon them.

IN both Respects, these Flowers resemble the Work of Grace in the Christian. When the Light of Life beams strongly on his Soul, it opens all his Affections and Faculties; and an eager Earnestness is induced to receive this Light, to refract its Glories, and to communicate the delightful Effects of it to all around. The Believer rejoices in the Light of GOD'S Countenance, in which his true Life consists, and which is *better* to him than the natural. (Psal. lxiii. 3.) "He aims to shew its Excellence to others; and, being a Partaker of the heavenly Gift, his Soul is earnest to *let his Light so pine before Men, that they may glorify his Father which is in Heaven.*

In the other View, when the Believer considers *himself* by the Manifestations of GOD'S Light shining upon him, in which likewise he beholds the unutterable Glory and Holiness of the Almighty JEHOVAH; he cannot but hide his diminished Head in the humblest Contrition, and *abhor himself* (with Job) *in Dust and Ashes.* The Brightness of the Lord stuns all Comparison in the Creatures, who, if they are under its Impressions, must fall down, like the Blest above, deeply confessing that HE ONLY IS WORTHY.

These Flowers, then, should teach the Heart this double Lesson; that it is our Privilege to rejoice in and glorify GOD, while it is our Duty to *walk humbly* before him. In the first case, we exalt him before Men; and, in the other, we magnify him within ourselves. In both, we shall find the Effects of his Light,—Holiness, Peace, Quietness, and Assurance for ever.

XXI. IN a well cultivated Garden there is a great Variety of Plants, which are fit for different Uses through the several Seasons of the Year. All of them are planted in *Places* proper for their Nature, and brought forward in the *Time* requisite for Service. Plants, originally exotic, are not set out in a cold Exposure; nor do the Esculents, peculiar to the Spring, thrive and succeed in Autumn.

VARIOUS also are the Faculties and Designations of the People of GOD. Every one of them has his proper Place in the Church, and in the World. Some are evidently born to answer some great and particular Purpose; which being accomplished, they are taken to their Home. Others, though less evidently perhaps, are planted about upon Earth to effect the Ends of Providence and Grace, which, if ever so hidden, are not the less necessary or sure. These being answered, other Successions of the Faithful arise, and, in the Agency of the same Divine Power, act and perform according to what GOD has given them to do. There never was a Believer born for nothing, or for no particular Good, which would be equal to nothing. In their Day and Generation, all GOD'S People have their respective Departments to fill; and *he* lives the most like a

Christian and honors GOD most, who fills his Station the best. The *Rank* of that Station is in the Hand of his Maker; and with this Rank he has nothing to do. His Object should be to mind the *Purpose* of GOD in it, and to pray for strength to accomplish' it. He will then find his own Place, and all the Circumstances of it, the most happy and the very best that could have been provided for him. The Reason why People fret about their outward Circumstances is—they are not living for GOD in them, but for themselves; not for the Purpose of his Glory, but for their own carnal Wills and Inclinations. They think those Things *great*, which are but *little* and make too *little* of those, which are the *greatest* of all. They have not laid down this for a Principle, that nothing is good, but as GOD makes it, to the Soul; and that the whole Earth, nay Heaven itself, would be an Evil without his Blessing. In short, they seek to be their own Masters and Managers, and (at the Bottom) leave GOD out of the Business. Such is the natural Apostasy of all our Hearts; but GOD has brought his Redeemed into Being at a right Time, has fixed them in aright Place, and will cause them to answer a right End. *To every one* (says the wise Man) *there is a Season, and a Time to every Purpose under the Heaven.* And *the Times and the Seasons the Father hath put in his own Power*, said one, who was wiser than he. Let every Christian, then, repose himself in the Will of GOD concerning him, follow faithfully wherever it leads, and act agreeable to it, to the utmost of his Power. He will find his Heart at Ease in this Way, but in no other Way beside. It is heavenly Wisdom to see the Hand of GOD in all Events; and: it is heavenly Grace to say over the most:

Trying of them, *It is the LORD; let him do what seemeth him good.*

XXII. WHEN a Man takes a Farm, or cultivates a Garden; if he be prudent, he considers his Ability to stock the one, or his Strength to manage the other. Too great a Farm would ruin a poor Man. He could not exert the necessary Means to procure a Crop; and, of Course, what Mould have well supported some other Person of greater Capacity, will only plunge him unavoidably into Distress. So likewise a Garden, if the Strength employed in its Culture be not proportionate to its Size; some Parts at least must be neglected, and most likely the Whole would be over-run with Weeds, or yield Productions of little or no Value.

SHOULD not this demonstrate to Christians the Folly of Covetousness, and the Danger of large Possessions? *As a Man's Life doth not consist in the Abundance of the Things which he possesses:* so neither does his *Happiness*. The true Secret of *enjoying* the World, is to live *above* it; not to create earthly Wants, but to diminish these by a larger Income of spiritual Blessings; not to extend Desire to a thousand Objects, but to fix it on ONE, and, in that One, to enjoy all the rest. The Heathen Philosophers have made many sensible Reflections upon the Vanity of the World; but their Wisdom sailed, on the Point of using the World without abusing it. They could talk of having the Heart loose *from* the Earth, but they could not lift it *above* the Earth. They felt a Void with-, in, and they perceived too, that the whole Earth could not fill it: And therefore, that

they might not hunt a Shadow, they tried, to contract Desire not to fulfill it, to reduce Sensation not to gratify it, to live without Enjoyment rather than to enjoy. They, and even *Epicurus* himself, placed Happiness in *not wanting*, rasher than in the positive *having*. The Christian's Wisdom mounts higher, and, instead of professing a stoical Apathy, founded on rank Pride or Despair, aims to have the most exquisite Sensibility, and to have that gratified chiefly with the true Enjoyment of the best Things, without being put off with the worst. In other Words, the Grace of GOD in him, upon Proof of the Vanity and Wretchedness of all earthly Objects in themselves, fills the Heart with a strong Desire after those invisible Realities, which the Gospel sets before him, and which he has had some Foretaste of in believing. He then begins to view, how unseemly a Business it is for him, as a Christian, to be *overcharged* with the Cares of this World, since he must shortly leave it, and should always remember his Home to be somewhere "else. Having thus made a right Estimate of all temporal Matters, his Soul is led tip to GOD, as the only Source of Rest and Comfort. Here he is stayed, and by him becomes steady. But still having a Body in the World, and Business in the World, which Providence has set before him; he does it with all his Might, but in a very different Spirit from that which once engaged him. He looks upon his Avocation in the World as a Duty to God and Man, performs it diligently in this View, but leaves all Issues and Events to HIM who orders all for Good. He is relieved from Anxiety, in Proportion as he simply rests upon the Will of GOD. And he enjoys with Comfort every Bounty, because it flows from that Will, and is meant for his truest

Good. The Measure or Quantity of this Bounty he leaves to his kind Provider, whose Wisdom, Love, and Power are engaged to do the best for him. Consequently arises the Death of Covetousness. He wants *suitable* Things, *not great* Things. His wish is to *be filled* rather than to be *loaded*. As somebody expresses it, "He seeks not a *huge* Coat, which will fatigue him to wear, but a *fit* Coat, which may keep out the Cold." In this Frame of Spirit, how many Toils and Vexations he escapes, which others drudge through all their Days, and find no Rest, nor Heaven, at last? His Ambition is to live with GOD in the World, and to enjoy what he has of the World in the Love of GOD. This Ambition finds a Rest, and exults in it. All other Ambition, with the Envy which attends it, preys upon a Man's own Vitals, always eats up his Peace, and often his Being. It only, at the utmost, swells the Vanity of the human Heart" from a Vapour to a Bubble." And as to those, who *will be* rich and cry out for *Wealth, Wealth, by every Method Wealth* • what do they get with all their Gain? The Apostle tells us, *they fall into 'Temptation and a Snare;*— if the World and the Devil lay a Bait or a Trap, they are caught by it;—*and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts,*— yet they themselves clever and cunning;— "*which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition,*—Fine Gain truly! A large Farm, with a Crop of Thistles! A great Garden, choked up with Weeds !

XXIII. WHEN the Farmer has manured his Field, ploughed it deep and sowed it well; when the Seed is sprung up, and promises fair for a plentiful Harvest; it rests entirely upon the Bounty of Providence, whether a

Grain shall ripen, or a single Sheaf be gathered into the Barn. A destructive Blight may seize the growing Stalk, or a parching Drought prevent it from growing. Excessive Rains may forbid the Harvest, and tempestuous Winds lodge his Crop; so that it may rot like Dung upon the Ground. He only, who makes the Corn to grow, and has promised Seed-time and Harvest, can give the Corn its Increase, and fill all Things living with Plenteousness.

WHAT GOD performs by his Providence in the natural World, is a strict Symbol of what his Grace effects in the spiritual. All our Cares as Men are thrown away, without the Energy of his Blessing: And his Blessing is often withheld, that Men may notice the Vanity of human Cares, and look beyond themselves. Men are prone to lay great Stress upon themselves, or upon the Activity of others: But their Labor is lost without GOD. If they seem even to accomplish their Purposes, they cannot enjoy them. They get perhaps to the End of their Road, which appeared to terminate in a Sort of Elysian Fields, where all was Harmony, Beauty, and Pleasure: But, when they came there, a great Gulf, which 'till then was hidden, stops them from their fancied Delight; or, if they still push on, will swallow them up with Despair. *Alexander*[^] conquered all that he thought worth conquering of the known World. He came to the End of human Ambition. But did he find Felicity; or was he, in any real Respect, happier than when he began his strange Career?—Poor miserable Wretch! in the Littleness of his Mind, he *cried*—cried for more of what had only made him restless and distracted—the Child blubbered for another Plaything; for another World; being

fatigued and dissatisfied with the first. GOD raised up this detestable Cut-throat for a Scourge to a sinful Age; and when he had accomplished the Chastisement intended he perished like a Shadow.

From repeated Declarations and Examples we know, that *Power*, simply and entirely, *belongs unto God*. Even when Men are employed for his Service, they are mere Instruments, which of themselves can do nothing'. Indeed, by human Eloquence and the Subtlety of Thought, it is possible, that they may *draw away Disciples after themselves*: but not all the Ingenuity and Labor of Mankind, united, could make one real Convert to Christ. The *effectual Working* of his almighty Power alone can accomplish this Task; in attempting which, all the bounded Might of Angels would utterly fail. The highest Archangel in Heaven could not create a Blade of Grass, or the Wing of a Fly: What then are his Abilities to regenerate a Soul, and fit a polluted Clod for Life eternal? *Paul* planted, *Apollos* watered, and all the Apostles gave up their Lives and their Time for the Promulgation of the Gospel. They were sharp Ploughshares to break up fallow Ground: They sowed the heavenly Seed with a liberal Hand: They watered, what they had sowed, with Doctrine, which distilled as plenteously as the Dew: They rejoiced in their Labors, and gloried that they were not in vain in the Lord. Yet what says the Man, who *labored more abundantly than they all*, who *ceased not Night and Day to warn every one with Tears*, and who *counted not his Life dear, that he might finish his Ministry with Acceptance*; I did not labor, (says he); *not I, but the Grace of God, which was with me*;

for *neither he that planteth is ANY THING, neither he that watereth; but GOD that giveth the Increase.* He had *nothing* (he says further) *whereof to Glory, except in his Infirmities:* And to glory in these, where would be the Honor or Comfort before the World? The Truth is, he labored *in the Lord, or the Lord worked mightily in him;* so that, while GOD put Honor upon his Minister, by using; him as an Instrument for the most glorious Business in the World; that very Instrument, full of the Grace with which he worked, gladly avowed, *All my Sufficiency is of God.* When Men. are diligent in the Work of the Lord, with the Apostle's Frame of Mind, usually they are crowned with Success. God gives them Seed-time and Harvest, and they have a blessed View, sooner or later, that their Labor has not been in vain. They know, that the Word, spoken by them, can naturally have no more Effect in taking the strong Citadel of a Sinner's Heart, than the Rams-horns by their humble Noise could have demolished the Walls of *Jericho* in a Moment: But they sound the Gospel-trumpet, both earnestly and long, and leave the Event with GOD, abhorring the very Thought, that any Thing can be done by their Wisdom and Strength, confessing, that it succeeds *not by Might, nor by Power, but by the Spirit* of the Lord of Hosts. They freely own, and sensibly feel, with the Apostle, that they are *nothing;* that all *the Good which is done upon Earth, the Lord doeth himself* and that GOD alone *is all in all.*

XXIV. HOW busily employed is the indefatigable BEE at this flowery Season? He gathers the precious Food from every Blossom in his Way, and conveys it, with

unremitting Diligence, to his well-constructed Cell. There he treasures it up, and from thence draws forth his rich Subsistence, when other Infants either cannot seek, or seeking cannot find, a Grain of Food.

LIKE this industrious Laborer is the Christian indeed. He gathers the precious Food of Grace, from the holy Word, from the Manifestations of the Divine Spirit, and from all the Designations of Providence to him and about him. He seeks for this holy Relish in every Thing. Whatever yields it not, is to him insipid and impure. It is the Food of his Mind, and the Stay of his Soul. In hearing the Word, he carries home all he is able, prays over it, *treasures it up* (like *Mary*) *in his Heart*, and shows the Sweetness and Strength of it in his Life. He does not dissipate, but gathers—gathers Honey, and not Froth. He does not hear, that he may shine in Disputes, but that he may learn how to live. He leaves Trifles for the Employment of those, who feel they have nothing to do, or are doing what will come to nothing at last. From the past Discoveries of GOD'S Mercy to his Soul, he draws a sweet Cordial of Encouragement, and lays up in his Mind this invaluable Conclusion; that, JEHOVAH, *having drawn him with his Loving Kindness and Truth, therefore hath loved him with an everlasting Love*. And from all the Tokens of Providence, respecting the World and its State, the Believer can draw Honey, when carnal Hearts can find none. Like his Master, *he has Meat to eat, which they know not of*. In the worst of Times, he can retire to his spiritual Cell, not the Cell of a gloomy Monk, but of an evangelical Heart, and there receive some *hidden Manna*

to bear him up against the worst of the World, or Death, or Hell. As all Times are in GOD'S Hand; instead of venting malicious Invectives upon poor Creatures, who cannot move a Straw against the Divine Will, the Christian prays for them and for himself; that *they* may do and succeed in doing what is right, and that *he* may have Faith and Patience to meet that right Sorrow or right Joy, that best Order of Life or of Death, which his heavenly Father has appointed for him. What can hurt such a Man, with such a Guard? Is the World or the Devil too mighty for GOD? — He could blow them away in a Moment, as the Dust of the Balance. One Blast of his Pestilence could destroy ten thousand Armies; one Gale of his Wind bury in the Deep all the naval Strength of the World.—Let this be the Anchor of the Soul, fixed in a ROCK, which cannot be moved. O that Christians would more zealously imitate the little Bee, *and lay up a good Foundation for the Time to come; there would be no breaking in, nor going out, and much less complaining in our Streets.* (Psalm cxliv. 14.) When the World had no Food of Comfort, and was overwhelmed by the Want of Peace; they would retire to the holy Provision of their Father's Love, and praise him for that *Peace, which the World cannot give nor take away.* Thus would they *fuck Honey out of the Rock,* and solve what, spiritually applied, will ever be a Problem and a Riddle to the carnal Mind; *Out of the Eater came forth Meat, and out of the Strong came forth Sweetness.*

XXV. ANOTHER Example of Industry is to be found in almost every Field and Garden, and meets the Eye of Man, as a living *Memento* to improve his Time, whenever he

strays abroad. The unwearied ANT collects her necessary Stores with Diligence, and prepares beforehand for the worst of Seasons. In this Instinct, or whatever we may choose to call it, the Traces of the highest Wisdom are to be found. And the wisest of Men has held it up as an instructive Pattern to those, who, with a Bulk sufficient to crush ten thousand Ants, have not the provident Sagacity of one of them. *Go to the Ant* (says he), *thou Sluggard*, slow of Eyes to observe, and slow of Heart to believe, *consider her ways, and be wise, which having no Guide, Overseer, or Ruler, provideth her Meat* (or Bread) *in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harvest.*

AND what a Lesson does this ANT exhibit to Christians for *redeeming the time*? Our Days upon Earth are but few; we should therefore work *hard*: And they are *evil*; therefore we should work *well*. How many precious Hours have we consumed in Ignorance and Sin; how many lost in Sleep, or in Supineness, which is much the same! The Days of Man are *threescore Tears and ten*: and if he dose away but one Third of his Time, which is the general Cafe, near *four and twenty* of those Years are funk in the Image of Death; if one fifth of the Remainder be expended in supplying the Stomach with Food and Drink (in doing which, like the Beasts, we are rather procuring the Means of Life than properly living), above *nine* Years more must be deducted for our Subsistence as Animals; and if, from the Years that remain, are subtracted all the idle and useless Portions of our waking Time; in many Cases, alas! how little will stand upon the Account either for GOD, for Man, or for ourselves! How many would be found not *thirty*, not

twenty, not *ten* Years old, indeed? It is from here, we find Children at seventy, under a hoary Crown.—And are the warmest Believers exempted from this Reproach? No. The wise Virgins, as well as the foolish, *all Slumbered and Slept*. The most wakeful were not awake, and the most sluggish did but sleep. When even the most ardent of all Christians shall sum up the Account of their Time; can they do less than sigh over the prodigious Waste on the one Hand, and the little Improvement on the other ?

How few the Moments spent for God at most!

The Ant has no Guide of her Youth, no Overseer to conduct her Industry, no Ruler for her Welfare; and when she hoards up her little All, she hoards it in a cold and dirty Home. But Believers have had Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept; they have enjoyed the kindest Providences in Family or Friends; and certainly possess a dear Master, who defends them from Evil, and who has provided for them a blessed Mansion at last—A Mansion, bright with the Effulgence of his Glory, and eternal in the Heavens as his Love. And shall this poor puny Insect, whose Stock is a few Atoms, and whose End is nothing, reprove *me* for Want of Industry; when I am told too, that *my Labor Shall not be in vain in the Lord* f Forbid it, O my GOD, by a double Portion of your Grace: Forbid it, for your own Glory! I have lived long enough like a Brute or a Sinner; let that lost Time suffice! From henceforth I burn to live like an Angel, or at least more and more like one of those, whose Citizenship is in Heaven, and whose

brightest Hopes are there. Do You, who works all in all, *work in me to will and to do of thy good Pleasure!* .

XXVI. THE Mode of GOD'S Working is inexplicable. No Man can explain or conceive *how* he puts Life and Spirit into all Things, nor *how* one and the same Cause should produce such various Effects, as we see in the elementary World about us. Our senses convince us of the *fact*; because the Increase or Diversity of Matter is the Object of our Senses. But the *Manner* of this Fact being entirely the Operation of an immaterial Spirit, we are obliged to submit our Reason to a Truth, which no human Reason can possibly explain. We think it Wisdom, and it certainly is Wisdom, to acknowledge an omnipotent Power and an inscrutable Artifice, working through all Nature, and demanding our implicit Assent to what we do not and cannot comprehend.

IF, in the sensible World, this Rule must be embraced by a sound Understanding; with how much stronger Reason, does it hold in the World, which is purely spiritual? If we are unable to explain the most common Properties of Matter and its innumerable Modifications; what Arrogance must it be to determine, by ourselves, upon spiritual Essences, and upon *their* Modes and Constitutions? Nature teaches us to take *that* for granted, in her Operations, which we cannot understand or account for: And shall the Works of Grace then, of a more exalted Kind, and tending to a more important End; be subjected to the Ignorance of the human Mind, and be exploded only because they cannot be defined? Can any one Thing in the World,

strictly speaking, be fully explained? Can a Blade of Grass, or a Stone, with the Mode of their Existence? Yet who doubts of their Existence? Shall a presumptuous Worm then dare to deny the Being of GOD, because he cannot define his Being, which, being infinite, must, upon that as well as other Accounts, be necessarily indefinable? And would it not be a blasphemous Audacity in a poor Wretch, who cannot tell how his own Finger moves, nor understand one single Property of his own Existence, to pretend a Demonstration, from his own Reason, concerning the Essence of his Maker? Is it possible, therefore, to know any Thing of the Divine Nature, but by Revelation, or farther than Revelation? And can a Revelation of this Kind be given by any Nature beside the Divine? A Maggot might much sooner define and develop the Reason of Mankind. Yet, ridiculous as such an Idea might seem, it cannot be a ten thousandth Part so irrational, as the Conduct of those Men, who limit the Nature and Operations of the Almighty by their own Conceptions.

*In Pride, in REAS'NING Pride, our Error lies;
All quit their Sphere, and rush into the Skies.*

We must, then, have a spiritual Guide, for spiritual Things, or submit to walk in the dark. From here appears the *Necessity* of a divine Revelation, which is not to be the *Subject* of our Reason, but its *Director*, and particularly in those Things, which relate to GOD and our spiritual Intercourse with him. Such a Revelation also must be *true*; because it proceeds from Him who is TRUTH essential and

eternal. Our Reception of it too must be upon this Ground alone; because it imparts much Information, which in its own Nature cannot be the Object of Sense or the reasoning Faculty. GOD has thought fit to *declare* the Truth in this World; but he will *demonstrate* it in another, where our Capacities shall be rightly enlarged to conceive it. This implicit Credit given to GOD'S Revelation is performed by that new Principle given to the Soul, called Faith, which an Infidel is as much at a Loss to reason upon, as he would be upon a Non-entity; for, indeed, it is a Non-entity to him. Faith believes what GOD has said; not because it can *explain* the Saying, but because, GOD having said it, it therefore must be true. AS the Eye of a Man convinces him of the Reality of the Existences about him, though it does not convey the Mode of their Being: So Faith receives the Truth of the divine Testimony, and enjoys it as such, though it can give no scientific Demonstration of its Nature or of the Objects it reveals.

Though this Deduction is here offered, it is confessed that all the Reasonings in the World can never win one Heart to GOD, nor cause it" to believe aright in his "Word. We may, however, should our Labor be to as little Purpose as the Apostle's with *Agrippa* and *Festus*, give a Reason of the Hope that is in us; that Gainsayers may at least be silenced, when they perceive that Christians, discarding Reason where it can have no Office, act an abundantly more rational Part than those, who, pretending to exalt her, lift her up to explain heavenly and invisible Things, while she cannot define the Manner of Operation in any one visible Object through the material World. This indeed is

insanire cum rations, to be rationally mad, and leads naturally and directly to universal Skepticism and Infidelity.

SUMMER.

I. IN this important Season of the Year, the Seeds which were sown, and the Fruits which were generated in the Spring, are proceeding towards Maturity. To accomplish this great Purpose of GOD'S Works upon Earth, an extraordinary Degree of Light and Heat is poured forth upon all the vegetable Tribes. Without this genial Ordination, no Plant could produce its Seed, no Tree support its Fruit. The Rays of Light act upon the vegetable Oils, and carry on what is usually called Vegetation. The Oil in Plants lubricates and extends the Vessels for the Passage of the Juices, prevents a too rapid Exsiccation, and, in Proportion to its necessary Quantity, maintains their Health and Vigor. It also preserves both them and their Seeds from the Injury of Cold. But for the Oil, every Plant would be adust, (scorched; burned, parched, sunburned) inert Matter: But for the Light, the Oil could never flow. The Light, the Heat, the Air, the Oil, and the Vegetable, having free Union and Communication; the Plant is carried on towards its perfect State, and assists, in its Rank and Place, to brighten the Face of Nature.

WHAT vast and invaluable Truths does this noble Symbol contain?—*Vast*, exciting our greatest Attention; and *invaluable*, delineating in a figure the most precious Objects of Salvation. The great Doctrine, which the Summer holds forth to the Mind, is the Christian's *Sanctification* or *Predisposition* for Glory. We will explain these Terms, that we may more precisely understand their Meaning. The strict and primary Sense of the Word

Sanctification is a *Separation from all Sin and Impurity*, an Abstraction from every Thing vile and worthless, a Release from the bitter Bondage of Satan, a Deliverance from the Load of oppressing Guilt, and a Devotedness to the great Author of all Purity and Perfection. In this view, it only differs from GOD'S Election by its *Time and Effect*. Election is Sanctification proposed: Sanctification is Election in Act. The Apostle was *separated* from his Mother's Womb, in consequence of GOD'S Election before he was born; but he did not become a *Saint*, or one *separated in Aft*, 'till Christ was manifested in him. He was chosen out of the World from before all Time; but he was not separated from the World, 'till the Time was completed for that Purpose. Both the Hebrew and Greek Words etymologically imply this primary Idea. Consequently our Lord shewed himself as the great spiritual *Nazarite*, the *separated* one; and his Redeemed become *Nazarites*, because they are *separated* from the World and from Sin through him and for him. They were eternally united to him in the divine Intention; and they are actually brought into the Enjoyment of that Union by the Power of Grace, towards its eternal Consummation in Glory.

But we have also obtained another Sense in the Term, and often understand by it *infused Grace* or Holiness. Many carry this Sense so far as to mean a *Stock* of inherent Virtue, by which they suppose themselves able to exert Acts of Righteousness, and to do a great deal for GOD without his immediate Aid. We will dismiss this as a gross Error, founded in the Ignorance of GOD and of human Nature, and attend only to the better Notion of the Term.

Undoubtedly, there is a Communication from God to the Soul, which forms a most essential Part of its Comfort and Safety; but this can only be called Sanctification, as an Effect may be named from its precedent Cause. In consequence of his Sanctification, the Believer in *Jesus* has a sweet Communion with him, by receiving out of his Fullness, and *tasting that he is "gracious* indeed. The Believer enjoys Christ, because he is separated from the unholy World, and in a Life of Union devoted to him: And Christ, for the same Reason, *manifests* himself to the Believer. This gracious Manifestation is in the Old Testament called LIGHT: And the ancient Church often understood by it, what we now understand by communicated or imparted Grace. This Grace is the Wisdom of GOD working in us, and discovering itself to us. It is therefore an imparted, but not an implanted Blessing. It remains in GOD'S Hand, and not in ours. The old Believers, accordingly, did not conceive by this Light a Quality separate from its Essence, which was Christ to them as well as to us, or any Principle inherent in themselves; but an Effusion proceeding from him, and enjoyed with him. *Jehovah* the Redeemer is *the* Light essentially; and *the Light of his Countenance* which enlightens the World above, the new *Jerusalem*, is the Portion of his People derivatively. The last was an Emanation of the first; as the Rays of the Sun proceed from its Body, and are in Contact with all Objects in their Direction. But these Rays are still *in* and from the Sun, not *in* the Objects. So this Light of Life is not resident in Man, but communicated immediately from GOD. Agreeable to this is the Apostle's Declaration; *I live, yet not I, but Christ*

liveth in me. And thus, when the ancient Believers said, *the Lord hath shewed us Light, or sent out his Light* unto us, or *enlightened us with the Light of the Living;* they meant (according to the Language of the New Testament) that Christ was *the Life and the Light of Men,* yielding that gracious Effusion, by which the Soul is made alive and kept alive to GOD. This Effusion might, with Propriety and for avoiding the Confusion of Terms, be called *Sanctity,* rather than *Sanctification.* Where this Light is, there is a clear Discovery of Holiness and Truth, and *Joy and Peace in the Holy Ghost,* which are the happy Consequences of the primary Sanctification before mentioned, and the utmost Effects of it in this Life.

With respect to the *Predisposition* for Glory, it seems to be that Arrangement, Disposition, or Frame of the Soul, which is caused by the active Light, or Grace, or Working of GOD, upon the spiritual Faculty of the Believer, which is given by the Holy Spirit through Christ, and is formed by Communion with him. This spiritual Faculty, when implanted, is recipient of the *Light* of GOD, imparted; as the OIL in Vegetables is recipient of the Light of the Sun. Consequently we find this Oil used symbolically in 'the Old Testament, as the special Qualification or Predisposition of any Person or Thing to the most holy Appointments; and, without it, nothing was acceptable or approved. Consequently also, the blessed Person, who finished Salvation, is called the *Messiah or Christ, or Anointed;* because his human Nature, as the Head of his People, was anointed with the holy Oil, or the Divine Spirit, that it might flow to them from himself, and be in

them by virtue of their Union with him. And from here too, as Believers are called *Nazarites* and *Saints*, because of their *Separation* from the World, so they are named *Christians*, because they have an *Unction* of this Oil from the Holy One, and by it are made holy and disposed for Life eternal.

Here we may behold one of the brightest Mysteries of the Christian Faith. Christ is the *Light*, as GOD, acting upon the holy Oil in his People for their spiritual Growth and Improvement; and Christ is the *Life* of his People, as God-man, supplying them constantly by his Spirit with that holy Oil, by which they have Communion with the Light, or Divine Nature, so as to live and grow thereby. Thus, the Redeemed, *being joined to the Lord, are one Spirit*: (1 Cor. vi. 17.) Thus, *he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one*: (Heb. xi. 11.) And thus, in yet stronger Terms. *they all are one, as the Father is in Christ, and Christ is in the Father, and one in the Father and the Son; for the Glory, given to the Son by the Father, is given to them by the Son, who is in them, as the Father is in him*. (John xvii. 21, &c.) If Christ himself had not revealed this glorious Truth, what Man upon Earth could have conceived, or, conceiving, could have dared to express it?

Upon the whole, it may be observed, that there are *three* Distinctions to be made in the Word GRACE, which have an immediate and inseparable Relation to each other; which Distinctions, if observed, may possibly release the Mind from much Embarrassment, which the Confusion or Misapplication of the Term has sometimes occasioned to

serious People. In its *first* and leading Sense, *Grace* means the *free* and *fixed Favor* or *Affection*, which GOD has set upon his People; and, of course, this is an independent and voluntary Motion of the divine Mind for their Salvation, *He hath Mercy, on whom he will have Mercy. The second Distinction of Grace* is the *Manifestation* of this Affection in God. Now, as *whatever manifests is Light*, this Flowing of the divine Love to Sinners is called *the Light of God's Countenance*; i. e. the *Evidence* or *Appearance* of his Favor and Mercy. This is that *Grace imparted*, by which they see the Wisdom and Glory of GOD'S Salvation, and their unalienable Interest in it; like as, by the material Light, imparted from the Sun, a Man may survey the Nature, Extent, and Worth of a temporal Estate. This *Grace imparted* works upon and with the *Grace* which is *implanted*: And this *last* is that *Regeneration* by the Holy One, which is given to the Soul, including the Capacity or Faculty of spiritual Life, and acting in that Capacity with the *Grace imparted*, from Moment to Moment, so as to produce the Fruits of Love and Joy inwardly, and of all other Righteousness outwardly, for the Glory of GOD. This is emblematically represented by the Agency of the Light upon the Juices in Vegetables, enabling them to exercise their several Functions of Life. All the other Ideas of the Term *Grace* may be traced from one or other of these *three*, as so many Branches springing from them.

In this Distinction of *Grace* into essential manifestative, and possessive, may also be observed the respective Offices of the ever blessed Trinity, of which, (as it would be too copious a Matter to treat of them particularly in this

Place) the following valedictory Words of the Apostle may afford an Application: *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.* Having thus, as briefly as possible, explained the Terms, we will recur to the Symbol, which led us to consider them.

It was observed, that an extraordinary Degree of Light and Heat was necessary in Summer to carry on the Progress of Vegetation. So, in the Christian Field, the believing Soul needs daily and continually *the Light of Life* to act upon him, for his Increase, Health, and Maturity. The Christian has no Life *essentially* in himself, but *lives by the Faith of the Son of God*. He could no more flourish and abound in good Works, or (which is the same) exert the Acts of spiritual Life, of himself, than a Plant could grow and bear Fruit without the Sun. All Bodies are opaque, and have no Light but from the Orb of the Sun; and there is no Principle of Grace, Holiness, Sanctification, Righteousness, or spiritual Energy (call it by which Name you please, though the Terms are not precisely used by Divines, which has occasioned Debate and Confusion) in any Believer in the World, but as he derives it, continually, from the Godhead through the Mediator. His Faith and Hope are not of himself, but are Expansions of the holy Oil in his new Nature, energized and acted upon by those Emanations of celestial Light, which descend from the Lord of Glory. *In him* (say the Apostle) *we live, are moved, and have our Being.*

Here we may see (for we cannot immediately quit this momentous Subject) the Force of that Injunction in the ceremonial Law, by which OIL was so frequently prescribed- There was *Oil for the Light*, Oil to be *mingled with the Offerings*, and Oil for the *Anointings*; all which served to denote, that nothing could be acceptable, nothing have the Favor of GOD, nothing be truly sacred and devoted to him, without that Unction of the Divine Spirit, which, flowing through the great Anointed One, is the *spiritual Oil*, gladdening all the People of GOD, and purifying both them and all their Services. to him. Thus, the wise Virgins had *Oil in their Lamps*, by which they might have an immediate Communication of Light; in other Words, they had the Spirit of Grace in them, and could hold spiritual Communion with the heavenly Bridegroom, as truly as Persons can feast with Joy at a temporal Marriage. (Matt. xxv. 10.) *Ye were sometime Darkness* (says St. Paul to the *Ephesians*), *but now are ye Light in the Lord*; and this is the Fruit or Effect of the Spirit, who supplies the Soul with that heavenly Oil, which capacitates the Soul to shine with heavenly Light. For this Reason, it seems, that the twelve Tribes of *Israel*, representing the Elect of GOD, are called *Urim and Thummim* [Lights and Perfections] which were precious Stones with the Names of the Tribes *engraven* (not written) upon them, and placed upon the Breast of the High Priest, to show how near and dear the Faithful are to their Redeemer, and that their Names; shall never be blotted out. They are *Lights*, because they are formed to admit the Rays of divine Light, as a precious Stone is for the free Admission of the natural; and they are

Perfections, because they are perfect and complete in Christ, as the precious Stones were upon the Breast of the High Priest. United in; one Plate, that grand Assemblage of Stones, called *the Fullness of Stone*, all set in pure Gold, was named, what in our Bibles is rendered, *the Breast-plate of Judgment*, but which perhaps more justly might have been rendered *the Seat of the Decree*, from the midst of which Responses were given concerning the Welfare of *Israel*. Thus, the Redeemed are one compact Frame of Jewels, without Defect or Redundancy, conjoined with perfect Purity, borne by the Redeemer on his Bosom, and the Seat or Rest of the divine Decrees; for in them all the Determinations of Grace and Providence are ultimately fixed and centered; and, according to their Welfare, is every Answer to Prayer given. Christ, their true High-priest, bore their Names on his *Shoulders* to support them by his Strength, and on his *Breast* to endear them by his Love. [Exod. xxviii. 12. 29.] Herein is the Promise, made to *Levi* of old, fulfilled to the spiritual *Levi*, devoted to GOD, *thy Thummim and thy Urim are of the Person, having Mercy upon thee—The Lord blesseth his Substance, and the Work of his Hands*. [Deut. xxxiii. 8. 11.] All his Perfections, and Progress towards Perfection; all his Lights, by which he knows GOD and is known of him, are from that merciful God-man, who blesses him in Body and Soul, and prospers him in the Way of Salvation.

Let us only add to the Length of these Observations one Reflection more, which we may gather from the natural Object before us. As the free Union and Communication of the Light and Oil, with the other Properties in Nature,

constitute the Health, Vigor, and Increase of Vegetables; so the gracious Communion of GOD'S Love in Christ, and his Light, or the Sense and View of it, by Christ, ripen and predispose the Souls of the Faithful for that State of Perfection and Bliss, which GOD has appointed for them, and which, therefore, they shall most assuredly obtain.

II. HOW strongly does a Garden itself illustrate and enforce the great Doctrines, of which we have been treating? In its first View, as a Piece of Ground selected and taken out of the common Field, fenced round, and appropriated to special Culture and Delight; how beautiful an Exemplification is it of that divine Favor, which chose GOD'S People, his spiritual Garden, out of the common Wilderness of this World, which walled it round so as that nothing can break down the everlasting Bounds, and which has *ordained* that the Trees *should bring forth Fruit, and that their Fruit should remain*? In another View, the constant Culture of a Garden, in its several Circumstances of breaking up the Ground, planting, pruning, watering, adorning, defending from inclement Weather, &c. most aptly represents the great Work and Office of the Divine Spirit, in disposing and fitting *the Heirs of Salvation* to Life eternal. Thus, they are not only a Garden, but a *watered Garden*; rendered delightfully cool in the most scorching Heat, and peculiarly fruitful in the most parching Clime. The Garden of *Eden* is a Description of human Nature before the Fall: Every Tree *was -pleasant to the Sight*, every Fruit *was good for Food*. The Heart of Man contained nothing, but what was beautiful for his Maker to look on, or happy for himself to enjoy. Since the

Loss of that perfect Form, human Nature has been turned into a *Land of Wandering*, where every Soul is restless in the Pursuit of Good; and into a barren Wilderness, where it can find none. The Lord, of his own free Mercy, in this howling Waste has planted a second Garden, with better Defenses than the former, the Trees of which are calculated to bear more sure, rich, and permanent Fruits. His Eye is ever upon it; his Hand continually: improves it; and his Heart delights therein with everlasting Affection. There is & striking Type of this Grace in Deut. xi. 1 o> &c. The People of GOD had been called *mat of Egypt* (and his *Church* has its name in both Testaments, because it is *called out of the World*) in which they *sewed their Seed*, and *watered it with their Foot*; i. e. they were called out from among: worldly Men, who sow their own Counsels. and Purposes, and endeavor to make. them prosper by their own Skill and Labor. But the Land to which they were led was a *Land of Hills and Valleys*, not to be fructified by a certain Flow of Water, as was *Egypt* by the River *Nile* i. e. all temporal or second Causes of Success and Prosperity were removed from them. They were not to expect; Blessings from *Nature* but from the *God* of Nature. Of this they had a particular Earnest before they entered upon this Land; for they had every Day (the Sabbath-day excepted) their *daily Bread* rained down upon them from Heaven, during a Course of forty Years in their Passage through the Wilderness.

It was also a Land, where they *should look from the Rain of Heaven to receive the Waters*, a Land which the LORD had *purposed for them as a Lesson of his Mind and Will*,

and a Land *on which the Eyes of God continually rested from the Beginning to the End of the Year*; i. e. the Providence of GOD should support their Bodies, and his Spirit their Souls, according to the settled Counsels of his Covenant; for his Eyes are upon his People *to do them Good* through Time and throughout Eternity. To the same Effect is the Psalmist's Acknowledgment in Psalm, cvii. 34, &c. The *Israelites* were to depend upon GOD for every Thing; and upon their own Wisdom, Righteousness, and Strength for Nothing: And so is the whole Church of GOD, from the Beginning to the End of Time. The Consequence of which is, that the Lord supplies every Thing *in its due Season*, plenteously in its proper and appointed Time. The Text further says, and repeats it, that the Lord will *give* all Blessings to support, comfort, mature, and carry on both spiritual and natural Life; and these are expressed by the Symbols of *Corn*, and *Wine*, and *Oil*. They were not to be earned, but bestowed; not hardly procured, but freely given. *Alas!* the Men in the World cannot draw a Drop of Water from the Clouds: Nor all the Christians in the World a Spark of Grace from above. Both must be freely sent, and gratuitously granted, from HIM, who rules All in All.-- To carry on spiritual Parallel from the above Text, and to pursue it through its natural and historical Circumstances, would require a Volume. Here we can only give Hints, and those but saint and imperfect, of that « glorious Wisdom, Grace, Love, and Power, which pierce like irresistible Rays through the Veil of Nature, and beyond it irradiate the Objects of that spiritual World, which but for the reciprocal Light of GOD'S Word and Works, would be concealed and invisible to the keenest Eye among Men.

III. YONDER beautiful Fir-tree, which urges its Point, like a Spire, towards the Clouds, marks every Year its Ascent, and shows its periodical Gradations almost from the very Root. Lately, it labored among the surrounding Shrubs, which seemed envious of its Rife, and urging to keep it down; but now it has fairly left them all beneath, and receives a freer Enjoyment of the Air and Sun.

THUS the Christian, when weak in Faith and newly partaking the spiritual Life, finds a thousand Lets and Hindrances to the free Contemplation and Enjoyment of the Love of GOD. He is as a Grain of Mustard Seed in the Garden of Grace, *small* in Size, and *humble* in Shew. But having radically an immortal Vigor, he still presses upwards, takes stronger and stronger Root, and gradually spreads forth his Branch upon Branch. Like the Plants of his Garden, he receives new and new *Lamina*, or increasing Coverings and Substance to his Trunk, from Season to Season; according to the Apostolic Description of adding Grace to Grace. (2 Pet. i. 5. See also Rom. v. 4.) He was first weak, then strong in the Lord. An Acorn, when planted in the Ground, fends forth a *true* Oak, but yet a *small* one. It becomes Timber by *Degrees*. So the Faith of a Christian is at first a weak and humble Confidence, feels much Oppression from carnal Reason and spiritual Foes, and gains Strength only in Proportion as it is nurtured from above. The weakest Faith of the newest Convert is indeed invincible, because it is defended and supported by an Almighty Hand; but it cannot be called the *Plerophory*, or *full Assurance*, because it has not fully received its spiritual Tuition, is unacquainted with

spiritual Exercise, and rarely knows what to chose or what to avoid in doubtful Propositions. (Rom. xiv. i.) All Faith is truly Reliance; but certainly there is some Difference in the Weight and Proportions of that Reliance. First, it believes; then, embraces; and lastly, (as the highest Degree) it cleaves to the Lord, and clings close to his Salvation, of which in that Act it becomes assured. But, in the ordinary Course of GOD'S Working, it no more becomes the full Assurance at first, than an Acorn becomes Timber in one Year.—Some Mistakes seem to have been started upon this important Subject; and therefore it may be worth while to canvass it with more Attention; especially as many sincere Persons have distressed themselves upon the Assertions of others, who appear to have considered Faith rather as *sensible Vision* and *Revelation*, than a spiritual Disposition worked in the Soul to believe in GOD, and to confide all its Interest and Happiness to Him. And there are others, who have by Faith meant *Comfort*, which is rather *Sense* than any thing else. It is true, *Comfort follows* Faith, but has no *necessary* Connection with it in its Exercises; for many have believed most faithfully, who, in the Act of Faith, have felt no Comfort at all. Comfort came afterwards, and ever will succeed true Faith, sooner or later. AFTER *ye believed, ye were sealed*, says the Apostle.

We must look to the original Scriptures, and to the original Language of the Scriptures*, to clear this Point. There we

* The Necessity of recurring to the Language of the Old Testament for the more perfect Definition of the Terms of the New, will perhaps appear from the following Considerations. The most important Words, or Expressions of spiritual

shall find, that GOD (and Christ as GOD) proposes himself as THE TRUTH, the fixed, the settled *Foundation*, which nothing can overthrow or confound. Hence all the Promises *are in Christ, Amen:* that is, fixed upon him as the solid Foundation, and therefore worthy to be believed. And Men are said to *believe* (which is a Word derived from the same Root) when they *rest upon* this Foundation. They have then a fundamental Stability. Now, GOD being the Truth itself, all his *Words* must be true. The Christian is enabled to receive this divine Testimony, puts his Seal to the Truth of it, and (as one justly expressed it) "takes GOD at his Word." Thus the *Object* of Faith is *certain*, so as to remove all just Occasion of Doubt. The *Nature* of Faith itself, in its own *Essence*, is also *Certainty*; but the *Act* and *Exercise* of this Faith, or its *Existence* in the

Things, in the Gospels, are Translations of Words spoken in Hebrew, or at least in a Hebrew Dialect; and the Words of the other Books of the New Testament were also Translations, by the Apostles, of the Terms used in their vernacular Tongue, into Greek, the then prevailing Language. They evidently took such single Words in Greek, as bore the nearest Relation to the leading Sense of the Hebrew Terms, which had been used in the ancient Church; for the Greek Language, being arbitrary in itself, as well as compounded of many others, with no Sort of Regard to the true Religion, and used by Men who had no Ideas of the spiritual Objects revealed in that Religion, and who consequently could not employ the Terms of it to any such Purpose, could not express those divine and heavenly Thing*, for which it was never prepared. The Apostles, therefore, often expressed themselves paraphrastically in their Greek Writings, that the important Sense of the original Terms might not wholly be lost. Thus St. John, in the Revelation, uses a Periphrasis for the Name JEHOVAH. (Rev. i. 4, &c.) So St. Paul (2 Cor. iv. 17.) uses another for the Hebrew Word rendered *Glory*, which, with all its Energy, scarcely comes up to the original Idea. And there are many other Terms, which contain the most consolatory Doctrines of the Gospel, transferred from the Old Testament to the New after this Manner. Sometimes they coin a Word, and always employ the Terms, which they use for spiritual Ideas, to a Sense, in which it was impossible for a Heathen, void of those Ideas, to employ them. Here we see the Truth of the Observation made by the Son of *Sirach*. "The same Things (says he)

the human Heart, being clogged with manifold Corruptions; the Christian can neither fully believe as he ought, nor perfectly do as he would. Looking, however, at Faith in its simple Idea, we may define it to be that gracious Perception of the renewed Mind which discovers the Truth of GOD, accompanied by an ardent Affection of the renewed Heart which embraces it; and both worked in the Believer by the Holy Spirit, and sustained, increased, and completed, by his Agency alone. Thus he rests and is built upon the Foundation—the whole Trinity as the grand Basis, Christ as the chief Corner-Stone, and next upon the Apostles and Prophets, as founded upon him. *Other Foundation than this can no Man lay*; and, *without it* all the Visions and Revelations in the World are not Worth a Reflection. *Luther* had a full Conception of the Excellence of Faith and the true Strength of its Foundation, when he

uttered in Hebrew, and translated into another Tongue, have not the *same Force* in them; and not only these Things, but the Law itself, and the Prophecies, and the rest of the Books, have *no small Difference*, when they are spoken in *their own Language*." The Reason was; these treated of spiritual Things in a Language *fitted* for them, and so properly called *their own*, which the Greek or any other Tongue, composed of vague and arbitrary Sounds, certainly was not. We hear a learned Jew complaining of the Greek, with all its boasted Copiousness and Propriety, that it could not express even his moral Ideas with *Force*. How then could it rise to sublimer and more heavenly Objects? And yet so great is the Excellence of this very Language in other Respects, that we find a Latin Poet, and with him an eloquent Latin Philosopher, confessing the comparative Poverty of their own nervous Tongue, and the great Difficulty of conveying the Sense of the Greek Philosophy by it. They, therefore, borrow some Greek Words, and coin others for their Purpose. It has been observed from *Jerom*, by *M. Rollin*, that "*Homer*, who is so judicious, harmonious, and sublime, becomes childish, insipid, and insupportably low, when turned into Latin, Word for Word." With how much more Difficulty then could this Latin translate, by Word for Word, the Wisdom of GOD?—This, by the Way, may serve to explain the Worth of the *Vulgate* Translation, so prized by the Papists, as well as fix the Value of the *Septuagint* itself in its proper Place. Taking, therefore, this whole Matter together,

expressed himself in these Words: "As I do not esteem myself qualified either to have or to interpret particular Revelations; so I do not desire for myself that sort of Faculty or Knowledge, and have begged of GOD, that he would not send either Visions, or Dreams, or Angels, to me. I am content with this Gift, that I have the Holy Word, which abundantly teaches, and supplies, whatever is necessary both for this Life and for Life eternal. In this I believe, and here I rest, with a certain Impossibility of not being deceived. Nor do I derogate by this from the Gifts of others, if possibly, beside the Scripture, GOD may have revealed any Thing by Dreams, or Visions, or Angels. They may indeed be Gifts; but they are such, as I neither

it seems plain, that, in order to understand the New Testament as well as the Old, in the more difficult Passages, where the Terms (if one may be allowed the Expression) are spiritually technical; constant Reference should be had, from the Greek and other Translations, to the Hebrew *Radices* and *Idiom*. To Hebrews, and in the Hebrew Tongue, have all GOD'S Revelations been primarily made; and, therefore, the *Things* of GOD are best explained by the *Words* of GOD. This holy Language was peculiarly formed to express or adumbrate those spiritual things; and, consequently, to understand them perspicuously, Recourse should be made to it for Illustrations of the New Testament, rather than to heathen Writers, who, G. however learned or elegant, could know nothing of its spiritual Purport, and who, if they used the same Terms which are there used for divine Things, must necessarily have used those Terms for a very different Meaning. This is not said in" Disparagement of classical Learning, but to prove that (like all other Heathens) it has no Right to enter into and profane the Temple of the Lord. Ancient Authors may indeed serve to illustrate Passages, which relate to the Offices and Principles of Men among the Gentiles; but, with Regard to divine Things, there can be no ancient Treatise so fit to explain the Sense of the Gospels and Epistles, as the most ancient Book in the World, which was composed to subserve the very same Purpose and Idea. This is the Way to *compare spiritual Things* with *spiritual*, and thereby to arrive (by the Blessing of the Divine Spirit) at a more full Comprehension of *the deep Things of God*, and consequently to become more and more *wise unto Salvation*.

care for, nor desire. For I tremble at that infinite Multitude of Delusions, Artifices, and Impostures, by which Satan has deceived the World for so many Ages under the Papacy: So that if I cannot credit the Sufficiency of the holy Scripture, I certainly shall not easily believe, either Angel, or Vision, or Dream." And, in another Place, he adds: "I have often said, that, from the first, I have always intreated the Lord, that he would never send Dreams, or Visions, or Angels, to me. For many fanatical Spirits have attacked me, of whom one has boasted of his Dreams, another of his Visions, another of his Revelations, by which all of them would have drawn me after them. But I have always answered, that I never desired Revelations of that Sort, and that I had no Dependence upon them, when proposed. My most ardent Wish is, that GOD would give me the true Sense and Understanding of his holy Word: For, if I have the Word, I am sure of walking in the right Path, and that I cannot easily err or be deceived. Indeed, I had rather have *David's* Understanding, than prophetic Visions, which, I believe, *David* did not greatly desire. Let me explore the certain Meaning of the Scripture. The Fanatics, with their Dreams, would have led me, some one way, some another; so that if I had attended to them, I must have changed my Doctrine thirty or forty Times.— If I have the Word, I am sure, that GOD and his Angels are with me." (Luth. *Com. in Gen. apud Wits. Misc. Sacr.* Vol. I. p. 379.) If others, who have pretended to wonderful Communications from above, had received the Blessing to be thus *faithful* the Christian World had been spared many Effusions of Absurdity, the Cause of GOD saved much unnecessary Reproach, and many a simple Heart preserved

from Uncertainty and Distress. However, it is melancholy to observe, that many of these Revelationists, with all their boasted Intercourse with Heaven, live upon Earth with less Order in their Lives, and with more Slavery to human Passion, than even some decent People, who make no Pretences to Religion at all. It is also sad to reflect, how many of these high Pretenders have come to nothing.

But, one would not be understood to affirm, that GOD does never vouchsafe extraordinary Communications and Testimonies of himself; for these have occurred upon some extraordinary Occasions. They were, however, *uncommon* and *extraordinary*, and are not to be looked for, because they are not *promised*. And let them come when they may, or how they may, if they are not agreeable to the written Word, and to the *Law and Testimony* revealed; they are to be exploded as Delusions, and suspected rather to be Suggestions of the Devil, than Impressions from GOD.

We have considered *Faith*, in its simple Idea, as a gracious *Reliance* upon the Truth of GOD: And we may define the *full Assurance* of Faith to be, not an Exclusion of all Doubting, but a Victory over prevalent Doubting, and a settled Confidence in the Wisdom, Power, Love, and Faithfulness of the Lord. Corruption, while we are in the Body, will *rebel*; and so will Doubt and Unbelief, which are the great Agents of Corruption: But they do not *conquer*; they do not *reign*. Faith has the final Victory; though Faith must: fight constantly to obtain it. As, in the Cafe of a Rebellion, every Defeat weakens it, and

strengthens the Power of a State; so, in this Rebellion of our corrupt Nature, with its Army of Unbelief, Doubts, and warring Passions, the Soul is invigorated by frequent Victories, and at length obtains such a Measure of Strength, as not to be shaken in its Conflicts. This Habit, and this Strength, thus worked in the Mind by Christ (for there is no Victory without the great *Captain of Salvation*), is the *Plerophory* or *full Assurance of Faith*, which every Believer should be seeking, as the greatest Privilege and Bliss on this side Heaven. Now all this, evidently, does not arise from Whim or Vision, but from a solid, warranted, well-grounded, and well-fought Experience—an Experience, which does not rest upon Opinion, but upon Fact, not on immediate Revelations, which GOD has promised to nobody, but upon his infallible Word, which is spiritually open to all that truly believe.

From this Consideration, the weakest Believer may receive ground of Comfort. If he cannot rely, as much as he would; yet if he rely at all, or as much as he can, he has found a Measure of Grace to be faithful: And the very Desire is not of himself, but freely given him from above. He must join Faith and Patience; and he shall find, in pressing daily after the Mark of his high Calling, that he shall not miss it at the last. Bishop *Davenant* calls full Assurance, not so much Faith itself, as *the Daughter of Faith*. To which we might add, the Daughter cannot be born so soon as the Mother, who must previously have a requisite Maturity.

Upon the Whole, we may see how justly the Image from Nature resembles the Progression of Grace. Every Believer may look back upon the Times that are past, and see many Victories obtained, many Snares avoided, many Corruptions subdued, which once had strong Dominion within his Soul. He fought hard in some Cafes, and seemed perhaps to be foiled in others; but he may remember, that he ever rose from his Falls with increasing Watchfulness and Strength. The Blows of the Adversary have inspired him with Wariness; and he is now less and less *ignorant of Satan's Devices*. He is grown, like our Fir-tree, above many of the obstructing Shrubs; and many things, which once were great Difficulties, are now become Exercises only to keep (as it were) his Life of Faith in Health and Vigor. He can breathe more freely the Air of Heaven, and is grown higher in his Wishes to be there. The Realities of Glory, always invisible to Nature, become through Grace more and more visible to his Soul, and wean his Heart therefore more entirely from the World.—This is Growth in Grace; And, without this, all other Attainments are but a Shadow or a Name.

IV. THE most flourishing Tree, or Plant, though it might spring like *Jonah's* Gourd, is not *seen* to grow. Time is requisite to mark or to measure the Progress; and, measuring the Progress by the Time, we determine the Growth to be more or less vigorous, and consequently the Plant to be more or less healthful.

TRUE Believers also are not like Mushrooms,

Which spring with Morning, and at Night decay;

But *Trees of the Lord's Planting, that he may be glorified.* They grow, but their Growth is not seen by themselves or by others, *immediately.* It is perceived .only in the course of Time. Nor do they grow by Noise, any more than the vegetable Kingdom. An increasing Volubility of Tongue, and a blustering Profession, like a roaring Wind among Trees, are more likely to blow down than to impart Life. (James i. 26.) It is not so much the Interest of a Christian to talk about the Gospel, as to have his Heart molded into the very Frame and Fashion of it. Let his Spirit be truly evangelized, and his Conversation "will then be *as becometh the Gospel,* as well as *of the Gospel.* Grace is weighty, and leads to a Weight of Glory. It turns from Lightness and Trifling, as its Bane. (Eph. v. 4.) It dwells in a recollected Mind, a steady Heart, and a peaceful Soul. When the Professor has this within him, he ceases to be a Rattle; knowing, that those are but the emptiest Vessels, which give the loudest Sound.

V. SOME Trees in the Garden make a great Shew, but bear no Fruit. They are splendid in Leaves, and perhaps in Blossoms; but they yield either nothing fit to eat, or something not worth eating. The largest Species of Tree known in the World is the *Baobab* or *Calabash* Tree of *Senegal*, which often exceeds seventy Feet in the Circumference of the Trunk, and covers with its Boughs a Circle of above one hundred and thirty Feet in Diameter; but yields a Fruit, which, while it is unfit for Food, does not exceed the Size of a common Kidney-bean. With this enormous Substance; it has large and handsome Leaves,

and looks, at a Distance, rather like a Grove than a single Tree.

O WHAT a Picture is here of many a specious Soul! How many have looked tall like Cedars in *Lebanon*; how many have promised fair like the Fig-tree in the Gospel; who, when the Master sought for Fruit, have yielded none? Some have spoken gloriously, and written elegantly, of the Word of GOD and heavenly Things; have been supposed in the uppermost Class of the Christian School; and have even *done*, in GOD'S Name, *many wonderful Works*; who, after all, have _____ O my Soul, leave the awful Blank, and turn inwards for a deep Examination and Proof of your own Faith and Experience; lest, after treating of Christ and his holy Truths, you yourself be only *a Cast-away!* Dismal Reflection! It is sad for those, who are deplorably ignorant of the gospel, or who never heard its *joyful Sound*, to fall into Perdition; but how much more dreadful must the Destruction of other Persons be, who have talked loud and written fair of their Knowledge in the Things of GOD, and yet have been actuated all the while by the selfish, proud, and unsanctified Motives of the Devil? Rather let me be an humble Shrub of a Span in Height, with lowly Branches bent by the Fruits of Grace, than all the *Calabashes* in the World, with their spreading Boughs and useless Trunks. O that I may be *a green Olive-tree in the House of my God*, of whom *my Fruit may be found*, and to whom it may be acceptable, through Christ Jesus!

VI. IT is a vulgar Error, that Plants feed upon the Soil itself, and derive their Increase from it. The Truth is, that the Soil itself is a Receiver of the vegetable Pasture from the Skies, and becomes a Repository or Reservoir of what it has received for the Support of the Trees or Herbs which may grow upon it, but imparts none of its own Substance to form their Substance, which is compounded of other and different Elements. In proof of this, an Orange Tree has been known to be planted in a Box, in which the Quantity of Earth was both measured and weighed, and to have grown for many Years to a considerable Size; but when the Earth (to which no Additions were made at any Time) was taken out, there was precisely the same Quantity and Weight as at the first. Again; every body knows, that only the upper Stratum or Surface of the Earth, which has been either exposed to the Elements or mixed with things which have been exposed, is capable of supporting Plants. And Soils are good or bad, as they are more or less recipient and retentive of the celestial Fluids. Sandy Soils, for instance, receive easily; but, being compounded of little more than an Assemblage of very small Stones (as may be discerned immediately by a Microscope) they as easily pass through them what they have received: and Clay, being of too adhesive a Nature to receive, or to part with what it has received, unless extremely broken and meliorated by some favorable Seasons, of course becomes sterile to Plants, and rarely fit for much Vegetation.

A STRIKING and beautiful Lesion this of human Dependence upon God! In Grace, as well as in Providence,

every Blessing comes from above. The Earth and the Creatures have nothing in them

selves but by his Operation. The Soul of Man, likewise, derives all its Holiness from above; and therefore the Fruits of Righteousness in him are called *the Fruits of the SPIRIT*. Without his immediate Agency, the Nature of Man, with respect to spiritual Productions, is as barren as a Rock. And, after Conversion, *all the fresh Springs* of the Believer are in his GOD; and, without GOD, *he can do nothing*. Grace is not in Man's Power, but, from Moment to Moment and from Day to Day, is dealt down from Heaven, as the Manna in the Wilderness was, or as the Rains and influences are, from the Skies. *' Give us this Day our daily Bread," is a Prayer made to express every Day's Dependence, as it comes. The Bread of Life is the *Gift* of God, and not the *Stock* of Man: It comes through the divine Will and Power, not through human Potency, and replenishes those for whom it is ordained. It is *the Children's Breads* and not the World's. The World neither knows nor desires it.

All *Increase* of Grace, as well as Grace in the Beginning, is from GOD in Christ. As the Substance of the Earth is not gathered into Plants for their Growth; so nothing carnal or earthly administers the true Life or Substance to the Children of GOD. This comes entirely from himself, who is *wonderful in working*.

The *Retention* as well as Reception, of Grace, is also *through the good Hand of God* upon the Soul. He prepares the Heart, and makes the Ground of it as good as it may

be, according to his Pleasure. Some Souls, like the best Soils, are rich in the Abundance of the heavenly Influences which they are enabled to retain; and consequently the Plants, which GOD establishes therein, become *Plants of Renown*, yielding sixty or an hundred fold. Others, like the sandy Glebe, receive easily. the Word, but too easily part with it again; so that the Crop, which might have been expected, becomes thin and poor; or, in dry and trying Seasons, scarce any at all. Others, again, possessing a stiff and stubborn Temper, may be compared to Clay, which requires much Labor and Breaking for Cultivation and for Reception of celestial Influence, and which, after all, produces Fruits neither so sweet nor so abundant, as the more porous and friable Mould.

VII. IN almost every Pond exists an Object, which, observed with Attention in all its Parts, opens a new Source of Wonder and Curiosity to an inquisitive Mind. It is the *vegetable Animal* called a *Polype*. There are several kinds of this amphigeneous Being found both in salt and fresh Water. They take Root as Plants, but exert Acts of Life, as Creatures of animal Sensation. They evidently vegetate, and as evidently are animated. They have a double Life, and yet form but one Species of Being.

THESE animal Plants or Flowers beautifully exemplify the two-fold Life of a Christian. He rises indeed upon the Symbol; for he is a Partaker of a *divine*, as well as a *human* Nature. He lives as an Animal in the gross Atmosphere of this World; but, as a renewed immortal

Spirit, he exerts the Acts of a purely spiritual Life, which are as distinct from all animal Sensibilities, as the animal Faculty of the Polype is from the vegetable. We cannot define the *Mode* of either Existence; but we can easily discern *the* Existence and *the* Distinction. We can also speak positively upon one Fact, that the Christian receives his spiritual Life, and the momentary Support of it, from the Divine Spirit; because the Word of GOD (as well as Experience) will bear us out in the Assertion. Every real Believer perceives a Life in his Soul, with which he was not born, which was at some Period given him by the Ministration of the Word and Spirit, and which puts forth in him many Acts of a divine Nature, to which his human Sense was, before that Ministration, a perfect Stranger. He has new Eyes, new Ears, new Heart, new Hopes, new Affections: In a Word, he is become, in the Language of the Scripture, *a new Creature*. (2 Cor. v. 17.) This *new Creation*, which every carnal Mind, swollen with the Opinion of its own Powers, is disposed to treat with Enmity, because it cannot comprehend what is above itself, is a *spiritual* Creation, formed in the Soul of the true Christian, and superadded to that Nature with which he came into the World. Consequently he appears outwardly as a mere Man; but to GOD, to Spirits, and to himself, both an immortal and a celestial Being. Men see his gross Parts; but only spiritual Existences can discern his spiritual. He is known to be a *Citizen of Heaven* by all the Inhabitants of Heaven.

This Symbol yields likewise an Argument, by Analogy, for the Immortality of the Soul. The Scale of Being

ascends by Gradation. As vegetable mounts to animal Life in the Polype; so Man from corporeal rises to incorporeal, connecting the World of Matter with the World of Spirit and Immateriality.

Grant a Make

*Half-mortal, half-immortal; earthy, Part;
And Part, ethereal; grant the Soul of Man
Eternal; or, in Man the Series ends.*

Wide yawns the Gap; Connection is no more.

VIII. EVERY Pond of water, as well as the whole Mass of Air, swarms with Inhabitants; and I have been sometimes much amused on the Bank of a Piece of Water in my Garden, by the wonderful Transmutation of various Insects from the State of Maggots, in which they first lived and swam as Fishes, to the State of Flies into which they have almost instantaneously emerged and flown as Creatures of the Air. In one Minute, they have been slow Animals swimming in a dense and gross Element; and in another, they have sprung into a Being, almost totally different in Life and Form, and flown swiftly off through an Element comparatively rarefied and pure, leaving their former Coverings or Sloughs in the Water behind them.

A MOST significant Emblem of that great Change, which shall pass upon human Nature in the Hour of Death! The Saint, in particular, shall start from a heavy earthly Tabernacle into a Form of Brightness and spiritual Agility. The Mass of Clay, with which he is now enveloped, both hides and confines his spiritual Part to the gross Atmosphere of this World; but it soon shall be thrown off,

and, like the Exuviæ or Coverings of the Insects abovementioned, shall be left to rot in the mass from whence it was derived. O what an everlasting Change in a Moment of Time! From corruptible to incorruptible! From mortal to immortal! From Pain to Bliss! From Darkness to Light! From dull Sensation to quick and vivid Intellection! From dying Creatures to the ever living God!

IX. IN this warm Season, while every Plant flourishes towards Maturity, a great Variety of pernicious Insects is dispersed over all the vegetable Kingdom. Some are large and voracious, like the Locust and Caterpillar, which desolate all before them. Others spread a no less certain, but more secret, Ruin over the Trees, the Fruits, or the Leaves, which they attack. Some work Destruction in the Dark, and make their Ravages when no Eye can see them, as the Slug and the Corn-fly. And others again, such as the Blights or Vine-fretters, almost imperceptibly assail the tender Twigs, and, though in themselves minute and weak as Individuals, are formidable from the vast Armies into which they combine. Every Plant, which grows, is subject to Ravage: One Party attacks its Leaves, another its Fruit, and a third its Trunk; while the Worms, Moles, &c. like Miners at a Siege, aim their Efforts at the Foundation, and sap the very Roots,

How strikingly expressive are these pestilent Vermin of those *MANY foolish and hurtful Lusts, which war against the Soul!* How characteristic of those numberless Swarms of evil Spirits, which lie in wait to devour! And, as in Summer, the destructive Insects principally abound so, in

the Prosperity of Man, do these Enemies of his Peace chiefly beset him. They creep under his choicest Blessings, as Vermin will under the fairest Leaves: And as the most delicious Fruits are most liable to Depredations, so the greatest Mercies should be received with the greatest Watchfulness and Prayer, lest some lurking Foe should insinuate himself among them. There are some Insects, which bear the exact Colour of the Leaves they destroy, and are therefore the more difficult to be seen: And how often will Satan be transformed into an apparent Angel of Light, that he may work unperceived, and the more readily carry on his destructive Aims? In the nearest Approaches to the Throne of Grace, that Summer of the Soul; how will this lurking Enemy attempt to defile, what he is not permitted to destroy? How will he suggest Motives of Exaltation from the deepest Abasement of Spirit, and urge Notions of Self-righteousness from the very Confessions of our Sin? And if he can thus prevail, as sometimes he does; how much more will he aim to swell the Heart with the Vastness of its Importance, and the high Degree of its Attainments, when it has been savored with the Sense of GOD'S Goodness and Love? O Christian, when the Light of your Father's Countenance shines *upon* you; pray earnestly, that the Light may shine *into* and *under* you, that you may not only be fully discovered to yourself, but that also you may be able to discover the secret and subtle Enemy of your Peace. He, if let alone, would poison every act of Duty and Love, either by mixing with it your sinful Passions or his own diabolical Insinuations. Whether these Insects crawl or fly; that is, whether Lust and the Devil appear like a Maggot feeding

upon the Trash of the Earth, or like a Moth with Wings of Pride and Self-exaltation; in the Help of your Savior, shake them from you; for the Purpose of both is to destroy your Soul, or to wither its growing Strength. Look to the great Husbandman, who will either send his Providence to take them off, or with the Word of his Power, like Lightning from Heaven, blast the blighting Race upon you. Be they ever so numerous, they shall be like *Sennacherib's* Host before the destroying Angel, (2 Kings xix. 35.) *all dead Corpses* in the Space of a Night: And, if others succeed them, fight the good Fight of Faith, and pray on; for, finally, you shalt be *a Conqueror, and more than a Conqueror, through HIM, that hath loved thee*. The Time will shortly come, when the many Foes, which you have seen in the Days of your Flesh, *thou shalt see again no more for ever*. (Exod. xiv. 13.)

X. THE Fecundity of noxious Insects is prodigious. It has been calculated, that one Female of the *Corn-fly* alone can produce, in one Year, no fewer than one hundred and five Millions, forty three thousand, seven hundred and fifty Individuals of the same Species. . WHAT an Emblem this of the prolific Nature of Sin! Indulge one Corruption; and how will you shut out the Torrent? One Lie, to cover itself, will often produce twenty; and every Lust, though supplied by Sins without Number, will still cry out, like the Horse-leech, *Give, give!* When a Man allows himself in any Sin, he cannot say, *Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther*; for he commits himself to the Back of a wild Courser, which (if GOD do not prevent) will entirely run

away with him. Sin never stops but at one Goal; and that is, in the Bosom of Hell.

We may also look at the generative Faculty of all Sin in the one first Sin of *Adam*. What a Race of Wickedness, Impieties, and Vices, has originated from that single Stock? Can all the Sands of the Sea, or all the Stars of the Sky, be equivalent in Number! Or can Number express all the Sins of Thoughts which never appeared, of Words which have been uttered, or of Deeds committed, for almost six thousand Years ?—Sinner, can you reckon those, which you have conceived in your short Life? No. They are like the Caterpillars, which GOD sent upon *Egypt*, absolutely *without Number*. (Psalm cv. 34.)

XL IN the Summer Season, the very luxuriant Branches of Fruit-trees are pruned off. These, if permitted to remain, would draw away all the Sap from the tender Shoots, which alone bear the Fruit, and, by destroying them, would injure and make barren the Tree.

NOT the most *splendid* Professors bear the most real Fruit, but the most *humble*. There have been many Souls, rich in Faith, who have escaped the World's Eye, and the Eye of Believers too, but have been most precious in the Sight of GOD. Perhaps, some of these *secret ones*, whom even serious Persons have thought the *least* and the *last*, will be found among the *first* and the *greatest* at Christ's appearing. Gold and Diamonds rarely lay upon the Surface. Who could have supposed, that a poor Heathen, and a heathen Soldier too, of a Profession the most unfavorable to Piety, should have outshone all the

Professors in the visible Church, and even the Apostles themselves, in an Exercise of Grace ;" if Christ himself had not declared it? *Verily*, says our Lord of the Centurion, *I have not found So great Faith, no not in Israel.* (Matt. viii. 10.) *The LORD seeth not as Man seeth* (it was said upon another remarkable Occasion); *for Man looketh upon the outward Appearance, but the LORD looketh on the Heart,* (i Chron. xvi. 7.)

As in the Church, so in every individual Member of it, not the most florid is always the most true; but the humble Acts and inward Breathings of the Soul have most of Christ in them, and are the most efficient Excitements to Works really good. *The Fruits of Righteousness are by Christ Jesus, to the Glory and Praise of God:* And, with these, all GOD'S Trees are more or less *filled.* (Phil. i. 11.) Our spiritual Husbandman prunes his Fruit-bearing Branches, that they may produce more Fruit. He cuts off their stubborn Will, rank Pride, and high Imaginations; all of them very showy and very luxuriant Boughs: But he cuts them off for a blessed End—that Faith may be strengthened, and that Joy, Peace, Holiness, and all other Fruits of Grace may abound. The true Believer can be satisfied, and often rejoices to see the tender Love of GOD, in the Suppression of his carnal Will and the *old Man*, and in the Establishment of the Will of *Jesus*, who is the Life of the *new Man*. The unmortified Spirit alone is dissatisfied and unhappy at this Work; but a Soul, given up to GOD and resigned to him, enjoys this Crucifixion of Self and this Cross, which he must daily take up after his Savior. For he is endued with this faithful Persuasion, that

let things *appear* as they may, his best Interest is safe, and his Soul is safe; because God has promised, that ALL THINGS *shall work together for his Good*. This is a *hard Saying* to Flesh and Blood; but, if GOD himself be infallible, it is a *true* one; and, sooner or later, every Believer will find it so.

XII. FREQUENTLY, in Summer, we have great Droughts and parching Heats, which would destroy many tender Plants, were it not for the copious Dews, which commonly fall at this Season, and for the attentive Watering of the Husbandman.

THUS GOD is gracious to his People, in the worst of Times. He either preserves them by his Providence, or removes them from the Evil. He is to them, as the *Shadow of a great Rock* from the virulent Heat of Trial; or as the *Dew of Israel* to their Spirits, to enable them to undergo it. In those parching Seasons, when the Comforts of all other Men are burnt up and destroyed; his Benign Spirit, ever ready to hear the Cry of his needy Ones, waters their Souls from the River of Life, nor suffers them to droop or decay. So assiduous is his Care, so unremitted are the Tokens of his Love, that he *waters them every Moment*. Whatever they may *seem* to want, either to themselves or others, they really *want nothing that is good* for them. They *have all and abound*; not perhaps in the immediate Perception of the animal Sense, but in the real and certain Enjoyment of that positive Mercy, which they truly need. Such is his Wisdom towards them, that he often converts the *Want* of what they think a Blessing, into *the very Blessing* which

they really want. Thus even *his Clouds*, gloomy and obscure as they seem, *drop Fatness*. When they come to Glory, doubtless they will look back upon Time, and reckon the Losses, Disappointments, Troubles, and Sorrows, they felt in the Flesh, among the choicest Mercies, which GOD ever bestowed. They will then see the Apostle's *need-be* for all *the Heaviness* they endured *through manifold Temptations*, and will bless the Goodness of GOD for the forest Troubles, which they ever sustained in the World. For,

XIII. AS the greatest Summer's Heat the soonest perfects the Fruit, and gives it the richest Flavor;

So the greatest Miseries and Trials, which the true Christian can endure in this Life, ripen his Soul the fastest for Glory, and cause the Graces of the Spirit to flow but the richer and stronger within him. As GOD *does not afflict* his People *willingly*, or without particular Reason and Necessity; so they have not one Sorrow too much, too many, or too long.—Here let Faith and Patience come in. Here is their Exercise; here their Warfare. This is not *the Strife of Words*: for here the Sound of the Hypocrite, and the Noise of the carnal Professor, are not heard; but a mighty Wrestling of the Soul with GOD, which the Lord approves, because the Soul in this Act gives up its own Will and Strength, and *cleaves to him alone with full Purpose of Heart*. Grace enables the believing Mind to resign all into GOD'S Hands, and to be active or patient, to be in this State or another, just as it seems him good. O happy Frame of Soul! O desirable Temper of Mind! This

is to be *rich in Faith*, wise in Experience, tranquil upon Earth, and foretasting Heaven. Compared with this; what are the Bustles and Bubbles of the World, the Pomp of Man, the Parade of Profession, and all the fair Shows in the Flesh? They are Vanity and a Dream— lighter than the Vapor of Vanity, and less than nothing!

AUTUMN.

I. NOW comes the Crowning of the Year. All the Care and Labor of the Husbandman, in the *preceding* Seasons, from *this* expect their Recompence The Profusion of Fruits upon the Trees, the ripened Corn in the Fields, and the cheerful Acclamations of ten Thousand Swains, unite to proclaim *the Joy of Harvest*, and to diffuse Delight through every rural Scene. The Gladness of triumphant Industry appears on all the Plains. The Birds, with their chirping Offspring, regale on the Bounty of Providence, which at this Season, when their feathered Tribes increase the Demand, has, with equal Wisdom and Goodness, increased the Supply. All animated Nature wears the Face of Joy. Nor is inanimate Nature silent of Praise. *The Valleys are so covered over with Corn*, that they too *shout for Joy and sing*. In various Ways, by Deed or in Voice, all animal and vegetable Being form a Unison to the thankful Palmist's Song—*Thou crownest the Year with thy Goodness!*

AND so will the Lord GOD Almighty crown the End of Time; when Earth shall no longer revolve, and when the circling Periods of the Year shall utterly cease. The Fruits of Grace (hall then be finally gathered into Glory. They shall appear with an everlasting Luster; as well as be collected with everlasting Love. GOD will *gather the Wheat into his Garner*, and all the Objects of his Salvation *unto Life eternal*. He will collect his People *from all Nations*, and his Redeemed from the uttermost *Coasts of the Earth*. The Sea too shall give up her Dead; and the

Universe of the Blest, human and angelic, shall shout with Joy. Their *Number* transcends the Arithmetic of Man, and can only be faintly expressed by *ten thousand Times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*: And as to their *Song*; it is *loud* to penetrate, and to fill, all that GOD has been pleased to create. *Worthy is the LAMB* (they shall shout) *that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honor, and Glory, and Blessing. And every Creature which is in Heaven, and on the Earth, and under the Earth, and such as are in the Sea, and all that are in them, [at this time, shall proclaim] saying, Blessing, and Honor, and Glory, and Power, be unto HIM that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the LAMB for ever and ever.* (Rev. v. 11, &c.)

This is the Voice of *the first Resurrection*, over the Partakers of which the *second Death* has no Power. It is a Voice of everlasting Joy and Thanksgiving, of Melody and of Peace. Not one discordant Note shall be heard among the heavenly Throng; but the whole Company of the Blest, innumerable in Members, and yet one in Spirit, shall sing the high Praises of their GOD and Savior for evermore.

What a glorious View will this illustrious *Assembly of the First-born* afford? Clad with everlasting Brightness, all refulgent from the Righteousness of the great Redeemer; crowned with Glory, all proceeding from the Godhead of their Savior; and triumphant in the victorious Strength of their almighty Head; what can be mentioned upon Earth with this unutterable Splendor? Dominions, Kingdoms, Empires, in their most dazzling Luster, sink into Shade

before this transcendent Blaze of Glory; as the dim Spark of Light in the Glow-worm expires at the rising Sun.

Here will commence the everlasting Autumn, the ever-joyful Harvest of Souls. The glorious Trinity will now behold the economical Labors of the gracious Covenant perfect and complete. The Godhead will pronounce over his whole new Creation, with a more glorious Emphasis than over his first, *Behold, it is very good!* The Father will rejoice in the many Sons brought into Glory. The Son, as God-man, will triumph in the Victories of Redemption, now fully accomplished and obtained. The Holy Spirit will glory in the Perfection of that Salvation, which He carried forth into the Souls of the Re-deemed, and by which He prepared them. for Heaven. "All the Company of Heaven" will celebrate the Wonderful Love of their GOD, in the Deliverance and Exaltation of Myriads of poor Sinners to Thrones and Kingdoms from Misery and Bondage. And shall these once poor Sinners be silent in his Praise? Shall these for whom all this Joy shall spring up in Heaven, be dumb, or insensible to the Joy they have caused?—O, if any can feel an Excess of Blessedness, and Gratitude, and Love, and Wonder, and Praise, in those heavenly Regions; surely it must be THEY, for whose sakes such astonishing Glories have been shown, when they merited nothing but Weeping, and Wailing, and Woe! What a Sense of Adoration mail warm their Souls, when they hear that last Call of Grace from their dear Redeemer; *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World!* And how will they attempt to answer, in a Strain of unutterable Joy, *Not unto us, Q*

LORD, *not unto us, but unto thy Name* we give *the Glory*, for all the *Mercy*, and all the *Truth*: which we saw, we tasted, we felt in Time; and which we now see and know to *endure for ever!* O what a triumphant Meeting will be here! JESUS, the Author of Salvation, receiving the whole Company .of his Redeemed; these, adoring, and wondering, and exulting in their precious Redeemer; Prophets, Apostles, Pastor, and Teachers, finding their *Crowns of rejoicing* among the beloved Souls who were called into Life through their Ministrations; happy Believers embracing with Transport their faithful Leaders; and all the near and dear Friends of Grace kindling fresh and fresh Joy, as they meet with each other in Glory. O what a Scene will this glad Day present! Is *this* Heaven; *this* the Joy of your Chosen, O Lord! When will you appear? *How long!*-----O blessed be GOD for the joyful Prospect! The Time of this Harvest shall shortly come, when *both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together.*

II. THE Autumn of the Year also preaches the Autumn of a Believer's Life upon Earth. When he is ripe for Heaven, it is not long before the Sickle of Death is put in, and the Spirit is gathered into the heavenly Garner. As soon as the Designations of Providence and Grace are fulfilled in him and by him, the Voice of GOD utters from Heaven the reviving Sound of—*Come up hither!*

III. THE Corn, when ripe, must be cut down before it can be gathered in; and, when gathered in, it must be thrashed and winnowed before it can be applied to Use.

So likewise the Christian's Body must be laid low by Death, before his Soul can mount up to the Mansions of Bliss: And thus Death, from being the forest Enemy, becomes one of the most blessed Friends to the Believer. Like a benevolent Angel, he bursts the Bars and Chains, which detain the Spirit in a World of Misery, and ushers in the Soul to a State of ineffable Joy. *Death is yours*, said the Apostle: And, without Death, who could fully possess the Life eternal?—This is among the Wonders of Redemption; the very Curse of Man becomes his Blessing; and that, which of itself, would have tumbled him down into Hell, now wafts him with a glorious Speed to the Mansions of Peace. In their last Hours, how many blessed Souls have thus perceived, that Death was their Mercy, their Privilege, their Joy? How many, when Nature could afford no Comfort, nor the Objects of Nature, have triumphed and rejoiced in the Foretaste of the Glory, just revealing? How many have braved what Sense considers with Horror; and nobly met this reputed Foe of human Life in his most dismal Forms? Read the Martyr's Pangs, but read his Comforts too; and you will find, believing living Soul, that Murder and Tyranny had no Advantage over *him*. In all these Things, he was a Conqueror, and more than a Conqueror, through HIM that loved him. Almighty Strength, unseen by Man, supported feeble Nature, and gave to a trembling Reed the unbowing Stability of an Oak. Founded on *the* ROCK, the Soul could not be moved; but, conscious of replenished Strength, looked down upon the agitated Waves with Tranquility and Peace. The Martyr's Crown was the Martyr's Joy, his "

Blood the Seed of " the Church," and his Peace is near the *golden Altar* of Salvation before the Throne in Heaven.

However tranquil and serene, *yet* every Believer's Death is a Martyrdom for Glory. He is cut off and becomes a Witness for GOD; and to a superior Interest he parts with the World. And O what Joy have thousands expressed at their last Hour, in the Prospect of what was before them! However Men may prate in their Ease, or riot in the Thoughtlessness of Folly; who would not wish to die like the Christian? Possessing a Spirit, touched with the keenest Sense of immortal things, not hardened into stoical Insensibility, he meets his Father's Will, rejoices in its wise and holy Dispensation, and receives it as the very best, which could have been appointed for him. When he sees Heaven just opening to his View, if he feel a Reluctance for any thing, it would be for his Return to dwell longer upon Earth. Let any one read the *Translations* (for such their Migrations from the Body may be called) of *Rivet, Du Moulin*, and of Hundreds more; and then let him ask his Heart, Can *this* be Death!"— *this*, which opens the Door to Life; *this*, which is swallowed up with the Sense of that Life even here! When the Soul ascends to GOD, and leaves nothing but what is corrupt and defiled to sink into Earth; has it not abundant Reason indeed to exult; *O Death, where is thy Sting! O Grave where is thy Victory!*

It is true; not all GOD'S People have this Joy of Harvest in their Departure; but still their Harvest is safe, though the Weather be not so fine. When they are gathered in, they will surely have their Measure full of Glory, and want no

more. The fore-running Joy (if it may be so called) is like the Voice from Heaven to Christ, (John xii.: 30.) not so much for the Believer's Sake as for the Help of those who remain behind. Whatever be the particular Circumstances of their Death, all GOD'S Redeemed have *Peace at the last*, and Peace for evermore.

BUT there are some, who, instead of being GOD'S Corn, are like *the Grass upon the House-tops, wherewith the Mower filleth not his Hand, nor he, that bindeth Sheaves, his Bosom*. To *fill the Hand* means the Consecration or Blessing of GOD; and *not* to fill it, consequently, the Desecration or Curse. Thus we read of *withered Branches, Stubble, dry Stubble, Chaff, Tares, whose End is burning*. The Wrath of the Lord, like a devouring Fire, shall burn up the Ungodly. They are not bound, as a Reaper binds his Sheaves, in *the Bundle of Life*, nor are they gathered into the heavenly Bosom: But they are winnowed away, like the Chaff, and cast into everlasting Fire. There the Worm of an accusing Conscience dies not, and there the flaming Wrath of GOD is never extinguished. What an awful, what an everlasting, Separation must shortly take Place between the Fruit and the Leaves, the Corn and the Chaff, the Sheep and the Goats; between all that Christ has made *to pass under the Rod*, claiming them as his own, and all that, in the Wickedness of their Hearts, disdained to have *this Man to rule over them?* It was a fearful Sight to behold Mount *Sinai* covered with Fire and Clouds, with the awful Magnificence of an holy, yet a paternal GOD: But this was a minute Appearance, compared with the Circumstances of that tremendous Day; when the Lord *shall arise terribly*

to shake, not a single Mountain, but the whole Earth; when the very *Heavens shall pass away with a great Roar, the Elements melt with fervent Heat, the Earth and the Works that are therein burnt up*, and the universal Frame of Things *dissolved*. If *Moses*, a good Man and accepted into the Favor of God, could not but *exceedingly fear and quake* at the comparatively small Display of the HOLY ONE of *Israel*, appearing for Salvation; what will all wicked Men feel, at the solemn Approach of the Divine Majesty, upon " the Wreck of Worlds," to let loose his dreadful Wrath upon them, and that fiery Indignation, which shall *devour his Adversaries*? This is an affecting Thought for Christians; and it should be an alarming Consideration to those, who *obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ*. For Persons so awfully situated, one cannot help offering a Prayer, that they may have such Grace to tremble now, as not to tremble for ever!

IV. IN this benign Season of Autumn, the Husbandman receives the Benefit of all his past Dependence upon the Constitution of Providence, which has ordered the Seasons and appointed Seedtime and Harvest. The Farmer sows in Confidence, that, at a certain Period, he shall reap. That Period he believes to be founded on the unalterable Purpose of GOD in the Constitution of Nature; and, according to his Belief, so it occurs. He gives implicit Credit to Providence, that it shall surely come to pass: Nor is he disappointed of his Hope.

So *Abraham*, both the Father of the Faithful and an eminent Instance of what the Faithful are, *believed God*,

rested upon his Truth as a sure Foundation, *that what he had promised, likely or unlikely to human View, he was able to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for Righteousness.* In like manner, *he that soweth to the Spirit,* receiving his gracious Testimony concerning Jesus, as the only Atonement and Justification, and proving that he has so received this Testimony by the Fruits of the Spirit within and without him, *shall of that Spirit reap Life everlasting.* He believes GOD'S Word and Promise concerning the mediatorial Office of the God-man; and Righteousness is imputed and imparted to him, upon believing. He feels some immediate Benefit in this Life; for, *being justified by Faith, he has Peace with GOD,* accompanied with a Hope, a Joy, a Love, which can never die. He *knows in whom he hath believed;* and he commits all Things, belonging to his Body or Soul, to Time or Eternity, into his Hands; from a firm Confidence, that all will be wisely ordered, and safely kept, for his present and eternal Good. As those, who believe, from a natural Impression of the Certainty of GOD'S Dispensations, that Harvest shall surely come, are justified by the Event and reap the Advantage of it; so the Christian, who, by the Agency of the Divine Spirit, is brought to cast himself upon Christ for the Pardon of his Sins and for a Title to Glory, is *now* (according to the Measure of Faith) as sure of Salvation, as the Immutability of GOD can make him; and the blessed Event, as sure as GOD is true, must be Life everlasting.

IN this Place we may digress a little to observe, that the Images and Symbols of divine Grace, found in natural

Objects, though they aptly convey what is done *to* the Redeemed, and *in* them here, do not reach to what the Redeemer has done *for* them in Heaven, nor to what he did, within himself or in his own Person, while upon Earth. The Illustrations from this World can only shadow forth what spiritually occurs to Believers *in* the World, or *while* they are in the World. They ascend no higher, and probably for this Reason, that we might see, that our Redemption, though carried on *in* Nature, is *above* Nature, and might be convinced, that we owe the whole of it to an Almighty Hand. Consequently, there are no natural Productions, which can represent to us the Atonement, the Righteousness, the Intercession, and the other mediatory Offices of Christ with the Godhead. These were all of too sublime a Form for Nature in any respect to rise to or illustrate. But, as it was necessary that GOD'S People should comprehend these superior Blessings, they are not *without* their Illustration. It was, however, an Illustration, framed, ordained, and revealed by GOD himself, to which no human Mind could have been equal; because, since the Fall, the human Mind is, in itself, naturally ignorant, and consequently unable to form the Ideas, of spiritual Things. As the Objects of Nature then cannot delineate those sublime and heavenly Purposes; Man, in his natural State, likewise cannot conceive them. We have a striking Proof of this in all the Wisdom of the Heathen. Therefore, Sacrifices, Oblations, and the whole Economy of the ceremonial Law, were divinely appointed to convey Ideas, which the Objects of the Field, or Garden, or the World at large, could not naturally convey, and for which they were never designed. These Rites, taken with their Commentary

and Fulfillment in the New Testament, beautifully and graciously express all, that is expedient for us to know; and by them we may receive, as well as the ancient Believers under that Dispensation, . a thousand excellent Hints, both of what Christ *hath done* for us in the Flesh, of what he *is doing* in Heaven, and of *our* future State of Happiness and Glory with him. Their whole Purport is *Prophecy* and *Doctrine*: And under one or other of these may all the Contents of the sacred Volume be arranged. A spiritual Faculty indeed is necessary to comprehend the Allusions and Images; and so it is to make a right Use even of the Images in Nature, and of all the Works of GOD; but the Exercise of this Faculty, as well as the Faculty itself, is *the true Wisdom* graciously given to Man, without which his highest Knowledge is but illustrious Ignorance, arising from the Flesh, and perishing with it. *David*, in the Spirit of this true Wisdom, professed to all *Israel*, that he knew the Purport of the Temple and its Services, *only* by Divine Tuition. *All*, says he, *in the Writing* [or Representation given by *Moses*] *from the Hand of God upon me* [by GOD'S holy Inspiration] HE MADE ME TO UNDERSTAND, even *all the Works of the Pattern*, or doctrinal Exemplar, (i Chron. xxviii. 19.) By this Power, his Mind received a Capacity to comprehend the spiritual Sense and Idea of all the legal Institutions, and those high Purposes of Grace which were implied in the visible Patterns. (Heb. viii. 5.) Read by this Capacity, there appears such an Harmony between the two Testaments, and in all the Revelations, Ordinations, and Providences of GOD, as strikes the believing Soul with an elevated Awe, and delightful Surprise: And it cannot but

look and admire, that JEHOVAH mould have done all, with so much Holiness and Wisdom in Arrangement, and with so much Mercy and Love in Manifestation, for such a Creature, such a sinful Creature, as Man.

V. EVERY Plant in the Field and Garden, and indeed every Work throughout the Creation, is framed for some particular End or Purpose, in which it finds its Rest. The vegetable Tribes have attained the Perfection designed, when they have produced their respective Flowers or Seeds. The great Object, with them all, is not so much the Nourishment of their own present Life, as the Provision for another; to obtain which, they employ all their Functions without Remission. In all Animals too, we may observe the same general Law. They have an Object to exercise and fill every Faculty; and no Faculty is at Rest, till it has discovered and obtained its Object.

THIS great philosophic Truth grounded upon Nature, holds good, though carried much higher, in Theology or Grace. The great Author of all things, always acting wisely, must act as surely, and with equal Design, in the spiritual as in the material World: And if with Design, then necessarily with Effect. AS God is omnipotent, his Design must also have, not a *partial* or *accidental*, but a *positive* and *complete* Effect: And as He is omniscient, both Design and Effect must be *perfectly disposed* and *adapted* to each other. Thus far a mere Philosopher may follow us; and thus far have heathen Philosophers, by the mere Force of Reason, advanced and concluded: They, like some others, agreed to the Rule, but knew not how to apply it. The

Christian Philosopher (by which Term I mean, not a proud Creature puffed up with the Conceit of its own Knowledge, but an humble Mind, made *wise unto Salvation*) is enabled to go farther, and to *enjoy* in his Heart those Truths, which, at the most *they* could but *speculate* upon in their Heads. Like them, he fees they stand upon the Ground of *right Reason*, because they are *Truths* but he receives them and rests upon them most entirely, because, above all Considerations of mere Reason, they are founded upon the *Revelation of God*, who is the *Author* of Truth. One of these Truths is the *Immortality* of the human Soul, which indeed the wiser Heathens acknowledged upon the most rational Principles; but which, to the Christian, is *enlightened* to a Demonstration *by the Gospel*. (2 Tim. i. 10.) If then we apply the Law of Nature before us to this Proposition, we may consider the *Faculty* of our Souls, and the *Object* of that Faculty.—Looking into ourselves, we find IDEAS raised of an *eternal State*, a *Consciousness* of that infinite *Duration*, and a *Perception*, not only of its *Possibility*, but of its absolutely *necessary Existence*: We find also a WISH to participate that eternal Existence, a *Grasping* after it as after a clear and perceptible *Object* before us, and a Shrinking from the very Notion of Annihilation as a dark and unnatural Void. Now, God's Works cannot be useless; and as He placed the Desires of Immortality in the Mind; He would have created a useless Work in forming those Faculties and Capacities, if he had not also created an *End* to fulfill them. This Immortality then must be the Object and the Rest of these Faculties; for our Faculties cannot be said to find their *Rest* in ceasing *to be*; because *Rest* is a

relative Term, and necessarily implies a *Being*. It seems absurd to say, that any thing *rests*, which does *not exist*. It is also evident that the Mind does not obtain *that* Rest in this present State, which it *conceives*, and which it *covets*. Neither its Conceptions nor Volitions are answered here. Yet it shudders, with a melancholy Horror, at the very Doubt of not obtaining them. With all the Atheism of Sin in our Nature, we cannot look with ease at this black Atheism, which would deprive GOD of some proposed End in us, and *us* of that End for which we exist. For to say that we exist only to crawl a few Years upon Earth, and to live in Expectation and die in Disappointment, is charging the Author of all Wisdom with natural and moral Defects without Number, with Causes deficient in Design, and with Ends void of all Goodness, Mercy, or Use. But, allowing this to be impossible, we may look into ourselves, and see a *Faculty*, capable of *comprehending* Immortality, capable too of *desiring* it as an ultimate Goody and extremely unsatisfied with the very Notion of not obtaining it. Either, therefore. *Immortality* is the *Object* of that mental *Faculty* which seeks it as its Rest; or God has created a *Faculty without* an Object. If he would avoid this latter Proposition, (which is a Blasphemy against the Wisdom and Power of GOD in his greatest Work: upon Earth) we must then adopt this. Conclusion; that GOD himself has impressed our Souls with the *Thought* of Immortality, given them an impetuous *Desire* after this Immortality, and so having framed this *Faculty* for that *Object*, has made it the Design of our Being, and our ultimate Rest. Thus, according to the Poet,

*The Soul, uneasy and confined from Home,
Rests and expatiates in a Life to come.*

On the other hand, remove the Conclusion; and does not this impious Absurdity follow? An all-wise and omnipotent Being has created a Work without Design, made a Tendency which loses its End, and committed (O horrible to say!) such an Offence against immutable Truth, as to form Premises with erroneous Conclusions, or (what is just as erroneous) with none at all. Yet this is the Logic of all the very wise Heads, who, from the Beginning of the World, have taken upon them to dispute against: the Immortality of the Soul.

But other great and comfortable Truths are suggested to us by a View of the fixed Purpose of GOD in the Objects of Nature.

WE have considered, from Reason, the Necessity of the Soul's Immortality, which is abundantly confirmed by divine Revelation. Revelation however does not leave us here, but carries us on to a Knowledge, which Reason could never have attained; for it not only assures us of Immortality, but explains the *Condition* of Men in it, with other Circumstances of the utmost Magnitude and Importance. We find it revealed, for instance, that, though Man be created naturally immortal, he has lost by Sin the original *Happiness* which attended his Immortality, and is now plunged into a State of Impurity, which has annexed *Misery* in its stead. In other Words, he has lost that holy *Faculty*, which finds its *Object* in GOD and his Will, and has obtained a sinful Faculty, which seeks an Object of

Gratification any where and every where beside, and becomes wretched because it can no where obtain it. It is so in this World, where there are many Things to meet with the *animal* Part of his Nature; though none of them do or can satisfy the Longings of the *immortal* Part. In the World of Spirits, where not even these low Palliations can be found, human Misery is completed: And one great Occasion of it will be, what Divines usually call the *pœna damni*, that *Pain of Loss* of which we are treating. The Soul may rove and be restless, but shall not find; and the Emphasis of the Distress will be, that the unhappy Beings, who may feel it, will know that they *never* can find, and must therefore be restless still. On the other hand, to the Children of GOD is imparted a spiritual Faculty, in the Stead of what was originally lost, which seeks GOD as the great Object of all its Exercise, and the great Fulfillment of all its Capacities. Here it *rafts*. Like *Noah's Dove*, it has at length found somewhat to stay upon. It is no longer whirled in the Circumference of Things, but finds a Center, which Center is *Rest itself*. Thus (according to the Scripture) those, *who have believed, do enter into Rest, and have ceased from their own Works, as God did from his*. They have found that Object which fills their Faculty, and, by filling it with that *Fullness which filleth all in all*, constitutes, constitutes every Particle of its, true Happiness both here and hereafter. This Object is GOD himself, *who only HATH Immortality* as his own; and in proportion as Believers are enabled to exercise the spiritual Faculty of divine Grace upon this Object, they are happy, fixed, and at Rest. They have found their true Center and Stay, the Want of which would make them, as it does all other Men,

restless and uneasy, always in Chase of solid Peace, but never finding more than its Shadow. The Faculty, filled in all its Measure from GOD, who is its Object, can want nothing; not only because *itself* is filled for the present, but because it will always participate that FULLNESS, or the divine and all-sufficient Being, who fills all Expansion, all Time, all Existence, in an Instant, yet for Ever; and to whom the universal ALL is an infinite HERE and an everlasting Now. Consequently we see, that, as . the Soul of Man was originally made for GOD, it can never be eternally happy without Him. If it seek Peace elsewhere, it can find none. If it depart from this World without finding Him, it launches into an Abyss, where HE will not be found in Peace for ever. Consequently also we see, that that the Lord having granted to his Redeemed the Faculty of his Grace and divine Nature, the Object of which is HIMSELF in Glory; this Faculty inclines the Soul in holy Fervor and blessed Hope, through all the Circumstances and Obstructions of this mortal Life, to that heavenly Object as its Fullness and its End. *Whom have I in Heaven but Thee* (says such a Soul); *or what do I desire upon Earth in comparison of Thee? Thou art my Help and my Deliverer; make no long tarrying, O my God!--*The answer is; *Surely, I come quickly: AND, ye, that hunger now, shall be filled.*

ONE important Reflection more, which seems necessarily to arise from the present Matter of Consideration, must not be passed by. If GOD has ordained, that all the Powers in the natural World shall work for certain and unfrustrable Ends: And if, in the spiritual World, there are like

Conformities between Faculties and Objects; then surely its Operations and Effects must, at the least, be equally certain and unfrustrable. This Argument is convincingly drawn *a fortiori*; for if the spiritual Existences are of higher Importance than the merely material, as perhaps nobody will deny; then GOD, having established certain Effects to result from certain Causes in the one, will have had a proportionate Regard to ensure them in the other. If the Operations of Nature are by no Means left to Chance, but are evidently carried on by the certain Energy of the divine Providence; shall not the Salvation of his People, to effect which cost him no less than the Sufferings and Death of his Son, be ordered in all Things and sure? Shall not the final Happiness of his Redeemed, for which he has, through every Age, taken such peculiar Care, and for which from before all Ages framed his Covenant, as well as framed a World to illustrate, be fixed and indisputable? *Let God be true* who has declared it by so many infallible Tokens, *and every Man a Liar* who presumes to deny them. All GOD'S Works confirm the salutary Truths of his Word. Every Operation in Nature yields its Portion of Evidence. The Reason of Things also confirms the sure Decree: And indeed the Reason of Man that Particle of Truth universal, when divested of Prejudice and unclogged by Sin, assents to the Propriety of such a Determination. But, above all, the Wisdom of GOD himself, and the Voice of GOD in his Word which is his Wisdom revealed, have rendered these Conclusions, drawn from that and other Evidences, *infallible*: because he has *shewed the Immutability of his Counsel* and *interposed himself by an Oath to accomplish them.* (Heb. vi. 17.) *The Mountains*

shall depart, and the Hills be removed; but my Kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my Peace be removed, faith the LORD that hath Mercy on thee. (Isaiah liv. 10.) Thus also faith Christ; I give unto them [his Sheep] eternal Life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my Hand. For, this is the FATHER'S Will, which hath sent me, that of ALL which he hath given me, I should lose NOTHING; but should raise it up again at that sent me, that EVERY ONE which seeth the SON, and believeth on him, may have everlasting Life; and I will raise him up at the last Day. (Comp. John x. 28. with vi. 39, 40.) This is the Testimony of the FATHER and the SON: And what faith the SPIRIT of Truth, speaking by the Apostle? Neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. viii. 38, 39.) He that cannot believe this immense, this dignified Evidence, could not believe any Attestations, even though one rose again from the Dead to make them.

VI. THE Division of numberless Leaves and Flowers into *three* Members or Petals upon one and the same Stalk, affords the Mind a Hint of frequent Meditation upon that fundamental Doctrine of Christianity, the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, for ever to be worshipped and adored.

IT was not an unsolid Maxim of the late Mr. *Baxter* (whatever may be thought of some of his Notions) that "in

a right Scheme of Theology, Unity in Trinity would go through the whole Method because (says he) the Divine Trinity in Unity has expressed itself in the whole Frame of Nature and Morality." (See his Life, P. ii. p. 297. and P. iii. p. 69.) It is so in the heavenly Fluids, in earthly Animals and Plants, and in the mortal and immortal Part of Man. It is the Voice of the Scripture, the very Revelation of GOD. If we are not *wise above what is written*, or what is worked, by JEHOVAH himself; or rather, if we are wise enough, through Grace, to understand his Mind and Will in his Works and Word, we shall see, that the whole of our Salvation is concerned in the experimental Knowledge of this Truth; that the First Person is our Father in Christ and by the Spirit, that the Second Person is our Redeemer and Head through the Father and Spirit, and that the Third Person is our Restorer and Sanctifier in the Son and the Father. The Knowledge, not theoretic or speculative, but gracious and faithful, of this sublime Mystery is the Master-Key to unlock the other great mysteries and Principles of the Christian's Expectation and Hope. The Ignorance of this is the Parent of manifold Errors, useless and contradictory in themselves, and opposite to the Light, the Life, and the Salvation of GOD.

1. Jehovah—Father]
2. Jehovah—Son]One Jehovah
3. Jehovah—Spirit]
1. GOD—Creator]
2. GOD—Redeemer]ONE GOD
3. GOD—Sanctifier]
1. Essence—Love]
2. Essence—Wisdom]One Essence
3. Essence—Power]

In the Creatures.

1. Fire — —]
2. Light — —]One Sun
3. Matter — —]
1. Body, or Substance]
2. Soul, or Affection]One Man
3. Spirit, or Mind]
1. Fire — —]Three distinctions
2. Light — —]in one substance of the
3. Spirit — —]material heavens

The are three that bear record in Heaven [the spiritual World] the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY GHOST; And these THREE are ONE: And there are three that bear Witness in Earth, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood; and these agree in one, one. If we receive the Witness of Men, the Witness of God is greater. John v. 7, 8, 9.

VII. IN Autumn, the Husbandman gathers the Seeds for succeeding Crops. These contain the *Germen*, or Principle, of a new«Life, which, upon the Corruption and Decay of the outward Shell, springs up and appears.

In like Manner, when the Believer drops his Body on the Earth, it shall one Day spring up again; not a natural Body, as it was sown, but a spiritual Body with an incorruptible Life. The natural Body must rot and decay, because it is wholly contaminated by Corruption and Sin; but that Principle of Life, which this outward Shell contains, being radically immortal, and, cleansed by the Purification of the Redeemer, shall then be radically impeccable too. Happiness, everlasting Happiness, will therefore ensue; and the new-born Body, united to its new-born Soul, shall be with GOD, and enjoy GOD, for evermore.

TO CONCLUDE. How rich, and how various, are the temporal Benefits, with which GOD has endowed his Creature, MAN? The Earth pours forth the most delicious and wholesome Productions, to satiate his Appetite, and to invigorate his Frame. The Fields wave with Corn, to give him Bread; the Flocks offer their Excess of Wool, to keep him warm; Vineyards afford him Wine, the Pastures Meat, and the choicest Trees their most exquisite Fruit. For him,

the Horse and the Ox are ready Drudges, content with the Offal which he cannot use, or with the spontaneous Growth of the Soil, or at most with a small Portion of the Increase which their own Labor procures. For him, the Herds deny their Offspring the profluent Juice, and yield themselves the patient Victims of the deadly Knife. The Birds delight to refresh him by their harmonious Voice, and call upon his Heart to sound a sublimer Praise. The Bees hum their low Applause, and, conscious (as it were) of the Meanness of their Song, make up in Labor what they want in Tune. These pay a dulcified Tribute to their sublunary Lord. In a Word, view the World around; explore the Fields; visit the Rivers, or the briny Shores; and see, if every Thing, which yields at all, does not yield either Food, or Health, or Delight, to Man.—But, is he thankful to his Creator for his Profusion of Blessings? Does he express that Thankfulness by a true and proper Use. of such overflowing Mercies? Or is not the plenteous Table abused by Gluttony, and the cheerful Viand by Drunkenness? His Health by Acts of Riot, and his Strength by repeated Sins? Instead of humble Praise, does he not insolently reproach his great Benefactor, by trampling on his Gifts before his Eyes?—And yet, manifold and abundant as these Bounties are, they all grow upon a World, which is *under the Curse*, and for a Creature which incurred it—upon a World, which, if there had been no Mercy beyond it, or if all its Productions had been analogous to his Sins, would have

Produced nothing but Thistles, and 'horns, and bitter Herbs. But let him look above the Soil beneath his Feet;

and see the quick Succession of providential Good pouring round him from the Skies. These also contain an inexhaustible Fund of Blessing for unthinking, or ill-thinking Man. From them are distilled the kindly Dews; from them descend the flowing Rains; and through them are conveyed all the genial Influences of the vast Expanse, which surrounds the World.

Who thinks of *these* with grateful Praise? Who offers the First-fruits of Thanksgiving to the great Author of continual Good?--Above all; that wonderful Orb of Day, which emits the cheerful Light, by which we behold the other Treasures of the Creator's Power, exerts a certain and well-proportioned Strength to fructify, adorn, and carry on the whole System of Being about us. This glorious Luminary, with the Moon and innumerable Stars, attracts our Eyes upward, and, in a Manner, demands an Elevation of our Minds to HIM that made them.— But who obeys the duteous Call? Who thanks the Almighty for the Light of the Day? Who blesses him for his Moon, or for the Stars of the Night? We all behold the Works; but do all adore the great Architect, who formed them? If, as the Poet sings,

An undevout Astronomer is mad;

who are truly or always in their Senses? And upon the Charge of Unthankfulness, which of us all can cast the first Stone at his Brother?—Yet all these Objects of i Heaven, Heaven and Earth are working for and attending upon Man: He is their " Center, *' in Respect of final Causes;" and they are made, not to give Luster, or produce

Fruit for themselves, but for him. They indeed do center in him. His Welfare is the Object of their Existence; and they have no visible End of Being beyond him. They all point to him; and at the same Time all point him to GOD. That is *his* only Center: And there only he finds *his* Rest.—We see also in Nature a double Motion. The Moon moves round the Earth, and attends its Motion implicitly throughout her Orbit. Other vast Orbs have inferior Orbs encircling them, obeying them in their Courses, and never departing from their Path. But their common, universal Center is the Sun. By him they mine, and round him' whatever Motions they make beside, they uniformly revolve. So likewise the Creatures of the Earth are the Satellites of Man; as he is a Satellite to GOD. They move round him and for him; while he, together with them, have their great Center in the Almighty. It is the Glory of the inferior Creatures, to demonstrate to *Man* their Maker's Wisdom and Power. It is the Glory of Man to render *their* Praise vocal by offering up *his own*. His Wisdom it is to concentrate the diffusive Rays of divine Beneficence, that his Soul may be more enlightened, and his Heart the more warmed with Love. And his Happiness consists in obeying his Center, as the Cause of his Motion and the Point of his Rest. The Earth revolves, and revolves with Rapidity. Its Progress is swift beyond human Conception. But, with all this Vehemence, it obtains a real Rest. Its Inhabitants cannot feel the impetuous Whirl; nor are they alarmed at passing through the Air with a Course of above 58,000 Miles in an Hour; *i. e.* with a Velocity 140 Times greater than that of a Cannon-ball. The Reason is; the World obeys its Center, without the least Aberration; and,

therefore, though rapid in Motion, it partakes the Calm of Rest. Could it wander ever so little, it must feel the Jar of Discord. In the Loss of its proper Place, it would meet continual Repulsion; till, convulsed in its own Frame, and clashing with the Frame of all Things besides, it would receive an entire Dissolution. So the blest Inhabitants of Heaven, like the Stars of Heaven, move in their Courses; yet, moving with GOD, the Center of their Being, they enjoy the Felicity of his Rest. They are ever employed, ever in Activity: Yet always serene, always in Bliss. Fallen Spirits, on the contrary, are *wandering Stars*, without Stay or Center; and for them is consequently reserved the *Blackness* and all the Disorders of *Darkness for ever*. Again; what can be quicker than a Thought? It can traverse over the Earth, and pass to the Sun, or through all we can perceive or cogitate, in a Moment. Yet our Thought is still at Home. Its Center is in our Mind, and, in all its Excursion, finds its Rest within us. In like Manner, holy Spirits, though they may descend to Earth, or pervade all the Systems of universal Nature, are never absent from GOD, nor out of Heaven. He is the Point of their Rest, and the Axis of their Motion.

When Man fell from GOD, he left the Orbit assigned him; and, in consequence, all the Faculties of his Soul fell into Confusion. They had lost their Center, and were at no Stay. Like *Cain*, Man has been . a Wanderer from that unhappy Day. The Chaos of the Poets, is no Fable applied to his Mind. He rushed then, and he rushes now, unless restrained, precipitately into Ruin. His Body crumbles into Atoms, and his Soul, unable of itself to recover its Center,

still wanders on in Regions of *outer Darkness*, where GOD withholds his Rays, and not a Glimmer of Comfort can shine. Like an Orb, too remote from its Place, Man's fallen Nature is now disordered, dark, and frigid: And it must remain so, till by Mercy Man be brought into his Place again.

Our Wisdom is to observe GOD'S Works, and to keep them, not in our Eyes only, but in our Hearts. *Whoso is wise* (says the Psalmist), *and will observe these Things; even they shall understand the Loving-kindness of the LORD.* (Psalm cvii. 43.) We are to observe them indeed, yet not for themselves as the End, but as the Mirror in which we may behold the Goodness and Majesty of our Maker, and the Medium through which we may contemplate heavenly Things. When we can do this, we have obtained *Wisdom*—Wisdom, to use rightly and apply truly the natural Objects—and Wisdom, to understand, beyond the Forms of Matter, what they represent of the loving Kindness of the Lord. We shall then have arrived at one great Purpose of our Being on Earth, and shall no longer creep upon it as poor Reptiles who have no better Home, but may walk erect as "human half divine/" and use it as a Step or Threshold to our heavenly Mansion. Here behold the DIGNITY OF MAN; not that wretched Dignity, which he can share as an Animal, and of which some so loudly boast; but that, which he enjoys as a Son of GOD, and an Heir of his glorious Kingdom: Not the earthly Superiority he holds above the Brutes; but his Approximation to the Skies, and his gracious Intercourse with Heaven: Not his Eminence with vain and dying Man,

but his Consociation with GOD.— Well then, may we ask ourselves, and all the World, *What hath God worked?*--We have seen and do see his Works upon the Earth. These, indeed, are Part of what GOD has worked. But they are minute and trifling all, compared with what he has formed in Things divine, and beyond the Skies. They are but as a Ladder to the Building, or as a Workman's Scaffold on the Outside of the Palace. The Tabernacle likewise and all its Services, though just and correct, yielded but a saint Glimmering of those heavenly Things, which they were intended to represent. In that Respects and because they were made of corruptible Substances, they could not but be (as the Apostle calls them) *weak and beggarly Elements*—too fragile to continue long, too mean exactly to describe. And though the Furniture of this vast Frame of Things about us incomparably exceeds in Grandeur the Pomp of those legal Institutions; yet even this is but a poor Scene, calculated as it is to convey some Notices of Splendor, when placed with that exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, which blazes round the *Holiest of all*. What is the Sun, for Instance, *in* all his Luster, compared with that great Luminary of Heaven, who is LIGHT himself, Light inaccessible, Light essential, Light eternal? A Kay of it, descending upon St. *Paul* near *Damascus*, swallowed up the meridian Splendor of the Sun, as though it had been but a Spark or an Atom. What then shall the full and unveiled Brightness be, where JEHOVAH himself is the only, and the unbounded Light?—It is too much for mortal Eye, too much for human Reason, in their present Imbecility, to look upon and contemplate.—*What hath God worked* also for THEE, O Believer? Can you tell,

WHAT *He hath done for thy Soul* ?—He has done Works, surpassing in Grace all that was ever shown to Angels; Works surpassing in Glory all that was ever conceived by Men.—This is a saint Outline of what he has done. The Lord (JEHOVAH is his Name) quitted his celestial Throne, and assumed the humble Flesh of Man, that he might raise him from the Dunghill of Pollution to the Participation of his holy Kingdom. He suffered, groaned, and died, in human Clay, to establish a full Atonement for human Sin: And he lived, atoned, and rose again, to bring in for Man an everlasting Righteousness. He then *ascended up on high, having led Captivity captive*, and is entered into the heavenly Place, as the great High-priest of his People, to reconcile GOD to Man, and to lift up Man to his GOD. In a Word ; if we look at what he has done in the material World; we may, in the astonished Adoration of the Psalmist, ejaculate; LORD, *how manifold are thy works; in Wisdom hast thou made them ALL: The Earth is full of thy Riches!*--But, if we attempt to survey what his divine Power has worked in the spiritual Creation; Wonder, Love, and Rapture will seize us at once; and all the Powers of our Souls must pour forth that ardent Exclamation; *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and knowledge of GOD! How inscrutable are his Decrees! And how unsearchable his Ways!*—For of HIM, and through HIM, and to HIM, are ALL Things: *To him be the Glory, for ever I Amen.*

THE END.