

THE  
CHRISTIAN  
**REMEMBRANCER;**  
OR,  
SHORT REFLECTIONS  
UPON THE  
*FAITH, LIFE, AND CONDUCT*  
Of  
**A REAL CHRISTIAN.**  
  
BY  
  
**AMBROSE SERLE, ESQ.**

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“Of these things put them in remembrance.”  
2 Tim. ii. 14.

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## **ABOUT AMBROSE SERLE**

When this book first came to the attention of Grace-eBooks.com, it was immediately evident that Christ was on every page of its contents, and in virtually every chapter title. That not only means the word *Christ*, but the *person* of Christ. If you are a lover of Christ and the message of reconciliation and redemption in Him, you will find this one of the most assuring and easily read e-books on the site. Come and see what author Ambrose Serle thinks of Christ. You won't be disappointed.

Ambrose Serle (1742–1812) was an English civil servant, diarist and writer of Christian prose and hymns as well as the book titled *The Christian Remembrancer* here being posted.

His *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle, Secretary to Lord Howe 1776-1778* is a primary source in the history of the American Revolution. The Lord Howe concerned was Richard Howe, 1st Earl Howe.

Ambrose Serle was the private secretary to the British general William Howe. He was the author of *Americans Against Liberty* a pamphlet published anonymously that defends the British Empire as a rightful and just government. It also criticizes the American colonists as enemies of the British public and opponents of the freedoms provided by Great Britain. He believed the colonists' complaints against King George III were unimportant and were not a strong enough reason to revolt against the government. He thought that the colonies harmed England financially, but Britain had little choice but to govern and protect them.

He was a strong loyalist and supported England greatly. His pamphlet writings of finances influenced the speeches of Lord North, an influential representative in Parliament, and an important

figure for both sides in the revolution. While the pamphlets effects were less noticeable with the patriots, they were there just the same.

Those things said, please do not let them influence your resolve to read this work. Forgive him, and read on.

## PREFACE

THIS little treatise is divided into three parts; the first of which relates chiefly to the word and work of God in the redemption of souls by Jesus Christ; the second, to the inward and practical experience of this redemption in the heart of the believer; and the third, to his outward conversation and conduct with others. The addresses to God, at the end of each part, may be read alone, or all together, in their order, as one prayer.

On this wide and important subject, the reflections, which might have been greatly multiplied, are brought into as narrow a compass as possible, being intended rather for hints to carry on the mind to farther meditations, than for full or exact meditations themselves. This treatise therefore is printed for the pocket, that the serious Christian may find it a little Remembrancer, with many short errands to his heart, which will neither encumber him to carry, nor fatigue him to read.

As the Author humbly believes, that he has had no other view in these reflections which have employed some of his solitary hours, than the glory of a gracious God and the edification of believers; he only requests, as one of the greatest favors he needs, that the pious reader will remember him, in return, before the throne of grace; that the (things, of which he has endeavored to put others in remembrance, may never be forgotten by himself, but be known, experienced, and enjoyed, by him more and more. The acquisition of many prayers on this account, from his Christian brethren, is of such value and importance in his mind, as would make him a far higher compensation indeed, than he has a right to expect, for these humble labors,, which need the mercy and favor of God, and the kindness and candor of every good man.

## **SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF AMBROSE SERLE, ESQ.**

Not equal grace, by Paul obtain'd,  
Nor Peter's pardon I require;  
But what upon the Cross was gain'd  
By the poor thief, would I desire!

COPERNICUS' EPITAPH.

IT is a natural wish to become acquainted with the *Lives* of those individuals by whose writings we have been delighted and improved. We inquire after the spot that gave them birth, after the education which they received, and want to know the sphere in which they moved with pleasure to themselves and with advantage to the community. This is congenial with the disposition of man, and gratifying to the curiosity of creatures endowed with the least degree of rationality: It is a source of innocent gratification.

Mr. AMBROSE SERLE, the subject of this short Biography, as he loved so he always lived in a state of seclusion and retirement. In vain, therefore, have we sought after particulars of his life beyond those suggested to us by his writings. He occupied a situation under Government, and the duties of which he discharged with diligence and integrity. Upon the decline of his health at an advanced age he visited *Worthing*, in Sussex, where he expired after having exhibited a degree of fortitude and resignation under his bodily sufferings becoming his Christian Profession. We should have been happy to furnish the Reader with some incidents of his *Life* and *Death*; but our inquiries have not been crowned with success. Suffice it, therefore, to say, that he lived and died a sincere and zealous professor of our common Christianity.

Indeed the Reader will be enabled to form a just idea of the character of the *deceased* from various parts of his writings. In these representations we cannot err, and *extracts* of this description will be gratifying to the curiosity.

His Works were *Horae Solitaries; the Church of God; the Christian Parent; the Christian Husbandry, or Companion in the Field and Garden; Charis, or Reflections on the Holy Spirit; the Christian Remembrancer; A New Dialogue of the Dead; Five Minutes' Consideration; Apology for the Church of Rome*; and several other small tracts. The volumes whose titles are here enumerated shall be briefly characterized; and a few extracts from a posthumous work *Secret Thoughts of a Christian lately departed* shall conclude this piece of biography.

*Horae Solitaries* consists of two volumes; the one having for its subject the divinity of Jesus Christ; the other, treating on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The work is made up of ESSAYS on some remarkable names and titles both of Christ and of the Spirit occurring in the Old and New Testaments. The Hebrew is well known to attach significant names to every thing. This peculiarity of the sacred language is here made subservient to the establishment of the Holy Trinity. A' *third* volume, which may be denominated an appendix to this work, has been added, entitled *the Church of God*, being ESSAYS on various names and titles given to the church in the Holy Scriptures. The whole forms one compact system of divinity. It has passed through several editions, and has been well received by the religious world.

The *Christian Parent* is a small volume, but replete with instruction. It consists of short and plain discourses concerning God and the works and word of God in creation, redemption, and sanctification, intended originally for some young persons in a family. The plan embraces a large and entertaining variety. . *Christian Husbandry*, or a Companion for the Christian in his Field and Garden. The very title of this work is indicative of its genius and tendency. Some divines have exercised their pen in a similar way, particularly

Hervey and Pearsall, as well as Flavel and Bunyan of pious memory. This little treatise is recommended strongly by the late Rev. W. Romaine, in an address to the reader, dated 1789, and which is prefixed to the work. The volume is distributed into four portions, denominated after the FOUR SEASONS of the year; The whole closes with a few pieces of devotional poetry.

*Charis, or Reflections on the Holy Spirit in the Salvation of Men.* In the Preface the Author informs the reader that the Reflections of which the work consists " originated at some distance from town in a conversation with which he was indulged in the company of two pious clergymen." Here is much curious discussion, and the subject cannot fail to interest every professor of Christianity.

*The Christian Remembrancer* comes next, and will be noticed towards the close of this biography. It may, however, here be pronounced the most popular of all the Author's productions, having ran through various editions, and been widely circulated throughout the religious world.

*A New Dialogue of the Dead.*• this is a supposed debate between a crucified Thief and the Apostle Paul upon the question—Who was the greatest sinner before conversion? It is a small pamphlet, and will gratify pious curiosity.

*Five Minutes' Consideration on TIME and ETERNITY* is likewise a small pamphlet of a serious and useful tendency.

*The Apology for the Church of Rome*, which is ascribed to the same Author, is an ironical piece, exposing its superstition, uncharitableness, and bigotry.

After the Author's decease, *Secret Thoughts of a Christian lately departed*, was published, and well received by all the admirers of his former works. From this production we shall select a few passages illustrative of his general temper and conduct. Indeed, there runs through all the effusions of his pen a strong vein of benevolence and piety. Sincerely convinced of the truth and excellence of revealed

religion, he earnestly strove to facilitate its spread among his fellow creatures. Thus he promoted the present welfare and eternal happiness of mankind.

This excellent man died in August 1812, and in the preceding September he thus expresses himself with great seriousness and resignation: " I am now entering upon the seventieth year of my age; and here J may raise an Ebenezer of gratitude and praise. Thus has the Lord sustained me many years more than \ once supposed that I could have lived upon earth. How much of mercy and goodness have I enjoyed all my days! Once I was nothing. Your favor brought me into being. Yet, being born a sinner, your patience endured for many years, till your Holy Spirit renewed me in the spirit of my mind, and rendered me, O Lord, capable of receiving your truth in its light and love, and of tasting how good and gracious you are, of which I have had a thousand proofs and pledges. From how many dangers and sins have I been delivered, from my youth up until now! How many mercies, temporal and spiritual, have I enjoyed through your bountiful providence and exuberant grace! When I have been departing from you, your goodness has prevented me, and turned my heart and feet in the right way. It was your grace which bestowed faith upon me, and kept that faith alive from day to day. If you had withdrawn your powerful hand, I should have been like the backsliding heifer, and have fallen by degrees into all the corruptions of the world, of the flesh, and of the devil: None would have been worse than myself. I should soon have been both a practical and a theoretical atheist, and have lived according to my fallen nature, without God in the world. To what dreadful extremities might I have run! But your mercy prevented the horrid career. Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto you be all the praise, that I am a sinner redeemed, restored, and made willing to love, to serve, to follow, and to enjoy your holy truth, and to walk in all your blessed ways! O! may I still be fighting the good fight of faith to the end, and never draw back, till I receive the crown, which, I trust, you have prepared for me at your appearing, or when I am called to appear before you!—My times, I bless him, are all in his

hands ; and I rejoice, that they are lodged there for my true welfare and safety. The world and its vanities, with my weakness and infirmities, are all passing away, and will soon come to an end; and now is the day coming on, which shall introduce me into a glorious world, and a blissful eternity. It is my Lord's appointment, and therefore must be well. He has loved me with an everlasting love, for the purpose of drawing me, and at this very period of time, to himself and to his glory. All is well, because he has done it. I am, and I desire to be, perfectly satisfied. My flesh shall rest in hope ; and my soul shall soar above all corruption and sorrow. O! blessed be my God, and my Father, for bringing me to this issue! To him be ascribed all glory, through my dear and gracious Redeemer!"

It is also worthy of notice, that *two months* only previous to his departure he writes with unfeigned humility: "Mine *age* and my *disorder* put me continually in mind that I have no long continuance here. How shall I face death, usually styled the king of terrors? How shall I appear in the presence of God? I have surely no other foundation of hope but in the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. I have no help but in the Spirit of Truth, by whom I have access to this grace wherein I stand. I have no plea but this one, which the Lord will not reject,—God be merciful to me a sinner!"

"What is it to die! I know not how my present disorder may terminate; but God, my heavenly Father, knows: I desire to be all submission to his holy will, wisdom, and truth, which is engaged to make every thing work together for my good. It is however a serious thing to die—a very serious thing to lie in the grave, and to be crumbled into forsaken and unknown dust. It is a serious thing to fly in spirit into regions we know not where, and to become all mind dissolved from matter. There is but one stay or hope, and it will be well tried; but one anchor to the soul, which is sure and stedfast, which is the promise of God's word respecting Jesus Christ, and his finished salvation. The Spirit of Grace also must apply this, and keep it in force, or the soul will sink in gloom, or be swallowed up in despair. Lord, my God, be with me in my departing hours; make

all my bed in my sickness; sustain my drooping spirit; and when my flesh and heart fail, be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever! Amen!"

Nor must we omit to introduce his observations *two days* only previous to the attack of that disorder whose ravages consigned him to the tomb. They are the thoughts of a serious rational being, conscious that he was approaching the confines of an eternal world. He therefore justly remarks:

"I know not *when*, *where*, or by *what* disease I shall die. This I leave, with entire submission, to the will and disposal of my heavenly Father, who has engaged himself to do the best for me; who has promised to make all my bed in my sickness, and who has conquered death for me, through my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is, however, no slight affair to be dissolved from the body, and for the spirit to fly to an unknown world. It requires no ordinary degree of faith and patience to meet it well, and as becomes a Christian. May I never presume upon my own strength; wisdom, or righteousness, but depart from them as he has enabled me to live, upon the mercy, help, and righteousness of my Lord and Savior, who has engaged himself to me by a thousand ties, not one of which, I trust, shall ever be broken. Lord, help me to believe, and help my natural unbelief! Stand by, and support me, by your Holy Spirit, in my dying hour. Let not Satan prevail over the weakness of my mortal frame, but strengthen me with special might by your Spirit, in the inner man; that while the outward man verges to decay, I may meet what is terrible to nature with holy calmness, and with such composure of soul as may glorify you, and encourage my Christian friends to rejoice in your goodness towards me, and to be encouraged for themselves! O! let me depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen, and my soul has tasted, your precious salvation! Be with, and uphold me, and then all shall be well, and I shall have nothing to do or say, but blessed be God, who gives me the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen! Hallelujah, for evermore! Amen! I write this with a trembling hand; but blessed be God, with an undismayed heart, through the love of Christ vouchsafed to me.

Blessing, glory, honor, power, to HIM that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever! Amen! Hallelu-JAH ! — July 14th, 1812."

In the Preface to the *Secret Thoughts*, which it will be recollected was a *posthumous* publication, it is mentioned that he suffered two attacks of a paralytic disorder, which though marked on its primary appearance by the most favorable appearance proved fatal in its subsequent recurrence. And it is then added—" The circumstances which attended the latter part of the Author's illness were such as precluded his friends the mournful gratification of conversing with him, but his patient resignation under suffering, and his undisturbed serenity in the contemplation of his approaching departure, afforded at once an evidence of his feelings and a consolation to their own." Dying at Worthing, he was interred in the church-yard of Broadwater, which is the parish in which this celebrated watering place stands. The following lines constitute the inscription which his sorrowing relatives have placed on his tomb.

H. S. E. O. Q. M. F.  
AMBKOSII SERLE,  
Lector,  
Animam cognoscere si vis,  
Ad coelum, per fidem in Cliristo,  
Surge ac Sequere.  
Natus est 30°. die August!, 1742:  
Denatus lmo. die Augusti, 1812.

It now remains that something should be said respecting the nature and tendency of the following work. Little indeed need be advanced concerning a production which has been so great a favorite with the religious world. It is too well known to require any elaborate description. Its sentiments accord with the articles of the church of England, and its spirit is in unison with the New Testament.

*Love of the Brethren* is at once the glory and badge of the religion of Christ. PEACE he bequeathed to his beloved disciples as his last and

best legacy. And the Apostle assures us, that there Now abideth *Faith, Hope, and Charity*, but the *greatest* of these is CHARITY.

"O thou *love of the brethren*," exclaims the author in the following work, "where have you fled? We profess to believe in *the communion of saints*; but where are the saints, who have this communion? We talk of the unity of God's church with respect to its members: but where are those members who live in this unity? O shame upon us, that we differ at all, that we differ on trifles, that we love to differ, that we urge and promote differences, and that the healing spirit is not more to be found amongst us! Lord, if you wouldest differ with us at any time, as we are ready at all-times to differ with others; O how should we stand before you, or what could we answer for ourselves! Give, O give, more of your grace, that we may be humble in our own hearts, true and just in our desires, mild to others, and deeply submissive to you."

Such is the spirit and temper of this little Work—whilst it inculcates *glory to God in the highest*, it also enjoins *peace on earth*, and breathes in the purest strains *goodwill towards man* in every region and district of the habitable globe. Noblest and sublimest of iEras! when the *Earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord*, including the principles and practice of the Christian religion—as *the waters cover the sea*.

*London, March 5, 1814.*

## **PART.1.**

### **CHAP. I.**

#### **ON THE ENTRANCE INTO SPIRITUAL LIFE.**

WHEREWITH shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" How shall I, a sinner, approach the eyes of that Majesty, which cannot look upon sin without abhorrence? My iniquities are more in number than the hairs of my head; and my heart sinks within me on their remembrance. My affections are naturally all inclined to the world, and worldly things. My judgment is depraved; my will is perverse; my understanding is darkened; my knowledge vain; and I see nothing within me, or about me, but what by guilt is altogether defiled. I have sore proof of that scripture, "that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually," and that "from the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness" in my nature; but only "the wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" of sin.

How then can I please God? How shall such a worm, such a lump of perverse ungodliness, obtain his favor? Shall I seek to deserve it by my own good thoughts? Alas! I am not sufficient of myself to think even one. Shall I by excellency of words approach my offended Maker? He regards not words, but the spirit and the heart; and my spirit and heart are wholly defiled. Shall I then by good works attempt to render him propitious? O my God, where shall I find them? How can I begin to act, before I have begun to think, what is right? How can the exercises of the body be pure and free, when the soul is unholy, and enslaved by sin? And if, from this day, I could cease from evil, and do perfectly what is just and right, which the experience of all men tells me is impossible; yet what will become of the long black catalogue of iniquities, both in heart and life, which are already written against me? How shall I wipe off the sins of my nature and my life, respecting the times that are past?

0 Lord, you have revealed yourself, as a holy God, and a just. You have declared, that you will not spare the guilty. And I have offended your righteous law in every hour and every action of my life. flow then can I be saved? How is it possible for me to escape the wrath to come? My anxieties, like my sins, might justly overwhelm me; and I ought to tremble at the righteous judgment, which I know I deserve. There are but a few days, at the most, for me to live upon earth; and I am not sure of one. 0, how shall I flee from the wrath to come? how shall I avoid eternal burnings, in which no man can dwell but with misery, and of which no man can think strictly without horror? Lord, can such a sinner as I escape? Can you have mercy upon me?

Such are the breathings of the heart when it first begins to awake, and live, and feel that there is an evil and a curse in sin, and that sin, with all its evil, lies at the door.

## CHAP. II.

### THE METHOD OF MERCY.

SUCH a flowing from the heart, as that just mentioned, gladdens all heaven. It is the motion of the divine Spirit upon the troubled deep, and will ere long produce both life and peace.

Soul, do you feel the power of your own corruption? Are these your meek, yet bitter cries? O hear, and may your God enable you to believe, the glad tidings of his own salvation!

You are a sinner, it is true; and your mercy it is, to see, in due measure, how great a sinner you are. It is the first line in the large book of humiliation, which you must be reading all your life long. But Christ died for sinners such as you; for all sinners that come unto God by him; for the vilest of sinners, that see the vileness of sin, and bemoan it, as you do. He saved Mary Magdalene the harlot, Matthew the publican, Paul the persecutor, Peter the swearer, liar, and denier of his Master, the malefactor on the cross, who had been a thief and a murderer, and ten thousand more like these; and he has just the same power, means, and mercy to save your soul, even yours.

He saves graciously, that is, freely; because no wisdom nor worth of man could have contrived or obtained his greatness of salvation. It was planned in grace, and performed by grace. It is all of grace, and bounty, and love, from beginning to end.

For this purpose he came into the world, and took our nature upon him. He took it in its meanest and humblest form; and was content to be born in a stable, to be brought up by a laboring man, to labor with him too, to suffer the worst evils of human life, and the sorest pains of human death, that so he might be an oblation or sacrifice in the stead of his people, and render an atonement to the justice of God for them. These sufferings, and this atonement, are the debt due to the law and holiness of God, without which, consistently with his

attributes, he could not spare the sinner; but by which he can be both "just," and yet "the Justifier" of him who takes refuge in Jesus. Yea, this dear Savior having paid the penalty due to his transgressions, God is now faithful and just to forgive him his sins; or rather more faithful and just to forgive them, than he could be in laying on the punishment again, which Christ endured in that behalf.

Christ also lived upon earth to fulfil all righteousness; and he fulfilled it completely for his redeemed. He makes himself over to them; and all he has is theirs, through faith in him. Thus they have a right to call him, what he is, "The Lord our righteousness." God is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, and beholds every poor sinner who trusts in Christ, and lives in him, as unblamable and unreprovable in his own most piercing sight; yea, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. This righteousness is that garment of salvation, which covers them wholly, and fits them perfectly for the kingdom of heaven.

Contrite soul, do you believe this? Is this good news, the very gospel, or good news of God? Search and see. Read and pray over your Bible, and you will find, that it is the very voice and will of your Lord. O that the fallow, the hard and barren ground of your heart, may be so broken up by his power, as to welcome this joyful news, like the thirsty soil receiving the showers from the skies!

## CHAP. III.

### THE SOULS DIFFICULTY IN EMBRACING MERCY.

THESE are glad tidings indeed (the soul may say) to one weary and heavy laden with sin as I am, could they be apprehended rightly, and maintained constantly, in the strivings of sin, and the doubtings of nature. I am, therefore, earnest to know these two things: 1. How shall I embrace this mercy of Christ proposed in the gospel? And, 2. How shall I keep up the spirit and intentions of it in my heart and life, so as to endure to the end, and be saved?

I know not how it is with others, but I find myself very unable, nay, most unable when I have the greatest occasion, to lay hold upon this mighty mercy of God; to rest upon it, and make it my own; and to use it for my consolation and support. I long for this with the full purpose of my heart; and my groans and tears in secret are well known unto God. But I have also an evil heart of unbelief, which suggests a thousand doubts and feats, sometimes of God's willingness to save me particularly, who am so very vile and faithless; and sometimes of my own reality of desire towards him, which is often dreadfully mixed with the desire of other things, and overwhelmed with cares and sorrows, difficulties and temptations. O what great troubles and adversities has God shown me! How shall I be delivered from the body of this death? How shall I lay hold on eternal life? How shall I know that I have fast hold; or be assured, that none shall be able to pluck me from it? O Lord, to be assured of this your favor, is, both in life and death, of more worth to me than a thousand times ten thousand worlds. For I might have these, and be wretched; but, with you, I can have nothing but life and peace for evermore.

## **CHAP. IV.**

### **THE NATURE AND EXERCISE OF FAITH.**

FAITH is the gift and the operation of God. It comes by the Holy Spirit's power, moving and strengthening the sublimest faculties of the soul, and is really a regeneration, a re-begetting, a revival of life from the dead. Thus the believer is said to be "born of the Spirit;" because it is the Spirit's office in the covenant of grace to regenerate, and because it is the promise concerning the Spirit to "all, even as many as God shall call." And thus also the Christian is sad to be "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

When this principle of divine life and light is given to the soul, it enables that soul to feel its own loss and misery, and to see its own sin and darkness. A man can have no true sight of the nature of sin but by this grace. He is, therefore, in some sense, a believer, before he knows himself to be one. Faith acts in him, before he can be sensible of the reflex act of faith. He first lives; then he feels his misery; and cries for mercy. He is then enabled to see the way of mercy in the word of mercy. He is next enlightened to behold the free welcome and rich bounty of this mercy to all returning sinners, and is enabled to view the fitness of God's mercy for him, and his fitness, as a convinced sinner, for it. He is then strengthened to embrace it, like a poor creature who must perish without it, but who shall never perish with it. And, at length, God seals it upon the soul, by giving a true' taste of joy and peace in believing; insomuch that the broken drooping heart revives, and is able to say, "I do humbly venture to believe, that Christ died for me, and will save me for evermore."

Now, through all the course of this gracious work, which, according to the will of God, is slower in some than in others, there is often much doubting and disputing in the man's own conscience. It is a sore struggle, at times, to quell the clamours of unbelief, and the suggestions of Satan; and at last, perhaps, the soul embraces the

reality of God's love in Christ, with a trembling kind of hopeless hope and doubting believing. These things often puzzle the understanding, and perplex the whole will and affections. A true believer is like Rebecca laboring with twins, a faithless Esau and a trusting Jacob; and so, like her, he cries out, "If it be so, why am I thus?" Whereas, if it were not so, if he were not of God, it could not be thus. Nature alone would not struggle; nor can what is dead strive against the stream. The whole bent of nature is against grace. So again, if he were all grace and no sin, he would feel no trouble; for the opposition of grace is made to nature, and to the sin which is in it. And it is a good sign, though not a pleasant feeling, that there is this conflict: It demonstrates the life of God to be within.

In this way, the christiam embraces the gospel. He is enabled in hope against hope, to believe it, as the grand charter of his salvation. And this very act of believing is the evidence within, concurring with the evidence of the written word without, that his name is enrolled in the charter, and that he is consequently entitled to all its blessings.

Take heart, therefore, you child of God, and fear not. You have the promise, the power, the mercy, and the truth of Jehovah on your side; and who can prevail against him? If you do not wholly believe, or are not perfectly cleared from all doubts, be not however dismayed. The faithfulness of your Lord is not grounded upon the perfect exercise of your faith, but upon his own sovereign grace and love. You desirest to trust him with your whole heart; but you never couldst have desired this, if he had not worked that disposition within you. He was the Author, and he will be the Finisher, of all in you, as well as of all for you. If God did not spare his own Son for your sake, what will he spare beside? Who shall, or who can, lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?-It is God himself, with whom there is neither evil nor folly, that justifies you from both. Who can condemn you? It is Christ, who blots out your sins by his own blood, or rather is risen again to present you faultless in his righteousness before the throne, and do for you as that advocate who never lost a cause. Who shall separate you from the love of Christ? Shall the

evils of life, all the distresses of time, and all the rage of the devil? Nay, in all these things your almighty Savior will render you a conqueror, and more than a conqueror, because he has loved you. Oh divine words that follow! From your inmost affections, from the very ardour and spirit of faith, mayest you breathe them forth! "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."

## CHAP. V.

### ON COMMUNION WITH THE DIVINE PERSONS IN JEHOVAH.

CURIOSUS speculations upon the Trinity profit not. There is a sort of knowledge in this, as in other things, which betrays its own falsehood by puffing up the soul. Much time has been lost, and many hurtful disputes have been raised, concerning the mode of the Son's generation from the Father, and the manner of the Spirit's procession from both; points which have not been revealed, and which therefore are not necessary to faith. It is sufficient for us to apprehend, that there are three Persons in one Jehovah, or self-existent Godhead, and that this Godhead is One; that we are privileged to have communion with these divine Persons in their several offices of salvation; and that, by the unction of the Spirit, we come into the grace of the Son, and possess the love of the Father, now and for evermore. "Through Christ," says the apostle, "we both (i. e. Jews and Gentiles) have an access, by one Spirit unto the Father. And thus the grate of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion. of the Holy Ghost, are with all true believers in every age of the world." He therefore that does not thus apprehend the doctrine of the Trinity, only apprehends the phantom of his own imagination, and is never the better for his speculation, be it ever so abstruse or refined.

Of what avail to my soul are all the nicest disquisition of men? I want food and light, reality and enjoyment. These do your word, O Lord, afford in plentiful measure, when your grace opens the well-spring to my heart. I am there taught to pray for that anointing of the Holy One, which shall lead and guide me into all your saving truth. By him I am both instructed and enabled to renounce myself, to put on Christ, and to cleave to my Redeemer as my only portion and hope. By the Spirit and Son of God, I am led np to fellowship with the Father, and to call upon him as my Father, even mine. O my blessed God, my Abba, my Father, my Life, and my all, what have

you revealed to my poor soul; and how much more have you done and prepared, than you have hitherto revealed to men; or than men in this state are able to conceive! O you Fountain of unutterable blessedness, you unfathomable height and depth of love, help me thus to know you in the secret of my soul; and may all your works of providence and grace increase this inward knowledge to the end! While others dispute, let me enjoy. Manifest your precepts to my mind, and say to my longing spirit, "Peace be unto thee, for I am thy salvation."

One spark of this life is of more worth than the whole universe of notions; for this not only brings an understanding of divine things superior to all speculations, but gives with it a fulness of satisfaction, arising from the very taste and perception of the things themselves. Faith takes them for realities, hope is enkindled by them as such, and love finds them to be so, and embraces them with joy to the end.

## CHAP. VI.

### ON THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST, BY WHICH HE BECAME IMMANUEL.

WHO shall unfold this mystery, or unfathom this love of my God.? The Ancient of days became a child of days, and the Lord of all would be the servant of all, that he might be a Redeemer, a Brother, a Friend, of poor unworthy mortals, of vile apostates and rebels, such as I am, and such as, without him, I and all others for ever must have been.

He took our nature without sin, that he might bear our sin. If sin had been in that which he took for himself, it would not have been possible that one, who was sinful, should have taken off sinfulness from others. Thus he, who was not, and could not be a sinner by nature, did, by imputation, become the greatest of sinners: "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" and Jehovah "laid upon him the iniquities of us all, when he once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." This dear Immanuel was a Lamb without spot, and therefore meet to be slain for an atonement; and a scape-goat, or strong-one going off, laden with iniquities; and so able to bear them away into everlasting forgetfulness.

He was very God and very man in one Christ. As Christ he is Immanuel, or God with us. What his name implies, that he truly is. He is God with us, able to save and to succour, able to bless and to enliven, in all our pilgrimage from earth to heaven. "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

And is this your promise, O you meek and lowly Jesus? and shall I be still slow of heart to believe it? Shall I always be hanging my head like a bulrush; and shall my eyes be still gushing out their faithless tears when you have promised not only the best of creatures in earth and heaven, but your own blessed self to be with me, who are Lord of all? O my dear Redeemer, be so with me by your gracious power, that I may be deeply sensible of your continual

presence; manifest yourself to me as you do not unto the world; for I am yours, and I desire to give up myself, and all I am and have, to your blessed will for evermore. Be, indeed, according to your name, my Immanuel, my God with me and in me of a truth, that I may walk with you as one agreed, and draw from you all those supplies of grace, life, and peace, without which I can neither be happy, nor alive to your glory. O hear and answer, for mine eyes are upon you!

## CHAP. VII.

### ON CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO EGYPT.

IT behoved this Immanuel in all things to be made like unto his brethren; therefore he went down into Egypt. All he did upon earth had some use and meaning. By some facts he testified what he was doing, and by others, what he would continually do, for his people.

"Out of Egypt have I called my Son," saith the Lord. His redeemed were spiritually in Egypt, the house of bondage. They were there under the service of a cruel king, a prince, who rules in the world by usurpation till the time appointed. Grievous are the tasks, and sad are the wages, of this tyrant of souls. Jesus went down, and came up again for a sign. As the head of his people, he did this, preaching their redemption from bondage in himself. In their order and times, they come up out of Egypt too, by the strong hand of this Captain of salvation. He is great in might, and therefore not one of them faileth. The prince of the air loses his dominion over them; and though he follow them like Pharoah's mob, and chase them all the way, he cannot hinder their course of faith, nor rob them of their Canaan in glory.

Oh marvellous love of my Savior! Was it not enough for you to take up my nature in its best estate, without submitting to a manger, to contempt, to persecution, to banishment, and all the wrongs of men? Oh how low must I be fallen, that it should be needful for you, (for, if it had not been needful, this act had been spared,) to endure poverty, wretchedness, and shame, that I might be delivered from all! I was in Egypt, and you tamest to me. Your grace preached liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. Your power performed what your love proclaimed; and you brought the prisoners from the prison, and those that sat in darkness out of the prisonhouse! Oh wonderful to tell! I, among your ransomed, have followed you in the regeneration out of this dismal Egypt, and have tasted a little of the glorious liberty of your children. Not unto me, my dear Savior, not unto me, but unto your

name be all the praise. I was wallowing in the mire of Egypt, and in the mud of the Nile; I was entirely given up to the filth and pollutions of this world, and should have remained therein, till I had been sunk for ever in its woe; unless your mighty arm had worked my deliverance, and set me free. Glory to you, Jehovah-Jesus, you Savior all-divine, for mercy unmeasurable like this, for grace and glory yet before me, to which there is no end! Oh how shall I shew forth your praise for all which you have done for my soul?

## CHAP. VIII.

### ON THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

WE see but little into the true worth and importance of the miracles of Jesus, if we look no farther than the outward facts. These indeed speak aloud the glory of his divine Person to the carnal sense of man, and did so even to those who hated and blasphemed him; but the grandeur of these works consisted in this, that they were only outward testimonies of the far more noble operations of his grace within the soul, which were not to endure for a time only, like their outward signs, but throughout eternity.

He gave sight to the blind, that he might testify unto men his sovereign power in giving light and understanding to the mind. He opened the deaf ear, that men might know, by whom alone they can hear aright the good news of salvation, and live for ever. The lame he caused, in a moment, to walk, that his people might learn, that they can only move, as well as live by him, and that without him they can do nothing. He cured the foul leprosy of the body, in order to shew that only by him can be healed the far more deplorable leprosy of sin, which covers and defiles the mind. All sicknesses vanished at his command, that we might have hope in him, as the only restorer of our souls. The poor, or meek among men, were made rich for eternity. He cast out unclean spirits, and suffered them to possess the swine, who were thereby lost, that he might teach his redeemed, that he only delivered and can deliver them from the powers of darkness, which, being let loose upon the world, drive them violently and swiftly down the steep course of time, into a gulf of inextricable woe. The hungry multitudes were fed by his miraculous power, to explain this great truth, that he is not only the giver of spiritual life, but the constant sustainer and nourisher of it from day to day: and he did this by small means, that the excellency of the power might be known to be his, and not in the creatures, however sanctified, blessed, and used. The winds and waves were instantly obedient to his word, if at this beloved might rejoice in him,

as the stiller of all spiritual waves, the tumultuous madness of this world, the ragings of Satan, and the confusion of all things. These can roar and foam no longer than it pleases him; and when they foam and roar at all, it shall turn out in the end for the good of his people. The dead were raised, to proclaim his rising power, and to declare, that the issues also of spiritual life and of endless death are altogether in his hands. Whatever he did, was an- act of mercy, under which he revealed, as in a parable, innumerable lessons of grace and love. All his works proclaimed him to be both the Creator of all, (and what seems more comforting to his chosen) the Redeemer and Restorer of millions that were lost.

Learn from these things, O believer, what your Lord God has done for your soul. He quickened you from the death of trespasses and sins; he gives light and peace to your mind; he feeds you with the bread of life; he cures all your spiritual diseases; he quells all your manifold enemies and temptations; he strengthens you with strength in your soul; he does all that is done in you by grace; and he will never cease working in you both to will and to do, no, not even when he has brought you to his kingdom in heaven.

O pray fervently, my soul, rightly to apprehend these precious things. If you teach me, blessed Lord, then shall I know them, in some measure at least, according to my capacity, as they ought to be known. Such knowledge, indeed, is too excellent for my clouded faculties of nature; they cannot, if left to themselves, attain unto it. I, therefore, seek not to obtain the apprehension of these truths, as fallen man can teach or attain them, but as you do teach and enforce them. In your teaching, though the substance of the truths be the same, there is a wide difference, from all the teaching of men. Man, by his own study, gropes in the dark, and wearis himself in vain to reach up to the perception of your excellent wisdom; but you are light in yourself, and sendest down both illumination and influence at once to such as are taught by you, by which they not only know your truth as a truth in itself, but feel the blessings of it, as a truth applied and made their own. They find strength and nourishment in what you give for food, and not airy words, or unprofitable

speculations, which, without you, are all that can be found in the best and wisest instructions of men. O raise me up, then, my blessed Teacher, above the pictures of things, which may be gained- by words, to the true enjoyment of the things themselves. So shall I not bear, or give discourse only of your spiritual feast, like a man in a dream, but shall taste and see indeed how good and gracious you are, and that all life, power, and consolation are entirely from you.

## **CHAP. IX.**

### **ON THE WORD OF CHRIST.**

"FOR ever, O Lord, "thy word is settled in heaven; and upon earth it runs very swiftly." The righteousness of your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live."

Such is the word, and the end of the word, of my gracious Redeemer. It is called a word, because it is a revelation; all words being only the revelation or expression of things. This revealed word is settled in heaven upon the throne of God, is ordered by the Divine Persons in all things, and is sure, because ordered by them in a covenant which cannot be broken.

It is a word too of testimony, because it testifies of my Savior throughout, either directly by the institutions and declarations of his grace, or indirectly by the course and actions of his providence, meeting in one and the same end, which is the guidance and salvation of his people.

This word, in the conduct of the Divine Spirit, is also a word of power, and the fit instrument of all his work. It is his spiritual sword, by which he divides asunder the soul and spirit, and effects that circumcision of the heart, whereby his people are enabled to live no longer unto themselves, but unto God. The operation is painful indeed to the flesh, or to nature; but it causes the spirit to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to give up its confidence in all things beside.

For this purpose, then, of testifying for Christ, and of acting by the Spirit in the redeemed, is all the written word calculated and given. Consequently, the institutions of the law preached Jesus and his salvation, the prophecies declared the same truth, the histories are records of God's conduct towards his people from age to age, the gospels are evidences of the accomplishment of all these things in Christ, and the epistles are explanations and enforcements of these things to believers. In short, all the holy writings relate to Christ, and

to the redeemed in him. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega of the whole word and work of the Most High.

In this word and its experience consist all the wisdom and comfort of a christian. Here is truth without error; so that he may read without fear, and trust without danger. All other books, as they come from men, have more or less of folly or vanity in them, and often are looked over with little true satisfaction and improvement. But, in this volume, grace not only discovers something new, but brings new force out of old truths, which have charmed the soul a thousand times. It discovers the multiform and manifold wisdom of God, in what he has spoken; insomuch that, from under the veil of one precious instruction, another and another shall arise, as the soul is improved to bear them. These are the steps of the kingdom.; and the higher the renewed mind can ascend, it not only understands better what it has already passed over, but sees farther and wider into the glories yet before it, till it is ravished with unspeakable delight in the infinite knowledge and love of God.

The right understanding of this word does not puff up, but humbleth. He has not a true apprehension of its sense, who is lifted up by it in himself. The lowly reader is the only learner. To him it is not a word lettered or sounded, so much as a living and lively word engrafted. It enters into his heart more than his ears, and it difluseth its sweet savour through all the faculties, setting them into delightful exercise for the divine glory.

The great depth of the word of God keeps the real christian ever a learner. He knows that it is impossible to reach the utmost of God's wisdom. There will be always mysteries to be unfolded, because man's capacity is finite; at the bound of which, how wide soever it may extend, remaineth ignorance. One, who had been in the third heaven, and in spirit caught up into paradise itself, where he heard unspeakable words, could only say, when He talked of the divine counsels, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his

ways past finding out!" He could stand upon the shore, and see; but all beyond was an infinite ocean.

The true disciple, however, knows enough to make him see the vanity and unprofitableness of all learning and wisdom (if so they may be called) out of Christ. The speculations of men are but dreams, and their pursuits but idle labors at the best, which begin and, end in self, and have no higher object than this evil wrld. The poor simple countryman, who has learned Christ, (and many such, blessed be God, there are,) can pity the pompous ignorance of those, who know almost every thing but God, and the proper value of their own souls. By a logic, far beyond that of the schools, he has been led to this conclusion, that God is his Father, that Christ is his Savior, that the Holy Spirit is his Guide, that the Bible is his charter and his library, that the devil, and the world, and the flesh are his foes, that the earth is the wilderness of his banishment, that heaven is his home, and that all the favor, love, and power of die Godhead are engaged to bring him thither. The worldly wise can only value this (if at all) when carnal knowledge is dying with their bodies, and all their trifling thoughts are about to perish. Consequently it is, that the poor man's knowledge being sound and true, though ever so small, can stand the onset of trials in the world, and death at last; while the learned and knowing, with none or small degrees of the true understanding, fall into errors, fail in their course, or die doubting and almost despairing.

O my soul, seek you the substantial wisdom which comes from God, and which time, or rather eternity itself, cannot diminish, but will only brighten and improve. Though other knowledge may be valuable for the purposes of this world, yet this alone can ripen for heaven, and is therefore most earnestly to be sought for by you, whose business and calling, whose citizenship and hope, are principally there.

And, you, who are the living and life-giving Word itself, through whom and for whom all the written word was given, come and possess my soul! I long for nothing, and I would always long for

nothing, but for your wisdom and you. O forgive my unsettled heart, which has so often been taken up with a multitude of unprofitable things, instead of being fixed wholly upon you, who are the only Way, the Truth, and the Life! I can have no rest, no firm establishment, but upon you. My nature is unstable as water; and I live moreover' in a slippery world. Leave, O leave me, therefore, not to myself, nor to the power of the evils, which are above, beneath, and on every side. Set me upon yourself, my blessed Rock, and order you my goings in the way, and lead me into the way everlasting. Who is sufficient for these things but you, who are all-sufficient? How can I, so poor a creature, hope either to stand or to prevail, but through that strength which is made perfect in weakness, through that wisdom, which cannot be deceived by fraud, and that love, which is stronger than death, and durable as the days of heaven. O Lord, be on my side, and then neither my own flesh, nor the corruption of the flesh in others, no, nor all the powers of darkness, shall be able in the least to hurt me. I am yours, O save me now, save me to the end, and save me for ever.

## CHAP. X.

### ON THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

Through My Redeemer was to be, and was, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; though he was to have, and had, all our iniquities in his own body on the cross; though he was to bear the curse, and was cursed, for the transgression of his people, and, for a token of it, was hanged upon a tree; yet, in his own person, he was pure, harmless, and undefiled, and so was called typically the holy Lamb of God, without blemish, or any possible defect. He was perfectly without sin, from the manger to the cross. When Satan tried him in the desert, he found nothing in him of weakness of mind or defilement of body; and therefore his temptations had nothing to lay hold of, but fell to the ground. His enemies among men, stirred up by the malice of the adversary, could not, whett he challenged them, convince him of sin; nor was any thing like guile to be found in his mouth. All his words were wisdom ,itself, and all his actions were, purity and love.

There are three principal reasons why such a Redeemer "became us;" and these are to be found only in Christ.

A sacrifice, in the first place, was necessary for our iniquities; for, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission" of sins. The justice of God required atonement; because it is inconsistent with the holiness of his nature to spare the guilty. No truth, in all his word, is more plain than this. But nothing could be substituted in the room of sinners, which was sinful in itself; for this would only increase the wrath of the Most High. And, therefore, as his love was pleased to provide and accept a substitute; such a one appeared, as was without spot, or defect of any kind, in himself, and had nothing to answer for of his own. This is the signification of all the pure sacrifices under the law, which speak aloud, that they are all together vicarious, or one offered in the stead of another.

In the next place, the redeemed, as sinners, wanted a righteousness, without which they cannot appear with acceptance before God: and, as a perfect righteousness can only be pleasing to him, and all men are incapable of producing such a one, and as therefore it can only be obtained by accounting the righteousness of a substitute for their own; Jesus Christ was Jehovah in our nature, in order to be Jehovah our Righteousness. God is wellpleased for his righteousness sake, which is infinite and everlasting, capable of justifying from all things, and through all times, even into eternity. Christ, not for himself but for his people, fulfilled all righteousness, and upon their account magnified the law of their God. It was for this end that he lived so many years upon earth, and went through all the stages of human life to manhood; by which his people of all ages might have, through faith, a right of acceptance in him.

And, thirdly, the merit of the sacrifice for sin, and the substitution of righteousness for sinners, required some person to intervene, or to stand between God and sinners, and to offer these exchanges in their behalf. This office is the office of a priest, who is a mediator between God and man, and who must therefore be holy in himself. Christ was this perfect person; and so was "such an High-priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," having "an unchangeable priesthood," to which he is consecrated forevermore."

These are the reasons of all his labors in love and righteousness: and he was able to merit and go through them, being Jehovah in man; as well as to suffer what he took upon him, being man in Jehovah.

Oh what a task of unparalleled grace and humility is here! Who could have done such unimpeachable works; but he who is perfect in himself? Who could have done them to render others perfect for ever before God; but one so much above all created perfection, as to have for others an unbounded perfection to spare?

Lord, help me to meditate upon you, and upon all that you have one for my soul! Who put on this garment of salvation, this robe of

righteousness, which your blessed hands have perfectly worked, that it may be my wedding garment in the day of my espousals, when I shall leave the world, and appear before the Majesty on high! This is the righteousness of saints, pure, white, and shining, in which they walk with you in glory, and in which I also hope to walk, unworthy creature as I am, both with you and with them. O then shall I appear without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, all-acceptable to God, all illustrious in you! Lord, "what have you wrought" indeed? You have worked for me to entitle me to heaven; and you have worked in me to fit me for heaven; a work, as it seems to me, no less difficult than the other; so stubborn and vile am I, and so opposite to your pure nature is mine. I marvel, and with tears of joy I marvel, at all the mysterious wonders of your redemption, at your plain and clear yet unsearchable love, at your awful justice magnified even by grace itself, at the kindness you have shown, and the goodness you have promised, at the never-ending line of wisdom in your holy word, and at the unbounded scene of glory yet before me. I am overwhelmed, I am astonished, at the weight and grandeur of your divine benevolence. Accept the faculties of my body and soul, all I am and all I have; and let them be found to your praise, and honor, and glory, both now, and at the day of your appearing! Amen!

## **CHAP. XI:**

### **ON THE DEATH OF CHRIST.**

"BEHOLD, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me, in the day of his fierce anger."

No, my Jesus, never was sorrow like yours. You bare the griefs of millions; griefs, which would have sunk those millions into unutterable woe. Omnipotence itself groaned under the tremendous load, which forced from your pure and perfect body, not common sweat, (the curse, inflicted with human labor,) but a dreadful sweat, bursting forth in great drops of agonizing blood. Oh, what a doleful cry did you utter; and who but yourself can conceive those (to us unknown) pangs and sufferings, which forced from your sacred lips, the cry, "My God, my God, why hast you forsaken me?"

The meditation of your sufferings and death is painful in the sympathy of nature: yet I cannot wish that you had not endured them, nor did you fully wish it for yourself. You were contented to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men for this very purpose. It was by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, that all the parts of this solemn event were transacted. And it is for the everlasting interest of me and of thousands, that all the scriptures concerning you were thus awfully fulfilled.

Lord, what is sin, that you yourself could not be spared, when from the souls of your people it was taken off, and laid upon you? Can any thing more solemnly describe the hatred of the divine nature to sin, and the severity of the divine justice upon account of it, than the pangs, the horrors, the cries of you, my Jesus, you suffering Son of God? And if you were sacrificed for sin, who in yourself knows no sin, what shall become of those who reject your saving sacrifice, and yet all the while have nothing but sin in themselves?

Who could support such excruciating tortures, unassisted and uncomforted as you were, even upon a just account? It was not in the power of a creature to sustain your inward griefs, your outward torments, and the entire dereliction or forsaking of God, of men, and of nature, all together and at once, as you did sustain them, upon any account or motive in the world. But you enduredst the whole with dignified complacency and satisfaction, even for your enemies, to convert them into friends, and to make rebels and apostates, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with yourself of an eternal weight of glory. May I not turn your own words, and say, "Behold, and see, was there ever love like your love, which you showed for your people, when the Lord afflicted you in the day of his fierce anger?"

Lord, how shall I speak, and what shall I say to these things? Shall my incredulous heart be still backward to believe? If Jesus died for my sins, can I die for them too? If he freely bare the curse for my sake, will the justice of my God still require the curse at my hands? if my iniquities were taken by my Savior, and he made a full and perfect atonement for them; can I dare to affront the divine Majesty by supposing, that he is yet so unrighteous as to charge them all again upon me? O forgive my hard and impenitent heart, that I should ever imagine such blasphemy against your faithfulness and love; that I should even think, that you can be so unjust and untrue, even in contradiction to your own word, as to lay that still upon myself, which, for my sake, was entirely laid upon my dearest and most blessed Redeemer! Lord, I melt into tears of shame at myself, and into tears of comfort upon the remembrance of all this your kindness to my soul. Your blood, O. my Jesus, cleanses from all sin; and if from all, what sin shall remain to be now charged home upon me? O help me, mighty God, Prince of peace, that I may not be faithless, but believing!

## CHAP. XII

### ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

No fact was ever more strongly and undeniably established than this. Divine Providence ordained, that it should be so, because upon this great truth depend all the assurance and efficacy of our redemption: "If Christ be not raised (says the apostle) your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

But is there no proof of Christ's resurrection, but the historical evidence?--Yes, blessed Lord, as you give your people to know of the doctrine of salvation, that it is yours, by the demonstration of the Spirit; so you affordest to them a most convincing testimony, that you are indeed risen from the dead, by their super-resurrection from the death of trespasses and sins. If you had not been raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, it would have been impossible for any of them to have either received or walked in the newness of life. Their being spiritually quickened with you, is a proof in itself of your glorious resurrection, and a confirmation to their souls, that they are your own unalienable inheritance, and that they shall also live with you for ever.

You have truly and graciously said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." Lord, I was long, too long, dead to God and dead to you, shut up under the curse of your law through sin, yet insensible, as a dead carcase is of all outward impressions, to my alienation and separation from your life and peace. I was dead also to my own true interest and everlasting concerns, and alive only to sin, and to the service of the lord of sin, without perceiving his bitter tyranny and horrible designs. "So foolish was I, and ignorant, yea, even as a beast before thee." The beasts indeed follow the end of their being, but I neglected mine. In tender mercy did you open mine eyes, that I might know myself and my misery, and that I might behold you as the only refuge and hope of my soul. You gave me the powers of a

new and spiritual life; and then I ran towards you with an affection I had never felt before, and desired to know more and more of you, and the power of your resurrection; that so I might no longer live in or for myself, but in your faith and for your glory. All this was your work, and yours alone. I might as easily have created a world, as thus have new-created myself, in opposition to the millions of hinderances from within and from without. No; it was you, my dearest Redeemer, it was you that restoredst my soul, and did lead me in the paths of righteousness for your name's sake; and therefore I trust, (and though I am sometimes afraid, yet still do I trust, and would trust again,) that "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and that I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Oh what an evidence of your resurrection have you thus brought home to my heart! Confirmed, as it is, by your holy written word, it is demonstration itself, and is not to be argued away by all the corrupt reasonings of men. It is a demonstration both of word and of deed, of spirit and of life, of understanding and experience, of your faith, fulness and truth, and of all my blessed and joyful interest therein. "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord has done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for Jehovah has redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."

Thomas doubted, that I might believe more strongly. He was suffered to fail in his faith, that my faith, and that of all your children after him, might be improved and confirmed. But the mere evidence of sense can draw no blessing. His bodily view of your resurrection was indeed followed by faith; but, from that you took occasion, most happily for your people, to say, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Through your mercy I have believed, and, according to your word, have tasted your blessing. Joy and peace in believing, quietness and assurance of mind, peace and resignation of soul, some holiness and strong desires after more, contempt of this world and foretaste of a better, preparation for death, and views of a transporting eternity, are

among the many proofs that you are risen and living, that you are gracious and true. O that these proofs may increase in number and measure, that my faith may be more and more lively, and that my hopes may continually abound!

## CHAP. XIII.

### ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts," in your human nature, "for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them," or "that they might become an habitation of God through the Spirit."

This was prophesied of Jesus long before his advent in the flesh. It was so prophesied, as though it were a fact already past; because the things to come are, as it were, present with God, being foreknown by his omniscient mind, and ordained in his holy will, which must be accomplished in all its purpose and decree.

He ascended to the throne of the Highest, with the full merits of his blood and righteousness, which were a sweet smelling savour, or a savour of rest, to the everlasting THREE. By this gracious ascension, Jehovah is become propitious to the redeemed, receives them in Christ, loves there for Christ's sake, favors them with his peace in their heart, carries them on by his providence and grace, makes all thing work together for their good, bears them through life and death, and finally receives them to glory.

The ascension of Christ brought down gifts from above, and, as the greatest of all, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, for his people. It was thus expedient for him, that he went away from the earth; for if he had not carried up his merits before the throne, the Comforter could not have come down to have led them into all the truth of God and of Christ, and to have made that truth effectual in their salvation. By his holy influence they are brought to believe, and are kept in believing to the end.

Jesus ascended likewise to prepare a place for his chosen. In a short time they are to be dismissed from these wretched houses of clay, standing in the waste wilderness of this world; and then they are to have in heaven everlasting mansions of beauty and glory, fitted and

furnished by Christ himself. They are soon to leave their bodies, now thoroughly defiled by sin, and to put on some spiritual fabric appointed for them, in which they are to regain with Christ, and the blessed, till the final consummation of all things.

Oh what gifts, my blessed Redeemer, have you procured and purchased for my unworthy soul! What have you not brought down of grace for time, and of promise for eternity to me, and to helpless sinners like me! Yea, you have given your own self for your brethren, that in you they might be given up to God, and like you be a sweet-smelling savour, ascending by your merits to the highest heaven. Oh what shall I, what can I, render for mercies like these? I can give, poor as the gift is, only my heart and soul to your dear glory; and I would not, surely I would not, restrain these. Yet I cannot offer Ciese, so weak and so corrupt am I, without the assistance of your strength. Favor me, then, more and more, with your gracious power, that my affections may be constantly mounting upward, longing for the place of my everlasting residence, and counting all things worse than dung, that would stop my progress thither. Where you are, dear Lord, soon do I hope to be. I am tired of this earth, and of all its shifting miserable scenes; I am weary of this body, full of disorder and sin; I loathe the husks, which the swine of this world quarrel for and devour; and I can be satisfied with nothing less than you and your presence for ever. O my Beloved, when shall I ascend up after you? All below is Mesech and Kedar: but, with you there is the fulness," not the mere shadow, "of joy; and, at your right hand, there are pleasures," not for a moment only, but "for evermore." You have said, "Surely, I come quickly." Amen, (reply the hearts of your people, and my poor heart among them,) yea, come, Lord Jesus!

## CHAP. XIV.

### ON THE GLORIFICATION OF CHRIST.

THE mission and work of Jesus for our salvation was completed in the eternal glorification of his person in heaven. His body was spiritually, though not substantially changed in this great event, and thus, with his human soul, as one complete and perfect manhood, was taken into God. He now shines in the brightness of the divine glory, far above all principality and power, and every name that is named, whether in heaven or in earth; and he thus shines as the Head of our redeemed nature, that his people may also be glorified with him, and be so united to him and to each other, as to become a holy temple, and a glorious habitation of God through the Spirit.

"I pray, (said the gracious Redeemer,) that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us: and the glory which you gave me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

O what a transcendent height of glory is this, to which such creatures as myself, believing in Jesus, shall shortly be raised! What mind could have been sublime enough so much as to have thought of these wonders, if the Lord of glory himself had not revealed them?

The glory of Christ is not like the airy phantom which men call glory, but has everlasting weight and solidity; it not only sends forth light, but is light: and all that can be conceived of splendor, excellency, durability, and bliss, meets in this glory, as its sole and substantial essence. The believer, therefore, is said to enjoy in Christ a exceeding and eternal weight of glory"-exceeding all conception and comparison; eternal in its enjoyment and duration.

"It does not yet appear what we shall be; but we now, that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is;" so that "with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the

Lord, we shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us!" O that my heart may feel the thanks, which no tongue can utter, and, in humble adoration, bless my God "for his unspeakable gift!"

## CHAP. XV.

### ON THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

WHEN the high-priest, once a year, entered into the most holy place, he carried the fume of the sweet incense, and the blood of the sin-offering, with him. The fume was to cover the mercy-seat upon the ark of the testimony, and the blood was to be sprinkled before it. This shalowed forth the interceding office of the great High Priest of our profession, in the holiest of all. He is entered there with his own blood, by which he has made a perfect atonement for his people, and with his own righteousness, which both covers himself as the propitiation, and his whole church under him, so as to render all, and all together, acceptable to the pure attributes of Jehovah.

Consequently my Redeemer received his name of Angel, Interpreter, Advocate, or Intercessor. He pleades for me, and for all poor sinners who come unto God by him, betbre the throne of the Highest. By the merit of his blood, and the excellent perfection of his righteousness, he fills all heaven (as it were) with the fragrance of that, which is, unutterably delightful to God himself. No broken-hearted rebel, who comes unto God by this High Priest, Jesus, shall ever bewail the insufficiency of his Advocate, but rather shall bless the Lord for his mercy in laying his help upon One who is almighty. If he look to this Savior, then certainly he will be with him as his "Angel Interpreter," or Advocate, "one among a thousand to shew unto him his uprightness; and he is gracious unto him, and saith, Redeem him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Then a his soul is brought back from the pit, and enlightened with the light of the living."

Our High-Priest, bearing our nature, "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," though without their sin; and he is "able to save us to the uttermost," or "for evermore, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." O that I may come therefore boldly, with liberty of speech, and with confidence of heart, to the throne of

grace, that I may obtain the mercy I want, and find grace to help in the time of my need!

Blessed Lord, you have shewed me what you have done for me on earth, and what you are now doing for the interests of my soul in your kingdom. You settest before me, in both respects, grounds of the most sure and the most strong consolation; so that, in you, I might have the fullest assurance of faith and of hope. O work, if it be your will, this rich consolation within me; for, without the effectual aid of your power, I may reason upon these grounds, but I cannot apprehend them; I may conclude in my mind that they are true, but I shall not be able to apply their sweetness, strength, or truth, to my heart. Lord, take your poor servant's cause into your own hand; plead it for him in the court of heaven; urge it upon him in the court of his own conscience on earth; let him feel the comfort of both in all the sorrows of his present state, so that no trial nor outrage from his enemies, no humbling sense of his own infirmities, may be able to stager his confidence in you.

Though you are in heaven, my Jesus, yet you know where I am, and of what I am made; and you remember, that I am but dust. O leave me not, neither forsake me; lest my own heart without any thing else, and especially my own heart with ten thousand evil ones beside, draw me off from my only true home, to some wretched, stupid, corrupting refuge of lies! Intercede for me, as for Peter, that my faith fail not. He needed an advocate no more than I. O you, that did plead his cause with everlasting success, plead and take care of mine; that I, together with him, and all the clients of your grace, may rejoice in your goodness to my soul, and bless your holy name for ever and ever!

## CHAP. XVI.

### THE LOVE OF THE FATHER.

"IN this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." We could have had no life but through the Redeemer; and we could not have had him, but through the tender love of the Father. Nothing can more forcibly shew the love of God towards us than this, that he should give up Christ to the deepest humiliation and sufferings, for our rescue and redemption. Had there been any possible method of salvation beside this consistent with the divine attributes, surely the bitter cup would have passed away from the blessed Jesus, and God would not have permitted him to drink it. But God did not, and therefore could not, in this case, spare his Son, but delivered him tip to death for our sakes; and thus, in a most admirable manner and degree, "commendeth his love towards us, while we were yet sinners," who therefore as such, could have done nothing to deserve it. "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

All this ensued according to the covenant of grace, which was settled between the divine Persons upon the throne of heaven; and when the Lord Jesus was sacrificed, then was this covenant ratified and established, Jehovah interposing himself therein, and through the divided flesh and spirit of the Messiah, satisfying his law and justice for the remission of sins. By this new testament in the blood of the Savior, his people are not only admitted into fellowship with himself as their brother, yea, as flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone, in more than espoused nearness; but they are also entitled, by a gracious right, to approach unto God as their father. They are adopted into his family; and the covenant, established in the hands of the Mediator, is the testimony and the seal of it. Consequently, they are no more strangers and foreigners, much less slaves and enemies, but sons and heirs, children and heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus; and so when they look up and pray, they do

not take God's name in vain and speak falsely, when they call Jehovah himself, Abba, Father; but they utter what they have a right and privilege to utter, and what the Lord delights to hear.

O my soul, you can not be in a ten thousandth part so ready to be joyful in this matter, as your God is to rejoice over you. If he could regard you so much when you were dead in condemnation, and an alien, as to give up his Son for your sake; how much more, when you are reconciled by this very means, will he pour forth his compassion upon you! If he was kind to you, when he stood as your Judge, and smote your substitute for your sins; will he, can he, cease to be kind under the character of your Father, your merciful and gracious Father, in Christ Jesus? Lord, remove so wicked a thought, so diabolical a notion, of unbelief from my mind! It is treason against your love, your justice, your truth, and all those attributes in you, which are the shining rays of your nature, to harbour so foul an opinion: it is atheism, madness, yea, the very falsehood and blasphemy of hell. Holy Father, drive by your Spirit such base and abominable suggestions from my heart; and let me claim the privilege of my adoption, let me call myself your child, though an unworthy child, and thus honor your faithfulness and truth by living in the sense of my nearness and dearness to you!

When my soul can most ascend to this its proper station, then time, and the things of time, are most under my feet; the world and all its bustles, annoy me less; my heart beats freely for heaven; and I can look down from the hill, seeing the vanities, and pitying the follies beneath which carry men away in an over-bearing stream from God, and too often "drown them in ruin and perdition."

## Chap. XVII

### THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT

If God be love, then the Spirit is love, because the Spirit is God. He manifests himself as the God of love, by unfolding and bestowing such love as only God himself could have, and from himself could pour forth unto others.

The Holy Spirit, as one of the parties in the everlasting covenant, loves his people with an everlasting love. By him they are spiritually circumcised and so admitted in the bond or privileges of the covenant: that is, they are cut off from the state and nature of the world, and are brought into a new fellowship with God, and all that belongs to him. By him also they are made sensible of the love of the Father and of the Son, when he sheds forth his own love upon their hearts; for it is He who enables each of them to cry, Abba Father, under the taste of his mercy and to say to Christ, "You are my Savior, my Lord, and my God," in the rich experience of his grace. Without the love of the Spirit, as they could not know, they could not come up to the love of the Trinity; for by him alone is this love shed abundantly upon all that are his, both in earth and heaven.

If I were left to love God by my own fallen powers, and had not the continual help of the Spirit of love; I should fear that I could do nothing but hate him entirely. "The carnal mind is enmity" itself "against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be. The law of God, is the pure life and love of God; and only by his Spirit can I delight therein, and then only after the inner man. Consequently it must follow that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Without him, every man must remain as he was born, earthly, sensual, devilish.

O how deeply then am I indebted to this divine Agent, for taking up his holy residence in my unworthy soul! What loving kindness and mercy have I not felt and enjoyed by his blessed power within me!

How is it, that he, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, should vouchsafe to take up his abode in a poor sinner's breast? What marvellous love is this, that he should stoop to dwell with one, whose heart has been the residence of the evil spirit, and the cage of every unclean bird! Surely, it must be infinite love, which could cleanse so unholy a tenement for himself, and keep it in any degree clean, against the manifold attempts to pollute it on every side.

Whatever I may lose then, O blessed Spirit, may I never lose the love of you! Fame riches, and other temporal things, are but of small account in themselves, and can soon be made up by your power; but the loss of you is the loss of more than life itself, the parting with the very anchor of my soul, and turning me adrift into a dark ocean of doubt and despair. O then forsake not your own, who could never have been your own but from your mere love and bounty, and perfect all the work of grace in me, that, before men and angels, I may give indubitable proof that indeed I am yours!

## **CHAP. XVIII.**

### **THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.**

THE nature of man, since the fall, is carnal, and prone to evil; nor has it power or inclination to raise up itself to the desire and enjoyment of heavenly things, but, on the contrary, shuns and abhors them. It "savourereth not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men," and of the world.

Now, as whatsoever is born of the flesh is flesh, and as flesh and blood cannot inherit, nor even know, the kingdom or grace of God, it is not marvellous that Christ should say, "Ye must be born again," or that it is absolutely necessary for a man to be "renewed in the spirit of his mind," before he can apprehend or enjoy the things of God. We see this plain necessity proved by the case of all men; for no man seeks and knows God by his own natural abilities; and every one, who does know him, freely confesses, that it is by grace alone he obtained that knowledge.

The first work of the Spirit, then, in a sinner, is a "new birth unto righteousness." As this is the Spirit's office in the covenant of grace, so believers under it are said to be "born of the Spirit." This is their entrance into the knowledge of themselves and of God. They are united unto God in Christ by the act of his Spirit, and so partake of a new life, with new functions, faculties, and affections; which life is in all things opposite to the carnal life of their fallen nature, and creates, from the time of its birth, a constant warfare in them against the being and power of evil.

As this generation in its essence is the sole work of the Spirit; so it is likewise in all its effects. When the Christian begins to live spiritually, he is soon enabled to think and act spiritually. And as the views and objects of this life are beyond the creature, and rest in God and in Christ, the Holy Spirit leads tip the heart to a dependence on the divine Persons for the attainment of them. This is

faith: and thus it appears, that it is the gift and operation of the Spirit.

By this faith, the Christian desires, and attains what he desires: by this he prays, and hopes, and waits, and expects: by this he wrestles against sin, and Satan, and the world: by this he looks with a holy contempt on all dying things, and beholds those delightful realities which are invisible to sense: by this he knows himself to be a child of God, and the purchase of Christ: by this he sees a glorious immortality provided for him, and longs often to enjoy it: by this he suffers the will of God, as well as obeys it, knowing that it must work together for his good: by this he welcomes death itself, and at length obtains the victory over it through Jesus Christ his Lord. All this work of faith is carried on by the effectual agency of the Holy Spirit. It is an action upon the spirit of a man, which none but the God of spirits either would or could perform. And where this work is not thus inwardly perfected, there may indeed be the notions of truth, and the forms of godliness, but they have no life or power in them. The heart, in that case, may be as dead to God, and as much in and of the world, as ever.

He is called "the Spirit of Christ," because he not only is one with him in Jehovah, but also takes of the things of Christ, and shews them to his people. Thus, where his Spirit dwells, Christ is said to dwell, because of their inseparable union. If Christ dwell in our hearts by faith, it is because the Spirit of Christ is in us, and God is in us of a truth. It was the 'Spirit of Christ in the apostle which enabled him to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

To you, then, O Holy Spirit of truth, and by thin own power, do I look up for faith and hope, and for the increase of faith and hope, and every blessing! O work in me to will and to do what is right; for, without you, I can neither will nor do any thing but evil. I am all depravity; but you are grace itself, and the God of all grace. I am weakness, instability, and want; but you are everlasting strength, the

rock of ages, the fulness which filleth all in all. I have nothing, but you have all things. O behold your poor servant, whom you have made willing to serve you; and let all the good pleasure of your will be done in me, and by me. Abate my pride, subdue my unbelief, mortify my corruption, strengthen my soul. All that I need, supply, according to your riches in glory by Christ Jesus. So shall I be steadfast in your steadfastness, lively in your life, active in your power, faithful in your grace, wise in your wisdom, holy in your holiness, happy in your love, persevering to the end by your care, comfort, and preservation. O, who and what am I, that you have so tenderly brought me hitherto; when, like millions around me, I might have been justly cut off and left silent in darkness! Help, O help me to adore you, and to testify of your goodness and grace, in heart, in mind, in lip, and in life, both now and for ever!

## CHAP. XIX.

### ON THE EQUAL OBLIGATION OF BELIEVERS TO THREE PERSONS IN JEHOVAH.

IT is an error to suppose, that we are indebted to one more than another of the divine Persons; for their love is but one and the same love, as their essence or nature is one and the same; and there could not exist such a difference or inequality of kindness to men, unless there was such a difference or inequality in themselves, as would not stand with the unity of their Godhead.

The love of the three Persons formed the covenant of grace from everlasting, in which they were equally and undividAdly concerned; and though the fulfilment of this covenant had necessarily an order and distinction, according to the several engagements of the three distinct Persons, yet the mind and will of the Godhead were but one, and the object of their power but one, even Jehovah's glory in the salvation of sinners.

The Father loved, and concurred in the redemption of his chosen by Christ; the Son loved, and bare their sins in their nature, glorifying in that nature all the attributes of the Godhead; the Spirit loved, and engaged to make effectual the whole plan, by fitting the heart to receive, and by carrying to the heart the benefits of eternal salvation. Thus God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; Christ fulfilled all that was given him to do; die Spirit enlivens, enlightens, and sEals to the day of redemption. This is the order of the covenant; begin. ning with the rather, and, through the Son and Spirit, descending from heaven, to the salvation of his people; but, in the order of their enjoyment of this covenant, the Spirit begins with them, and they ascend l y him next to the Son, and then to the Father. This is a blessed mystery of faith, which (however plain in the scriptures) can only be understood truly in the course of a gracious experience. No mere notions, and especially of the carnal

mind, can possibly reach it. The tuition, or rather intuition, is altogether divine.

What a blessed thing is it to believe and to know assuredly, that the wisdom, will, affection, and power, of all the Persons in Jehovah, are concerned in the salvation of every poor sinner that repents! What a confidence of spirit ought not this to inspire in the children of God! If their Lord be thus engaged, and concerned for their welfare; how can any of them be lost, or fail of what he has prepared for them? O my soul, rejoice in the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, that one God, who has done such great things for you, and who will yet do more. yea, more than eye has seen, or ear heard, or it has entered into the heart of man to conceive. To this one God be glory. Amen. Hallelujah!

## CHAP. XX.

### ON THE PARTICULAR DESIGN AND USE OF THE SEVERAL HOLY SCRIPTURES.

BLESSED Lord, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet. and a light unto my path!" Without this glorious revelation, I must have remained as I was born, a poor, helpless, hopeless, and miserable sinner.

By this is your servant taught the order and excellency of your first creation, when man was made in righteousness and true holiness, and lived therefore in tranquillity and peace. Consequently I learn how he fell from you, and, in falling, became spiritually dead and cut off from your life in his soul; while his body received the seeds of dissolution, and began to die from that very hour. I also am instructed to see your mercy, proclaiming a Redeemer in the midst of your justice, which otherwise must have destroyed, or made wretched without remedy, my whole race. You ordainedst a covenant by sacrifice with the first believers, spewing thereby in type and shadow the great atonement of Jesus Christ, who, by your own everlasting covenant, was "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. By faith in this propitiation, they offered up their spiritual sacrifices, when they presented before you the appointed creatures; and "according to this faith they died, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

By this holy word, I also learn, how, for the dreadful impieties of the old world, you brought on a flood upon the earth, destroying all mankind but the small remnant of one family. My eyes have seen abundant testimonies of this truth, within the bowels, as well as upon the face, of this globe; in beholding, what once lived upon the surface at great depths beneath, and what once inhabited the seas upon the tops of the highest mountains.

By your blessed record I understand, that you made a covenant with Noah, and Abraham, and the other patriarchs, promising the great Savior to them and their seed. You did suffer their offspring to go down into Egypt, and brought them up again with your mighty hand, that by this you might proclaim a more glorious deliverance to your people. The plagues of Egypt were strong emblems of the curses and evils which sin brings upon the souls of all men by nature; and your visitations of Israel were likewise representations of your conduct in grace towards all your redeemed. You deliver to this day your people from the world and the devil by the blood of the paschal Lamb, and sendest them forth from their power, to become sojourners as in a wilderness, "and to seek a better country, even a heavenly."

You did appoint all the rites and ceremonies of the holy law to spew forth the Savior's love, life; and death, till he should come. They are lively prophecies, and wise memorials, of what he was to be, and to do, and to suffer, for the salvation of poor sinners. No mind, but yours, could have contrived such a long train of mysterious truths, which were all to be fulfilled; no power, but yours, could have established and accomplished them all from age to age; no love, but yours, could have undertaken salvation at so costly an expense as the sufferings and death of your blessed Son.

In this sacred volume, I further read the conduct of your providence, in preserving the chosen remnant, and in punishing the ungodly and profane. The histories of men are composed by prejudice, and are full of falsehoods. What passes in my own time is so differently represented by different men; nay, what I have seen myself has been so variously seen and understood by others; that, were we alike-minded to report the truth, our misapprehensions and errors are so many, that through them the sane facts would scarcely appear to be the same things. But your record is faithful and true, and spares not the faults and evils of any man, either of your chosen people as a nation, or of your dearest children as individuals. Here I see your constant love of holiness and hatred of sin. Here I read many great lessons of human infirmity, and many strong proofs of your

forbearance, your justice, or your mercy. O let me, while I read, remember and understand.

In this book of books, I am also instructed by large and various prophecies given forth in deep and mysterious words. By your holy prophets you have indeed spoken at sundry times, and in divers manners or figures; but all their prophecies, whether by symbol, type, vision, inspiration, or voice, declare but one final purpose, even the salvation of souls by Jesus Christ. His testimony was the very life and spirit of all their predictions.

By other parts of this blessed volume, I am edified and built up in my most holy faith. The final patience and self-renunciation worked in Job, under your visitation, instruct me in the way of your righteousness. The proverbs or similitudes, full of mystic sense under moral ideas, teach me to look unto you for all my wisdom, grace, and strength. By one book, I am convinced of the vanity and vexation of all worldly things; and, by another, of the mysterious height and depth of the love of Christ. I am also taught what to sing, and how to sing, of your wonderful praises, by words which your own Spirit has revealed, which millions of your children have graciously communed with, and which infinitely exceed all the compositions of men. They are words, full of prophecy and vigorous sense, and full of sober joy in the faithful foresight of the prophecy fulfilled. The love of Christ is the substance, the form, yea, the very life and breath, of all your holy psalms.

In your gracious Gospels, dear Lord, I am taught the accomplishment of every mystery, and of the great work of salvation, covenanted and foretold, in the person, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. O what a picture do they hold forth of the meekness, wisdom, grace, and compassion of that dear Redeemer! Lord, you know how often my heart has burned within me, when you have talked with me by these records, and while you have opened to me the scriptures. And yet you know, too, how often I have been one of the fools and slow of heart to believe all that your prophets have

spoken. O give me an understanding that is true; and so shall I be taught your word!

The life, deeds, and writings of your holy apostles are, in your blessed hands, most glorious and lively demonstrations of your everlasting truth. They shew me how your saints have walked; and they encourage me to be a follower of them, who now through faith and patience inherit the promises. O my gracious Master, strengthen me, as you were pleased to strengthen them, with might by your Spirit in the inner man! and so shall I hold on and hold out, till I receive, as they have received, the blessed end of my faith, in the salvation of my soul! You have also been pleased to close your prophecy, and to seal the vision, with an awful revelation, which reaches onward to the very end of time, and almost unveils the mighty majesty of eternity itself. I read this mystic book with solemn awe, and often tremble as I read. Your grace has unfolded some little of this important mystery to my mind; O grant me more understanding, so far as may be proper for my welfare, or as my weakness in grace may be able to bear it. Keep me from reading with my own eyes, which are but carnal, and cannot profit me, and let me be your disciple, and your humble disciple, alone! The ideas of this solemn are all framed upon the principle of the ancient part of your volume, and can only be apprehended at all through the intimate analogy of the whole.

O Lord, I bless you, I daily bless you, for this wonderful record of life and peace, which, if all men could spiritually read, all men would confess, that it is, and could be, of no origination but yours. The impressions of divinity are so glorious and evident, that he that ruts if he has but eyes, may read and own them. And yet in nothing is this record more true, and in nothing is human experience of it more strong and striking, than in this, that no man can believe or understand a word of it, to the salvation of his soul, unless it be given him from above, unless all his instruction be imparted by you. Not that in your book there is any defect indeed, but wholly in the gross, sensual, and sinful apprehensions of fallen man.

“Open mine eyes,” O Lord, “and then shall I behold wondrous things from thy law!” Things hidden to carnal sense, but clear and obvious to the view of that faith, which you give to your children. I wait upon you for this end. While I read and while I write, while I praise and while I pray, I seek for your instruction. I am a fool, without you; but, by you, I am made wise for eternity. Speak then in your holy word, for your servant heareth; and enable me to lay up what I hear, like Mary, within my heart, that I may be a true "scribe indeed, instructed in the kingdom of heaven, bringing forth, out of the treasure of my heart, things new and old!"

## **CHAP. XXI.**

### **THE RECOLLECTION OF THIS FIRST PART IN PRAYER TO GOD.**

O ever-blessed Jehovah, three Persons in one Godhead, full of grace, and full of glory, have mercy upon me a miserable sinner! I am not worthy so much as to look up to the throne of your holiness, being polluted in my nature, wicked in my life, and covered entirely with innumerable transgressions. But, O, where, where, shall I go for help and succour, but unto you, O Lord, who, for these my manifold abominations, are most justly displeased!

Wonderful goodness! You have commanded me to come, and invited me to present myself before you, with most astonishing testimonies of favor and acceptance. You have found a way to make satisfaction to your offended majesty and justice, not by my punishment and ruin so fully deserved, but by the sufferings and death of your dear Son. By him you have magnified your law and made it honorable, through an infinite and perfect righteousness, which he has completed for it. For these wonderful ends, by your everlasting covenant, he took into his divinity our human flesh, and became our Immanuel, or God with us: And so he became capable of suffering, doing, and substituting for his people, whom thus he purchased, all that was given him from you. Having completed this whole work of salvation, he is now ascended upon high, pleading and interceding for poor sinners, that they might be partakers of his glory. Oh how great was his love; stronger indeed than death; mightier than sin and Satan; yea, almighty to redeem!

Holy Father, how great also was your love in sparing your own Son from heaven for guilty worms, and yet not sparing him upon earth, when bearing their nature and transgressions! I am overwhelmed with a sense of your unutterable benignity and compassion, joined as it is with everlasting justice, purity, and truth.

And, you blessed Spirit, what do I owe unto you, for all your gracious work in my poor heart, enslaved as it was by sin, and by nature departed as it is from all righteousness! You have taken of the things of Jesus, and explained, and enforced, and enlivened them, into my soul. By you alone, I have heard, and believed, all the mysteries of redemption, needful for me to know. By you I have experienced some of them; and by your aid I hope to experience more. Be with me throughout my pilgrimage, and, in these days of rebuke and blasphemy against your person, O grant me the evidence of your presence, by enabling me to abound in every good word and work for your glory.

O blessed Trinity! Three-One Jehovah! God in covenant for redeemed sinners! God in truth over all the world! hear and regard my prayer. Accept and sanctify my praise. I adore you for all your abundant mercy. I glorify you, O Father, Son, and Spirit, equal in nature, love, and majesty, with earnest, though poor, returns of gratitude and praise. Receive me, and whatever I am and have, graciously, for Jesus's sake, who is my Master, my Savior, my Priest, my Prophet, my King, my Lord, and my all, and also your only Son, in whom you are well pleased for ever.

Lord, I am frail, and full of wants. I am a poor, weak, despised, and despicable man; and yet your own adopted child notwithstanding. Give, O give me the bread of life; lighten my dim eyes with the light of life; and supply all my need, great and rarious as it truly is, according to your riches in glory by Christ Jesus! I bring a thousand and a thousand wants, imperfections, and cares, before you; and, Lord, I can bring no other. These, and such as these, are all I have both in body and in soul. O then take me as I am, and make me what you would have me to be. I know not of myself what is right, or good, or wise; but you know. Therefore, I beseech you, my blessed God, undertake even for me! I have no refuge, but in your power; I have no hope, but in your promises; and I desire nothing in this world, no, nor in the world to come, but the sweetness, the testimony, the possession, the glory, of your great salvation.

O let the evidence of this salvation be made more and more clear to my mind, and the experience of it more and more firm and solid to my soul, through your word and by your Spirit. May I read, and understand; may I understand and grow; till I come to the stature and measure appointed for me. Keep me from leaning on myself, lest I fall into error. Help me to depend upon you, that I may be led into all the truth. So shall I praise you with joyful lips, and, through my gracious Savior, bless and adore you, O God, my God, for ever and ever!

## PART II.

### CHAP. I.

#### UPON UNBELIEF.

The corruption of our nature renders the life and exercise of faith the most difficult affair in the world. It is indeed far beyond ourselves. The apostle, therefore, ascribes our believing to *the exceeding greatness of God's power*, even to *the effectual working of his mighty power*.

Many talk of this believing, and yet but few have attained it. A speculative assent to a chain of principles is easy; but the grounding of the heart in these principles upon Christ, and especially in the time of trial; the giving up a man's self, as nothing; the patient waiting of the soul upon the truth and promise of God; the cool and deliberate parting with the things of sense for the things of the Spirit; the discovery and suppression of carnal and corrupt motives in the heart; all these are matters, which are neither in the compass, nor taste, nor inclination, of flesh and blood.

Consequently it is, that, when men are made serious by affliction, sickness, or the approach of death, they find themselves so much at a loss for the use of that faith, which perhaps, from a long profession, they did not suspect they had wanted. O, it is dreadful to be in the dark when we want the most light, and to have no assurance of everlasting things, when we are called to part for ever with the things of time

The soul, indeed, that never doubted, has never yet believed. The office of faith being to subdue unbelief in all its activities, this often makes a sore and difficult conflict in the soul. Carnal reason looks for the demonstrations of sense, and cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; for these being in their nature out pf its

comprehension, they appear foolishness unto it; and therefore this weak and fleshy reason cannot bring a strong and living confidence to the soul. Faith is chiefly occupied in things above animal sense, and often against it; but reason, beginning with ignorance, and proceeding upon doubt, seeks its rest in sensation, and can rise no higher. A man, therefore, cannot be *reasoned* by logical deductions and convictions out of unbelief into faith, but must be *saved* through the gift and working of the Divine power, first to possess faith, and afterwards to use it.

The mind, likewise, can never subdue its distressing doubts by its own exercise, but only by the gracious help of God: And the very looking for this help is from faith. Faith brings indeed its proper evidences with it; but these are all from the divine record, which, by the demonstration of the Spirit, answers the ignorant objections of carnal reason, and (what is vastly beyond the power of all the reason in the world) at once silences, satisfies, comforts, and renews the mind." Thus faith relies, and the Spirit testifies; and this conjunction of what the soul is enabled to yield with what in that act it immediately receives, constitutes *that full abundance of certitude*, which should be the grand aim of the children of God. *After ye believed, ye were sealed with that Spirit of promise, which is the EARNEST of our inheritance.*

This is not the work of a day. Conflicts and exercises are repeated continually; because while, flesh remains in the believer, it will be unbelieving flesh, ever expecting sensation instead of faith, though it be directly contrary to God's method of salvation. Man fell by disbelieving; and he is raised again through believing. lie is to trust God for every thing, before he can have the true enjoyment of any.

Faith does not take away all doubting, because it does not take away the body, nor the indwelling of sin in that body; but it subdues the reigning fury and the raging prevalence of doubting. It mighty attacks the body of sin, which is the grand cause of doubting. It enlightens the understanding, so as to enable it to discover truth from error; and it softens the heart, and gives it an affectionate

tenderness to the things of God, and an upright fear of sin. Sometimes this precious faith obtains from the Christian such clear views, as makes him to wonder how he could doubt at all. And yet the doubting will again and again return, though perhaps with less frequency and strength. Its sudden attacks however are very distressing: And these are permitted of God, in order to show, that the soul is not to live by any gift imparted to it here, but simply and continually by that faith, which leads the soul out of itself to God in all its views and desires.

This is a difficult, though a daily and needful lesson. Lord, teach it your servant; or the knowledge will be too excellent and sublime for him to attain it! Let it also be not a lesson of theory and notion only, but of practice and experience, that I may become *skilful in the word of righteousness*, that this word may *dwell richly in me in all wisdom*, and that I may know how to repel by it, as the proper sword of your Spirit, the sad assaults which, while I am here, will often be made against me. *O let thy mercies come to me, O Lord; even thy salvation according to thy word: So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me, for I trust in thy word!*

## CHAP. II.

### HOW HAVE I RECEIVED CHRIST.

THE apostle says, *As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.* I must therefore receive him, before I can walk in him at all. It is a matter of the deepest consequence to my soul that I should do both.

How, then, Lord, did I receive you? Did I seek you first by my own will ? Alas! I was gone out of the way like all other men ; I was altogether become abominable, having no will for good, but only for evil. Did I resolve to seek you by my best endeavors? I must confess, with shame and sorrow, that my resolutions were weaker to me than Samson's bands were in his full strength to him; and that the first or the least temptation led me away. Could my sincere obedience merit your favor? I see, that if a man could sincerely obey in his natural state, but which indeed he cannot, having no love to the work, but only a slavish fear of hell; Lord, I see that your law requires, if I would be saved by your law, a sinless. and perfect obedience, instead of this insincere and defective one, upon pain of my utter destruction. You have said in your word, that *he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all*, and that *by the deeds of the law shall no man living be justified*. How then could I, who have offended in so many points, be saved? How then did you, in your righteousness, bring me to expect salvation?

Lord, I was poor, and vile, and miserable; I was helpless, yet laden with iniquities; I was wounded, and lying in my blood; my case and condition no man knew, or, knowing it, could relieve. In the midst of my misery was the appointed moment of your mercy. Into my deepest wounds you did pour your oil and your wine. You alone cheered my heart with your free salvation. In the view of what Christ had *done and suffered* for poor sinners like me, and by your gracious power applying this his two-fold merit; joy and gladness came into my soul, yea, greater than any found by men of the earth, *when ilieir corn, and wine, and oil have increased.*

Your word was the instrument, and your Spirit the worker. He new-created me in Christ Jesus; he renewed me in the Spirit of my mind; he made darkness light before me, and rough places plain: By his teaching I know your truth, by his grace I enjoy it, by his power I am kept therein, and shall be kept, I trust, to the end. Lord, all the glory of conversion worked in me, and of your complete salvation worked for me, wholly belongs unto, you from beginning to end!

It was in this way I received Christ; and your word, O Lord, assures me it is the true way; because it gives to you all the glory and secures to me all the benefit. In this way of humbly receiving, I must also walk continually. I have nothing of my own but sin. You have nothing, O my Redeemer, but grace and mercy for your people. Help me to receive out of this eternal fulness grace for grace, according to my need, that I may walk unto all well pleasing, and adorn your doctrine in all things. I would love much, because much has been forgiven me. I would serve heartily, because you have kindly done great things indeed for me. I would live holily, because it is the way to your kingdom, and the very, happiness of your kingdom itself. Let me, my Savior, be more like unto you; for, Lord, I would be yours, and only yours, for ever!

Thus my heart often vents its desires; though at times it is unsteady, dull, and ready to droop under the weight and grossness of a sinful body. I have no remedy for this malady but Christ sought for in humble prayers. And when my prayers are faint and drooping, as they too frequently are, I bewail and am sick of myself; but I dare not leave him, lest a worse evil befall me. I therefore in compunction of spirit cast myself down before him as low as I can, praying, for prayer, and intreating him that he would not eave me to my evil self, but enliven my soul with an answer of peace. When I can put forth this., act of faith, there is often peace in the act itself, which refreshes me. and usually comfort follows upon it, or (what is better) more faith to throw all upon him, and to live more by him for the time to come.

## CHAP. III.

### HOW DO I LIVE UPON CHRIST?

ALAS! my soul, in spiritual things you too often live upon yourself. You seek in frames, in forms, in creatures, and in animal life, what is only to be found in your Redeemer, even a right inward peace and stability of mind. Outward duties are well in their place, but they have no divine life in themselves, and of themselves can give none to you. They are to be performed, but not trusted in; to be used with grace, but not to buy grace. They are as the scaffold to the building, a *mean* for carrying on the spiritual work, but not the *object* or the *end* of the great design. In the power of Christ they are blessings; without his power, they have no life or help in them.

Many treat the ordinances as a fair *substitute* for a serious and constant watchfulness over themselves, for patient devotedness to God, and for real holiness of heart and life, instead of the *mean*, and only the mean, which the Lord has appointed, for leading up the soul to all this, as their proper and indispensable end. By such worshippers, the holy means are turned into a profane and detestable idol (as was the case with some of old; Isaiah, Ixvi. 3.) in the sight of the Lord, who does not regard lip-service, nor any carnal or corporal attentions only, but *the poor and the contrite spirit*, that can *tremble at*, while it hears and believes, his holy word.

Remember this for yourself, O my soul. Your first and last trust must be in Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Without him, all prayers, praises, rites, and ordinances, dwindle into carcases without a soul. Every performance will be carnal and corporal, unless the Savior fill it with his divine Spirit: And when this comes, then there is a sweet communion of heart with Christ, and a blissful reviving of the soul. Then, behind the veil of outward ordinances, there appears a delightful view of the Lord in his goodness, beauty, grandeur, blessedness, and glory; and such a view as no carnal eye can behold, and no unrenewed mind understand or conceive.

Mere professors stick in the flesh, and mistake the worship of the body and the motion of the lips, for the love, taste, action, and adoration of the soul. Religion is too sublime for those, who are rather carried through a course than live in it. The road, indeed, may be a good one; but these no more travel therein, than a corpse borne along in a hearse can be said to be making a journey.

My soul, your life and your liveliness are all laid up in Christ, and are to be drawn from him according to your need. You have no stock left to your own disposal. As the manna was received daily from above, so you must live out of yourself for your spiritual daily bread. Having pleaded your pardon by his blood, and your justification by his righteousness, you must live on him for grace still to plead both, to enjoy the effect of both, to commune with him from time to time, to deny yourself, to renounce the world and the devil, to master corruptions, to be growing wiser in his word, and more rich in its experience, and, in short, to use him continually for your all in all. The whole of this is spiritual, and therefore difficult, work; and you are quite unable to perform it in any respect but through that strength which is made perfect in your weakness. If Christ indeed be your life; then, because he lives, you shalt live also.

In living thus upon Christ, you are to live above yourself, and certainly above every thing which you by yourself can perform. This is the true and sublime life of the *inner man*, which is not corruptible, nor depends for vigor upon corruptible things. It is therefore a hidden life. *Ye are dead*, says the apostle, *and your life is hid with Christ in God*. No outward or carnal eye can see it at all, except in some of its holy outward effects, the true excellence of which, at the same time, it cannot apprehend: and the spiritual understanding of other believers can only discern its inward truth and growth, but in proportion as they themselves are spiritually grown up in Christ Jesus the Lord. A mere reasoner in religion knows nothing of the matter. He, who has never left himself, nor truly disowned his own wisdom, righteousness, and strength, has never yet come to Christ, nor rightly believed in him.

As you are not to live upon yourself, Q my soul, so you can not live this true life by the aid or opinions of others. If they are instruments of good to you, it is your heavenly Father who employs them for that end. They themselves, as well as you, must live upon him, for all their wisdom, grace, and strength, and not *by the life of their own hand*. Christ is and must be as much their life, as he is yours.

You sometimes wax and wane in your duties, as the moon in her light. At one time, you are full of spiritual appetite and vigor; at another, in lowness and want of strength. The cause is not in the Sun of Righteousness, who is always alike; but in you, who turns not the same aspect always to him, and therefore have not always the same light and heat. If you think to get the brightness from the stars around you, instead of your Sun; you will be like the dark part of the moon turned away from the natural sun, which often scarcely appears, or when it does, appears as dull as it is cold. In all providences, ordinances, and situations, Christ must be your point of view, your succour, your light, your life, and your trust; or they will be found, however excellent in his hand, only *beggarly elements* in yours.

In all things that are truly divine and spiritual, the flesh soon becomes weary, and flags, and fails. When the exercise grows difficult, especially; then corrupt nature soon declines, and cannot sustain or endure the toil. Consequently it is, that so many seem to receive the word with joy, and to run well for a time, who, when persecutions or trials arise, having no root in themselves, begin to find dislikes and offences, and so presently fall away. Their fallow hearts have not been broken up deeply enough by the gospel-plough (*i. e.* by the law) to cover well the gospel-seed. This seed, having never been *hidden in the heart*, has taken no root downward in humble and secret contrition, nor grown into substance upwards to *bring forth fruit unto perfection*.

The hidden and spiritual life is often most active and strong, when the flesh is lowest and has least to do. *Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.* When the

Lord is risen upon the soul, all that is weak and carnal, is as nothing before him. A sweet proof of this may sometimes be found in sick and dying believers. How do they triumph in spirit, with a glorious liveliness, over all the debilities of a dying body? *When their heart and their flesh fail, God then appears most eminently to be the very strength of their heart, and their portion for ever.*

There is a *knowledge of Christ after the flesh*, which will carry men a great way into all the splendors of religious profession. It shall make a man look and talk seriously; carry him constantly to ordinances; give him great personal zeal and confidence; enable him to be very exact in all outward discipline and form of doctrine; nay, it shall bring him with a fervent activity (if a minister) into the pulpit, help him to deliver perhaps sound discourses with seeming earnestness and able oratory, so that multitudes shall hear and admire, and possibly be worked upon by him; and yet in himself it may be mere flesh, have only selfish ends and views, and be the poor low knowledge of Christ by the flesh, after all. There is sometimes a little true life in this, and then it is strengthened and refined by trials and temptations; but when there is none, then by time, or trouble, or some other thing, it will finally fall away. *If they had really been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us.*

O my soul, there are *depths of Satan*, as well as of God; and there is no security for you, but in renouncing the flesh, and all the secret as well as open works of the flesh, and by following Jesus humbly and thoroughly in the regeneration. In the poverty of carnal nature, the Lord will manifest the riches of his grace. You must be poor in your own spirit, or you can not be rich in his. He fills the hungry with good things, but those that are increased with their own goods, or build upon their own spiritual or temporal attainments, he will always send empty away.

O Lord, look upon me a poor and helpless creature, who cannot so much as look up to you for aid, without your special grace for that end. How can I live upon you, my Savior, unless you come down to me in this dark and wretched world, and visit me with your

salvation! I have waited for your salvation, O Lord; and I would still patiently wait in all the ways of your appointment, expecting your presence in this troubled pool to bless me. I expect you, and only you. None else can do me good. My soul craves for true and immortal life; and this is your gift: O give it unto me. In all your means of grace, let my heart wait for your grace by the means. "Teach me to bless you for these means, when I have them; and to trust you for them, when I have them not; yea, to trust you without means, when I have no hope of them." "Without your presence all outward things are barren and dry; and my soul can find no sustenance. Lead me, O my gracious Shepherd, by your own hand to the green pastures, and beside the waters of your holy rest; restoring my soul, and conducting me in the paths of righteousness for your name's sake. So shall I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, neither fearing nor finding any evil, and at length arrive at the heavenly house of my God, in which I shall dwell for ever.

## CHAP. IV.

### ON SELF-SEEKING.

As they that are in the flesh, cannot please God at all; so they, that follow the flesh in any instance, do so far displease him. This flesh is a subtle adversary, and will creep into our duties as well as our sins: mixing itself under a thousand forms into almost all that we can say, or think, or do.

Who could expect to feel this deceiver in the deepest contrition of soul, or to find him in peals of groans and showers of tears? Yet self will endeavor to make a man proud of this very humility, be plumed upon his own abasements, and be fancying himself something in the midst of his confessions about his vileness and nothing.

A poor soul shall own itself, with much pain and sincerity, to be a miserable sinner; and self, from this very acknowledgment, will stir up a notion of worth in the creature, and give it to believe that there are some seeds at least of excellence within itself, which others have not, and for having of which he is higher or better than they. Self will bid some men confess themselves sinners, that they may be considered as saints. To take them at their word, would mortify and displease them.

When the heart of the believer is melted in duty, and enjoys the liveliest frame of communion and love; how often and how much is self to be found therein, either attempting to puff up with an high opinion, or to instill a carnal security, concerning its spiritual interest and welfare? If it can abate the power and watchfulness of faith, it will lay a ground of distress to the believer in the next trial; so that he will soon find himself to be yet in the flesh, and that (as one says) "He must never think to put off his armor, till he is ready for others to put on his shroud."

A man may appear excellent in religious conversation, and be eminent in public duties: he may speak and write much, and perhaps

well, upon the things of God, and may recommend them with zeal to others; and yet so much of self may be in all, that when he looks over his heart, and discovers it, he will rather find reason to be ashamed of the whole, than to be satisfied with any one part of it. I know not, whether, in writing these pages, there be not so much of this evil mixing itself, as to defile and almost nullify any good that may be in them. And though I can humbly look to God for the sincerity and uprightness of my general aim, yet such are my apprehensions of my own carnality, vanity, emptiness, and self-love, and of the sinfulness of giving them indulgence, in serious things especially, that I am sometimes inclined to throw the whole aside. I see this hateful principle in almost every thing I can say or do, and am ashamed of myself and of it; but still it rises again and again, though often detected; and therefore I am obliged continually to cast myself, with a redoubled sense of the mean, weak, vain, and vile condition of nature, upon the sole and free mercy of God my Savior.

In success of duty for God, and in being the instrument of good to others, this selfishness of our hearts will endeavor, if not to rob God entirely of his glory, yet at least to share with him in it. Self will be pleased, because *we ourselves* have been concerned, because *we* have been honored, and because by *us* the Lord has been magnified in the souls of others. It is self, which is vexed when this is not the case, and when we have toiled for nothing, or others have caught the fishes. Whereas our spirit should rejoice in the will of the Lord, and be as much pleased when his work prospers in other hands, as in our own. And thus indeed they would rejoice, if this corrupt self did not mix with and seek its own establishment in the most spiritual exercises of our souls. We too much forget, that we are only instruments, and that we can do no more of ourselves for God, than our pens can write down our thoughts, when not taken up by our hands.

All this may serve to show, what a severe jealousy we should hold concerning ourselves. We should not only pray, but watch unto prayer; we should both perform our religious duties with zeal, and should examine well the zeal with which we perform them; we

should abound in every work and labor of love, and should entreat for wisdom and grace, that flesh and self may not abound in them too; we should ask again and again for a single eye and a simple heart, that all the glory of every good may be given to God its right owner, and that we may be kept in our true place, admiring his mercy, and showing forth, with humble simplicity, his honor and praise.

## CHAP. V.

### ON THE DIFFERENT APPEARANCES OF GRACE IN DIFFERENT PERSONS.

*THERE* are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all. Some believers are remarkable for the strength of their faith in trials even unto death; others for their liveliness and activity in duty; others for their wisdom, conduct, and prudence both in temporals and spirituals; others for their zeal in defense of the truth; others for their knowledge in the mysteries of the truth; others for their patience, meekness, and gentleness; others for their submission to the will of God; others for outward usefulness in the church; and others for an inward and spiritual life of communion with God. But all these are the various gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, dividing to every man severally as lie will, and not the talents or abilities of fallen nature. They are also given to every man, who has them, to profit withal, according to his place in the church or in the world. He, who has one of these graces, should not undervalue or despise him who has another; for the Giver is the same, though his gifts may be granted for different ends.

Very often particular graces are bestowed to counteract and oppose particular corruptions,, of which the Lord himself can be the only true judge. The situations of some Christians require gifts of grace, which might be less necessary, or less manifestative of the divine glory in others, than they would be in them. The Lord distributes wisely and kindly to all his people, according to their day and duty, or according to his own designs in them and for them. But they are all of them *his workmanship*, and could, not more in grace than in nature, either create or fashion themselves.

This should teach you, my fellow Christian, a lesson of forbearance to your brethren. It is not. always right, that you should judge another by your own pattern. He may have graces not less pleasing to God nor less useful in their purpose, than those which are given to

you. Are you a warm and active Christian? Condemn not him, whose endowments may be more placid and contemplative than Yours. He, who now creeps as a snail in humble silence, may, by one lift of divine power, get into heaven before you, and perhaps be raised higher there than you. God judges not like man, according to the outward show, but according to the secret riches of his love. Are you a quiet and retired believer? Do not censure, him, who is called forth to more stirring duty than you are. Though his work may seem less spiritual to you, it may be to introduce designs of providence and grace, which only God can foreknow, and which may be the means of carrying out his saving power far and wide. Some of the first reformers were less remarkable for a quiet and gentle spirit, than others who have followed them ; but these last do not seem so fit instruments for grappling with papal outrage and tyranny, as they were. When rough work is to be done, men use the axe and saw; but, for gentler operations, the plane, the razor, or the knife. These last would not cut down a forest; nor would the first serve to polish or smooth.

Honor then the work and blessing of God upon his people, in what form soever it may be found. Every member has his appointed office from him. It is self-love and conceit, which disparage others; and these we will not call *gifts from above*, but rather worms from beneath, which seek to gnaw the root of the vine. *Covet*, indeed, and *earnestly, the best gifts*; but the *love* of God and man is, after all, *the more excellent way*.

## CHAP. VI.

### ON THE DIFFERENCE OF MYSELF FROM MYSELF.

LORD, how variable a creature am I! Unstable as water, changeable as wind, different as the weather, when I am left, in any instance or degree, to myself. One of our English kings, from his slackness, was called *the unready*; and the same name, with respect to my best concerns, will too often serve for me.

Sometimes I have a fair day of comfort and hope; but the clouds come on again, and gather blackness over my soul. *Suavis hora, brevis mora*: Short and sweet was the hour of my spiritual delight; but the time of my dullness and drooping has been frequent and long.

Blessed be your name, O Lord, that my real state with you does not depend upon my vigor, liveliness, and constancy, but upon those only sure grounds, your faithfulness, mercy, omnipotence, and truth. Whatever I am or may be in myself, you are and will be always the same, and always the same to me.

The time, or rather the eternity, is at hand, when my state will be unchangeable, and my frames will be unchangeable too. The crowns of glory cannot fade; nor those, who wear them, alter or decay. I shall both know, as I am known, and in all things shall be like to my immutable and glorious Savior, when I get into his kingdom.

Why then should my present variations distress me? I live not by them, nor for them, but upon a higher principle, and for a more exalted end. This is the time of faith, in which I must wrestle, and labor, and strive against all the disadvantages of an evil nature and an evil world: and I am to look for strength from Christ, who will be honored in my weakness and deficiency, which compel me to give up myself incessantly to him. He is engaged to preserve me by his own oath and unchangeable covenant; and therefore, come fair,

come foul: let me have either comfort or sorrow: all must be well at the last, for he has promised, and most assuredly will give me, a safe and abundant entrance into heaven.

## CHAP. VII.

### ON BRIDLING THE TONGUE.

IT has been a frequent confession of wise and good men, that they have often lamented their speaking too much, but seldom their holding the tongue. In the multitude of words there will be some folly, something that will not tend to edification, something that may rather weary and offend, than delight and improve.

This evil of over speaking usually comes from an over-weening opinion of self. Unchastised and unsubdued self is fond of its own display; although it can display nothing, or, were it not deceiving or deceived, nothing but its own wretchedness and ruin. The apostle has a striking hint for professors of religion: *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

What is *our end* in religious conversation? If we speak without a purpose, surely it is folly. If we speak for our own praise, it is a wrong to our own souls, and a robbery of God. If we speak for his honor, and the edification of others; we should look up to him for his blessing, that our words, as they ought, may be weighty and wise. In this humble dependence upon God, and with a warm and generous concern for the spiritual welfare of others, our discourse may be comfortable and edifying, both to them and to ourselves. A word in season, thus spoken, may be, remembered and blessed. The more of this kind of conference, the better; care being taken of the spirit in which we speak, of the time and propriety of speaking, and of not mixing other things (as it is too often the case) with our religious discourse, which may render it trifling or unsavory. When we have said all that we could wish to say upon divine things, it will be profitable to withdraw, that, after our visit, there may be a due opportunity for reflection, meditation, digestion, and prayer.

## CHAP. VIII.

### UPON FALSE APPEARANCES.

THE whole world walks in a masquerade, or, as the scripture calls it, *an image*, or *vain show*. Scarcely any man would appear as he is, but as he is not, before others; and he loves to indulge even his own mind in the same deceitful view of himself. The more artfully he can put on the veil, the finer man he seems, often in his own esteem, generally in the esteem of others; and nothing mortifies him more than when some wind of trial blows this veil but a little aside, so that others perceive a part at least of what he has been always very industrious to conceal.

This disguiseful clothing is the handiwork of evil and corrupt nature, fallen from the truth and purity of God into a strong love and likeness of the perplexed and foolish subtlety, which fully occupies that being, who is the father and author of lies from the beginning. To plead for this dissimulation, as some have done, is to turn advocate for the evil one, whose fees are vanity and vexation in this world, and something worse in the world to come.

Our depraved nature cannot bear to see its own wickedness, and much less to have it exposed. What shifts and turns, what labors and difficulties, will it not encounter, to obtain a great name and opinion, though it be but a false one? And how will it be delighted, as with a prize, in the fleeting breath of dying creatures, who have only for a memorial of themselves some filthy monument of sin or of shame? To be open and sincere, is counted a weakness: because it lowers a man's power of taking those advantages for interest and fame, which all men by nature are pursuing, and which, in a state of nature, they think to be the only object worth pursuing, as the highest and greatest good.

And, alas! how much of this disguise is brought into the things and church of God! I lament, for one, how prone I am to cheat myself, and to wish more for the esteem of others than I ought to think of, or

than I can possibly deserve! I would be all fair, and valuable, and excellent, and what not, in their esteem ; while I am conscious to myself, that there is within me so much vanity, weakness, dullness, wretchedness, and evil, as might justly suffice to render me in their eyes, what any of them, that can look into themselves, must appear to be in their own.

I have displeased some, whom I did not intend to displease; and others have offended me, perhaps with a contrary intention: the same persons and myself have been mutually satisfied at one time, and dissatisfied at another; and wherefore? Not because my nature or theirs was better or worse at any time; but only because it sometimes discovered itself more according to some occasion: And when it drops the disguise of goodness which we can regard, or discover itself too plainly; sinners as we are, we cannot love it, so odious and depraved is it become since the original ruin. We cannot love it in others, nor others, because of it; though we are at a world of pains to conceal, to indulge, or to dress off, the ugly monster in ourselves.

It is this depravity which has begotten hypocrisy, not only in the world at large, or in courts or particular callings of men, where certainly it does reign absolutely and universal, but also in religious profession, where surely it ought not. It has reigned especially in this last, since it has been esteemed a scandal not to be called a Christian. It is true indeed, that the appearance of religion is certainly better than the appearance of evil; but however, when men seek to appear religious, for the selfish honor, or carnal comfort, which may follow from others upon account of it, they only seek themselves, and are but the less truly religious for their professions.

Why am I grieved, if others think lightly of my gracious attainments ?—Because I am grown unjustly great in my own esteem for things, which are not my own, but given to me. But does not this very grief prove, that their judgment is but too right, and that my real stature is not so tall as I think it? If I were humbled in myself, in some degree as I ought to be (for, in the full and just degree, no man can be

humbled in this life,) I should approve their sincerity towards roe, and contentedly sit down before them in the lowest room. Their mean opinion would not hurt me, because it would be the same as my own. The vileness of my heart, and the low progress I have made in Christian experience, are indeed sufficient to humble me every day I breathe; and it is nothing but my blindness, or a falseness to myself, that pleads me to forget either my own real condition, or the place where I ought to stand.

We are not naturally honest to ourselves; and we do not wish that others should deal too plainly and strictly with us. If we were truly honest and wise (and grace only can make us so in any degree,) we should meekly hear, and even wish to hear, of our own frailties, errors, and defects, that we might grow the true Christian growth, which does not consist in the favorable opinion of men and of our own minds, but in lowness of heart, and spirituality of life, respecting ourselves; in patience, quietness, and good-will, with regard to others; in contrition, humiliation, and submission before God.

Professors also live too much outwardly. Religion is carried often into the strong animal passions, not to subdue, but to feed them. Consequently the poor anger and violence of a corrupted nature are frequently mistaken for zeal, for life, and for power. But noise, and bustle, and tumult, and hurry; the agitations of temper, and strong concerns for influence, or authority, or direction, among men; the parade of religion, or the superiority of a party; may all be carried on with very small degrees of real grace, and perhaps with none at all, Diotrephes loved to have the preeminence; but this could not suppress his inward bitterness, nor increase the signs of his Christian calling: 3 John, 9. If we do not live for God in our religion, we must live outwardly, and so shall endeavor to make a fair show in the flesh; but if we have his presence indeed, the truest part of our life will be hidden, and we shall much and gladly retire within to enjoy it. The most certain sign of our real growth will be, the sinking into ourselves as vileness and nothing; the being thought meanly of with content, if not pleasure, and the rising up of our souls towards God

with private" delight, ardor, affection, and constancy. All this may be done before HIM, who sees in secret, far better than in the corners of the streets, or places of public resort. We shall aim, through grace, to be gracious, rather than to appear so.

This hidden life my soul pants for, O Lord, you know! whatever becomes of my outward respect among men. If I have the more of you for the loss of this, it will be indeed most rich amends. Nay, it will be better for me to be without human regards, lest I should grow more proud than I already am, and so lose that blessed sight of you, which I always enjoy most sweetly and clearly, in the deepest renunciation and depression of myself. O make me more and more dead to the opinion of even gracious men, that my poverty and meanness may be ever before me, and that in all forms and circumstances I may constantly be relinquishing myself, so that I may have more inward and intimate fellowship, friendship, complacency, and nearness, with you!

Careless, myself a dying man,  
Of dying men's esteem;  
Happy, O Lord, if you approve.  
Though all beside condemn.

## CHAP. IX.

### ON THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD.

NOTHING more fully proves the fall of man from his original creation, than the opposition and temper of his soul, while in his natural state, to the things of God. His wishes, his hopes, his labors, his principles of action and thinking, all are turned directly another way. *God is not* really (whatever a man of the world may speculate) *in all Ms thoughts*. He is *without God*, or rather, in sober truth, he is (as the apostle calls him) *an atheist in the world*.

Consequently it is that the people of the world have in all ages reputed the people of God, either to be fools, in not laying themselves out for such things as wholly engage themselves, or knavish hypocrites, who only take a pretended spiritual method to accomplish the same carnal and selfish ends. And if they can find an instance or two (as they often have done and may do) to confirm this opinion, O how do they insult over professors of all kinds, and run down religion itself, as though it were a trap or an engine for all manner of deceit, or at best a whimsical paradise, framed by superstition, for dunces and fools?

On the other hand; how wild, mad, besotted, and phrenetic, do all the agitations of these men seem to the Christian, in his retired and considerate hours? They are pursuing, in his view, lies and shadows, vapors and dreams. They grasp after something, scarcely knowing what. Ever restless, they are always upon the hunt; but never finding, never satisfied. They live weary and tired lives, full of envy, disappointment, and care; and they die hopeless deaths, either in abject terror at what may come upon them hereafter, or in the stupid opinion, that God created them only to live for a while like maggots upon the trash of the earth, and then at last to be thrown into a hole to rot away into nothing. Such is the sordid spirit, such the wisdom and the hope of this world!

## CHAP. X.

### ON THE PRIDE OF THE HEART.

MOST of the discomforts of our lives arise from the pride of our hearts, unmortified and unsubdued. Did I think as meanly and humbly of myself, as from the knowledge of my weakness and sinfulness I ought, the contempt or the insult of others would not hurt or afflict me. But I am false to myself, and therefore lifted up, assuming to my vile nature what it has no right to expect; and I am false to others, wearing appearances to create respect and esteem; which is walking in a mask, and rendering myself foolishly proud. If men saw me, and I saw them, as we really are, we should none of us be much inclined to boast of ourselves; but our glorying must either cease, or else be wholly in the Lord. I renew my reflections upon this subject, but because they cannot be too frequently upon my heart.

This pride has occasioned to my soul a world of trouble, both when it has reigned unsubdued, and while, through grace and trials, it has been in the acts of subduing.

When it is unsubdued, the heart is open to all manner of mortifications. A look, a gesture, or a word, shall put it to pain ; and, when this pain rages, the passions will begin to rave, and throw the whole frame into a miserable violence and disorder. Outward opposition will make it worse. The inflammation then grows often to a degree of frenzy, which nothing hardly can soothe or allay. And it is one of the wonders of Providence, that this pride of man, when combined and raging in multitudes, does not confound all order and rules more than it does, and utterly ruin and destroy the world.

To subdue this sore evil, *the pride of heart and life*, and all its effects in his people, is one great end of God in afflicting dispensations. They are high in themselves; and it is necessary for

their good that they should be brought down. Whatever answers this end, come in what shape it may, it is all a blessing.

Did such an one use me ill, or speak contemptuously of me? As *David* said of *Shimei*, it is be\* cause the Lord has permitted him. Has he treated me as I deserve? Why then am I angry? He has been to me a messenger of truth, whatever were its intentions, with which I have nothing to do; and therefore let me own the truth, and fall down in abasement and contrition before God.—Is the censure false? I have no right to be offended: He has not hit me, but himself, and becomes therefore the object of my prayer. If, in this instance, his condemnation has been wrong; my heart knows in how many others, and perhaps in worse, it would have been just and right. In every view I have no fair claim to be flattered with the applauses of men, but to be humbled in myself for the constant weakness, worthlessness, and evil, that cleave to me in all things. If I felt this as I ought, and walked as I ought in the continual sense of it, I should be ashamed to be proud, and should abhor myself, for the bold injustice and iniquity of being so, in dust and ashes.

I believe that some Christians have more trials and afflictions in the flesh than others, because there is more natural stubbornness of pride and willfulness in them. The Lord will have these to be subdued. And he suits all his chastisement?, with great and unerring wisdom, to the occasion\* If they thought of this aright, they would not be so much in care how to get rid of the visitation, as to have the design of it answered within them. They would pray to be humbled under the mighty hand of God, that he might exalt them in the right way, and in the due time.

It is my pride, and my self-will proceeding from pride, which render me so uneasy with God and with others. Were I truly lowly, and deeply sensible of my own condition; not the opinion and hard words of others, but my own sin would chiefly offend me. I am imperfect, as in all other graces, so especially in humility, and therefore I fret in myself, and am inclined to speak and to render evil for ever. O Lord, help me, a poor feeble man, help me, a poor feeble

man, and hide pride from mine eyes! Suffer me not to fall upon this stumbling block, which has overturned the world ; but help me to follow Jesus, who was meek and lowly in heart, and by him to find rest to my soul!

## CHAP. XI.

### COMPARISON BETWEEN CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL WISDOM.

CARNAL wisdom is the highest attainment of the carnal mind. It yields an exhibition of fallen man in his fairest and most cultivated form; and it is therefore the aim and desire of the best of natural men.

This wisdom (for we will call it at present by that name) arising from a depraved and corrupt principle, is necessarily weak and corrupt likewise. It seeks earthly and carnal things, is occupied entirely upon them, and looks no higher, and finds no more, when left to its own inclinations and powers. This wisdom, therefore, is called in the Scripture, *earthly, sensual, devilish*. It acts only upon and for this present world: it is plunged in the sensuality and designs of it through an earthly evil nature: it is, like Satan, in total opposition to the will and holiness of God, serving, as its last end, the creature instead of the Creator.

Thus the learned man is proud of his knowledge, as it gives him the superiority over others: the statesman, by his political understanding, pursues and triumphs in his own grandeur: the merchant, by his skill in trade, heaps up to himself riches: the mechanic, by his art and ingenuity, assumes his peculiar distinction: the carnal divine (for such an one there may be) is learned, and zealous for his party or profession, or for his own carnal exaltation in it. In short, it is no matter whether the means be high or low, but every natural man of every condition employs all his understanding, and all his powers, for carnal views, for earthly glory, and for temporal attainments. If his plans are calculated for these, and especially if they succeed, he is admired, applauded, and admitted to be a great, a wise, or an extraordinary person.

But, alas! how vain and perishing, how delusive and unsatisfactory, is this short-lived wisdom, and all that it can look after or find! To

what purpose are the eager wearisome toils and cares, the studious anxieties and restless pursuits, of all the millions of mortals in ages past, whose airy glory is blown away like a vapor in the wind, and whose very names are extinguished and lost? And if not lost and extinguished, yet of what value or consequence are they now, beyond the fleeting idea and imagination of mortals like themselves? And to how few, even in this last poor way, does the remembrance extend? And how unknown and insignificant is all this paper-glory to the owners, whose very image is departed from the world on which they doted? And what real use or satisfaction can any man propose to himself, in being remembered by those, who, themselves, shall soon vanish as a shadow, and upon earth be altogether and for ever forgotten?

Yet this is the highest prize of all earthly wisdom; and is not this perfectly fanciful, fleeting, trivial, and vain? In the grave all its thoughts perish, equally with the low notions and opinions of the ignorant and foolish, the poor and the despised.

But there is a WISDOM, which (unlike the other) deserves the name, and being no production of this corrupted earth, but coming from above, is *pure and spiritual* in its nature, and in all its purposes and effects, true, real, lasting, and happy. To the possessors of this wisdom, and to such only, it is said, that they *shall be had in everlasting remembrance*.

Its origin is in grace from HIM, who is the Fountain of wisdom. And its first effect is in the renunciation and abasement of self, as that which is false and contrary. Thus the fear of the Lord is the beginning, or first fruits which the soul can present, of wisdom. It is a certafn truth in every real Christian's experience, though a strange paradox to the rest of the world, that a man must become a fool, that he may be wise. The wisdom from above sees the ignorance of all other pretended wisdom, detects its base and groveling pursuits, and lifts up the soul, not to a temporary dying fame, which is often infamy with God, but to a solid and perpetual good, and to a *weight*, not a shadow, *of glory*. It discovers the *deceivableness of*

*unrighteousness* in the heart and in the world, the poorness of every thing out of Christ, and the great value of Christ and the soul above all other things. It does not lift up a man in himself, as a great and glorious doctor for human admiration; but it makes him low in his own eyes, through a view of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; and it keeps him from aiming at vain glory, as being a kind of treason against God, and as an unjust attainment for himself, a poor, dependent, ignorant sinner. The Christian, made wise to salvation, dreads to be left to his own wisdom; because he knows that blindness is its other and its truer name.

Christ is made, of God, wisdom to the believer. He spake as never man spake; and none teaches like him. He often gives a poor and ignorant countryman such instructions, as render him abundantly more wise than the mere scholar by all the florid pomp of the schools. So engrafted too are his instructions, that the art of man, and the sophistry of Satan, cannot baffle those who possess them. His knowledge is solid, and real, and enjoyable; such as the heart can feel, the soul live by, the spirit exult in, the whole man act upon, amidst a thousand trials in the world, and in the nearest prospect of death and eternity.

Possessing this wisdom, how serenely can the Christian look down upon the bustling cares and pursuits of men, upon their honors, their pleasures, their riches; even as a man of great natural wisdom would look down upon the follies and recreations of boys! Toys and games employ the attention of children, and engage their passions, though frivolous and fleeting: And are the solicitudes of men, and of old men too, less idle or extravagant, when they lay out all their time and strength, and souls, for that which profits not even here, and which none pretend to be profitable in the day of wrath? What poor things are these of the world in the hours of sickness and pain? and how much poorer still in the hour of approaching death? Honors, titles, and estates cannot remove a pang, nor give one drop of consolation; but in many cases, afford a wish of dismal remorse to their owners, that they had never obtained them. There is, I fear, more than one *Dives* in eternity, who laments that he had not been a

hundred times poorer and sorer than any *Lazarus* (with grace) was or could be in this world.

True wisdom proves its own worth by seeking and obtaining a proper and valuable end. On the other hand, that cannot be real, but delusive, wisdom, which is always working and promising, and at last concludes in nothing, or nothing but ruin. But this is the most, which is attained by the wisdom of this world, spiritually viewed. It gains air and dirt, a name and a perishing good, (if a good) below; and then it ceases to act, leaving its poor possessor only misery and disappointment, except indeed the fearful expectation of an unwished and unwelcome hereafter. Can the end of the merest idiot be more stupid and unwise?

Without a doubt, the affairs of this life must be carried on, and the Christian must more or less be engaged in them; but the wisdom of grace in his soul will teach him, that there are also other affairs to mind; affairs of infinitely more moment to him than all the world put together. If he should gain the utmost or the whole of this earth, and lose himself and the end of his being; where would be his profit and advantage? People, who can speculate clearly and calculate nicely for

gains in common matters, would do well to carry their thoughts of profit and loss a little farther towards the end of time, when all things, which most deeply concern them, are to be balanced and settled for ever.

Lord, above all wisdom of earth, and earthly gain, may I obtain that wisdom, which leads to an Happy immortality, and which shall abide with me beyond the bounds of time! I am a poor dying creature, going fast out of this world, and almost upon the very threshold of another. O help me to see then what can truly profit, or what may really hinder me; that *the loins of my mind* may be girt up with the girdle of saving wisdom, and that I may always be so running, as at length to obtain the crown! O preserve my heart from that unwise wisdom, which lays up what must soon be lost, and

squanders away what can never be regained! which thinks much of airy trifles, and almost not at all, or not at all to the purpose, of an unperishing good!—Of a good which your Spirit has called, *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, a crown of glory that fadeth not away; a building of God eternal in the heavens, a kingdom which cannot be shaken; a blessedness, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man; yea, rivers of joy and pleasure for evermore!*—Lord, if you give but the wisdom to obtain these, I shall very soon cease to lament the non-attainment of every other knowledge beside!

## CHAP. XII.

### UPON INDEPENDENCE.

MEN desire what is called *independent fortunes*, through their natural arrogance, and fond indulgence to their flesh: And because believers are flesh as well as spirit, therefore, in proportion as that flesh is spiritually uncircumcised and unsubdued, even do these require *this meat* of the world *for their lust*. It is very irksome to a believer's carnal nature, that he lives in his spirit the life of faith; and it will be more and more irksome to nature, as this life grows in him and is proved by trials, which tend to deny or abridge his earthly desires. The flesh cannot delight in any thing, that may not gratify its senses; but the life of the spirit consists greatly in *crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts*, in trusting God through a naked promise for what is yet unseen, and in giving up will, hope, desire, and every thing within and without, to his disposal. This is all horrid and dismal, yea, death itself, to the natural man. He hates, and abhors, and scoffs, and sets all his wits and passions at work to cry down a life so strange and peculiar, that he must even die to himself and all he loves, before he can live it. But whosoever will save this life of the carnal mind shall lose it; and whosoever would lose it, shall, by the mercy of God, find a better, even a life of confidence and communion with Jesus Christ.

This principle of independence, or aversion to live in simple trust upon God, is the secret cause why many professors *hasten to be rich*, or *will be rich in this world*, though by it *they Jail into a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in ruin and perdition*. "If I can get such and such a fortune, I will do so and so (say they,) and then serve God without distraction." But the flesh is not to be laid asleep by indulgence, nor the fire to be put out by heaping up fuel. Experience shows, that large possessions do much oftener damp any little life or zeal for God, than quicken the Christian's hope and concern for a better world.

The spirit of faith teaches another lesson. It bids a man *commit all his way to the Lord*, and rather to fear than to court great riches; knowing what mischief and wretchedness they have brought upon many, who once seemed to run well; and knowing also the natural desire of the carnal mind to covet these things merely for its own food and feasting.

The goodness of God, therefore, providentially keeps his children, for the most part, poor in this world, that they might live in the fuller trust and dependence upon himself. He that does not expect much from this world, cannot be much disappointed by it. When a man also has little or nothing before him, he looks to the best help: So the poor Christian sees, that God is his best help, and therefore lives humbly upon his bounty. In this way of continual trust and daily dependence, and not by fulness of bread or independence, he is made *rich in faith* through additional experiences, and walks with more and more strength and sweetness of spirit as *an heir of the kingdom*.

On the other hand, how many rich professors are there, who plead their very situations in life, as so many false reasons why they should be gay and splendid, why they should see all sorts of fine company, no matter of whom, why they should have pompous equipage and luxurious tables, and why, in short, they should have every thing in dress, manner, and custom, which their poor, vain, foolish, unmortified flesh can desire to have? They seem not to *seer*, that in all this they are living to themselves or to earth, and not to God or his glory among men. How it is, that they support faith at any rate, with every indulgence and ease to the flesh, with full conformity to the world, and with the entire good opinion of the world, I know not; but this I know, that if the true life be supported amidst so much contagion and disease, it is because *all things are possible with God*, though *with men this, among others, is impossible*. I speak not against rank and station, for these are providential appointments and necessary in themselves; but against the abuse of these to pride, sloth, vanity, and all the common evils and excesses of a polluted world. And I believe also, that I do not

speak from envy or chagrin ; for I really know not the man in this world, with whom I should wish or dare to wish an exchange of situation.

Lord, let me have what is best for my true life and welfare, and that only. Make me contented in your allotment. I have often been otherwise, and am still prone to desire unnecessary and dangerous things: O forgive me this error and blindness, and correct the madness of my proud and rebellious heart by the fervent faithful life of your Holy Spirit. So shall I desire only what will please you, and be content in my soul either with what you give or when you deny, however my flesh may strive to murmur and repine. O hear me; and let my whole trust, my God, be in you!

## CHAP. XIII.

### ON WORLDLY GRANDEUR\*

To a Christian, living and walking as becomes his heavenly calling, how poor and creeping, how idle and vain, how foolish and wretched, is the common eager pursuit after high distinctions in the world! They not only come up, and are cut down, like the grass, withering into dust and oblivion; but, while they appear, they are empty and fleet shadows, or (if it can be conceived) the very "shadows of a shade." If viewed at a distance, they seem solid as a mountain; if embraced closely, they are found but a cloud. Their possessors are poor, because ever in want. One blast of honor will not serve him, that wishes for two : nor a thousand him that can hope for more. The dominion of *Europe* would make a natural man pant for *Asia*; and he that cannot be satisfied without an additional province or river would not be satisfied with this whole world if he had it, but (like *Alexander*) would grasp after and lament for another. Whatever a natural man has, it is no matter: He never has enough; he always wants more. Consequently, he is poor; and he is wretched, because he perpetually feels himself poor. He has miseries from his poverty, and torments from his pride.

The real Christian is enabled to pity the anxious absurdity and vexatious vanity of those things, which are the great jet and concern of the worldly great and worldly wise. He looks indeed for a name, but is for *an everlasting name which cannot be cut off*. He is not content to be happy only a few days or years, but desires to be blessed and joyful for thousands and millions of ages to come. He longs for a crown, but it is for *a crown of glory that fadeth not away*. He pants for a kingdom, but it is for the kingdom of Christ and of God. He is really a person of boundless ambition; for nothing less will serve him than the infinite realms of everlasting joy. Riches are much upon his heart: but they are the durable, the unsearchable riches of Christ. He cannot be put off with the paltry cares and thorny honors of worldly greatness; but nobly pursues, and with

certainty too, the very happiness and grandeur of God himself, even that very glory which Christ received from the Father, and which, as their head, he will share with his members.

Compared with this, all the pride and glory of man appear but as stubble or falsehood, the mere dream of a shadow, a nothing. And if human greatness can appear thus in the believer's ideas now; what will it seem, when the earth itself shall be dissolved, and the Babylon of sin upon it shall be thrown down into perpetual ruins?

O what is Earth, if Heav'n be mine,  
Or what its dying toys?  
I seek, I burn, for wealth divine,  
For God's immortal joys.

## CHAP. XIV

### ON WORLDLY COMPANY.

ALL things may be lawful, but all are not expedient. It may be lawful for a Christian to be much among the men of this world, and in some cases it may be necessary, for the discharge of lawful callings; but is not expedient certainly to be more among them than is thus strictly proper and necessary.<sup>^</sup> Either the Christian must enter into their spirit, or they into his, before they can become agreeable companions. If he take up their spirit; surely it will soon be to his grief and his burden. And it is very unlikely that they should come into his: unless God might bless his faithful conversation to the good of their souls. But this is seldom the case in worldly company, and especially in the company of many worldly men together. The corruptions of one will bear up and harden the corruptions of another, and he, that perhaps would not have jeered alone, will scoff by sympathy with a mocking crowd. It is best to speak of spiritual things to carnal men by themselves; when common decency may force them to give a patient hearing, even though grace may not crown the discourse with a blessing. An whole herd may only trample upon your jewels and then turn again to rend you.

That man's religion is much to be doubted of, who frequents the society of the men of this world for satisfaction and pleasure. *How can two, even two only, walk together, unless they be agreed? If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you* (says Christ) *out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

Can a man touch filth, and not be defiled; or fire, and not be hurt? How much less then can a man conform to the spirit of this world, without pollution to his soul, or without feeling the loss of that peace, if he ever had it, which the world can neither give nor if lost repay? It is no wonder that men complain of spiritual falls and desertions, when they stand upon *slippery places*, and leave the

presence of God for the friendship of mammon. How can a heart, reeking from the hot dunghill of this filthy world, be offered as a sweet smelling savor to God, or hope to be accepted with returns of his heavenly fire?

## CHAP. XV.

### THE MANNERS OF THE WORLD ARE HURTFUL AND HINDERING TO BELIEVERS.

THE apostle declared it to be his privilege, that *the world was crucified to him, and he to the world*. Another apostle says, that *whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God*. And Christ assures us, that *we cannot serve God and mammon*, insomuch that if we would approve ourselves to be his disciples, *we must take up our cross daily and follow him*.

This is very evident; they who are the most given to the modes of this world, and mix most with its customs and pursuits, are the least alive to God, and the least lively in the things of God. Gaiety and foppery of dress, mimicry of worldly pride and parade, the hollow language of fashionable companies and friendships, do ill become a Christian, and never promote his true welfare.— It is not indeed the custom at this day to say such things to professors: but they are not, however, the less true, or the less needful.

Poor and wretched are all these fooleries, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and especially when they thrust out the enjoyment of things divine. To have gay bodily apparel with cold and naked souls; to possess fulness of bread with emptiness of grace; to enjoy much worldly company, and lose the society of God and his saints; to be esteemed polite and genteel in manners with men, and to be awkward and dumb in addresses to God—is all such a complication of folly, meanness, misery, and sin, as a Christian, in his right mind, should be amazed at and abhor.

Are we loved by the world! It is for this reason, the world will *love its own*. But how then are we *chosen out of the world*? How then can we belong to Christ, whom the world hates ?—This trimming between God and the world is neither for the comfort of our souls, nor for the credit of our profession.

Do we fear to be censured for singularity and precision? A Christian must be singular; for he is one of those, who is *not to be numbered with the nations*, a *stranger*, and a *pilgrim*, or *passenger*, here; and he must be precise, neither loving the world nor living for the world; for, otherwise, *the love of the Father is not in him*.

On the other hand, an open and generous civility, a gentle and benevolent deportment, bespeaking sincerity of heart, and holiness of life, are truly ornamental to the Christian. In avoiding the ape, a believer need not stumble upon the bear; nor, in shunning grimace and affectation, to plunge into sourness and brutality. If meekness, patience, gentleness, good-will, good manners, and good works, will please all men, it is his duty by these means to study to please them. But if they expect his conformity to the world for their pleasure, and are disgusted at the transformation and renewal of his mind, as it is more than probable they will be; it is then his honor and his privilege not in this way to please them, if he would approve himself to be the servant of Christ.

Though the Christian, in one sense, must be in the world and put his best hand to its business and affair, according to his lot from God's providence; yet, in another sense, he must come out from the world and be separate, lest his soul be hindered and defiled. He cannot enter into the spirit of the world without injury and loss: And it is the spirit, not the lawful business, of the world, which contains all the evil. In his calling and concerns, a believer is to glorify God: And he is enabled to do this, first by the prayer of faith over them, and then by the life of faith in them. That business and those intentions, which will not admit of these, are to be avoided as the very plague.

Lord, how poor and vile are all the gay modes of this world, compared with the simplicity and enjoyment of your truth! how beggarly and unsatisfying are its vanities, how low and crawling its ambition, how foolish and cheating its hopes, how vain and unprofitable its cares, how various and continual its troubles, how wretched and horrible its end! O give me your wisdom and love,

your grace and your truth; for this is that better part, which shall never be taken from me!

## CHAP. XVI.

### ON CONVERSATION AMONG PROFESSORS.

THERE are many professors of religion, who are always craving for company. They think, that to be alone is to be dull, and that, without conversing with creatures, they must be silent and stupid, whimsical or melancholy. Such persons are to be pitied, who have not learned the divine secret of talking with God in private by fervent faith and prayer, who know not how to listen to the still small voice of his Spirit in his holy Word, who cannot find an endless delight in discovering and tasting the sweets of redemption, and who lothe to commune with their own hearts, in their closet or their chamber, and be still.

When such persons get into company, and especially into a great company, they soon discover how unfit, as Christian professors, they are to be in it. The discourse, if of God and his truths, will be light and unsavory, without unction or solid experience; or if their conversation turn, as it generally will, upon men and earthly things, it will only differ from the language and spirit of this world, by being spoken by persons who wish to be thought of as living for another.

It is a melancholy truth, that the levity, dissipation, envy, calumny, and detraction, too often found among companies and parties professedly religious, as well as among the people of the world, make retirement very necessary to the Christian who would walk much with God, and far more cheerful than the generality of talkative professors can conceive it to be. But the soul, which is led to the true enjoyment of divine communion, finds it a relief, rather than a burden, to *cease from man*.

The Christian should not, if possible, get into company but either to impart some spiritual good, or to receive it. If he has grace and talents for the former, he will, before the discourse, secretly look up to God for his aid and blessing, and afterwards will desire rather to

be humbled for what he could not say, or for the manner of saying it, than to be pleased on his own account, for any thing he did say, or for the satisfaction afforded to others. If, on the other hand, he has received edification from godly conversation, he will then pray that it may abide with him, that the sweet savor may not be lost, that it may be carried into lively effect and experience, and that, like good seed upon good ground, it may increase with the increase of God, and bring forth fruit abundantly to perfection.

All this implies, that large and mingled assemblies must be more noisy than profitable. There has been of this at all times very sufficient evidence. Great entertainments, and many persons called together to enjoy them, may serve to keep out the calm serenity and sweet possession of divine reflection, but perhaps too rarely promote it. In many words there will probably be errors and folly; nor do numbers in a company always multiply wisdom. The flesh may be gratified and feasted, while the spirit may be starved, and wearied, and dry, and at last be sent empty away. It must be grievous, to a real Christian, thus to come out of company a worse or less happy man for entering into it.

It is the way of God *to feed his people with the rod* [of his gracious and selecting power] even *his flock, his heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel* [the field of the world]: And they *do feed* [like Abraham and the patriarchs, who were strangers and pilgrims upon earth] *in Bashan and Gilead* [the lands appointed for them], *as in the days of old*. Micah, vii. 14. They were ever *a people dwelling alone* [in abstraction from the spirit of this world], *and not reckoned among the nations*. Numb. xxiii.9.

If I have you, O my God, I have plenitude of society, though (like the blessed *John at Patmos*) no creature should be nigh, or though I should be an outcast from all the world. You can talk with me by your works, by your providences, and chiefly by your Spirit and word. O what delight have I felt in the testimonies of your faithfulness and truth, of your mercy and grace, of your presence and love, of your glory and power! Surely, surely, when I have

enjoyed these in their genuine sweetness, retired from every eye but yours; it has seemed hard to go forth again into the world, or even into the converse of those, whom your own providence and grace have endeared to me. And if this be so divinely delightful, in a mortal body and a miserable world, O what shall my felicity be, when I become a pure exalted spirit, with vivid ecstatic life, in the calm and unspotted regions of glory!—When I think of these unutterable mercies, how can I but long and pant, how can I but hunger and thirst for God, the living God, my God, my own God, and my own for ever.

## CHAP. XVII.

### ON THE CHANGES OF TIME.

How do the things of this world pass away! One generation follows another, and another after that, and so on from age to age, filling up the long rolls of time in melancholy array. They appear long to me, because my rule of comparison is taken from the shortness of human life; but to eternity, to the everlasting existence and infinitude of my God, these ages are almost a nothing. Into this eternity all that can be called time is continually passing, as into a gulf which has neither bottom nor bound. Thus time is full of changes and vicissitudes; while eternity is not only a perpetual *now*, but also a constant and perpetual *same*.

When I look into the histories of ancient days, and review the confusions and violence that have passed (for the history of the world is little more than a record of its sins); I ask my heart, to what purpose have all these things been, and where is now the profit to those evil men, who promoted them? Their works are in the dust, or at best upon paper; so that, excepting perhaps for punishment, they have neither remained here, nor followed their authors. All their hopes, and cares, and commotions; their own restlessness, and their inquietudes to others; are buried all in everlasting gloom. The pleasant remembrance of their gayest hours is either extinguished, or swallowed up in bitter sorrow for their sin; and the prospect for ever and for ever beyond—O what can this be, but a complication of all that is dreadful, unavoidable, and eternal!

This cool and serious review of worldly things and affairs passes so often upon my heart, and seems so necessary in reminding me how much I am but a stranger and sojourner here, that, if I have dwelt a little the more upon the vain wickedness of earth and of time, the reader will know the reason in me, if he feel no occasion to apply it to himself.

One cannot take up an annual calendar of names, published only twenty or thirty years ago, without almost considering one's-self among the tombs. The gay courtier and the plotting statesman, who once figured away within the senate or about the throne, now lie in undistinguished ruin with the beggar and the clown; not less vile than these, and perhaps not less regarded or forgotten than the lowest of the low.

And what shall preserve, from the like disaster, all the present system of cares and pleasures? If, indeed, that can be called a system, which begins in evil, is carried on with disorder, and ends in folly or nothing.

O! but (says one) *I have much goods laid up for many years; and I will say to my soul; soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.* One of this sort, not worthy to be named, is put down in God's record for an everlasting fool. In the same night, his soul was required of him, and had something else to think of than to attend the absurd business, which only the body could do, of eating, drinking, and being merry, in the abuse of temporal good.

In the midst of all this perishing and disordered state, there is one rich blessing, which never can fail. The mercy of Jehovah in Christ Jesus endures, yea, endures for ever. This is often repeated by the Lord himself, that it might be constantly and cheerfully believed and kept in mind.

O my soul! your time fails, your body is decaying, the world is daily changing, and nothing about you continues in one stay. Blessed be God, to you likewise a change shall soon come, and come for the better in the midst of it all! Whatever alterations appear, you have an unalterable God, and an unperishing home before you. If the earth fall into destruction, as soon it will, your estate cannot be lost; for you are only a pilgrim and traveler here, and your inheritance is above, far out of the reach of ruin. Your interest being safe in Christ, all is safe that is worth saving, with respect to you. You can only

pass from death into life, from sin to holiness, from pain to peace, from earth to heaven, from mortals to God.

O how then should I rejoice in you, my Savior and my Lord! In you, who makes all things mine; all, either as good, or to lead me to good. I adore you that you thus disposes the world, life, death, things present, or things to come, in my behalf; calling them mine, making them really mine, because they contribute to my welfare. Above all, I bless you for the end. I am lost in love and admiration, when you tell me, that I am yours, O my Redeemer; even as you are God's.

What manner of love is this; that I, a mutable worm, should become an immutable spirit; that I, who live in a tottering house of clay amidst a people of unclean lips, should be raised to a mansion of glory among the innumerable company of saints and angels; that I, a dull inhabitant of a miserable world, ruined and ravaged by sin and time, should be translated to a joyful rest, unchanging as eternity; that I, who was once a slave to Satan, and deserve only to live with him, should be made and kept a child of God, yea, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ Jesus of a kingdom which cannot be shaken! O what manner of love is this indeed!

## CHAP. XVIII.

### ON THE PATIENT ENDURING OF WRONGS.

LIKE the blessed Psalmist, I have sometimes been rewarded evil for good, to the great discomfort of my soul. It seems trying to flesh and blood, that is, to my animal and corrupt passions, to bear all and to say nothing: But yet this is generally my wisdom and my duty.

It is my *wisdom*, because then I do not stir up further evil of strife in my own bosom, or in that of others; and I moreover engage my gracious Master to undertake for me, by committing all in silent patience to him, who has engaged to make every thing, and such things as these most certainly among the rest, work together for my good. Thus that, which appears to be only a natural evil, will, by his superior management and control, be turned into a spiritual blessing.

It is also my *duty* to suffer patiently, considering him who endured the most severe contradiction of sinners against himself; because thereby I prove that I belong to him; for which purpose, perhaps, trials of this kind may have been permitted to fall upon me. If I have right and truth on my side, it is not only faithless but also unreasonable to be impatient. I ought rather to be thankful in that behalf, and to ask mercy and grace for those, who slander me against all equity and without a cause. It is indeed unpleasant to have the treatment, which he experienced who said, *I became a reproach among all my neighbors; and they of mine acquaintance were afraid of me, and they that did see me without conveyed themselves from me:* But this may be God's physic to my soul, which is not given me for my pleasure, but as the means, though painful means, of future good. My worldly attachments, or my Christian attachments in a worldly nay, might be growing stronger than are for the true health of my soul; and, therefore, this is a call to live more inwardly through grace, and to wait in faith and prayer for more communion with God. When I gain his company by losing the company or the friendship of men, and even of good men with great corruptions like my own; I have no reason to lament any loss, but to

be thankful, with all humility, for the kindness of every providence, which leads me nearer and keeps me closer to my blessed Lord. He is a tried and sure friend indeed, who can help in every exigency, and will be a friend for eternity.

If I took another sort of conduct, and exposed those as I might, and perhaps as they justly may deserve, who have done me evil for good; I should indulge only that base revenge of my fallen nature, which would plunge me as deep another way in the corruption, of which I might have right to complain. I may and ought to use the caution of keeping out of the way of injury; but I must not revenge it either by word or deed. While I am only wronged, I am safe; but I am open to all manner of evil, when guilty of wrong.

Above all the harm that can be done to me by creatures, let me tremble at my own passions, which, like tinder, are ready to kindle by the smallest spark of mental fire. May I tremble too at the officious readiness of others to increase my inflammation by their own. And alas! how much more ready is corrupt nature to feel and, to foment discord, than to subdue and abhor it! Let me pray then to be delivered from the strife of other men's tongues; and to have a strong restraint, for such I greatly need, upon mine. Sin "is the great kill-friend," as one calls it; may I therefore beg to be guarded against sin, both in myself and in them!

O Lord, what a nature, and what a world do I live in! I groan under a nature, which is ready to meet all the evils and confusions that are in the world, and to make every one of them my own. How does the unquiet spirit of man plunge himself and all about him into confusion, miseries, and distresses; engendering unhappy discords among individuals, and bloody cruel wars among the nations! And how often, my blessed Master, instead of retiring to your bosom, have I myself allowed this spirit of violence within me, and met it in other men! How much have I wronged my enemies by not praying for them, as I ought, when they have vented their wrongs against me! With how little patience and submission to your will have I endured these wrongs; not considering that they could not have

come, unless they had been permitted by you, and were allowed to come altogether for my good! O Lord, wipe off my guilt by your most precious blood, and enable me in future, as well not to take offence, as to be earnest to give none. So shall I appear indeed to be the disciple of you, my Savior, who, like a patient silent lamb, did endure all manner of insults and injuries; and so, in following you, I shall find peace at least both in your bosom and in my own, though I find none beside throughout this distracted world!

## CHAP. XIX.

### ON PRAYER.

PRAYER is the very breath of faith, and the first evidence of new and spiritual life in the soul. The Lord says to Paul, *Behold he prayeth*; because the Lord had then given him a heart to pray. Doubtless, he had often fasted and prayed before, as far as the lips were concerned- but the spirit, not words; life, not expression only; constitute prayer with God. Language may give it a form; but language alone is like mere body without a soul ; and he that so offers it, renders to God a dead unclean carcase for a living sacrifice, which is an abomination in his sight.

Whatever has life, must breathe; and if the life be sound and strong, it will breathe freely. Short, irregular, disordered breath, discovers either great exercise or ill health. It is the same in the life of faith. If the soul be quickened by Christ, it will breathe out its desires after him; perhaps, like a child at first, mingled with strong crying, bitter sobs, and many tears: But still it breathes on, and prays on; its breath of prayer is not stopped, but struggles for life and increase. If the prayer be faint and weak, disordered and low, the person is not in full life and health, or else some great temptation oppresses him heavily. The Physician of souls must be looked to for medicine, and for deliverance. Certainly all is not right, and a speedy help should be sought for and applied.

When the mind is truly touched by grace, it will and must pray. If the heart cannot find words to carry up its request, it will send them forth in earnest groans. Prayer can no more be kept from ascending than flame from the fire. *The Spirit* (said one, who understood this matter well) *helpeth our infirmities: For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* The cries of a drowning man are above the formality of words, and forcibly pierce the ear for help: So the deep-felt anguish of a convinced heart is inexpressibly eager for mercy, and with moans and groans sues it

out from God in right earnest. It does not seek a florid oration, pompous phrase, or theatrical starts, but pours forth aspirations, at times, too ardent and mighty for words. O how God loves such addresses as these! One *Abba*, *Father*, one tearful sigh, one inward groan, is beyond, and far better than all the fine speeches in the world.

Let not the broken-hearted sinner grieve then too much, that he cannot find language to express the fulness of his desires. His desires are the better for being found in his bosom too large and too strong for utterance. There is more of heaven in them, and they will break out at last the swifter towards heaven. If he can find fit words, let him use them; if he cannot, let not their absence increase his concern. God knows and loves the language of the heart, and in due time will answer the prayer. See 1 Sam. i. 13—15.

As to the gift of wordy prayer, it is generally bestowed for the sake of others. If accompanied with faith, it is highly valuable for godly edifying; if not, it will rather weary than improve. This gift is stirred up to more usefulness by exercise; and, when expressions flow easily, the heart can freely open itself without over-much labor or fear.

As to *public* ministrations of prayer, the unhappy zeal of party renders it difficult to speak of them without danger of offence. However, this every candid Christian may venture to allow, that a form of sound of words may more decently be used for congregations, than the loose, crude, and incoherent expressions of raw and inexperienced men. On the other hand, could the church be always sure of sound and able ministers,, who might rightly pray over the word of truth, as well as divide it; there certainly would be less occasion for forms, which seem to have been composed to prevent disorders, or keep out heresies, or to show to the church at large, what should be the objects of prayer at all times. No one surely can deny, that, in both the Jewish and Christian church, where public forms have been used, men have prayed together with the Spirit, and perhaps with the more understanding and communion

because they knew the words, and that it is possible to do so now with any sound and gracious form. So, on the other hand, it would be bigoted and unchristian like to affirm, that the Spirit of grace has not blessed what is called free prayer to the edification of souls; when, doubtless, there are now living numberless witnesses, of great truth and piety, to the contrary. It never was indeed the form, or the want of it, that made true prayer, but the grace of God in Christ Jesus, flowing through the words that were used, from or to the heart. And if all these gracious persons, divesting themselves of narrow prejudices, were asked, How and by what means they prayed; they would probably answer to a man, that it was by faith in, Christ Jesus, and by the good Spirit of their God. If both sides, then, are thus in debt to grace for the very life and being of all their prayers, and are thus alike free to confess it; how should the kind meekness and forbearance of their dear Lord glow in their bosom towards each other, and cause them to love one another gladly, because he has made no difference in his love to them? Surely this would be much better than to wrangle about a mode or no mode of prayer, in either of which, just as God blesses, there may be much true prayer or no prayer at all. It is the spirit of faith which carries on the real business; not the form or the gesture, the lip or the tongue.

Having ventured thus far to walk upon ground, which party and prejudice have made very tender; it may be expedient for my soul to consider the subject of prayer in a view more appropriately interesting and necessary to its welfare.

My Savior commands me to *watch*, as well as to pray; and his apostle exhorts me to *be sober and watch unto prayer*. My flesh is prone to be intoxicated with the mystic cup of *Babylon*, with the love of this present evil world, and therefore is unruly and unsteady. From there arise all my dullness and distractions of mind in the things of God; my coldness and weariness in prayer, my feebleness in duties, and my faintness in praise. I need to be sober, for I have a great concern before me: I ought to watch, for my enemies are subtle and mighty. They watch, if I do not, and are always ready to take advantage to hinder, whenever I am careless to get forward. I have

*an open door, and many adversaries.* If I do not watch *unto prayer*, the world will get between me and my duty: If I do not watch *in prayer*, Satan will do his utmost to prevent my sweet or continued approach unto God: If I do not watch *after prayer*, pride, presumption, security, or negligence, will find a way into my heart. O Lord, if I were fully and constantly aware of my true situation, how could I think to do less than *always to pray and not to faint*?

My fallen heart is ever ready to take up with the mere performance of duty. How often have I prayed for spiritual mercies; and not considered afterwards whether God has granted them, or not? For increase of faith, wisdom, holiness, and other graces, I have asked with earnestness at the time, and then soon have forgotten what I asked for, or neglected to mark the event. Consequently all the lowness of my attainments in divine things, and my overborne subjection to things earthly. And when I have requested temporal blessings; how little have I considered the hand of God in granting, or the wisdom of God in refusing them! How often have I sought the good for its own sake, instead of seeking it for God's glory and my spiritual welfare, and thereby was ready to turn it, if granted, into an evil! How little use have I made of temporal benefits, when they have been given me, and sometimes given unexpectedly too, that I might notice God's providence; and how ready has my corrupt nature been to take and apply them all to itself! Surely, I am as much the monument of God's patience, as of his love.

It is a matter always to be had in remembrance, that prayer should be followed up with thanksgiving. I ought to be thankful, if what I have prayed for is received; and I should be thankful also, if what I have prayed for is restrained. God is better to me than I am to myself; and he only keeps back any thing from his children, either because it is not good for them at all, or not good in the time and for the purpose for which they desired it. The words of a very ancient poet, rightly turned, may express, in this case, the sentiment of every Christian:

The good we need, great King, bestow,

Whether we ask for it or no;  
But, if for ill we blindly cry,  
In mercy, Lord, that suit deny.

The practice of many saints under the Old Testament was to pray thrice in a day. According to opportunity, I cannot pray too often, either in the closet, the family, or the church. There are indeed stated times for these; but one kind of prayers may be used at all times, and in every circumstance of life. The prayers of ejaculation, or of darting up the heart towards God (like that in Nehem. ii. 4.) in short and pathetic sentences, have a wonderful effect in them, and tend very much to keep up the soul's communion with God, and the life of holiness, in common things. Many such may be taken from the Psalms in particular. They show a sweet and healthful inclination of the soul, more perhaps than labored expressions, or long continuance of address, which may sometimes fall into idle repetitions, or be unattended with suitable affections and fervency. O how delightfully will these aspirations often pass towards heaven from the heart! How warmly stir up the affections, and raise the mind! How strongly check the inordinate care of earthly things!

*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be always acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my strength, and my Redeemer!*

## CHAP. XX.

### ON SINGING PRAISES TO GOD.

THE first of all earthly singers gave this as an inspired rule; *Sing ye praises with understanding*. Without spiritual understanding, we can only make a noise. Unless we know how deeply we are indebted to God, and have the sweet sense of his goodness in our souls; we may please ourselves with a tune, but we yield no music to him. Some of old *charted to the sound of the viol*, and *invented to themselves instruments of music*; but, at the same time, they were among those, who were *at ease in Zion*, who *put Jar away the evil day*, and to whom *woe* was denounced. God never instituted varieties of music in his service, however, like other carnal circumstances, he might bear with it under the Jewish economy; but only trumpets and rams horns to usher in the seasons and solemnities. It is spiritual harmony which is the delight of heaven, and not outward jingle and sound; and therefore if we are not spiritual, we can have no true notion of this delight, nor *make melody in our hearts to the Lord*. The thrills of music, and the divine joys of the soul, are very different things. Worldly men have had the first, and thought them from heaven: But they continued no longer than the sound; while the peace of gracious praise is full, sublime, and abiding. We must indeed be real Christians before any of us can say with the apostle, *I will pray with the SPIRIT, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the SPIRIT, and I will sing with the understanding also*.

*I* cannot but shake my head, when I hear an officer of the church calling upon the people, "to sing to the praise and glory of God;" and immediately half a dozen merry men, in a high place, shall take up the matter, and most loudly chant it away to the praise and glory of themselves. The tune perhaps shall be too difficult for the greater part of the congregation, who have no leisure to study crotchets and quavers; and so the most delightful of all public worship shall be wrested from them, and the praises of God taken out of their mouths. It is no matter whence this custom arose; in itself it is

neither holy, decent, nor useful, and therefore ought to be banished entirely from the churches of God.

When Christians sing all together in some easy tune accommodated to the words of their praise, and not likely to take off their attention from sense to sound; then, experience shows, they sing most *lustily* (as the Psalmist expresses it), and with the best *good courage*. The symphony of voice and the sympathy of heart may flow through the whole congregation, which is the finest music to truly serious persons, and the most acceptable to God, of any in the world. To *sing with grace in their hearts to the Lord*, is the melody of heaven itself; and often brings a foretaste of heaven to the redeemed even here. But jingle, piping, sound, and singing, without this divine accompaniment, are grating, discordant, jarring harshness with God, and vapid lifeless insipidity to the souls of his people.

I am not an enemy to music as a human art; but let all things be in their place. The pleasures of the ear are not the gracious acts of God's Spirit in the soul; but the effect of vibrated matter upon an outward sense. This may be indulged as perhaps an innocent and ingenious amusement; but what have our amusements to do with solemn and sacred adorations of God? Would not this be carnal, and after the modes of the world, and not after Christ? Surely no believer will venture to call any thing spiritual which does not proceed from, or accord with, the Spirit of life, or tend to *mortify the old man with his affections and lusts*.

Neither sounds of air, nor words of sense, alone, however excellent, can please God—*He is a spirit, and they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth*; for such *he seeks*. It is easy to do many, if not all, religious acts with a very carnal heart; but to be truly religious, or to walk and act in our spirits with God,—this has always been too hard *for flesh and blood*, and can only be performed by that grace, which gives life and power to every renewed mind.

Lord, help me, I beseech you, thus to laud and adore you! Give me a lively sense of your mercy to my soul: and then my soul shall offer

up her gracious returns of lively praise. Sacrifice and burnt-offering you require not, for no outward thing even of your own appointment, when not inwardly understood, can please you: the music of my voice, without the incense breathings of my soul, you will not accept. O assist me, then, to praise you aright; for, without you, I can do nothing. You alone give occasion to praise; and you also give the Spirit of praise to use the occasion. Vouchsafe both unto me. Then shall I one day join the great *assembly of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven*, and sing, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, that ever-new song, *Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb! Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

## CHAP. XXI.

### A CHRISTIAN, IN LOSING HIS LIFE, SAVES IT.

CHRIST has said, *Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.*

In doing this, the Christian must *die daily*. He is *crucified with Christ* in the flesh, that he may *live with Christ* in the spirit, His mortal fall; for, in himself, the strongest, the wisest, the holiest Christian, is confusion and wickedness!, weakness and nothing. He feels himself void of all good, and flies to Jesus therefore to obtain it. When he does not enjoy his Savior, he cannot enjoy himself. But when he has him, he has more than all things; because he has him, who made and possesses them all.

They, who are great, and love to be great, in outward things, have commonly but little of this essential life within them. When the soul has no feast within, it gads abroad for delight, and will put up with mean and carnal trash, unsuitable to its proper nature, rather than have nothing. Outward pomp and carnal show, in religion, above all commonly proclaim an inward emptiness and want.

There is a carnal knowledge of spiritual things, which the apostle calls a "*knowing Christ after the flesh*", and which is very different from the divine knowledge of those things. The apostles appear to have had chiefly, if not only, the former, till the day of Pentecost, when they fully *received power from on high*. They indeed loved Christ, and sincerely followed him before; but their love and knowledge of the Savior had in it a large mixture of flesh and corruption. Consequently they were astonished to hear of his sufferings and death, and their own humiliation; when, it is plain enough, they expected great temporal advancement and honor for themselves, and a glorious temporal kingdom for him. Even after his resurrection, like the Jews at large, they thought of a *kingdom to be*

*restored unto Israel:* But, when the true kingdom came into their hearts, we hear no more of these carnal expectations, but of a joyful readiness to suffer persecution and death for their Lord, and to go somewhere else, instead of this world, fully to enjoy him.

So, among us called Christians, there is this carnal knowledge of Christ, consisting in outward profession and a natural understanding of the truths of the gospel, which is also mixed sometimes with degrees of grace and spiritual life. But persons in this state are much in outward things, are great outwardly, talk of religion outwardly, and of its great advancement by great human helps in the world.

They are strong in their animal passions, bring these into religious matters, make a vast noise and agitation among men, are great rulers if possible, seek to carry all church-affairs in their own way, and, in short, are never easy out of a bustle, and certainly never easy in it. When these people sink from themselves by getting more true life in Christ, they are found to be more and more mild, humble, patient, gentle, *not intruding themselves into things which they have not seen, nor vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind.*—Then Christ becomes all in all to them; and they themselves nothing at all without him. Then it is that they lose their own lives, and find them again with great interest and sweetness in Christ.

If the love and word of Christ *dwell in us richly in all wisdom*, we shall desire to be much with Christ in our spirits, and to shut out all possible interruptions and hindrances in our communion with him. This is our great happiness, and the true life of God in the soul of man.

## CHAP. XXII.

### ON THE OPINION OF CARNAL MEN.

THE judgment, which natural men form of spiritual life, is altogether wild and extravagant, gross and injurious. *The things of God himself are foolishness unto them; neither can they know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* And can those think rightly of the people of God, who have not the faculties to think rightly of the things, which render them distinct from other men, and which are the very grounds and principles of God's conduct towards them? And ought a Christian to be moved exceedingly at the judgment of ignorance and error?

This world's opinion of all divine things is indeed very foolish and vain. It condemns what it has not seen, and despises what it does not know. It laughs at the wisdom of God, which it is too weak to apprehend, and sets up its own mutable reason, which is but folly, in its stead. A few years shall lay it low; and the wisest of the worldly wise will be the first to condemn themselves for the madmen and the fools. Wisd. v. 4. (Apocryphal – Book of Wisdom or Book of Solomon.)

Be satisfied, then, fellow Christian, with the just judgment of God. You can not be more despised than your Savior was. He indeed deserved no scorn, but you much more than you can have. If they call the Master of the house *Beelzebub*; shall those, who are of the household, think to escape a hard name?—No; let them bear it for his sake: it will never disgrace them in heaven.

## CHAP. XXIII.

### ON THE ESTEEM OF GOOD MEN.

THOUGH a nice sense of honor, consistent with his profession, becomes a Christian; yet an overnice care to get honor from any man is neither the duty nor practice of the Christian life.

Be not too anxious, my brother, for the good opinion even of the best of men, nor altogether judge of your state by so uncertain a rule. Concern of this kind seems to argue too fond a regard of your carnal self, or of your own state in the world. If they show disrespect, and if it arise from mistake; rejoice that your true hidden life depends not on the opinions of mortals, but on the love and just judgment of an unerring Redeemer. The opinion of others can never make nor unmake you, as a Christian. But if their disesteem should be founded in truth, fear not to dive to the bottom of your own undeservings, and cease not to pray for grace to correct them. Be not offended with your brethren, in either case; for this will lead to ruptures neither for their profit nor yours. The glory of God and of his truth is also concerned, which should fill you with the greater forbearance and caution in all your dealings with the *household of faith*. Pray for wisdom to examine your cause faithfully, to know the worst that can be found of yourself, and to see into the truth or mistake of others. And if, in your own conscience, the right be with you, be thankful for the mercy, and cease not, because they need it, to pray for them who are in the wrong. Your true charity should relieve, in this way, their spiritual necessity, and so rise, with that lawful triumph of a Christian, by an holy and inward superiority of meekness and of love.

Beware of anger and offence. The wrath of man cannot work the righteousness of God. Be humbled by every disesteem, whether just or unjust, within yourself. This is gaining a step in the great inward and spiritual progress of self-renunciation; for which end these means, though unpleasant to proud nature, may have been mercifully and providentially ordained. Fear not to see the worst of

your own infirmities: Tremble rather, lest they should be hidden and unknown to your soul. When you are made truly low in your own eyes, the slights and contempt even of good men, proceeding, as they usually do, not from grace but common infirmities, will not overmuch vex you. It is the fondness of self, and the pride of our hearts, which render all outward insult and injury distressing and painful. He that thinks little of himself, can bear to be thought little of by others: But he that is lifted up within, is grieved, when he cannot find that tribute of respect, which his own foolish fondness has ordained for himself.

The best remedy for spiritual disorder is spiritual prayer. Corruption inflicts or feels pain; and grace should subdue corruption. It is the true wisdom of a Christian to set his faith, and not the passions of his unholy nature, at work upon evil. Grace will teach him not to huff, or snort, or resent, or speak great swelling words of carnal indignation; but to bear, and forbear, and pray, and wait, and entreat, according to the occasion. When the rough north wind of trial rages and raves, then the graces of the Christian should more abundantly flow. All this is difficult, without a doubt; but will not a gracious success be afterwards a comfort to the believer, both as it affords a real proof of the true life of Christ within him, and an occasion of glorifying God before men? And if it answers these ends, how great is his reason to be thankful!

When gracious men see all this work upon you, they will honor God in his own gifts: But, if they do not, it is in no man's power to alter your condition with him. Be deeply thankful, that you have found mercy; and show forbearance to those, who need it from you.

## **CHAP. XXIV.**

### **WEAKNESS IS IMPATIENT.**

IT is not strength, but weakness, which complains. He, that is strong, can well bear the infirmities of the weak: He, that is weak, cannot bear at all, but is overwhelmed with his own. A father in Christ can put up with the frowardness and indiscretion of the babe in Christ; but the latter, having his mind but little exercised, is full of dislikes, and always wants his own will and way: Otherwise, he complains.

This weakness is commonly captiously fonder of finding errors than healing them, and more able to discover the grounds of difference than wisely to take up the points of unity. Sincere, yet quarrelsome; troubled, yet headstrong; young in the faith, yet presuming; fond of parties and persons, of modes and of forms of doctrine, with warm heart and little experience; all this is the character of most young or weak professors.—When they grow older in grace, they become wiser in the kingdom, more catholic, patient, forbearing, candid, and forgiving. They see a thousand mistakes and often willfulness in their own first profession; and these incline them, through an increase of wisdom and strength, to suffer kindly the infirmities and frailties of others. They then love what is real, encourage what is weak, pardon what is childish, endure what is troublesome, correct what is evil, and pray, not rave, when they see but slow improvements.

## CHAP. XXV.

### ON RETIREMENT.

WHATEVER is a man's first great business in life, that he will pursue most, and desire to study with the least interruption and disorder. A man of this world has his heart only in the world; but a Christian gets as much as possible into heavenly things, because his *heart* and his *treasure are in heaven*.

The God of wisdom himself has said, that no man can serve him and mammon. We have but one heart, which we cannot divide; and if it were possible, *an heart and an heart*, or a heart divided, would be an hateful offering to the Most High.

There is no real Christian, but who feels and bewails how often his common affairs draw off his mind from his best affairs, and throw him into dullness and distraction. He feels and bewails this, because he is a Christian, and because his best affections are somewhere else. His grief is not so much, that he must apply himself to social duties, which are indispensable to every one according to his place under Providence, but that he cannot carry more of the true spirit and unction of religion into them. Could they be more and more sanctified by the word of God and prayer, and could his mind be more delivered from the worldliness both of them and of those with whom he must have to do; they would grow into a kind of holy ordinances to him, and, instead of hindering his faith, would improve his joy. We forget to bring religion into our common course of life; and so that course is suffered to bring its own punishment and trouble upon us. A Christian, living like a Christian in his outward profession, is far more in the way of rendering glory to God, and of doing good to men, than a hermit, who does nothing in his wilderness but seek himself, or a monk, who by the torture of his body thinks to work out his own righteousness, by which to merit heaven. The true retirement is retiring from the sinful customs and spirit of this world, and giving up the soul to God in all things.

Having said this, it is also right to say, that there should be hours of secret retirement to every Christian, if possible; or at least as much time as possible, for prayer, meditation, and reading, upon the things of God. Where this time is through necessity short, as it often must be among the poor, who generally are God's own rich ones; still the real believer, in the midst any or of all his business, may now and then sweetly dart up his soul to God in fervent ejaculations, which will . keep up the true frame of his mind, and draw down many comforts from above.—These short: and silent breathings will also show a lover's heart, and prove, that whatever may employ his. hands, his mind is truly engaged for heaven.

Where circumstances of life, and the capacity of persons, will admit of farther separation from the world, it will be right, because advantageous, to use it. The retirement, however, must be for God, and not for self; in the spirit of religion, and not of laziness; to be more quickened for heaven, and not to be more useless upon earth. Consequently it will be seen, that all Christians are neither called to nor fit for an entire seclusion from the world: their habits, dispositions, abilities, and occupations of life, render it improper for them.

When a Christian can fill up all his retirement with the things of God and for his glory, with no just demand upon him from secular affairs; it is certainly a. most high and desirable privilege. Such an one may and ought to further himself in knowledge, and to devote all he knows, through grace, to the glory of God and the edification of men. Leisure is abused, when employed in tattle and dissipation, as it often is; and the abuser had much better be engaged in some active calling and employment. The droning tale of a gossip has but little to do with the life of the gospel.

To retire indeed unto God, is the most severe and solemn business in the world. It is a sort of middle state between heaven and earth, which no carnal mind can either understand or love. The<sup>^</sup> froth and levity of the flesh must be subdued;; else all the retirement will end in vanity. Humble, and ardent prayer should begin the day, the study

or the exercise of gracious things should carry it on, some intervals must be found for supplications and praise, strict watchfulness and trials must be continually made upon the heart, growing meekness for death and heaven must appear in the life, and no rest be taken at night but after humble prayer and surrender of all into the hands of God for time and eternity. A circumspect Christian is more careful of his time than any other man, because he can spend it more preciously. He thinks it a sad loss to throw away hours, which might have been employed in the works or word of God.;

When the truly retired Christian is alone, he is (as one says) "never less alone;" for God is with him and in him of a truth. He not only goes into his study, or his closet, but gets within himself, into the closet of his heart, and watches all the motions of nature and grace. Thus in time he becomes truly learned in that most difficult subject—his own self.

When we talk much with others, it is hardly possible, in a nature so fallen and corrupt as ours, not to talk amiss. But when we commune with God, he speaks so with us, as to give an increase of wisdom and grace, with much solid refreshment of mind. His word and will become plain and familiar to our souls; we enter into the spirit of his ways; and our spirits feel many undoubted proofs both of their own immortality and of the great blessedness of approaching glory. This, wherever it abounds, deadens the affection of a Christian to the low and vain discourse of the world, renders him more happy in and fit for his retirement, and enlivens his hopes for God and heaven. What improvement, thus to live! what blessedness, thus to die!

Many retire, that they may see and hear more of the world, and be entertained with its novelties or news: But the believer would withdraw to dive more fully into himself, as into a subject deep and little known, and to be more acquainted with his Redeemer in all the wonders and manifestations of his grace. It is a day lost indeed, when he obtains no prospect of heaven, or has made no steps towards it.

If a man does not thus retire, he only opens a wide door for all sorts of temptations to rush in upon him. So very few are fitted for or called to this kind of leisure (though by abuse only it becomes leisure) that God in his wisdom has appointed so much corporeal employment in the world, even for his own children. As the earth would be more an *Acelandama*, or field of blood, than it is, but for necessary labors, which call away, in some respect or other, almost all men; so the church itself would be more defiled, and individuals more unholy, than they are already, if manual or active duties did not take up the greatest part of their time.

I have known many professors, and some of an order too which should have engaged them mostly in things divine, who have wasted in frivolous discourses, mean pursuits, idle engagements, and other sad dissipations, large portions of those hours, which ought to have been devoted to studious improvement, serious conversation, or active piety. Vessels thus ever running out; how and when can they be filled? And what have they for others, who lay up so little for themselves?

O Lord, help me to retire indeed, but yet chiefly for you, and for greater communion with you. When I find you not in my heart, it is hard and darkened: When you are not in my closet, it is either full of confusion as a market, or it is desert as the wilderness. I can get nothing; and I soon feel, that I am nothing, but an empty, unprofitable void. O cheer your poor servant with your presence, who would indeed be a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth, yea, if it be your will, a stranger to every thing but you; having my heart in your home, and my soul in every respect under your command. Lord, thus help me to withdraw from the world, only to draw nearer both in spirit and in truth, unto yourself, and to whatever relates to your glory! .

## CHAP. XXVI.

### ON THE FEAR OF MAN.

HE, that unduly fears man, cannot truly fear God: And he, that lives much in the fear of God, will not regard over-much what man can do unto him. The want of faith is the root of all carnal fear, which becomes less and less pressing, as faith gathers strength and increases in the soul. It is a sad hindrance in the ways of God, as well as torment, to live under the views, opinions, prejudices, and passions of worldly men.

*The fear of man brings a snare;* and a snare for all sorts of evil. Mild, gentle, feeling, and delicate tempers, are most exposed to this danger; and they should pray much to him, who strengthens the weak, for fortitude without rudeness, for resolution without roughness, and for stability without stubbornness, that so they may properly act and hold out in time of trial.

When it is a principle graciously established in the soul, that men can do nothing to us but which is for our good, and that they must do whatever is; it greatly abates that fickle feebleness of nature, which, out of too much love and care for itself, brings us into bondage of heart to wretched worms, *whose breath is in their nostrils*, and themselves, in this way, *not to be accounted of*.

## CHAP. XXVII.

### ON MY OWN IMPERFECTIONS.

WHILE I am in the flesh, I must be encompassed with many infirmities: and while I am in the world, I cannot escape trial and temptation. These things are grievous to my spirit; but I see that they are permitted to wean me from myself, and to draw on my heart from the creatures to my only true refuge in God.

What feebleness, at times, do I not feel in duty; what fickleness and unsteadiness, in following my Redeemer; what dullness and distraction in prayer; so that I can hardly remain firm and lively, long together, in the pursuit of that good, which my soul most desires and approves. It is a war indeed in my members to get my corrupted nature down, and to have the life of grace warm and vigorous within me. I cannot but groan, at times, in this tabernacle, being burdened, and almost oppressed, by the evils within and about me.

Were it not for divine help, O what should I do? Like Peter on the sea, I have sometimes ventured boldly after my Lord; but like him too, through faintness of heart and weakness of faith, at other times, I have cried out, *Lord, save, or I perish!* You have helped me indeed, blessed be your name, O my God; and yet I cannot but reproach myself for the cold forgetfulness and weakness of my spirit, in doubting so often of your faithfulness, and in not keeping hold of your promises.

Thus, Lord, I feel myself a poor, a frail, and altogether a weak and worthless man; fit for nothing but your mercy, and capable of nothing, when left to my own nature, but rebellion against it. When I survey myself, and all my confused and ruined faculties, I am filled with shame, and cannot but wonder at your long-suffering towards me. O wretch that I am, in what a vile body of sin do I live! How am I always struggling against you with my perverse and wicked flesh, contrary to the true and lasting interests of my soul? How ready to

yield to your enemy and mine; or to give up all for lost rather than maintain the hard and painful struggle with corruption and sin?

When I have been lively and zealous for my God, how often have I been ready to overlook, to misapply, or to turn his grace to the foolish vanity of my own mind? Insomuch, at times, I seem all flesh to myself, and to have neither true light, life, wisdom, nor strength from above within me. My failures are and have been so numerous, the apostasy of my heart so great, the conduct of my life and temper so mutable and irregular, and all my frame so poor and wavering, so cold and weak in embracing the best things, that I am ready to bemoan with the prophet, *Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips! My whole head is sick, and my whole heart is faint.*

Others may talk of their wills and their powers, their duties, and their deserts; but, as for me, I can scarcely lift up my eyes to heaven when X consider myself: Rather with the publican my brother, I must smite upon my breast and say, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* Instead of looking on myself as a fine holy creature, who can appear confidently before my God, I shrink with contrition and shame at the thought, that I have done little else than dishonor him all my days, and deserve nothing for the best thing I was ever able to do, but confusion and sorrow.

O what plague is discovered in a man's own heart, when he knows himself; and how little does he appear in his own eyes, when he has been made to view, in some true light and degree, the piercing purity and perfections of God.

And yet, O marvellous to say, God is pleased, by all the weak and contrary things in me, to magnify his own power and glory. By these, he makes me out of humor with myself; by these, he drives me from a thousand refuges of lies; by these, he compels me to cleave unto him, as my only Rock, Succor, and Remedy. In this way, I can feel, as well as read, what the apostle meant, where he says, *Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the*

*power of Christ may rest upon me; for when I am weak, then I am strong.* These are strange paradoxes to the natural heart; but blessed is the man who can truly understand and enter into their sweet sense and experience.

## CHAP. XXVIII.

### THE BELIEVER RECEIVES FOOD AS WELL AS LIGHT IN THE WORD AND DOCTRINES OF CHRIST.

THE mere notion of divine things, without their power, cannot profit the soul. As a man may be poor with the plan of a large estate, of which he has no possession; so a professor of Christianity may have the Bible before him, and may be able to raise very high and fine speculations from it, and yet have no true knowledge or enjoyment of the truths which it contains.

A minister may preach of these truths with great clearness, and with fine and fervid declamation; and yet have no true savor, no solid experience, no real communion, of the truths themselves within him. What proves this is, that he is not the same man in the pulpit and in the world. The doctrines of the gospel will serve for orations as well as other topics; nay, will serve for the most exquisite orations, because there is more of sublimity and glory in them than in any other.

An author likewise may write about divine revelation, and all the mysteries of redemption, with precision, accuracy, force, and elegance, and yet himself be destitute of the main concern, which is, the faith and inward perception of these things for his own soul. I would deal fairly and closely with myself in this respect, as well as with others; and I will confess, that my light is far beyond my liveliness; and though I humbly trust that I have some little real life in my knowledge of God and his truths, yet I own with an aching heart, that it is indeed but little, too little, and much less than my inbred fondness for myself, or vanity, or pride, or conceit, (for, Lord, you know, and I know, that I have all these in abundance within me!) will suffer me at times to think that I have. Perceiving, then, my own weakness, and the *deceivableness of unrighteousness* in my own heart, I am able to see, and yet to pity and bear with, the same infirmities and defects in others.

However, no real believer can find much or long satisfaction in any notions or conceptions of divine truth, though very subtle, clear, full, extensive, and convincing, without something of a more substantial nature arising from them. He does hot despise head-knowledge, indeed, because by this he can see the wisdom of God; but he would have heart-knowledge too, because he wishes to taste, to enjoy, to be assured of his interest in, the love of God. He can no more feed upon words and syllables in his soul, than he can live upon air only for his body.

The Lord, therefore, when he imparts *the demonstration of the spirit* to a man, imparts it *not in word only but in power*: And so the gospel becomes *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes*. He cannot receive it aright without this power; he cannot live upon it but by this power; nor hold out in living and believing to the end but by the same power.

This gracious feeding of the soul upon the things of God is its greatest enjoyment here upon earth, and one of its bright evidences for heaven. It is a secret holy act, carried on best without the clutter of the animal passions, or the intercourse of corporeal things. The holy bread was eaten in the holy place, before the holy light; and all out of the air, or view, or correspondence, of the world.—Thus, in the secret place of the Most High, the soul feeds upon Christ, beholds Christ, and obtains all its divine communion with the things of God. And when it has thus tasted that the Lord is gracious, it loves to be with him, and says earnestly, as Peter did, *It is good to be here*. The carnal notion even of the best things will no longer satisfy or feed it. *The bread of God which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the hungry soul*, can alone satiate its cravings and completely answer its desires.

## CHAP. XXIX, ON THE SPIRIT OF SCOFFING.

IT is no less ungracious than unwise to indulge a scoffing temper in our souls. Pride and an unmortified opinion of self, joined with contempt of others, are the true origin of this evil. It is the more dangerous, and not so much to the scorned as to the scorning, when set off with wit and mimicry, point and satire. But attic salt is not the salt of the covenant; and, in sacred things especially, is not the true savor for a Christian.

It may be diverting to mimic and *to take off* others, in order to expose their foibles or delects; but how, and to whom, is it diverting? Is it to the humble, spiritual, and mortified mind? No, but to the profane and the carnal; or, at least, to what is carnal and profane in a Christian, which is the very principle of all others that he would not strengthen or encourage, but subdue.

There is so much inhumanity, as well as irreligion, in this jeering temper, and usually so little good sense, that the Christian is bound to oppose it both in himself and in others.—Cheerfulness is his privilege; but surely he may be happy in his mind without planting thorns elsewhere; nay, it proceeds from the want of true happiness, if he can endure at any rate such a contemptible shadow of it.—True peace is gentle in itself, and glows most sweetly in diffusing gentleness and kindness on every side. The happy Christian

Nature and grace.

would increase his own joy, by making, if possible, every one truly happy about him.

## CHAP. XXX.

### IT IS A GREAT POINT OF CHRISTIAN WISDOM TO DISTINGUISH WELL BETWEEN NATURE AND GRACE.

EVERY real believer has an old man and a new, an *Esau* and a *Jacob*, a carnal mind and a spiritual mind, within him: And these are contrary the one to the other; so that he cannot always do the right things that he would do for God, nor crush the evil things that he would not do, within himself.

These opposite principles have two opposite laws, or rules, of action and power. The inclination and effect of the one are constantly directed to self, and to carnal things for the indulgence of self; and those of the other to God, and to spiritual things for the glory of God.

Men under nature, having only one of these principles, cannot, in their natural state, discern the other. It is by grace, as by a rule, that they are able to measure nature, and to know the tendencies and proportions of both grace and nature, within themselves. *He that is spiritual, judges, or discerns, all things; yet he himself is judged of no man.*

Nature in the Christian is for cleaving to sense, to its own doings, and to its own powers, even in religion: But grace in his soul is for living by faith, above and often against the feelings or sense, upon *the truth as it is in Jesus*, and upon his work and working, for life and salvation.

Nature loves to show and set off itself, and to be admired as excellent, eminent, wise, and great in the eyes of men. Grace does not set much by itself, but is lowly and humble, vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, dreads the applauses of men, and enables the soul to see, that it is so utterly weak and poor, as well as vile, that it must

receive out of the fulness of Christ every one of its blessings, from the first spark of grace to<sup>^</sup> the bright crown of glory.

Nature is quarrelsome, impatient, and full of restlessness, desiring its own objects immediately and independently, and applying all it receives to its own ease or aggrandizement. Grace seeks not her own, but the things which are Jesus Christ's, makes the spirit meek, and mild, and patient, and quiets it with the will and love of God in all things.

Nature hates the cross, and shuns it as a bitter and evil thing; it struggles hard not to feel it, and, when it feels it, to get rid of it, without any other consideration than it is painful, and hinders all indulgences and gratifications. But grace submits to the cross with humble resignation, and desires that God's purpose may be answered by it; like as a wise patient wishes that his physic may have its due effect, however unpleasant and distasteful it maybe in the act of receiving. .

When nature attempts holy duties, as she sometimes will either in fear or in pride, it is to make herself rich and increased in goods by them, so that she may have something wherewith to purchase even of God himself. But grace comes to the obedience of faith, not to live or purchase life, but because she is truly alive already to God; and she acts, not for her own exaltation, but for the glory of him, who only can exalt, and who fills the hungry with good things, while the rich are sent empty away.

Nature admires dignity, and parade, and pomp, and outward splendor: it seeks to be pleased with sweet sounds, fine language, decorated places, and genteel company; and all this in religion too. Whereas grace shuns and distastes all gay appearances of earth, thinks of Christ in a stable, and in poverty, and of all he did and suffered to stain the pride of flesh and blood; and receives the favor of God as a precious pearl for its own intrinsic and eternal value, and not for the sake of any outward things different in kind from its own.

Nature loves life, and to see good days in this world, and as many of them as possible; it shudders to give up its temporal enjoyments and carnal hopes, and would endure a great alloy of care and trouble, rather than part with the *lying vanities*, to which it is wedded, and in which it delights. Grace, contrariwise, can say with holy Job, *I would not live always upon earth, if I might; for I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.* Grace can think upon death as a friend, and has often met him as such; looking forward to the crown of glory, which death can only lead to, but never can take away. And all its trials here only cause a stronger breathing and livelier expectation of the heavenly home.

Nature is forward to speak, and loves to be heard, and will be angry if not regarded, and will do much to be seen and known. Grace is slow to speak, and slow to wrath; wishes to hear and learn, and understand; delights not to be in the chief seat, but is content with the lowest; and had rather lay up spiritual treasure in the heart, than babble it away, for selfish aims, with the tongue. It is not petulant or vexed if disregarded, but commits itself, and all that belongs to it, to the direction of God.

Nature draws from its own fund, and carries all back, and with interest if possible, to itself again. But grace receives all from God, and is never so truly delighted, as when God receives the whole of the glory, as his just return.

These are a few of the many distinct operations of nature and grace. But sometimes they are so perplexed and interwoven with each other, through the craft and duplicity of the fallen natural principle, that it requires the greatest watchfulness and attention of the Christian, to unravel and divide them.—The fact is, the two principles live at one time, act at one time, and will be found in one and the same person at all times and in all things, while he lives upon earth. The Christian cannot avoid the activity of his natural or carnal mind; though by that faith and prayer, which removes the spiritual mountains of difficulty, he is to strive and may prevail against its high rule and predominance. Carnality will exist, while he

exists below; but it must not be the reigning and triumphant principle within him. On the other hand, Grace, which is pure and simple in all its own acts and intentions, and resolves every thing with a single eye and single heart into God, must take the lead and bring the other into the closest captivity and obedience that can be unto Christ. This is the daily battle and warfare which passes within the Christian, which no eye can see, but the eye of God and his own ; yea, not his own always, nor always alike. Thus, when grace prevails, there ensues what is called mortification, self-denial, humiliation, renunciation, and all the other exercises, which are painful to the flesh, or nature, and its will and ways. On the contrary, where nature is uppermost, there will ever arise coldness towards God, faintness in duty, doubts, reasonings, discomforts, fear of man, fear of death, and a whole world full of weaknesses, hindrances and temptations. By the prevalence of these different effects in the soul, may easily be seen, if attended to, the leading superiority of one or other of their respective principles. When there is a strong animal or carnal nature in the believer, though with a good measure of grace, and trial comes of a powerful and threatening kind; O what a tumult is raised within! Nature struggles for ease, and winds, and turns, and frets, and laments, and uses a thousand shifts to carry off the believer from the battle, or to melt away his heart in the midst of it.—Grace, on the other hand, tells him, that now is the time to act like the Christian, to lay hold upon Christ and his promises, to take up the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, and the helmet of salvation, and to withstand at least, if not even to meet, the enemy; that he shall conquer the trial by suffering the will of God, it being his present duty to trust, to hope, to pray, to wait; and that, in a short time at the utmost, al! shall end well, and redound both to his Redeemer's honor, and his own improvement.

What conflicts, perturbations, hopes, resignation, despondences, will not the Christian. find in the constant opposition of the carnal to the spiritual life; when temptations, troubles, or trials of any sort are to prove the strength of both? And yet, after the temptation, it is in some measure with him, as it was with Christ after his; comforts.

like angels, will minister unto him. There is such a peaceable fruit of righteousness succeeding to these grievous things, as will make the believer a most ample amends for all his trouble and sorrows.-- But if this fruit should be deferred in the present life, it will be but the more welcome and glorious, when the soul bursts out from the bonds of clay, and leaves all sin and a sinful nature behind it.

## CHAP. XXXI.

### ON TEMPTATIONS.

It is a great part of the Christian warfare to encounter temptations. When a man truly becomes Christ's soldier, he is armed from head to foot by him; because from head to foot will his enemies attack him, with all sorts of weapons, to inflict every possible distress, when they cannot overwhelm with destruction. He has, because he needs, *the whole armor of God*, that he may both stand and withstand, during the *evil day* of this mortal life.

O how many fiery darts are thrown, with all the vehemence of spirits, against the Christian's soul! If his armor does not sit close upon him, and if the shield of faith be not well and constantly held up to catch and repel the assault; how many sore, and almost venomous, wounds will he not endure? Nay, if the Christian think to be only upon the defense, and fight not in his turn; it will be with him, as it is in all defensive wars among men, very troublesome, and very disadvantageous. He has therefore a weapon given him, that he may attack too; and when he wields, in the strength of his Captain, *the sword of the Spirit*, which is *the word of God*; the great spiritual foe remembers the deep strokes he received by it from Christ himself in his temptation, and shrinks away from its edge. If the Christian should be so unwise as to fight the enemy in his own might, and without this armor; he would suffer as a man must do, that would encounter a whole host in array (every individual of which is almost infinitely stronger than himself) naked, unsupported, unarmed. None know the strength of the world, the flesh, and the devil, but those who have life and are called to oppose them; just as the force of a stream can be tried only by the resistance made against it. The people of Christ too often fall into an unprescribed way of fighting, through a presumption of their own conduct and power, and therefore are often brought off from the field wounded and half dead: And it is through the mercy and grace of their Lord, that they are not entirely captured and destroyed. They

are usually more ready to look to their armor, and call upon their Leader in great trials; and therefore they prevail: But when they despise the strength of a little temptation, and fight against it in their own; then it is that they are deeply taught their inward and natural weakness, by losing the day. In their Captain's armor, in his strength, and by his sword, *they must resist the devil*; and so, to their joy, shall they find, that he will presently, fly away from them.

Nothing escapes the vigilance of this foe. He observes the particular constitutions of persons; ,and he makes his. attacks upon all the weak and .unguarded parts. He suits *his devices* to the frame of their dispositions; and, if they are ignorant of those devices, he will often make sad havoc and distress.

He also knows, that the Christian has traitors in his own bosom, once under full diabolical command, and now not absolutely suppressed and confined. These he bribes, entices, advises, corresponds with, and acts by; so that when the assault is made from without, these suspicious inmates are not idle within, but join hand, head, and heart, as it were, to throw all open to the enemy.

Consequently for these inbred foes, envy, pride, malice, lust, and all the confederacy of black and carnal principles, Satan finds out and proposes their several objects of desire.—These are soon converted into engines of war against the soul; and if the Christian's thoughts are not inspirited and guarded by the watchful firmness of faith, he may be unawares entangled again by his old master, who used, before he was a Christian, to *take him captive at his will*. What disgrace does every defeat bring to his holy profession; and what misery, both before and after his recovery, to himself!

Satan has also sly and subtle temptations, perverted from religion itself, by which he often assaults the mind. Sometimes he will raise snares from zeal, love, light, enlargement, and success in duties, by which to flatter the Christian into a high opinion of himself, and of his gifts and graces, in order to take him off his guard, or to unclothe him of his humility. When he can make a man proud, he makes him

like himself; and when unclean, like a beast. At other times, he will inject the very poison and curse of his own diabolical spirit, by darting evil thoughts; despairing or blasphemous suggestions; vile conceptions of Christ, his word, his work, and all his salvation; preposterous, doubting, distracting, and presuming fancies; and an almost infinite variety of abominable suggestions; which, if the soul be unarmed and unguarded, will harass it to the utmost distress. He has no pity; nor will he leave off for groans or wailing, agonies or tears. These rather encourage him, if there be nothing but these. The only thing he dreads is the *Sword of the Spirit*; and the only thing he cannot pierce is *the armor of God*. Therefore, when all this sad business is going forward, the Christian should not lie crying on the ground like one bereft of his senses, but should call upon his Captain for the armor and the sword, and with these should venture on boldly, trusting to the divine strength which is promised, against the foe. When he can do this, the conflict will soon be over: It is yielding, hearkening, reasoning, and parleying, which occasion all the mischief.

I Can talk of all this,. my fellow-Christian, and I know it likewise to be right and true; but I am often beset, and have often been as much to seek as you can be, in this hard, yet glorious, service. To this moment I feel my own miserable weakness, when left, in the least degree, to myself. I have had my drubbings, my falls, my horrors, my conflicts, as well as you: and I have been taught by them, though with much slowness, (I speak it with shame and sorrow) to fly to the right refuge, to lay hold of the right strength, to buckle on the right armor, and to fall on with the right sword. When I have done this with most alertness and with the most unreserved confidence in my divine Master, I have been most successful, and most easily have prevailed. When I have lingered, or dallied, or tampered with my foe, or else thought I could cope with him by himself, because he has appeared under a mean disguise; then I have fainted and failed; then have I sunk, and been surely overthrown. .My rebuffs have made me a little more wary of my own heart, as well as of my spiritual adversaries; and I find it the best way to -begin speedily

with prayer to HIM *that heareth*, that I may truly be ready for whatever may come upon me.

O how hard a thing it is, and how far beyond *flesh and blood*, and all the powers of reason, for a man truly to know the plague of his own heart, the deep apostasy of his nature, and all its subtle tendencies and operations!

While we are in the flesh, conflict with it must be more or less our daily exercise. And the use of it is, chiefly to keep our hearts from pride and sloth, to bring down the love of self in all its desires, and the love of sin in all its forms, to endear Christ to our souls in the holy ways of his salvation, to cause us to give up ourselves to him with less reserve, to wean us from earth and earthly comforts, and to fix our affections more firmly on heaven. If all this ensue, we shall then have happily disappointed the devil, and beaten him with his own weapons; and therefore shall in the end rejoice for every trial and conflict, which have led us on toward the attainment of that blessed state of mind, which is the true life and expectation of a Christian in this world, O that I may recollect these things for myself; while I am aiming to stir up the minds of others to the remembrance of them! Lord, your strength is made perfect in weakness, and your wisdom in folly; I call upon you, therefore, and upon you alone, to be the Guide, the Help, the Defender, and Deliverer of my soul! *You are FAITHFUL, that hast promised;* and here, and not upon my own natural reason or corrupted powers, do I rest my every hope of safety and salvation.

## **CHAP. XXXII,**

### **ON ADVERSITY,**

WE naturally love the world, and the things that are in the world, and this love, unsubdued, is the sole cause and ground of what are called mortifications and disappointments from the world. If the love of Christ prevailed more in us, it would not be in the power of outward things to give us so much pain as they do; or rather, if this love were perfect in us, we should be ashamed and sorry that these things should give us any pain at all.

This is the truth; but how do we use it? Very often, in the time of trial, we make no other use, than to assent to it as a truth, and there leave it. Reflections of this kind are but orations to the winds, unless grace shall second and enforce them. The most trifling loss, as I have often observed in myself and others, is sufficient to unhinge and throw us out of order; if we have no stronger power than our own to keep us in it. .

There is not a plant upon earth, how unsightly and bitter soever, but which has an end for its being. God, likewise, has not intended his providential works, however adverse or disagreeable to our sense, but for some just purpose and design. There is also a *needs be*, if we *Jail into divers temptations*. And, if needful, then they are right and profitable, and will appear to be so at the last.

We have many evil humors, that require correction; and God sends adversity, as a medicine, to heal some disorder in the soul. When it comes with grace into the spirit of a Christian, how does it soften and blunt his rough and acid dispositions, how reform and lower his swelling and confident frames, how chasten and subdue his restless and impatient tempers; while the better part, his renewed mind, gathers strength, and holiness, and resignation, and hope? We shall, indeed, thank God heartily for all our adversities, by and by; and, though they are not to be counted as any part of our inheritance, we shall rejoice eternally, that they were graciously made a part of the

means for bringing us to it. *Lazarus* himself can now rejoice over all his sores, and adore the Lord for the worst of them.

The apostle Paul was a chosen vessel, and dearly beloved of the Lord; but the Lord did not say concerning him, what great things he was to *do* or *enjoy* (though no body perhaps ever did more for Christ, or enjoyed more of him, upon earth) but *what great things he must SUFFER for my name's sake*. The flesh shrinks at this; but grace can enable the soul to count it all joy when it falls into divers temptations ; not for the grief that is in them, for that would be unnatural, but for the peaceable fruits of righteousness which they shall produce in the end.

We must pray, then, to trust the wisdom and love of God in all sorrowful dispensations; since he does not willingly or wantonly afflict his children, nor send one sorrow more than what is absolutely necessary to their edification and welfare.

When we can bear all trouble as a part of the burden of Christ, and can obtain his assistance to bear it with us ; we shall find it daily grow lighter and lighter, and at length press upon us only like the burden of wings on a bird, enabling us to fly the swifter and the higher towards heaven.

## CHAP. XXXIII.

### ON PROSPERITY.

GOD's people are seldom trusted with much prosperity; and, when they are, it very rarely appears for their good. The things of earth and time, in affluence or abundance, have a fascinating power over the carnal senses, entice them first into the ways of evil, and then (if grace prevent not) intoxicate them with it. How many spiritual sots are there in the world, who, though averse to gross intemperance, are reeling instead of running in the path of duty, their heads being turned with the fumes of this earth, and their hearts *waxed gross* through the *abundance of her delicacies?* And it is one dreadful proof of the strength of this intoxication upon them, when they hate to be told of it, and feel angry, not at themselves, but at the friendly and faithful informer.

The gaiety, parade, lightness, and lofty airs of many religious professors too well show, what a dangerous thing it is to possess much of this world, and how easily our hearts may be made drunk, and then drowned in sensuality, if not in perdition. Were Christ and his apostles now upon earth in their plain and lowly form, it is much to be feared, that they would be thought hardly good company enough for many of the present race of genteel and modish professors of religion.

It is an excellent prayer, which Christians in worldly prosperity cannot remember too often; "In all time of our WEALTH, good Lord, deliver us!" We want his help, then, more if possible than in adversity: lest *the lust of other things, entering in should choke the word, and it become unfruitful.* We have weak heads and a disordered appetite, which are soon *overcharged* with a full cup of temporal prosperity. *They were filed* (says the Lord speaking by the prophet to the Jews) *They were filed, and their heart was exalted: THEREFORE have they forgotten me.*

It was the good advice of a wise man; “seek not proud riches, but such as you may get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly.”

There is no doubt, but that Christians with worldly riches may do abundance of worldly good to others; and it is one proof, that God is in them of a truth, when they do so: Yet, there is very great reason to pray, that, while they are God's stewards to feed other people, they may be careful not to be starved themselves, and that no pride may arise in their hearts through these outward displays of *zeal for the Lord of hosts*. These may seem great things to men; but, if we remember the widow and her two mites, we may understand, that something else is greater before God, than any administration only of carnal and temporal things.

Our hearts need no gross damps of this world to cool them. On the contrary, God by troubles frequently stirs up his own grace and life in them, as we stir our fires, that they may kindle more freely, shine more brightly, and glow more strongly for our comfort.—Whatever draws us nearest to God, cannot be real adversity: What- . ever entices us from him, deserves not the name of prosperity.

## CHAP. XXXIV.

### LUXURY INDECENT FOE CHRISTIANS.

LUXURY is to pride, what the body is to the soul. It gives substance to that depraved temper, which Satan occasioned to man, and which reigns in himself with the most malignant subtlety, ruling also, where it is permitted, in the faculties of creatures and the grossness of matter. It first reduced him from angel to devil: and it has degraded mankind almost to both devil and beast.

A very great part of the world's pursuit is indulgence to the flesh, by procuring, not the mere necessaries (for these are in a small compass) but the pomps, the shows, the imaginary wants, or the real luxuries, of this present life. If they have much goods laid up for many years, no higher thought remains, but to take their ease, to eat, to drink, and be merry. They have strange and wretched notions of spiritual and eternal enjoyments. Heaven and heavenly things are necessarily in their very nature too refined for those, whose heart is ever in the dirt, and whose whole life and hope are supported by what lives and grows upon it. Like a man whom I remember to have seen, they have no "desire to sit singing *Hallelujah*, upon a bare cloud (as he expressed it) all the day long, without any thing to eat or to drink." This was his idea of heaven: And have those people any better or more solid thoughts of its glories, who prefer to them (as the men of this world uniformly do) the poor vile trash and sordid attainment of the earth? Alas! so it is; no natural man has any true regard for God or his soul, but only for his carcase and the world.

The primitive Christians were distinguished, as well for the plainness and simplicity of their manners, as for an exact frugality in all their affairs. They thought, and with great truth, that to do otherwise would be both unseemly for their profession and injurious to the poor. People, who want all for themselves, as the luxurious ever must (except in some rare cases), can have but little, if any thing, *to give to him that needeth*; and, what is worse, a luxurious pampered person has usually no heart to give at all, but has lost his

bowels of compassion, through the excess and voluptuousness reigning within him. Consequently it is, that the very rich and very great are too commonly hard hearted; while, in the middle ranks of life, both sympathy and benevolence are frequently found to lighten the load of woe. These, it is- true, may be all mere nature; but they are, however, not the least precious remains of original beauty among its ruins.

To glut the stomach is to starve the mind; vainly to dress up the body, is to strip the soul; to appear great before men, is really to be little in the eyes of God; to be anxious for this world alone, is to lose the true enjoyment both of it and a better. Yet all these compose the prime wisdom of worldly men. But, should such be the object, the pursuit, the practice, of a Christian? Can the pilgrim, or traveler, the stranger and sojourner upon earth, who talks of *seeking a better country and a heavenly*, make it his business or delight to indulge his flesh and carnal affections in modes like these? It seems, indeed, a sort of burlesque upon godliness, that a creature, proud, pampered, glutted, adorned, and wallowing in lazy and luxurious life, should solemnly profess meekness and lowliness of mind, abstraction from a sinful world, deadness to earthly vanity, humble expectations of heaven, and a life of faith and communion with God till heaven be attained. I am not a monk, nor monkishly inclined; but surely the modern luxury among many professors is neither the characteristic nor ornament of Christian life, and cannot from its own nature be the means appointed either to win or to wean men from mammon to God. It is indeed with pain and reluctance that this subject of pride, laziness, and luxury, which usually go together, is here mentioned, and especially that there is so much occasion for mentioning it, in our day and in our land.—To use, and liberally to use, God's temporal mercies with cheerful thankfulness, is one thing; but to *nourish our carnal hearts as in a day of slaughter*, to live only for ourselves, and to be filled with a fulness of earth instead of God, is quite another. The apostle speaks of *using the world, and not abusing it*, plainly intimating the distinction and the difficulty. For this reason most probably it is, that the Lord keeps the bulk of his

people out of worldly snares by poverty and trouble, for which they will see more cause to thank him hereafter, than the wealthy and the great for all their riches. When the world lies heavy and close upon the heart, O with what a sluggish slowness does it rise up towards heaven!

Lord, above all your gifts, give me yourself! I may be happy without the creatures, but I must be wretched for ever without you.—Against all my carnal affections and desires, above all my apprehensions and views, beyond all my hopes and expectations; O do you lead me through time to eternity, and be my life, my love, my light, my Lord, and my all in all!

## CHAP. XXXV.

### THERE ARE MANY FIRST, THAT SHALL BE LAST.

OUR opinion of persons and things is usually taken from outward forms and appearances; but God looks on the heart, or spirit, which is the true and only substantial essence or being.

What a wonderful revolution shall the day of God make upon the earth! Many high and towering professors, extolled by others and prized by themselves, shall be glad to take even the meanest and the lowest rooms, deeply thankful "not to be quite thrust out of the kingdom; while some poor dejected and despised souls, who passed their days almost unknowing and unknown with respect to their world, shall shine forth as the stars in the firmament of heaven, to the surprise and astonishment of every eye.

We greatly mistake, in general, with respect to spiritual glory. It does not consist in the splendor of gifts and talents, or any *bodily exercise* (as the apostle calls it) of the animal frame, but in the less glaring, though far more solid, ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; not in the attraction or admiration of men, but in the love and enjoyment of God; not in the subtle and lofty aspiring even of the inward man, but in self-abasement, simplicity, humbleness, and sincerity of mind, resignation of soul to God, victory over self, and every thing else that belongs to lowliness and profound humiliation. This is *real and living* glory; but not the glory of the world or of the flesh, for these neither understand nor desire it. Alas! how little is it considered, that an outward *religious act* and *religion* itself are Two things, very distinct and very separable! Scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites, have performed the one with the greatest care and exactness; but, all the while, were farther from the kingdom of God than even publicans and harlots: The other consisting in divine life and inward union of the soul with Christ, is the portion and experience of none but the children of God.

We may be proud of pretended virtues; and, perhaps, it is possible to be proud even of grace itself, opposite as it is to that fallen principle of corrupted nature; but it is not so possible to think nothing of ourselves, and to be contented with the slight and contempt of others; to prefer all God's children to ourselves, and to place our seat far below theirs; to love our meekest and our humblest thoughts, and to hate bitterly the emotions of pride, and the urgings of anger and arrogance. Yet all this is the true and solid dignity of a Christian soul, and brings it nearest to the likeness of Christ, if not nearest to his throne.

O Lord, help me to understand myself.—May I wish to see, not how great and good (as flesh would have it) but how mean and vile, I am. Preserve me from high thoughts of myself; for . these become not a sinful, dying worm, who lives every moment upon a breath of air; nor yet do they become a redeemed sinner, whose only plea must be mercy, who has nothing of his own but sin, and who by grace alone can be saved, according to your will, O Lord, my God!

## CHAP. XXXVI.

### ON TALENTS.

IT is the sentence of an apostle, uttering the mind of the Holy Ghost, that *though he himself should speak with the tongues of men, and of angels*, that is, with the highest degree of the most energetic or zealous eloquence, *and had not CHARITY, • or the LOVE of God in his heart, he should become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.* He goes farther; *Though I (says he) have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.* He does not stop here: *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*—Awful words! The possibility of such a case (and surely the apostle had not been led to state it, if it were not possible) should alarm the mind of every one, who professes to believe and follow the gospel of Christ.

It is obvious, at first view, that GRACE and GIFTS are *two things*; and that their separate effects or consequences to the possessors of either, may be different also.

Grace, or charity, or love, which have nearly the same sense when applied to the life of God in the soul of man, is the special influence of the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the heart. This, coming from God, unites man in love to God through Christ, and shows itself in the various ways of patience, resignation, self-denial, abstraction from envy, and other malignant passions, with all those other blessed fruits, which the apostle beautifully describes as growing out of it, and which cannot truly grow out of any other principle.

But eloquence, prophecy, understanding of mysteries, attainment of theoretic knowledge, and even that sort of faith itself which rests on rational evidence only, the working miracles, as well as almsgiving and the surrender of life, may all be possessed without grace, and may answer ends too that are not gracious. They may be gifts indeed

from God; and so is food, or health; but they have been sometimes gifts to the mere natural man, and may be held, like all other of his faculties, either with or without any thing better.

A man may understand and reason upon the terms, grace, justification, regeneration, and other holy and spiritual principles, so far as they can be the objects of human apprehension; and yet have no share in the truths implied by them, and consequently be ruined at the last.

*Ahitophel* was eloquent and wise, almost as the *oracle of God*; 2 Sam. xvi. 23. *Saul*, as well as *Balaam*, was *among the prophets*; 1 Sam. xix. 24. *Solomon* understood all mysteries and knowledge, but found them vain and insufficient to keep him from falling. *Judas* preached, and worked miracles; but, at the same time, *had a devil*; Luke ix. 1, 2. The *Pharisees* gave great alms; but were *a generation of vipers*. Even *heathens* themselves, and amongst them poor *Indian* women, have surrendered up their bodies to torture and to death; but none of them, certainly, either with any sense of the love of God, or for his glory. The apostle's argument is, that these outward gifts, **ALONE** cannot possibly profit to eternity, because they cease or vanish in time: Even the believer's holy knowledge, as it is possessed here, shall be *done away*, because it is *partial*, and he sees through the medium of corruptible sense, as. *through a glass darkly*, or enigmatically; which will not be the case in the soul's future perfect and pure vision of God: But *charity*, or the divine love, arising from the divine essence, and essential also to the very being of a true Christian, can never fail, nor cease, nor be extinguished.

All this proves the assertion, that grace and gifts are *two separable things*, even in the profession of the truest religion. Grace is peculiar to the *children of God*; gifts may be possessed by *men* as such, whether heathen or Christian. The former is essential to the divine life; the latter, at best only ornamental or subordinate. A man may go to heaven without *gifts*; but, if he had all the fine parts and all the advantages of religious life and profession in the world, without *grace*, they would in the end profit him nothing. Many, it is to be

feared, have written and spoken well concerning salvation, who never inwardly experienced or enjoyed it. They knew the *theory*, but not the *thing*.

*By their fruits*, such ever were and ever will be known. They have called Christ, *Lord, Lord*; and this was easy enough: But to *do the things which he said*, to *take up his cross*, and to *follow him truly in the regeneration*; this was *above flesh and blood*, and impossible to be done by those who have nothing else. This observation applies to professors at large: But the Redeemer himself carries it farther to persons in a higher class: *Many, many will say to me in that day, LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied (or preached) in thy name? and in thy name done many wonderful works* (perhaps been made the means of converting souls, as *Judas* probably was)? *and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me, YE THAT WORK INIQUITY.* Thus it appears, *the devils may be subject to a man through Christ*; and yet (what is of infinitely more consequence to himself) *his name may not be written in heaven.*

Where grace and talents are indeed united, they capacitate the possessor not only to be useful, but to shine: And to shine thus (like a diamond upon sable), reflecting purely the Redeemer's glory, and foiled (as it were) with meekness and humility, is a blessing to be wished for on account of others, rather than for any man's own concern, and therefore not to be envied. He that envies another's abilities, forgets the giver, and has not learned the proper use of any, not even of his own. Great faculties require proportionally the greater grace to manage them ; or the corruption of the heart will pervert them to private ends, as it has but too evidently done in a thousand cases. To color the deception, there may be a shadow of zeal and abundance of activity with these talents, which may seem well laid out, and be very successful too among men, in the most serious and divine concerns: And yet, after all, SELF, that secret and subtle SELF, may be the main-spring, or final object, of the whole. *Come see MY zeal for the Lord*, said *Jehu*: while his great purpose was earthly splendor and dominion for himself. Herod preserved John (as the word means) *and did many things* by his suggestion,

*and heard him gladly;* but, through pride and lust, he murdered him at the last. And so Judas (as was mentioned before) prayed and preached, and undoubtedly worked miracles, as fairly and clearly as the other apostles; or certainly he must have been suspected by them for *the traitor* at the Lord's Supper, without any further occasion of troubling Christ with their repeated question, • *Is it I? Is it I?* Had he been noticed for the least outward deficiency among those, *to whom even the devils were obedient through the name of Jesus;* John could have wanted no other sign. John xiii. 21, 26. An old writer gives another remarkable instance. An eloquent and distinguished orator maintained in a set discourse the truth of the Christian religion, with so much force and clearness, as to excite the admiration and astonishment of all that heard him. His friends warmly congratulated him on his success. He was alive to their praise; it was the very thing that he wanted. But to secure the honor (as he thought) more entirely to himself, he vaunted, that, in taking the other side of the argument, he could as easily pull down all he had raised, and establish the contrary upon its ruins. Divine justice, we are told, was not slow to vindicate the divine glory; for he, who, notwithstanding his great abilities, was before a spiritual fool, became soon afterwards a natural driveller and an incurable idiot. His eminent powers, which at first seemed to be in employment for God, turned out, upon trial, to be devoted to himself and his own vain glory. These and such like things should ever occasion *great searchings of heart.*

Help me, O my God, to search *mine!* For this, end, do you yourself *examine me; and try my reins, and my heart.* Leave no corner unexplored; but discover the whole, as it is, to the eye of my mind; let, O let me never be deceived about myself, nor fatally be a stranger to my own spirit, or to the principles of action within me. Let these be all simple, all pure ; give me the *single eye* and the *single heart*, that no double views or intentions, no corrupt motives or desires, nothing, no, nothing but what proceeds from you, and leads to you again, may direct and animate my soul. Let me cautiously regard all my faculties, and jealously watch over the application of. all my powers, that every thing in me may proceed in

the exactest conformity to your will and word. It is my wish indeed, and this you know, to act much *for* you, but in no case and at no time *without* you; and, when you call me not to action, but to suffering and waiting, which is yet more difficult to man, O help me, like *Abraham* and *Moses*, to stand in patient submission as they stood, though my trial be drawn out, like theirs, through a dull and unpromising length of years. Be you with me, and all shall be well, whether I *bear* or *do*. If I am to be silent or passive, support me, for I cannot remain thus by myself: if I am called to act, *work in me to will and to do of thy good pleasure*; for all your truth, and my own experience, prove, that, in the business of spiritual life especially, *without thee I can do nothing*.

## CHAP. XXXVII.

### IT IS THROUGH GRACE THAT ALL ORDINANCES ARE RIGHTLY USED AND BECOME BENEFICIAL.

As there is a talent of speaking with grace the things that are true and profitable; so there is a talent of hearing with grace, that those things may be received with edification. We may too often see and bewail a customary slight mode of bearing, which, instead of enlivening, deadens; instead of warming, fixes the cold; instead of promoting the life of God within, only confirms the life of the flesh throughout. This is sharply reprehended in Ezek. xxxiii. 30—32.

Some are for hearing a variety of preachers, others a multitude of sermons; not for profit but for pleasure, not to digest and turn the discourses into spiritual nourishment, but to satisfy the hurry and bustle of nature, which does not love patient reflection nor the meditating labor of the soul. To hear only and commend this, and that, and the other preacher, however excellent and gracious, is poor employment indeed, which requires very little sense, and less grace, to perform. To set up men and forget God, to be extolling one man above another, and to be ready to quarrel and abuse for the sake of one poor worm against another; is all of it nothing more, than the vileness of the carnal nature perversely crept into religious profession, and all of it equally wretched, impertinent, and vain. If this were the whole that is to be found in religion, it would not be a bad wish, that one's " Life might rather be spent with philosophers."

To hear for amusement or criticism, to be delighted with flowery language, to be charmed with action, person, manner, and voice, may answer the purposes of the theatre or senate; but to attend upon God, to hear his word as for one's life, to be filled with the solid importance of divine things, and to carry them home into the heart for comfort and strength in the experience; this is quite another kind of business, which does net so much engage the carnal mind or ear, as employ the most fervent exertions and the holiest affections of the

soul. The one is rank abuse of a sacred institution, and perverted to lull the heart to sleep in carnal security, under the notion of a religious engagement: The other is finding, in the true and gracious use of the means, the advantage which the Lord intended by them.

It is better likewise to hear one sermon, and then to recollect it, to feed and ponder upon it, and to turn the matter of it into prayer, than to be present at four, five, or six in a day, as some have been, and not be able at last to give a tolerable account of any one of them. The divine life of a Christian does not consist in mere hearing, any more than his natural life in always eating; but in digesting and in bringing what he hears, as so much nourishment, into the very frame and texture of his soul.

Faith must be mixed with this and with all ordinances and sacraments, otherwise the outward man alone acts, while the inner man is asleep or dead; and so that, *which should have been for welfare only, becomes an occasion of falling.*

"*How* have I heard? not *how much?*" is the best inquiry. Our Lord directs us to consider it well, where he says, *Take heed how ye hear.* And if we reflect, that God's word is *a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death,* in them that do hear it; surely, in so solemn an affair, we ought to pray before we hear, to watch unto prayer in hearing, and to mix faith and prayer with what we have heard, that it may turn to our good, and not to our sorrow. 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

## CHAP. XXXVIII.

### ON THE PROFITABLE HEARING OF THE WORD.

THIS subject is of so much importance, as to demand some further reflections.—It is a trite observation, that we have *two* ears, and but *one* tongue. The natural inference however becomes the more important, when authorized by the Holy Ghost; *Let every man be swift to hear, and slow to speak.*

But though swiftness of hearing be right, it is only so upon just principles and for a proper end. A person may be swift to hear evil, through the corruption of nature, for no other purpose than to practise it. In such a case, slowness, or deafness itself, is comparatively a blessing.

It appears, then, that there are two sorts of hearing, or faculties, the spiritual and the carnal, the right and the wrong; the one formed and empowered by grace; the other left, as it came into the world, under the perverseness and depravity of nature. We will consider both of these as briefly as possible.

When man fell from God he not only lost the right use of the natural faculties, which consisted in raising spiritual and divine ideas from the outward objects; but the faculties themselves were diminished, and instead of serving the Creator and showing forth his glory in the knowledge and happiness of a perfect creature, were corrupted to obey a fallen spirit in every ministration of sin, whether in filthiness, pride, or malignity. The ear, amongst these, became the organ of a depraved understanding, and is often put, by a figure, for the depraved understanding itself. And, because men in their state of nature are so besotted and blinded by sin, as to have *no understanding* (or what is worse than none) in spiritual things; they are said to have *no ears* in those things. On the other hand, our Lord frequently addresses himself to those, *who have ears to hear;* manifestly implying, that the faithful only can hear to purpose, and that all others are, in a certain sense, *without ears*, that is, incapable

of understanding what they outwardly do hear. This corrupted faculty cannot, therefore, receive the truth; but, through gross misapprehension, will commonly pervert it, turning good into bad, and the bad into worse and worse.

The true faculty is indeed a *new creation*, and consequently the *operation* and *gift* of God. The Lord makes *the hearing ear and the seeing eye*, said the wise man; or, as *Elihu* expresses it to the same purpose, *opens the ears of men and sealeth their instruction*. In vain might men speak, as *Ezekiel* would have spoken to that emblem of sinners spiritually dead, *the dry bones*; unless the Lord of power vouchsafe to bless, and to impart the truth and strength of a *right understanding* to the mind.

But where this new life is given, the believer should remember, with anxious concern, that even there also remains the old. They both exist at once in the same person, and often produce, if care be not taken, and a better care than his own, a sort of neutral exercise of faculties, employing them upon the very best things to no purpose at all, and sometimes to purposes which, it might be thought, no gracious person could allow or endure. The fact is, professors hear the truth too much in their old men; they do not mix faith with what they hear; and so they become triflers in divine things, and grow insipid and indifferent to them. Their new man is not renewed day by day, through holy meditation and prayer, and therefore seems to grow weaker; while their old man gathers strength and inclination for the things of the flesh and the world. They do not (as the martyr of old said) "join the ears of their head and of their heart together."

Consequently, in Christian profession, we have such just complaint of *heavy ears*. Persons shall have been long under the word, and yet shall have profited so little for the time, that they appear like infants when they ought to be full-grown, or dwarfs, and misshapen dwarfs too, at the proper age for maturity.—This *dullness of hearing* often makes it *needful*, that such should be *taught again the first principles of the oracles of God*; because (as the apostle says) *being babes, they have no experience in the word of righteousness*. What a

strange sight is this; a man in leading-strings; a person in years wailing for the breast! And yet meat, and especially *strong meat*, is not good for him: He cannot digest it. He is capable of taking nothing but milk: And it is well, if the only *pure milk* of the word will satisfy him.

There is also, in Christian profession, what the scripture calls, *an uncircumcised ear*.—A man, with an uncircumcised ear, is unsubdued by what he hears, so that his *thoughts are not brought into captivity*, nor into sweet subjection, *unto Christ*. He hears, therefore, by his own powers. His soul consequently is not bent into meekness under the word; but coming to it as a critic or a judge, with an high look and a lofty heart, he squares all things by his own rule and reason, and determines all by the crooked measure carnal understanding. When the truth is *made particular* to him, he acts, like some high professors of old, and like all who are *uncircumcised in heart and ears* (Acts viii. 51.)—*he resists the holy Ghost*. Such an one *receiveth not correction: Truth is perished to him, and cut off from his mouth*. He is therefore not the better for what he hears, but the worse, converting the wholesome nourishment, through his cachectic or bad habit, into poison or disease. In process of time, he grows both careless and hardened under the word, and being now sermon proof, receives no more real impression from the gospel, than the flinty rock from a shower of rain. Alas! alas! How often may one bewail these uncircumcised ears!

The apostle reminds us also of *itching ears*, which are not so desirous of their own proper exercise of receiving the truth, as of being tickled and amused. A light thing, a mere feather, will answer this purpose better than that *two-edged sword*, which cuts beneath the skin, and penetrates to the very *thoughts and intents of the heart*. The itching ear takes a wonderful pleasure in quaint or odd expressions, or in flowing, polished, or rhetorical phrases and language. To it there are no such charms, as the charms of manner and words; a rich and glowing diction, a correct and masterly style, the grace of delivery, the force of reason, and the prettiness or sublimity of thought. These are excellencies indispensable and

invaluable to the curious ear. A good story, especially if there be any wit in it, will tickle it almost to" an ecstasy. Sometimes mere rodomontade will serve the end, which is to divert and be diverted\*\*" A pathetic or melancholy discourse will also" tickle well an itching ear, though in a different way; for if the animal passions be moved, if the old Adam be worked upon, if the common feelings of the carnal nature be excited with any degree of emotion; these will gratify and please that carnal nature, like the hearing of tragedies and oratorios, even to rapture and excess, so as almost to be mistaken for religion and grace. In all this, there may not be one particle of that life of the new man, *which is renewed after the image of him that created him*. I do not mean that a Christian is to be divested of the common feelings of humanity, but that he is not to mistake these for the actions of grace in the things of God, nor from the word of God to seek for so low an object as the gratification of these. He is riot to be entertained, but edified; not to be amused, but corrected; not to be pleased only, but profited; not to crave indulgence to the *desires of the flesh and of the mind*, for this every worldling craves; but through grace to subdue his evil propensities and affections, and to confine nature within its bounds, that the life of Christ may be made manifest, and that the fruits of faith may abound to the divine glory. O how much more wise and happy is this for the soul, than the mean and trifling enjoyment that can be procured for itching ears!

There is also, to mention no more, what a gracious and dear friend of mine has well styled, that *monster* in profession, who is *all ear*. No faculty, in religious matters, but this one: No heart to apprehend, no heart to love and experience, no hands to act for Christ, no feet to walk in the obedience of God: but *all—all ear!* A new preacher, a fine preacher, a long sermon, sermon after sermon, discourses about the talents of preachers and the beauties of sermons, and sometimes matter not quite so good as these, are objects of supreme delight for too many, who rather wish to hear about Christ than to live upon him, and to have a good seat under the sound of ■the gospel than to be enjoying the power of it. Q what a poor sort of professing life is

this! To mistake air for food, and mere hearing for godliness alas! What will this avail the soul, when it shall need strength and courage to resist the powers of darkness, and to enter the gloomy valley of the dead!

The true servants of God have, in a certain subordinate sense, *their ears opened, or pierced*, according to the meaning of the rite in the law; and thus they are made *his own for ever*. They come *wittingly*, in the day of his power, to the door of his house, and even to CHRIST the only door of the *true tabernacle which God has pitched, and not man*; and there each of them joyfully declares; "I would not, and in your strength I will not, go away, O Lord, from *thee, because I love thee and I love thine house, and because it is good for me to be with thee.*" By this spiritual operation, they are made alive to God, and are enabled spiritually to hear his word, and to have it *written in their inward parts*, and thus to serve and live for God in Christ with life eternal. They cannot endure another service; and any voice, but the voice of their Master, they will neither delight in, nor obey. As dutiful servants, and adopted children, they listen to his holy word, follow his heavenly will, seek not their own but his honor and glory, and count nothing of so much value beneath the sun as to finish their course with joy. O my soul, may you be found with these, when the Lord *shall make up his Jewels, and shall spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him!* You shalt then enter into his house indeed, and dwell with him forever and ever.

Another type in the law affords us a further idea on this interesting subject. The sanctifying oil was not only to be put upon the *right* hand, the *right* foot, and the *right* ear of the leper, but upon the *extremities*, the thumb, the great toe, the tip, of those *right* members; in order to show, that, in our renewing by the Holy Spirit, we must expect all *true strength*, even the *least* and to the *utmost*, all our *right obedience*, and all our *hearing to profit*, from that UNCTION OF THE HOLY ONE. This ANOINTING, which is received of Christ, even the *Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, abideth in the real Christian*; and by this, in fact, he becomes a Christian, that is, *an anointed person*: And the same anointing

*teacheth him of all things, and is true and not a lie.*—Thus he hears, and hears aright. He hears inwardly, and with life; and by grace, in this hearing, increases life. Sounds, mere sounds, are nothing; and words alone are nothing; but the word and truth of Christ, spiritually received and experimentally digested, are, in his eye, and heart, and ear, the all in all of every ordinance and proclamation of the Gospel.

I would come into the power of these things, O my Lord, more and more; and I lament with deep compunction, that my progression is so small, my true hearing so dull, my affections so cold, my faith so weak, my hope so drooping, and my whole man so often disordered and defiled by infirmity. O how great and difficult a thing is it to be a Christian! To live, and hope, and walk, truly by the faith of you the Son of God! Do you, who are the High-Priest of my profession, circumcise and *pierce my ear*, that I may be made affectionately *thine own for ever*: anoint it also with your HOLY OIL, that I may receive rightly and understand truly the words of eternal life, the rich and the profound mysteries of your heavenly kingdom. So shall I hear, and live, and learn, and love, till I see you in your glory; and then, stripped of all my own imperfection and frailty, but *clothed upon* with your righteousness and salvation, I shall magnify your holy name amongst your redeemed, in the great, the universal, the everlasting, *Hallelujah*.

## **CHAP. XXXIX.**

### **UPON DECLENSIONS FROM GOD.**

ALAS! how prone am I to fall into sin, and to leave the Fountain of living waters! My infirmities often prevail against me, and, contrary to the better will of my soul, drag me into the snares and bondage of corruption.

I have sinned: What shall I say unto you, O you Preserver of men! If you leave me to myself, if you recover me not; I am gone for ever. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Thus I mourn and am vexed, when my corruptions are ready to overpower me. I should be lost, but for your merciful aid: I must perish entirely, if the blood and righteousness of my dear Redeemer were not again and again applied to save and to comfort me.

O what a vile and miserable body do I bear about with me! It is the very load, and plague, and prison of my soul. And yet how foolishly do

I love it, and care for it! and how much more time do I spend in nourishing this evil flesh, than in seeking the peace of God, or the advancement and prosperity of my immortal part?—I am ashamed, as a Christian, that I am not more ashamed of these things.

## CHAP. XL.

### ON SOBRIETY OF SPIRIT.

A CHRISTIAN should desire, as a great privilege, the constant sobriety and calm recollection of his mind. Worldly things often flutter the animal spirits; and the disorder of these will too frequently throw the soul into confusion ; so that it is liable to be carried away into what it condemns, through a sudden impression on its affections; or to be turned aside from what it approves, by the vehement onset of its passions.. This want of inward sobriety is one great cause of all the irregularities, which believers feel and bemoan in their passage to heaven.

*Be sober, be vigilant*, is a most necessary admonition to us, while we are in this unstable fleshy and within reach of such an adversary as the devil. If we are not abstracted, in due measure, from the crazy and drunken spirit of this world, to which we are naturally inclined, and from which grace only can deliver us at all; we shall be distracted with a thousand foolish and useless things, be exposed to numberless dangers and snares, be harassed with doubts and disorders, and often in pur giddiness shall forget where we are, where we are going, and what must shortly pass upon us. O this golden, glittering, dazzling, cup of the mystic *Babylon*, this evil world! Haw often is it in her hand, held out towards us! How ready are we to take and to drink of it! But how full is it of the *abomination and filthiness of her spiritual fornication* and departure from God!

How difficult, duly considered, is the Christian's passage through life! How marvellous his safe arrival in heaven! It appears, indeed, to be nothing else than one of the greatest continued wonders of almighty goodness and power.

If a man were commanded to put to sea by himself in a small open boat, without any sustenance but what might fall from the skies, and with no direction but a chart and compass, and thus to pass over a

wide and tempestuous ocean; some faint picture might be formed of the Christian's voyage to heaven. He too in a feeble bark has no chart but the word of God, no compass but the Spirit of God, no provision but the daily grace of God in Christ, no safety from the raging waves of the world, or the roaring winds of the evil spirit, but the power of God, no ability to keep himself for one moment from sinking but through the faith which God supplies, and no hope of getting safe to the heavenly shore but from the truth of God in Christ Jesus. Indeed, and indeed, when a Christian considers all these perils on the one hand, and his own weakness on the other; it seems an act of most astonishing love and omnipotence, that he should ever reach the kingdom of heaven. He feels it to be mercy, and faithfulness, and rich bounty, and unspeakable kindness altogether, from beginning to end, and is at times lost in wonder, love, gratitude, and praise, for so great, so unmerited, so eternal, a salvation.

Seeing then that these things are so, verily he ought to watch and pray, that he may *continue in faith and charity, and in holiness with sobriety* unto the end.

## CHAP. XLI.

### OUR HEART MUST BE GIVEN TO GOD.

If we could offer to God the whole world, and yet keep back our heart; it would be to him • a worthless and an odious offering. He considers not the greatness or outward grandeur of human actions, but the spirit by which they are performed. Some build hospitals, make noble endowments, give large donations, and do many *other great and wonderful works*; all which are not to be spoken against in themselves, because they are of use to the world, and especially to the poor: but it is possible to do all these, without a heart for God, without considering his glory, without faith in his mercy, or real love of mercy to man, and without being in the least degree nearer to him or his holiness. A widow, with two poor mites and a hand and a heart of faith, will be found to *have done more than all these*, in the sight of him who judges righteously.

If our heart be given to God, we shall not be barren and unfruitful indeed; but our fruit will not be for carnal display or vanity, but unto true holiness. *Christ in us the hope of glory*, is a principle of such power, that it turns a man (as it were) out of himself, delivers him from his own selfish whims and intentions, releases him from a multitude of slavish fears and concerns, and causes him ardently to desire and delight in those. things alone, which may exercise a gracious and thankful spirit in showing forth the praises of his kind Redeemer.

## CHAP. XLII.

### ON SELF SUFFICIENCY.

MULTITUDES of professors, without breach of candor, evidently appear lifted up in themselves; and too many, from this unsubdued principle, are plainly working for worldly eminence or observation, while they would be thought to be working only for God.

What is the origin of this evil? To me it seems to be founded in the imperfect knowledge of the divine *Law*, and consequently in a proportional ignorance of their own fallen nature. *By the law is the knowledge of Sin.* The Holy Spirit uses it, in the day or his power, to show to the heart its own absolute sinfulness, to convince it of this never-to-be-forgotten truth, that *in the FLESH dwelleth no good thing.* Consequently, the force of our Lord's declaration; *Ye must be born again.* The old nature is corrupt altogether *according to the deceitful lusts;* and in it the sinner must perish, if he obtain not the grace of the Spirit, producing regeneration and a renewal of mind.

From the ignorance of this truth, either in principle or practice, or in both, men, professing religion and holding even some important doctrines of the gospel, become conceited and full of themselves. If the Law had read its lesson duly upon their hearts, it would necessarily sink their arrogance into humiliation and abasement. From the want of this teaching, they think it possible for a man to repent of himself, to ask in faith before he has it, and to do much that even God in his purity will accept and approve. Upon some latent or dormant principles of inherent goodness and strength, not quite diminished by the fall, they presume, that a person may begin with God, and that, after this beginning, God will, in consequence, (absurd as it may seem) begin with him. This rotten foundation, grounded upon reason or the exercise only of the argumentative faculties, is the chief support of the false and incoherent superstructure, which, in their further proceeding, they unavoidably build upon it. The basis and the building are truly of the same materials—the proud conceit and unsubdued ignorance of the

natural heart. If the numerous ramifications of error were traced to their origin, they will be found, more or less, to unite in this master-error,—a vain presumption of the free-will, ability, or rational capacity, of fallen man.

The Lord teaches his redeemed a very different lesson. They are first brought down by him, that they may, in due time, be properly exalted. He teaches them the right use of the Law, that they may know how to receive truly and enjoy sweetly the rich grate of his Gospel. In proportion, as men sink by the one, they rise by the other. He, therefore, who most *lives* the gospel (for it is a life, and not a mere profession), who most spiritually enjoys the gospel, and in it most entirely gives himself up to the will and word of the Redeemer, is and must be best acquainted with the nature and purpose of the law, and, by its use, enters most deeply into the renunciation of himself. He, who mingles Law and Gospel (a case not infrequent even among great professors), through ignorance of the right place of either, must proportionally walk in darkness and discomfort, and may, unless God in mercy prevent it, fall into some dangerous errors, the very nature of which tends to harden the heart, as well as to blind the eyes, of those who are subverted by them. Heresy is no slight affair, but will spread and *eat as doth a canker*. In very deed, every man without real grace, be his denomination what it may, is and must be, either secretly, or openly, if not both together, a real Antinomian.

*Who then is sufficient for these things, or able to direct his own steps?* How can any escape, since all are blinded by nature, and *shut up* under sin and condemnation through the holiness of the law? Blessed be the Lord for his *Grace* and *All sufficiency!* Viewing *these*, in faith, the believer may say, with his brother of old; Though *I am not sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself, yet my sufficiency is of God;* or, with a brother of still higher antiquity; *JEHOVAH is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear I JEHOVAH is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?* He, who knows what all this means, will tremble to have recourse to the powers of nature, or to rely upon himself; and, of course, *boasting will be*

*excluded.* Egotisms, or much about a man's own self, rarely become a Christian, and are seldom necessary. Publications of this sort are usually the outbursts of an overflowing vanity, or the high conceit of a man's own consequence in the world.

## CHAP. XLIII.

### ON LIBERTY OF SOUL.

THE real liberty of the soul consists in a happy freedom from the usurped dominion of sin and Satan. The Christian therefore denies himself, because of sin in his mortal body; he shuns the spirit of the world, because by its sinfulness it promotes its inbred corruptions; he prays and watches against the evil one, because he is the grand tempter and stirrer of all iniquity both in himself and others.

The more this frame is maintained, the more will the heart enjoy *the glorious liberty of the children of God*. This is a holy and righteous freedom, which the Christian pants after continually, and which is then most sweetly experienced, when the soul is most abstracted from the low solicitudes and dull satisfactions of sense and of time. The Father of mercies is the cause, the Son of his love is the channel, and the Spirit of grace is the power, of all the spiritual freedom in earth and heaven, and of all the transporting blessedness resulting from it.

The world and the flesh are a dead weight upon the mind in its possession and exercise of this delightful liberty; and, therefore, in the mind's struggles to gain and secure it, the world and the flesh must be brought down and kept down, having nothing about them, separately from the mercy and providence of God, but miserable chains and fetters, wherewith to bind and imprison the soul.

## CHAP. XLIV.

### UPON SICKNESS.

ALL sickness and sorrow arise from sin. If we were not unholy creatures, we could not be unhappy creatures. Because of the ill habit, occasioned by transgression, every element fights against our health by changes and inclemency; and the very food we eat, while it nourishes for a time, lays the foundation of disease in our bodies, already prepared by their own weakness and ill temperament to receive and increase it.

Sickness is a dismal scourge to the ungodly, and a painful spur to the gracious. To the one, when the Law flashes its lightnings upon the guilty conscience, and thunders all its terrors upon the startled soul, then disease comes forward as the horrible harbinger of miseries everlasting; but, to the other, a solemn remembrancer, through the Gospel of Grace, both of the vanity of all earthly things, and of the nearer and near approach to immortal glory.

When sickness comes and grace can meet it; O what a just representation do they make to the soul concerning the poor honors, riches, cares, and pleasures, of this transitory world! How unimportant do all the struggles for power, splendor, titles, wealth, and pre-eminence, which have employed or enraged the past and present ages, appear! How childish and mean do those objects pass before us, for which men have lavished their time, and thrown away their souls! What bubbles, what nonsense, what glaring and horrid stupidity, have filled and directed, have engaged and overwhelmed, the counsels of the greatest among men; and all to no other profit than a little fleeting vanity, with a rapid descent to lasting oblivion or ruin! Thus the soul feels, when it is quickened by sickness to consider the low and passing affairs of earth and of time.

On the contrary, how inexpressibly great and tremendous do the things of God and eternity rise fully in view to the mind! O the worth of worlds, what are they, in some of these soul searching

moments! How is the soul astonished with the grandeur of God, and with the deep and wide importance of all that belongs to him!— Wrapped in the solemn contemplation of unutterable glories, how does the spirit of a man tremblingly examine and solicitously inquire into the truth and extent of its interest in them! And if grace seal an answer of peace upon the heart, how does it flutter with gladness at its safety, and how will the whole frame be agitated with a new delight in the sure prospect of eternal concern in these valuable, these only valuable, things!

The Christian will be wakingly alive to all this and more, if his disorder be such, as can admit of reflection. Blessed be God, however, whether he can thus reflect or not; yet, being a Christian, his state is equally safe with God through his gracious Redeemer. Whatever be the frame, the promise is sure, the covenant of God is ordered in all things and sure, and sure and faithful is God himself to perform it. It is comfortable, and indeed desirable, to have pleasant foretastes and feelings of grace and glory, under the pain or decay of the body; but they are no otherwise material to the true believer's security for heaven. If he has not these perceptions during the short time of his sickness, he will have them abundantly after it, if it end in his dissolution; or, if it do not thus end, the want of them is a loud admonition to *make his calling and election sure*, in the days that may yet be appointed him.

If we cannot think of Christ, through the power of disease, O what an happiness is it to be assured, that Christ thinks constantly and effectually of us! He *makes all our bed in our sickness*; that is, he turns the whole frame of our condition in it for our best advantage.

O Lord, leave me not, poor and helpless sinner that I am, in my most healthful state; leave me not especially, I beseech you, in the low, the languid, the distressing circumstances of infirmity and disease! Jesus, Master, you are said to have borne our sicknesses, because you bare the sins which occasioned them; take, take away from my conscience the guilt which brought disease, and then the worst part of its misery shall likewise be done away. And when, through my

feebleness or disorder, I cannot act faith upon your love; O lift my drooping spirit, carry me as one of your own lambs in your bosom, enfold me in your gracious arms, and let my soul wholly commit itself, and give up its all, in quiet resignation to you! If you raise me from my sickness, grant that it may be for the setting forth of your glory among men. If you take me by sickness from this world, O you Hope and Life of my soul, receive me to yourself for my everlasting happiness, and present me, as another monument of sovereign grace, before the great assembly of saints and angels in your kingdom of heaven!

## **CHAP. XLV.**

### **UPON DEATH.**

It is an awful and a solemn thing to die, and I am sometimes amazed at myself, that, seeing it is not only awful but sure, I can be so void of reflection or recollection, as I frequently am, concerning it.

Some talk bravely about death, and of encountering it with great natural courage, or upon high philosophical principles. These may indeed defy or meet the sting; but they can neither soften nor take it away. For a sinner to bully death with no spiritual life in his soul, and no everlasting life in reversion, is the act of a desperate madman, who laughs at a horrible precipice before him, and rushes down headlong to destruction.

O eternity! eternity! It is fearful indeed to burst the bonds of life, and to break forth into the boundless and unalterable regions of eternity! Nature, in its senses, cannot bear the shocking reflection, which death affords, either of being an everlasting nothing as atheists talk, or of enduring everlasting misery as sin deserves. It is grace only which can inspire the heart with a hope full of joy and immortality, that, when this brittle transitory life is past, the soul shall possess a being, happy and long as the days of heaven.

Through Jesus Christ alone is death disarmed. When the Savior speaks peace and salvation, through his cross and righteousness, this last great enemy is no more the king of terrors. He gives up his fearful sting, and destroys nothing about the Christian, but sin and the means of sin.

O how sweet is the smile of that Christian, who, dying in the body, feels himself just upon living forever! "He is not sick unto death, but unto life," indeed. He quits his cares, his sorrows, his infirmities, and all that could distress or distract his spirit here, and looks calmly into the state before him, where he can meet with nothing but concord and joy, in the society of the redeemed and of his Savior.

He is weaned from the earth, and therefore can part with it easily: He is fitted for heaven, and therefore longs for it earnestly. He cannot but desire that, which is congenial with his own renewed mind; and this can truly and perfectly be found, only in the regions of glory.

They who afflict themselves (said a primitive Christian writer) about the loss of this life, are like the infants unborn, who, if they could reflect and speak, might bewail an expulsion from the womb at the approaching time of their birth; foolishly considering it, not as the means, but as the end of being. So men, in their natural state, may indeed deplore their removal from this world, for which only they desire to live; but the renewed Christian is privileged to have a more glorious hope of a life everlasting pure like God's, and of an habitation wide and beautiful as the temple of heaven.

Lord, when I shall quit this clay, I know not; nor do I desire to know. It is quite sufficient for me, if you sustain me by your grace now ; and if I am divinely assured, that I shall be for ever with you in the world to come. O that this *invincible joy of the Lord may indeed be my strength*, when I lie down upon the bed of languishing and death, waiting from moment to moment for Christ, and for my dismissal to be with him.

Whene'er my head must take its last repose,  
O keep your presence nigh, my God, my friend;  
And tenderly my weary eye-lids close,  
While to your Spirit's care I mine commend!

Soon this body shall turn to the dust, from whence it was framed: but nothing can extinguish the life of my spirit, which has no relation to earth, which cannot subsist by matter and form, and which, in its faculties of will, understanding, love, and perception, is of kin to a brighter world. And, O how reviving is the thought! I am not only of kin to angels and heavenly spirits by the very nature of my soul; but I am doubly related to them and to my God, by being born again and *renewed after his blessed image or likeness though*

Christ Jesus. I am made by this act his own child and the heir of an everlasting inheritance. All that death, then, can do to me is, to tell me that I am of age, and to lead me forth from these chambers of darkness to celebrate my birth-day in the palace of glory. There is in this view (what has often been tasted) a kind of luxury in dying. In such a blessed, such an animating sense of death, I ought to say, that he might well bear another name; or, rather, I might exult with the prophet and apostle, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*

Whence then, at times, is the shuddering reluctance I feel at the prospect of dying? Surely it is, because my faith and hope are not so lively as they are privileged to be; it is because I do not so steadily trust in the truth of those things, which my mind apprehends, and which I profess to be waiting for. Earth is too real, and heaven too unreal; or I could not thus hesitate, or tremblingly stand, on the bank of the brook, which keeps me from the fruition of God. The struggle of my heart would not be for longer and longer continuance here, if my spirit were as firmly persuaded as it should be, of my inheritance and mansion in glory.

You blessed Savior of poor sinners like me, on you alone my eyes are fixed! In the solemn last hour of my pilgrimage below, O let my eyes of faith be yet more steadily and more ardently fixed upon you! And do you, in the tender compassion of your heart, which can sympathize with all your people's woes, look down in my departing moments upon me. Soothe the pangs of death with your rich consolation and care. Let me then see you indeed by precious faith, who to carnal sense are invisible; ready, willing, glad, to receive my soul; and let me pour it forth, in an ecstasy of praise and desire, as into the bosom of everlasting love! O my God, thus to die, would not be dying; but only beginning to live and to be happy for ever.

So true are your gracious words, O my Jesus, that *Whosoever liveth and believeth in thee, shall never die : No, he shall never perish, but is passed from death unto life, and shall live for evermore.* Glory be

to you for this rich, this invaluable promise! Lord, I believe; O help  
mine unbelief!

## CHAP. XLVI.

### THE RECOLLECTION OF THIS SECOND PART IN PRAYER TO GOD.

ENABLE me, O Lord my God! to examine myself, the state of my soul, and the reality and growth of my experience, seriously, deeply, and constantly. I am still clothed with a corrupt nature, and therefore am always inclined to favor myself; and nothing but your grace can give me a faithful distrust of my own condition and attainments, or an holy watchfulness over all that passes within me.

As I have received Christ Jesus my Lord, so I know it is my interest, privilege, happiness, and duty, to walk, to live, to grow, and to press forward in him. O keep me from spiritual sloth, or, as it may better be called, from carnal security, that I may run, with the loins of my mind always girt and disentangled, and with increasing faith and patience, the blessed race which you have set before me. Give zeal for every duty, wisdom and strength rightly to perform it, and a humble holy resignation of heart to leave all the success unto you.

Make me wise to discern the motions within my soul; and to trace out from whence they proceed. O let me not be deceived by the will or the cunning artifice of the flesh, whenever it would mingle in holy things; but let my spirit be your own sacred temple, where I may find you indeed, working in me, enlightening and enlivening me for all your service and glory, and drawing me, with singleness of eye, and simplicity of heart, to seek not myself, not my own pride, profit, or pleasure, but all I want, and all I can rightly have, in you, and from you alone. Draw me nearer and nearer to this just and perfect rule of action, to this sweet and blessed spiritual life; so that I may be able indeed to say, and with the increasing confidence of truth, *I no longer live, but Christ lives in me: and the life that I live in the flesh, is not after the flesh, but by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself freely for me.* O let this be my humble and secret path of life, which none can know but whom you

teachest, and which, for its narrowness, none can walk in but those whom you support by your hand.

You know, O my God, that I am in the world, surrounded by temptations, opposed by men, attacked by devils, weakened by infirmities, and exposed by a corrupt nature to all manner of evils. Without are fightings; within are fears. How shall I get safely on to the end, or, rather, how shall I get on at all, unless you are with me? I plead then your own promise of truth, that you will guide me by your counsel, and at last receive me to glory. Keep me, while I am in the world, from the envious, proud, hateful, dangerous, and unhappy spirit, which abounds in it.

Let me have constant proof that indeed I am yours, by having your life manifest in my mortal body, controlling and subduing it in all things to your righteous will. So shall even the world acknowledge, that I have been with Jesus; and if it hate me, upon that account, as it hated him, O welcome be it, and let me account it as one of my brightest evidences and greatest honors.

In all the circumstances and conditions of my outward life, O help me to look for your special blessing, without which nothing can succeed in itself, without which every thing may lead me astray. Help me to bear losses and crosses as your dispensations, intended only for my good; and give me wisdom and grace to see your intention, and to get the good you mean by them. If one of your hands be laid hard upon me, let the other support and bear me up with the more firmness and stability. Restraine all the murmuring and rebellion of my carnal nature against your holy will, and lead my spirit, by all visitations, to nearer fellowship and sweeter communion with you. So shall my earthly sorrows be turned into spiritual joys, and all the calamities, which can befall me here, shall become urging and successful remembrancers to prepare me for that decaying mansion, *where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.*

And when sickness and death shall come, as come they must in a very little while at the longest—O stand by me, my dear and only Lord, in my drooping and needful moments. Make all my bed in my sickness, and overcome the sorrows of nature by the lively joys of your grace. Receive my spirit, which I commit unto you, as your only: for truly I am yours entirely, yours by purchase, yours by grace, yours by promise, yours by the immutable and consecrating oath of all your holy attributes. Carry, O carry me to the regions of peace, to the church and general assembly of the first-born, to the blissful city of God, and to your own habitation, O Jesus, my Lord, my Life, my only Redeemer! Whom have I in heaven itself but you; and what can I desire, throughout all the universe of your works, in comparison of you? My heart and my flesh may rail, yea, they shall and must fail; but you, even you, are the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

# THE CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER.

## PART III.

### CHAP. I.

#### THE REAL CHRISTIAN LOVES HIS COUNTRY, AND IS THEREFORE THE BEST OF PATRIOTS.

POLITICAL hypocrisy has made the laudable name of patriotism almost suspicious. But he, that is sincere in the best things, and walks as in the sight of God, will, of all men, be faithful in lower matters, and carry a sterling integrity from religion into every duty of social life. On the other hand, he, that regards not God, nor yet other men but as they are convenient to himself, may very justly be suspected respecting his fidelity to his country. Profit and vain glory, indeed, will carry some men very far, as they have done ; but strip a worldly man of these, and where .ire his motives for promoting the national welfare?

The Christian is not a mere showy patriot, for lucre or for fame; but he is, what none but a Christian can be, a patriot in spirit and in truth, pouring out his secret and earnest prayers before God for the true prosperity of the land. The world, indeed, has a low opinion of this artillery of heaven; but He, who is wiser than the world, has told us, that *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. And if one such person, like an *Elias*, can be instrumental in drawing down public blessing; what may not be hoped for from the prayers of legions of Christians throughout the nation? We may read what the prayers of such men have obtained, in Heb. xi. 33, 34.

The Christian patriot will rejoice in the good done to his country; though other hands, rather than his, have been employed in the doing it. That man deserves not the name of a patriot, to whom the peace, honor, and prosperity of his country are valuable, only as they may contribute to his own.

As the Christian's patriotism is founded upon the pure principles of religion, he is more desirous of his country's prosperity in true worth and virtue, than in mere power and riches, which are often the dangerous fuel of luxury and pride both to states and individuals. He is no enemy to commerce, for a thousand reasons; but an utter enemy to commercial vices, for reasons infinite and eternal.

In wishing for his country all kinds of temporal blessings, he cannot forget to ask before God for a greater abundance of spiritual mercies. His heart's desire is, that the gospel and religion of Jesus Christ, happily countenanced and established by the laws, may for ever flourish through the land in its most genuine and effectual power and purity. Though he is not, and cannot be, an enemy *to* any man, yet he is a well-principled adversary to all wicked and blasphemous errors and opinions, and to all profligacy of heart and life, which flow from them, and which have over-run, the country with guilt and shame.

The Christian carries religion into his patriotism but not his patriotism into religion. The things of God are too holy and sacred with him either to be mixed with or truckle to the little low politics of men. He is the citizen of a better country, and a pilgrim in all others; though a peculiar and public spirited friend to that, in which he was born.

*As he can say with Samuel, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for his nation;* so he would act upon all occasions, as *Samuel* did, and endeavor to promote the welfare of his country by being a good countryman. He will contribute fairly and cheerfully to her burdens, live in all godly quietness and honesty among his people, and pray faithfully and earnestly for the whole public weal as a Christian. Were all the subjects such patriots, the country would have but small reason to be afraid of the most mighty and numerous enemies; for who could penetrate *the wall of fire*, with which God, in such a case, would surround it?

## CHAP. II.

### THE REAL CHRISTIAN IS CONSCIENTIOUSLY A DUTIFUL SUBJECT TO THE KING AND HIS GOVERNMENT.

HE that said, *fear God*, immediately added as one evident proof of the reality of godly fear, honor *the king*. Being chief magistrate, the king is God's first temporal minister, who is to bear the sword of justice and judgment for *the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well*. The Christian then, living like a Christian, has no just cause to fear a wound. We are commanded by God to reverence those, who act under the king, for these ends; how much more then we are bound to regard himself! And if the Christian be concerned for his country, he cannot be unconcerned for his sovereign, who is more deeply interested in its welfare than any other man.

He prays publicly and privately for his king, for his family, and for all that are put in authority under him. It is his wisdom, interest, principle, and duty thus to pray; because their prosperity is not only connected with his own, but their downfall would occasion the worst of hazards to millions of people. He, who countenances strife and sedition, can no more be a true and benevolent Christian than a real patriot and subject; for by these, confusion, rebellion, rapine, and murder, may overspread a land, to the general destruction, and to the reproachful hindrance of godliness and piety. I can find examples of pardon for the most atrocious private sins, in the Bible; but I do not recollect one instance of God's mercy, extended to the public crime of rebellion. Indeed the same word is used in the original both for *rebellion* and for *apostasy* from God; and probably because they are almost one and the same *thing*: Rebellion is an aggregate evil, inducing and involving every other wickedness, and is precisely that offence of the first magnitude, which ruined the fallen angels, and through them brought misery and mischief into this world, as well as occasioned the irreparable sorrows of eternity.

A true Christian values private, public, and religious peace at too high a rate, ever to sacrifice it to the caprices and suspicions of selfish parties and worldly politicians. Corrupt as the world now is, he is thankful for the civil and religious liberty he enjoys, esteeming it a wonderful providence to him as a Briton above all other men; and therefore he is not captious and querulous because governors are frail mortals, like himself, and consequently cannot please every one, nor be absolutely perfect in all things.

In cases of real oppression, the Christian has a better God to go to, than his own passions, or the violence of sinful men, or the evil god of this present evil world, who kindles that violence and passion by his own. He does not rave, but pray; swear and curse, but bless; not strive to cut throats for his own self-will, but to subdue his own heart first to the will of God, and, then to soften the hearts of others by temperance of conduct, kindness of reason, and innocence of life. *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.*

The word of God is the Christian's rule of politics; not the false, fanciful, ignorant, and impracticable speculations of men, who know not their own hearts, and who, deriving all from their own stock, or aiming like *Belial*, to live *without yoke*, could not have true wisdom or grace, and consequently could not truly and really govern themselves. Whatever principles, temper, and conduct, cannot be *sanctified by the word of God and prayer*, are absolutely unholy to a Christian, and strictly to be avoided by him.

## CHAP. III.

### THE REAL CHRISTIAN WILL PUNCTUALLY OBEY THE LAWS OF HIS COUNTRY, IN EVERY THING NOT OPPOSITE TO THE WILL AND WORD OF GOD.

INIQUITY, not righteousness, is the object and occasion of law. Without law, so sinful is man, there could be no society, property, liberty, or peace. And though real Christians would, as such, do nothing but right, were there no law at all; yet as the number of these is few, and as the nature of man is frail and requires order and direction, they cannot better show, that they could live without laws, than by the most exact attention never to break them.

There is only one case, in which a Christian can withdraw his obedience; namely, when the laws of men are directly opposite to the will, and word, and laws of God. But he ought to be very sure, that they are so, and should rarely trust to his own single judgment; lest, instead of suffering for God by resisting man, he only set up his natural self-will against that of others, and so disgrace rather than glorify the cause of goodness and truth.

The laws of his country ought to be very dear, at this time, to a British Christian, because he is most unreservedly protected by them, in his liberty, property, and religion. He can now sit, and kneel too, *under his men vine*, none making him afraid.

A professor of religion acts unworthily, when he strives to evade the spirit and intention of the laws, or to profit by secretly breaking them. It is no act or faith, either to smuggle, or to eat, drink, and wear, such things as the prudence of the state has forbidden. Persons, who can allow themselves in this licentiousness, ought to examine the uprightness and sincerity of their own consciences, and whether they would not yet further contribute to the ruin and confusion of their country, if the punishment and force, meant for ungodly men, did not restrain even them. The Christianity of a smuggler, or shuffler of just duties and taxes, is as much to be

doubted, as the honor and justice of a professed highwayman. It may be added, that the man deserves the highest blame, who, professing religion, can venture to do what religion and reason uniformly condemn. By his profession, he renders himself both a cheat and a hypocrite; whereas, without it, he would only have been demonstrated—a knave.—These are hard and bad *names*; but they cannot be so bad or offensive to us, as the *persons*, to whom they rightly belong, most certainly are in the sight of HIM, who hates iniquity.

## CHAP. IV.

### HOW A REAL CHRISTIAN SHOULD CONDUCT HIMSELF TOWARDS THE CHURCH OF GOD.

THE untamed corruptions and natural blindness of the human heart have introduced a great variety of disorders into Christian profession, and occasioned the whole multitude of sects and parties. All believers agree, that there is but one spiritual church, the bride of Christ and the mother of the faithful; but all believers do not act, as if they really consented to this truth. What mischief has not *the carnal mind* produced in all ages!. Superstition, bigotry, persecution, pomp, parade, and intolerance, are all of them the proper fruits of an evil heart, uncircumcised, unsubdued, untaught, by the Spirit and power of God. They are the evil detestable weeds in the spiritual field, which do nothing but stifle, overrun, rob, and impoverish the corn.

There are real Christians perhaps in every Christian church or society; and it will scarcely be denied, that there are hypocrites, formalists, carnalists, and ungodly men in all. Let the Christian's conscience be free; for God is his only master in these things: but to whatever particular profession he may belong, let his conversation be edifying to that, and let his charity be shown to all the rest. He should be willing to think the best things of any good men, considering the prejudices of education, the differences of situation and temper, and the advantages which God has given to some above others; and especially considering, that real Christians of all denominations are sincere in their views, and under deep concern for the salvation of their souls. These considerations beget tenderness in every spiritual mind; and the want of this tenderness in any man is no proof, that he is *not yet carnal*. "In things necessary, there should be unity; in things not necessary, liberty; and in all things, charity."

Whatever difference may be in the outward mode or form of real Christians respecting the worship of God, their life and spirit of

worship are one and the same. As believers under the law had the like grace of faith with those under the gospel, though there was a vast disparity in their outward dispensations; so these last have an inward and substantial unity, yea, and uniformity too, one with another. Let each then, in his several vocation, not so much strive for the honor of a party, the love of party being only the love of self; but to glorify Christ with all the gracious power which may be given him. It would be happy indeed for themselves, and honorable for the Christian religion, if all its professors were like-minded in all outward things: but as this is not to be expected, while evil can mingle with good, or darkness with light, they ought however to labor hard, on all sides, to keep *the unity of the Spirit in. the bond of peace.*

Let him that uses ceremonies, be candid to him that uses them not; and let him, that will not observe times, and days, and rituals, pray for, rather than revile, those who do. . The love of Christ preaches this lesson, which the apostle of Christ, almost in so many words, enforces and confirms.

With respect to those of the same denomination, the Christian is called in a more especial manner to show forth his works of faith and labors of love, for their comfort and edification. tie will see that the true distinction of a believer in Jesus, is not to rise over all, and to set up himself as a great somebody, but to be their helper or servant rather, showing all meekness, patience, gentleness, and truth. The infirmities of others he must not magnify, but pity and pray over, knowing that he himself is in the flesh, and is also encompassed with them. The attainments of others he must not envy, because these are the free gift of God, which if a man allow himself to envy, it is only because he does not know this gift aright. Strength of spirit inspires another conduct: Weakness of the flesh alone leads the professor to this. In fine, whether he be a public servant or a private member in the visible church, he will pray, that he may demean himself according to the settled order, with all gravity and decency, that he may lay no stumblingblock in the way of the weak, and no offence before the eyes of the strong; but that he

may be an example of godliness, humility, faith, resignation, and charity, to all about him.

This, surely, is far better than any *nick-name*; for this is the true life and essence of what is signified by the best name,—a CHRISTIAN.

## CHAP. V.

### ON THE RECIPROCAL DUTIES OF MINISTERS AND PEOPLE.

IT would be presumption in me to offer instruction to those, by whom I would most gladly be taught. My words, therefore, on this head shall be few; and, I trust, they will not offend.

The faithful minister is the servant, the shepherd or pastor, the overseer, the teacher, the guide, the physician, the helper, and the comforter of the people committed to his charge. It is not, consequently, a light business for light heads; but an awful and solemn concern, which requires all the grace, wisdom, prudence, learning, courage, faith, patience, and godliness, that are dispersed among the laity at large, to be collected, as much as possible, in one individual man.

The profit *of* the flock, not the profit from the flock, is the grand object of a true pastor's concern. It is the character of the hireling, *whose own the sheep are not*, to care only for the fleece: and when he gets this the sheep not being his (which he proves by his want of care for their souls) he is nothing better than a robber. The world swarms with these spiritual thieves, who sacrifice all the plunder to their idleness, avarice<sup>^</sup> pride, or pleasures.

What a character does the Lord give of whom he calls *the foolish shepherd!* He does not *visit those that are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal the broken, nor feed that which stands still.* Woe (continues he) *to the idle* (the false or foolish) *shepherd that leaveth the flock: the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye; his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.* He shall eventually be without strength or understanding. Zech. xi. 16. See also Ezek. xxxiv.

When any congregation of people have the blessing of an able and faithful minister, how ought they to prize so scarce and so valuable a

jewel! Such an one is worthy of all honor, both for his work's sake and for his own sake; and those Christians are not wise for themselves, who do not all in their power to strengthen his hands, and to assist him in his ministry.

One good way of accomplishing this, is to pray earnestly and constantly in private for the pastor. This would draw down mutual blessings both on speaker and hearers, and much endear them to each other. The reason, probably, of the dissatisfaction and uselessness, which often arise between them, may be owing to the want of mutual prayer, which begets indifference or remissness, as well as discovers too lax a spirit of watchfulness and faith. And, then, how can the word, on one side, profit; and, on the other, how can the preacher be approved?

The minister of Christ, who gives up all his time, labor, and expectations, to his holy calling, ought to be comfortably and honorably supported in it. The laborer is worthy of his hire; and the very beasts eat of the corn for which they toil. If the maintenance be voluntary, it ought to be the more liberal for that very reason: If it be settled, it ought to be punctually complied with. It is sad for ministers, whose business is of a higher kind, that the covetousness or dishonesty of their people should make it just and necessary for them to attend, with any anxiety, to lower affairs. Certainly, it betrays a want of love to God, when men can suffer his ministers or his poor to starve by their dwellings. How can the pastor give himself up to the word" and to prayer, when he is constrained to serve tables? And how can he minister without distraction, when poverty and care haunt and worry him all the day long?—As a layman, I may ask these questions, without suspicion of any interested attachment to an order.

It is a melancholy fact, that the worldly pride and laziness of some clergymen have made the laity regardless of their sacred profession, and ready to treat it with wrongs; and that the spiritual ignorance and irreligion of the laity have rendered the situation of the clergy,

in some respects, not so honorable, or desirable, as it should be, for themselves.

However these things may be, the Christian has one security of hope which can never fail; *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal;* "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" And, "Let every one, that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." *God is our Refuge and Strength; we have found him abundantly so in trouble: Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the CITY of GOD.*

Outward establishments may meet with revolutions, and vary, and fail; but the true temple of God shall endure for ever. Yet, while Providence has ordained and settled so great a blessing as an establishment for religion among us; it seems to be the duty and the privilege of grace cheerfully to observe and support it.

## CHAP. VI.

### ON QUARRELS AMONG CHRISTIANS.

IT is not grace, which genders strife, but corruption. If therefore my brother's corruption be raised against me, shall I oppose my corruption to his, and so enter into wrath; or shall I not rather beg of God, that his grace in me may invite the grace that is in my brother, and that so we may settle the whole in peace? If we are real Christians, we must both desire only what is just and right, or we do not live like Christians; and if we both agree in desiring this as the end, how is it, that we differ violently about the means? If either have done, or desired, the wrong; the other, who may be more under the conduct of grace, should kindly and affectionately represent it; and, if he cannot be heard, should leave the matter to God, without raising the unholy and unhappy tumult of heat and resentment in his, own mind. He, that can bear and forbear most, is certainly most like the Christian. It is misery and deadness to a real believer to walk and to. war after the base fury and discord of the flesh. When he deserves well of men, and patiently suffers evil from them, then he most follows his Master, and is most right in himself.

The apostle directs for believers, not the vengeance of the law, but Christian arbitration. Law is the last refuge, and can only be lawful, when right is not to be had by better means.

If Christians who have a matter of difference, would graciously agree, to meet with each other in prayer, and to pray together kindly for each other before the throne of grace; surely, if they meant the attainment of that right and truth which they prayed for, they might soon find it out and settle it accordingly. But, it is the flesh which comes in and mars all. One cannot stoop, and the other will not. They are not so wise as Luther's two goats, that met upon a narrow plank over a deep water. They could not go back, and they dared not to fight. At length, one of them lay down, while the other went over him; and so peace and safety attended both. Why should not believers try this method? But, alas! while grace remains idle or

neuter, the world jeers and triumphs; the devil is busy and tempts; good men mourn and lament; the weak are stumbled, and turned aside; and a long train of inquietudes and jealousies fill the breasts of those, who humbly hope to dwell with God and with each other throughout eternity. These things ought not so to be.

If my brother be in the wrong, how shall I show myself in the right? By wounding him more than he has wounded himself? By doing wrong likewise, and rendering evil for evil

No; let me pray, that God would open his eyes, and not shut my heart; that he would give him more grace, and me more patience to meet what is not gracious in him; and, at the utmost, that I may not be a partaker with him of anger, or of those sins which may follow upon it.

Am I in the wrong? What then shall I do? Shall I persist in it, and make myself more in the Wrong? This would not be gracious; this would be bringing misery by heaps upon myself. Rather let me go first to God and then to my brother, acknowledging my fault, or my error, to both. There is no shame in confessing our sins to God, nor any meanness in owning them to men. It is the mark of a noble and generous spirit in common life; and it is the wisdom, as well as the duty and privilege, of a much better life in the Christian.

O you love of the brethren, where are you fled? We profess to believe in *the communion of saints*; but where are the saints, who have this communion? We talk of the unity of God's church with respect to its members; but where are those members who live in this unity? O shame upon us, that we differ at all, that we differ on trifles, that we love to differ, that we urge and promote differences, and that the healing spirit is not more to be found amongst us! Lord, if you would differ with us at any time, as we are ready at all times to differ with others; O how should we stand before you, or what could we answer for ourselves? Give, O give, more of your grace, that we may be humble in our own hearts, true and just in our desires, mild to others, and deeply submissive to you.

## CHAP. VII.

### ON THE MARRIAGES OF REAL CHRISTIANS, AND THEIR DUTIES IN THAT STATE.

IT is the voice of reason and religion, that piety must not be yoked with profaneness, nor the true believer with an infidel. When persons have broken through this rule, they have always done it to their own sad cost; as abundance of examples can testify.

Some have ventured upon this transgression from merely carnal motives, pretending at least to hope that they might be instruments of bringing the other side unto God. Many instances indeed occur, where both parties have married before they knew the grace of God, and have afterwards been called by it; but the example, perhaps, is not easily to be found, where a believer, acting directly against the rule of God for merely temporal ends, has been blessed with the spiritual advantage of a partner's conversion, but on the contrary has been vexed with trouble and mortification to the end of life. It may be expected, that God will be faithful to his own word, and that they, who willfully violate his order, cannot do it with confidence in his blessing.

This blessing of God is all in all; and if we have not this, whatever we have beside, it is nothing, or worse than nothing.

When the marriage-contract is made graciously, and with grace; there is every reason to hope for success. The less water of earth, and the more wine of heaven, there may be at the feast, so much the better.

After marriage, begins a life of care; and consequently the life of faith should be strengthened to bear it. It is a good way for married persons, not only to pray in the family, or privately, but together. Mutual prayers will improve mutual affections, and turn the very common blessings into spiritual mercies. If Christ dwell indeed in

both their hearts, he will not only keep out disgust and variance, but subdue, or remove, the causes of them.

As this state requires much and strong grace to go through it properly towards God; so it demands a larger exercise of charity, forbearance, and kindness, than any other, that no duty fail between the first and dearest neighbors, the husband and wife.—These are more exposed to solicitude, trouble, and a thousand affecting circumstances, than persons in the single state: They are yoked inseparably to meet them, and inseparably must bear them. Now, if grace be not the living and conquering principle in two persons thus circumstanced; there are so many imperfections in themselves, so many unavoidable mortifications from others, and so many evils on every side, that it will be impossible for them to live, in a due degree, as they ought, above the common disquietudes which overwhelm the world. But grace in the heart will double every temporal mercy, soften every temporal misery, and lead them on, with the truest union, towards the kingdom of heaven.

What a comfort is it to true Christians, truly married in grace as well as nature, to reflect, that as they are helpers of each other's faith and joy in this world, so they shall be everlasting friends in a more exalted way of life, in the kingdom of God! They can remain together in this state for only a very few years at the most; but there, no further separation shall ensue. Being as the angels of God, they shall live with him and the whole church of the redeemed in unspeakable joy for ever. Their present union of heart and grace faintly typifies the union of themselves and of all the faithful with Christ; and, when they part here, they do not separate in the best sense, but only pass off, one perhaps after the other, to enjoy this spiritual union in everlasting perfection.

## CHAP. VIII.

### ON THE DUTY OF PARENTS.

THE general rule of parental duty is, to bring up children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*. It is true, we cannot give them grace, but we can lead them to the means of grace: We cannot give them a new life, but we can correct the old one: We cannot make them to know Christ savingly; but we can, and we ought, to nurture them diligently in the ways of Christ, and admonish them in the fear of God. Whatever we can do for them, either temporally or spiritually, we are bound to do ; and when we have done all, we must leave them to the Lord. We must not repine, if we cannot mend their outward circumstances; for these are in God's disposal: Nor should we faithlessly murmur, if all our prayers and diligence be lost for their spiritual good; for as this is a gracious gift, we only seem to attribute too much to our own powers and affections, when we unduly lament, that our children have not obtained it by us. When we have prayed to God for them; we must trust God with them, and wait the issue in faith and patience. Nature will keep up our common endeavors, and grace will promote a thousand and a thousand prayers. These, when put together, will make up a good stock and foundation, and consequently no bad inheritance for them.

There is a promise of blessing *to more than the third and fourth generation* of a Christian's offspring; which love for them, and faith in the promiser, will ever be prompting him to sue out, that they may obtain. I had rather be a good man's child, covered by his prayers, than the son of the first emperor in the world, undevoted and unblest.

Some that never had children, and others that would be wiser than Solomon, or rather than God's word itself, have written books to show, that chastisements should be utterly excluded from education. Doubtless, it requires prudence and temper to chastise properly, and it ought to be done with a secret looking to God for a blessing, as well as on any other duty; but those have either taken up false

principles of human nature, or have had but very little experience of it, who presume that it will do very well without the fear of punishment, or that it can be reasoned into all the irksome duties and toils of life. Such methods, we know, will not restrain even grown persons, who certainly can reason, and receive reason, better than children. Corruption is to be checked by all means; and if the gentler kinds fail of effect, as they will in the far greater part of instances, the most severe must be used, but always without passion and in moderation. It should be understood to be a parent's sad duty, which therefore can give him no pleasure, but on the contrary pain and mortification. When it is thus performed, it will not easily be abused: "When otherwise, it is not really performed at all. The parent's ill conduct, in such a case, deserves a severer chastisement from God, than any that can be due to the misdemeanor of a child.

## CHAP. IX.

### ON THE DUTY OF CHILDREN.

THESE are *to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right*. Till children have learned obedience, they have properly learned nothing, and will probably be fit for nothing.

As they owe to their parents, under God, their maintenance, protection, introduction to the duties of life, and their very life itself; God has laid it upon them, as what is necessary in the order of his providence, to honor and respect their parents. Children, who transgress this order, rebel against God. And it has been matter of great concern to many gracious persons, after they have been brought to a true sense of things, that they have failed particularly in this just and important duty.

Their obedience is to be in the Lord, and for the Lord's sake. This is well-pleasing to God, and profitable for themselves. The only exemption is, if parents are so ungracious and unjust, as to insist upon any thing which God forbids, or to oppose any thing which God commands. Here the most dutiful children must disobey, and can plead God's own absolution for their conduct.

There is one great circumstance in life, which often strains the bond of filial duty. This is marriage. Children ought, if possible, to engage in this state with the full blessing and consent of their parents. On the other hand, parents should never constrain, and not always restrain, the affections of their children.

The two trying cases are *fortune* and *religion*.

As to the former; the discretion of parents is usually of great importance. Children are not to follow their passions into ruin; nor is it the duty of parents to consent to it. On the other hand, mere lucre should not guide the parent's eye or mind, but the nobler considerations of character, worth, and piety.—Where these are

wanting, all the wealth in the world is little better than a gilded curse.

As to religion, the unalterable rule for Christians is *to marry in the Lord*. If a parent direct otherwise, the command of God must first be regarded; and though he may have a right to put a negative perhaps upon almost any match, he cannot have a right to command one, which is contrary to the express word of God. He likewise has not a right to sacrifice his child's natural affections in any marriage, even where no objection can be made upon a religious account; because the peace and comfort of natural life are concerned, and because the child must be the sufferer here, and be exposed in the event to some dangerous temptations. On the other-hand, (to put the last difficult case) where the child has placed affections in a manner, that religion and all other circumstances will justify, but, because of religion, the parent withholds consent; it will be the best to try all means to gain that consent, to wait as long as possible, and with as much patience as possible for it; above all, to supplicate the Father of mercies to dispose the hearts of the parties concerned aright, and at last to venture on an act of such apparent disobedience, but through fear of greater evils than what may arise from the unreasonable obstinacy, perverseness, or irreligion of the parent. The case is so nice, and may so vary in its circumstances, that the wisdom, uprightness, grace, and impartiality of the ablest Christian friends should be well consulted upon the occasion.

## CHAP. X.

### ON THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN MASTERS.

IT is far more difficult rightly to command than dutifully to obey. To be a master and a Christian at the same time, in the direction of worldly affairs, requires more grace than men usually imagine. The master may soon be acted, and people are commonly very fond of acting this character, from the lust of power which rages in corrupted nature: But to command, under a sense of God's authority, the things which are just, and equal, and not to be lifted up with the pride and passion of pre-eminence; this is to give a proof, that the heart indeed lives as in God's presence, and that worldly superiority, which generally begets insolence, can be maintained with true meekness and humility. But how can he, whom grace has not made master of his own corruptions, expect obedience from others with all readiness and sincerity?

And in a higher case, so in this it may be asked of every Christian master, *Who maketh thee to differ from another?* Surely, God's providence never raised men into power, that they might show their pride only, but that they might do good, and carry on, as far as their power may extend, the welfare of society. If any people act otherwise, they must one day be deeply convinced, that all the little distinctions of men have no natural, though a necessary political reality in them, and that there is one common *Master in heaven*, with whom there is no such thing as *respect of persons*.

Many professing masters are exceedingly deficient in one great duty to their servants. They give them perhaps plenty of bread, and furnish them well in earthly things; but they neglect to hold out the best of all subsistence, the bread of life, to their souls. The omission of family-worship cannot be excused on any account. This (as one said) like the hem of a garment, keeps all things together, and prevents other duties and affairs from raveling out. Servants cannot have grace indeed, but by God's mercy; but they can easily see, if their masters do not live graciously, and will readily notice it too;

nay, sometimes make from their failures an apology, though a bad apology, for themselves. If masters would live and demean themselves like Christians indeed, and walk in the fear of God; their servants would mend their manners, if nothing more, and we should have fewer complaints than we have, to the disgrace of religion and the discomfort of our lives. The wickedness of superiors, like a contaminating disease, infects the ranks beneath them, and has often brought a whole society or nation to the pitch of destruction.

## CHAP. XI.

### ON THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN SERVANTS.

A PROFESSING servant should get by heart the following rule of the apostle, and in all his business keep it in mind: *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing service, as to the LORD, and not to men.*

Our proud hearts do not naturally love obedience. We would be all masters, and set up for ourselves; and if God suffered this, corrupt as we now are, we should soon be undone.

Is the master a man of the world? The Christian servant's light should so shine before him, that though he might hate him for his religion, he must respect him for his diligence, dutifulness, uprightness, and truth. Some masters have been won to God by the gracious and upright conduct and conversation of their servants; and how do those servants live who say, that they shall not be so blessed? If the master be harsh, it is not likely that a servant's sauciness should reclaim his mind, or do good to himself, or bring honor to the cause of God. Let all be done, which can be done, *without murmurings and disputings*; and, if there be no other remedy, it is better to part than to commit the sins of impertinence, or to live in the sins of anger and of strife.

Is the master a real Christian? The faithful servant will render him double honor, and rejoice to obey him on a higher principle; both because providence has made such an one his master, and grace his brother and friend. If he take any unhandsome liberties on that account, forgetting his own place and duty; he breaks the order and disposal of God, and lays for his own mind a foundation of much uneasiness. It is a sad mistake of their duty, when truly serious servants imagine, that by the grace of God they are . to take up a

new sort of natural boldness towards their superiors, and that, instead of putting on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, they have from grace a privilege to be insolent, foward, rough, and disobedient, as though they believed, that rudeness or impertinence were distinguishing properties of gospel-grace or gospel liberty. But it is a proud heart, that will not know, or pay due respect to, a superior. What a wretched thing is it to be said in the world, as it often is, " I had rather have any kind of servants, than professors of religion, because they ate always lazy or unruly:" Or, "I had rather have any one for my master or mistress, than those who talk about godliness; they are always so gloomy, humorsome, and perverse: In their places of worship they seem saints; but at home they are wolves, and bears, and very devils."— O this is a sad light indeed before men; or rather an unshining taper, that reeks only in a smoke and a stink for disgrace and annoyance!

I am sorry for the occasion to observe, that the giving away without leave a master's property, whether meat, drink, clothing, &c. is really neither more nor less than a species of robbery. It may be done under the mistaken notion of *charity*; but a theft, or disallowed bounty, from another's property, can never be real charity or goodness. It would be very easy, though not safe, to be liberal in this way, with. what costs a person nothing; but is the servant willing to administer relief at his own expense? If not. he is guilty of *purloining*, which surely very ill suits the character or profession of a Christian. He must be just, before he can be truly generous. The like remark will also extend to the *waste*, or idle application of a master's property, or the improper spending of his time; all of which are paid for by the master, and cannot be thrown away or mispent, without injustice and sin.

The laws of this country, above all others, are so much in favor of servants and the poor, that the Christian servant is obliged, ingratitude both to God and man, to conduct himself with the more zeal in his service to both. Servants here are considered by the laws as equally free in person with their masters, and not to be defrauded or abused. How then should the Christian bless. God, that he has

placed him in such a country as this, where the gospel is freely preached and freely heard, and where he can enjoy his conscience with comfort and liberty? If he has more work than his master (though that is not always the case) he has less care, fewer distractions, and is more out of the way of many deceitful and dangerous temptations.

## CHAP. XII.

### ON THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN HIS CALLING.

IN the conduct of all things, whether spiritual or temporal, a Christian is *called, not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness*, and to be *blameless and harmless, the Son of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*. The methods and practices of evil men are to be no rule with him; but, on the contrary, his outward life and conduct should be a luminous example unto them.—He should remember, that though they cannot see or know his inward life or principle of action, yet they are very able judges of the action itself, and can easily discern whether his temper, honesty, sincerity, goodness, and charity, be such as become his profession.

The Christian's station, therefore, in this life, should be carefully maintained for his master's glory; for that is his chief business, not only in the church, but in the shop, the field, the house, the closet, and in all he has and does in the world; for which end it is necessary, that grace should come into and superintend the whole. Be he rich or poor, high or low; if he live without grace in common life, he lives poorly to God, if at all, in spirituals, and (to say the best) at a very cold and uncomfortable rate within himself. That a Christian should think of getting satisfaction or happiness out of the creatures without God's blessing, argues a great want of faith and experience; and he cannot have this blessing, unless grace attends him in his circumstances, and subjects his will, his vocation, his industry, and all his carnal affairs and affections to God's glory.

A Christian is as much a man of grace at the market or in the shop, as in the church or the closet. He deals fairly and conscientiously, neither defrauding in the nature, measure, or weight, of commodities, nor taking base advantages of the ignorance of others. The money, gotten by fraud, has a curse, which will either bring torment with it, or melt itself away. There is a maxim: "Buy cheap and sell dear:" And to carry this maxim on, men will wrongly undervalue and discommend, saying, *It is naughty naught*, in order

to defraud the seller of the just worth; and they will overprize, and put into false light, by a thousand false words, what they have to part with, merely to *take in* the buyer. Thus shop-lies, as well as custom-house oaths, are become proverbial and therefore trivial, even with some who should treat such abominable practices with detestation. But how can he be thought an upright man with God or in the church, who can pick another's pocket by language, which he knows to be deceitful and unjust, in the poor concerns of this world?

The putting *double prices* upon goods is also dishonorable, and unworthy of a Christian. If a man give the higher price for that, which the -seller can and will afford at the lower; the seller is a thief and a cheat for all the money in the difference. The law of man indeed will not lay hold of him; but he should ask himself, *What is that gain worth, which has the curse of God upon it?* He may be sure, it has not his blessing, because it is unclean and unfair. For aught he knows, it may bring an evil upon all his due profits, and lay the ground of much future unhappiness, and perhaps of ruin. Would he do such things, if he were dying? How then can he dare to attempt them, when he knows not but that he may die in the doing them? It is a laudable custom, which some worthy persons have set up, to put one fair sum upon their goods, and to take no other.

With respect to commodities of fluctuating value, the market must be the standard of demand.; it being understood, that the market is neither enhanced nor depressed by any known artifice or design.

. In all cases of traffic and business, every man owes justice to himself and justice to others; and it is his duty to defraud neither. A Christian must be an honest man, and will not willfully, knowingly, and perseveringly, do wrong: And therefore if any person will thus do and continue to do wrong, as he cannot deserve the name pf an honest man, so much less that of. a Christian. *The counsels of the wicked only are deceit.*

Whenever doubts arise upon any subject of this kind, let the Christian do as the Psalmist did —*set the Lord always before him.* If

a man walk closely in the fear of God, and set up his Savior for his example, he will very rarely through ignorance be guilty of injustice to man.

I believe, further, that a Christian is *conscientiously*, though not *legally*, bound, to supply all deficiencies in former failures, whenever providence may afford him the power. That Christian seems a very strange one to me, who needs the chain of statutes to bind him to duty; and, therefore, though it may be his case, and the case of many an honest man, to become a bankrupt, but certainly a credit to no man; yet when his certificate is granted, and he is thereby become clear of the compulsive force of the laws; how can he delay, with a clear conscience, to make good to the utmost any just losses, which others have sustained by him, as soon afterwards as God shall have given him the ability? I have heard of some, and these too were mere men of the world, who, recovering from ruin, had the magnanimity and good sense (for indeed it is both when understood) to discharge all remainders to creditors, and, with those remainders, the interest accumulated upon them. And shall one, who calls himself a believer in Jesus and a child of God, neglect, in a similar case, to do both himself and his Christian profession so beautiful an honor, only by doing strict justice to those unfortunate sufferers, who, by their confidence in his integrity, have every sort of claim to expect it of him? I should doubt the faith of the professor, who could hesitate a moment to own, or to do, so plain a duty.

There are also some professions, which no real Christian can dare to follow. It is not necessary to name them, because they fall under the stroke of one general rule, which every believer in Christ must approve. *The trade, the calling, or the gain, which cannot be prayed over, be lived upon in faith, and carried on with thanksgiving, is like Achan's golden wedge and Babylonish garment, a curse to the owner, and an abomination to the LORD.* On the other hand, *a small thing which the righteous hath, is better than great riches of many wicked:* and he is much safer and happier too, who has grace in his

heart with no money in his purse, than he, who, with thousands of gold and silver, has the wrath of God along with them.

It is the privilege and duty of a Christian to commit all his present concerns to the blessing of God. He that prays, as well as works, loses no time by his prayers. He that works, but does not pray, may often expect to labor in vain, as well as in sin, and bring his affairs to no good end. "Duty has much present comfort, and no curse in it; which consideration alone is worth all the care of a Christian.

## CHAP. XIII.

### THAT DUTIES ARE NOT TO BE MEASURED BY THE SUCCESS WHICH MAY FOLLOW THEM, BUT BY THE WORD OF GOD ONLY.

WE have much self-love and self-righteousness in our fallen nature, which cause us to expect success from our spiritual or temporal duties, and to be mortified when we do not find it. Whereas if our minds were perfectly given to the Will of God, or in this frail state could be so given; that Will would be perfectly our own.

Let not the Christian grieve without hope, if, after all his attention to duty in his common concerns, they may not seem to prosper in his bands; for, however they seem, they do prosper for his real good, and especially if his heart and soul are drawn by any disappointments the closer to God. "God's promises are not to be measured. by his providences, but his providences by his promises." The Christian, therefore, must keep in the strait path of duty, and leave it to his heavenly Father to appear faithful in the end, who can at no time be otherwise.

In religious duties, such as prayer and exhortation to his family, the Christian may likewise not always be attended with success; but is he, or can he dare to stop their performance upon that account? He should remember what God has appointed him, and he should pray to do it; but, as to the event, this does not belong to him. It is God's concern entirely. He may indeed rejoice, when he sees the hand of God; but he must trust and be doing, when he sees it not. All will be found well sooner or later; and that surely is sufficient for his present comfort.

It has been a sore trial to many faithful ministers, when they have worked hard in God's vineyard and have not sped. But it is scarcely necessary to observe to these, that they shall be blessed *in* their labor, if not *from* it. They feel the comfort of God's promise and presence, or they would go on more heavily still. It is an old

complaint, *I have stretched forth my hands all the day long to a rebellious and gainsaying people.* So Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years, while the ark was in building; but though it cloth not appear, that he worked upon one soul, he was not, however, the less blessed of God. Our Lord's apostles converted more than himself abundantly; and probably for this reason, that his faithful ministers should not afterwards be too much discouraged, when they see not an immediate or extensive fruit of their labors.

## CHAP. XIV.

### ON THE DEPORTMENT OF A CHRISTIAN TO OTHERS.

IN the first place, *as much as lieth in him*, the Christian *will, if possible, live in peace with all men*. That blessed Dove, the Holy Spirit, harbors not with contention and strife, but loves peace, concord and unity, yea, and unanimity too. It is by him that men find but one mind in their house, and in the house of God.

As the Christian is no *brawler*; so, in his habit of life, he cannot be an arrogant, uplifted, conceited, and presuming person; because such an one, in this arrogant world, cannot possibly be free from brawling.

Not being a coxcomb or forward person, the Christian has nothing on which to plume himself for the admiration of others. He knows, that the applause of men will not follow the tree servant or Christ, and that, if it could, it is too dangerous a thing for him to meddle with, whose inward selfishness costs him a constant hard labor to subdue it.

He values men, and desires to value them more, as God values them. The family of the faithful are his relations for eternity; and he will spiritually esteem these above all other persons. He is to live with them in glory. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples* (saith Christ) *if ye have love one towards another.*

His natural love to his natural friends is not extinguished by the love of God, but elevated, purified, and increased. He sees more than others of the real worth of their, souls, and is more anxious accordingly for their best interest, their immortal welfare. Those among them, who have obtained like mercy with himself, are more especially endeared. Those, who want this mercy, have his fervent prayer and compassion because they want it. When he cannot love

his friends for Christ's sake, he will not cease to love them for their own.

Railing and evil-speaking he will cordially detest. The good he knows of others he will rejoice to mention, and the harm (unless for prevention of further harm) he will study to conceal. It is a good rule, never to speak of men's faults to others, till we have first and faithfully spoken of them to the offenders themselves. This would prevent a world of mischief and slander, and perhaps save many from a disgraceful persisting in sin.

He will esteem grace, and even common virtues and worth of character, above all manner of riches. A rich wicked man is, in a Christian's eye, somewhat like a body bloated with unwholesome fat and disease; not very pleasant to look upon, but much to be pitied and deplored. O what a sordid and dangerous evil is fulness of bread, without emptiness of self! The Christian will behave to such men with the decency that becomes him, and with the respect due to their station: At the same time, he cannot be partaker of their sins; nor ought he to miss the opportunity, if providence give it him, to set before them better riches than they now enjoy, even God's *durable riches and righteousness*. Though few of this sort do *put their necks to the work of the Lord*, (Neh. iii. 5.) or shall be saved, and it is only possible with God to save any of them; yet the Christian will be more tender and compassionate to them upon this very account. If they are to have their whole *portion In this life*; should not the anger, that may be felt from their insolence and pride, be turned into pity and prayer; since their *riches* will soon be *corrupted*, and not an atom of tlieir *pomp can follow them*?

With regard to the poor, the Christian cannot, as a Christian, be wanting in commiseration or relief, so far as it lies in his power. The affliction of their circumstances will reach bis heart most, when his hand can do least to abate it. No real Christian can *despise the poor*. He that does this is under a worse poverty than theirs. *God hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of his kingdom*: How then can those among the poor, who are thus blessed,

receive contempt from any of God's children? Or how can the poor at large be treated with insolence and cruelty, when the Lord has declared that *he will avenge their cause*? If a poor man he wicked, he is doubly entitled to pity; because he has nothing in this world, and worse than nothing in view for the world to come. If a poor man be gracious, he is doubly an object of love; because he is now under many trials in the flesh, which the wealthy do not feel, and yet is dear to God, as his own blessed child and future inheritor of his glory.

To men of every rank and station the Christian will endeavor to render their due; *Custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor*. Let his own situation in this world be what it may, he is *the only gentleman in hearty* whatever others may stem to be in outward grimace and manners. *He is gentle, showing all tenderness to all men.* This is the golden polish; and, without this, the rest is nothing but daubing or tinsel.

It will appear from that, that the Christian school teaches the most punctual good manners of any in the world. It inculcates rules of the purest honor and integrity, and enforces every moral obligation, not by a harsh and unpleasant constraint, but by the far more prevailing and happy impressions of dutiful privilege and love. It not only insists upon decent outside, but leads to the correction of the heart, and to the strictest adjustment of all things into a right order within. No lax morals, no licentious conduct, no ill words, no indecent looks, no, nor yet one evil thought, are tolerated for a moment to the disciple of Jesus Christ. He would be, if he could; and he grieves because he cannot be, in this life—all holiness and perfection.— Thus, though no part or cause of his final salvation depends upon what is done by him or what is done in him; yet he desires to *abound in all the fruits of faith, which are by Christ Jesus, to the praise and glory of God.* And if these things be so, how can any presume to say, "That the doctrines of grace are pregnant with immorality!" It is the ignorance or relinquishment of these doctrines, which, like the absence of the sun, occasions most of the moral darkness, together

with the speculative and practical atheism, or philosophisms, that now obscure and torment the world.

## CHAP. XV

### THE CHRISTIAN S CONDUCT TO THE TEMPTED AND DISTRESSED IN MIND.

THE members of the same body have a natural care and sympathy for each other; and so have the members of the church of Christ, which is his spiritual body. They cannot know of the sorrow and trial of a brother's soul, without some concern of spirit, or feeling of compassion.

Godly conference and discourse are often rendered the means of comfort and relief. The Lord, indeed, usually works in this way, that his people may see it to be their greater privilege and duty thus to help each other's faith, and so be joint partakers of his joy. This mutual regard and assistance tend also to unite the flock of Christ, and to make them more and more dear to each other. For want of this, many congregations are like scattered sheep, unaffectionate, disregarding, and careless of their brethren's true happiness and prosperity.

Whatever be the trial or the disorder, the word and promises of God are the appointed help and remedy which must chiefly be used and applied. If God's word cannot relieve the troubled mind, vain indeed must be the word of man. But, experience shows, that this word, through the aid of divine grace, has been blessed to the souls of his distressed people, when all other helps have failed.

And as all the blessings must descend from above, so all discourses, if not begun, should at least be ended in prayer. Very often in the prayer, the trouble shall be lightened, which the previous discourse did not seem in the least to remove.

There is not a possible case of distress into which a believer may fall, but there is something in the holy scripture which can meet it. It is the wisdom, then, of a gracious person, in all conferences with the afflicted, to have a store of suitable passages with him, or with his

mind, that out of it he may be able to draw what may tend, under God's blessing, to remove or to lessen the trial.

Where the body as well as the soul is affected, proper remedies must be administered to both, and especially to the latter, that it may be encouraged to support the frailer and the weaker part. Generally in cases of sickness, the mind above all things must be attended to; for if that be well, it will not only enable the person to bear the other better, but it will have this noble cordial within, that *all shall be well at the last*. It is an abominable wickedness in some physicians, that they order all religious discourse out of the chambers of the sick and the dying, lest it should lower the spirits (as they think) and perplex the mind. Are the dying, then, to be deceived into death, if ibey are ignorant of God and salvation? Or, if they know God, are they to have no comfort of his word, when they have most occasion for it? It is equally wicked to flatter with life, when death itself is at the very door. I remember a man, who seemed to have some serious impressions from religious discourse, under a near prospect of dying; but when a deceiving physician had assured him of his recovery, he threw away all concerns for heaven, received with disgust any mention of the state of his soul, and was found with cards and idle company in the very evening of that night in which he fell speechless and died. Did not such a physician contribute what he could to the murder of a soul ? And is not this the worst, because the most lasting and irreparable cruelty?

Certainly, religious discourses at such seasons should not be thrust in at random, but by discreet persons, or (if they can be had) by pious ministers, who will neither be too long. at one time in their attentions, nor offer what may be unsuitable or impertinent.

When the soul is relieved and consoled, every one knows how much it will sometimes contribute to the health of the body. But if it be the will of God to remove the party from this world, surely, in the acts of faith and of the comforts which faith brings, it is the more meet to ascend up to another. Why should a Christian go off thoughtless and sad to celebrate the marriage supper in heaven?

All trials and troubles are meant to take out the dross from the Christian. By grace, they have this effect more or less, throughout his life: And his various distresses likewise are exactly proportioned to his need of them. The last refinement is in death, in which he is perfectly cleansed and purified from every corruption, and removed to enjoy that pure state, which is equally void of sorrow and sin throughout eternity.

## CHAP. XVI.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S CONDUCT TO OLD AGE.

IT is the Lord's express command, *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God.* The experience and gravity, the judgment and wisdom, frequently found in old age, demand veneration ; and even where these are in some measure wanting, the infirmities and inquietudes of that state call upon people of younger years to abound in compassion towards them.

I know not how it may be with others; but for myself I ever loved the company and conversation of the ancient, preferably to the gay humors of the young, and have been exceedingly delighted at their explanations and informations of circumstances and events, which no books could possibly have given me.

To this day I cannot meet an aged person, especially if he be infirm, without feeling some kind emotions of heart towards him; and these always heightened by an anxious pity, if it appear that he has not yet felt any true concern for himself. All this may be mere *nature*, it is true; but, however, I do not wish to suppress it.

The grey hairs of the aged, those " church-yard flowers," (as they have been named) call aloud upon them, and through them to all men, *Prepare to meet your God.* They are remembrancers, to the eye and to the heart, of death at hand, and of eternity to come.

But the *ancient Christian* is especially to be considered as a venerable pile, respecting his soul, built up in a long course of grace for the habitation of God himself. The Fathers in Christ, having known HIM who is from the beginning; are to be revered, consulted, and (if need be) defended by the younger brethren upon all occasions.

The apostle, encouraging this tribute of respect to the aged, exhorts, *Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father*, even when his

conduct should be such, as is not to be approved. If these have tried grace and long experience, they have also increasing natural weakness and numberless infirmities, by which it will be no wonder, if in some instances they should be overborne. Could a young man, with a very large portion of grace, change places with them for a day, it is to be doubted, whether he would manage the case any better! though it is not to be doubted, that this experience might teach him extraordinary commiseration in future.

## CHAP. XVII.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S CONDUCT TO YOUTH.

AN heathen could say, *That the greatest respect is due unto children.* He meant, that nothing Should pass before their sight, which might either lead them to vices, or encourage vices in them.

There is no need of gloom in any of the things of God. True seriousness wants it not, and is very foreign to it in its nature. It is particularly unnecessary to indulge this sullen and morose humor of the natural heart (for it is seldom little better) before youth or children. There is an easy cheerfulness and benevolence, remote from all silly levity, and highly consistent with grace and the best good sense, which ought to reside in a Christian's heart, and which he might exhibit particularly upon occasion to younger persons; they are to be drawn by *the cords of a man*, that is, with natural affections; and though it is not in human power to render them truly religious, Jet surely religion ought not to appear before them, or before any body else, as a poor, miserable, dreadful thing like a spectre or ghost, to frighten them away from her. They should see, as well as hear, by the example of real Christians, *that the ways of religion (or true wisdom, which is the same thing) are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* Sourness may indeed be found very plentifully in nature; but there ia pot one single particle of it in all the being or exercise of grace. On the contrary, its tendency is to correct the natural moroseness of the human heart.

The Psalmist gives this mild and gentle invitation: *Come ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* But wherefore? That they might *see good*, and partake of the blessings which the word of the Lord most amply sets before them.

Our Lord's benevolence to children is above all comment. He gave an example of good will and tenderness in this respect, which net the greatest and wisest of his disciples can think himself too wise or too great to follow.

The sincerest faithfulness to their souls is consistent with the greatest good-nature to their persons; nay, we cannot be truly good-natured to them, unless we are faithful. Instruction, even in the best things, may be set before them in an inviting form, without the least deviation from the soundness of truth; and by a little gracious skill, they may perhaps be led to perceive, how deep an interest and concern they have in them. If God is pleased to second the instruction, by giving them a true sight of themselves; it is a known case, that they will love and honor those, who gave the instruction, as long as they live. And if God does not bless it to the desired end, yet the piety and well-meant kindness of the instructors will not fail of their approbation and respect; for none can choose but love those, who show any real or disinterested regard for themselves. Besides, who can tell, that the seed now sown in early age, though it seem buried and forgotten for many years, may not, in the secret workings of God, be brought forward into life at some future time? There have been instances of persons, who were favored with good instructions in younger days, and who appeared to have forgotten God, their instructors, themselves, and every thing else that was good, for a very long portion of their life; but who afterwards were blessed and made happy, through grace, in the very recollection of those things, which, *like bread upon the waters*, seemed to have been lost, but which *were found*, and found with great advantage, *after many days*.

Sin may be checked, nay punished, and yet the sinner be loved. The sinner shall love in return when he perceives that love occasioned the correction, or rather, that there would have been no correction but from love. It is the same in a higher case: *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth*: And he will not do this, but for those who are truly his sons.

It is very much their own fault, if there be not great weight in the conduct of parents and friends with young persons and children. These, it should be remembered, hear their words; but they watch their example. If the doctrine and life be the same thing, they will regard the former for the sake of the latter, with reverence : if the

preceptor divide them, it is usual for them to despise both, and to treat him with censure, or derision, into the bargain.

## CHAP. XVIII.

### ON THE DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY.

SOME people delay the testamentary disposal of their effects, till the time of sickness or prospect of death; when the mind, if capable of reflection, which is not always the case, should surely be engaged altogether in eternal affairs; and therefore, for this and other reasons, they are either able to make none at all, or none with suitable judgment and deliberation. The folly and cruelty of this conduct, as it respects either a man's friends or himself, cannot escape the censure of heaven and earth. *Set thine house in order*, is a divine command in the preparation for eternity: And the laws of all countries solemnly respect this final instance of attention to social duties.

There are those who make arbitrary or capricious bestowments, slighting the rules of God's word, the proportional claims of nature, and those reasonable human prescriptions which are founded upon them, and which none but very strong causes, such as the wickedness, idiocy, or certain misapplication of the parties expectant, can properly set aside. Such seem to forget, that, being only stewards and not absolute proprietors, they are as accountable for the *disposal* of their goods, as for the *acquisition* of them.

Others are exceedingly liberal in bequests to public or private charities, who would spare little or nothing during their own life, or in other *words from themselves*. These pompous bestowments are but too often "the painted sepulchres of alms," raised up by covetousness for a worthless glory: And if there be living and lawful heirs, or unexceptionable kindred, the whole is done at their expense, not the testator's, who has presumed to misapply what he could no longer grasp, and what therefore could be no longer his own, and to rob his friends for the sound of a name, which, in such a case, had been less disgraced if entirely forgotten.

If a Christian should *set the Lord ALWAYS before him*, he is especially called to recollect his presence in a business where he may be said to be acting after his death, and to be affecting very materially the future actions and interests of others. When his will is in force, he himself is at the bar of God, accounting for its principle and effects. He should therefore renounce all humors, and, in the most solemn frame of a religious mind, ask himself; "Suppose I were standing before the Divine Majesty, would I devise what he committed to my charge exactly as I have now devised it?" The *answer of a good conscience*, and of a *sound mind*, will generally exclude all foolish or perverse partialities, and determine what is honorable for the Christian, and fight for those he leaves behind him.

Where there are no near relations, or just claimants, people, at least pious people, may equitably dispose of their worldly matters with no other restraints than those of attention to religion. It would not be unseemly for persons in such circumstances to bequeath their property either to pious friends, who may receive or do good with it, or to pious institutions, where. It will be done; guarding, however, against idle ostentation, or the vanity of earthly fame. It would be poor, in a good man's view, to have this for the motive or reward. The distinguished Christian, whose honorable name is remembered near the front of these papers, and shall be remembered for ever in a way very superior to the words or memory of man, was a signal example of the widest benevolence, united, wherever the case would admit of it, with the closest and most humble concealment. Large sums of money were distributed, through various channels, to thousands of distressed persons who never knew, and perhaps never heard of, the principal instrument of their relief. He seemed to have a just fear, if not abhorrence, of that dangerous applause, which all sorts of people are ready enough to bestow on persons of this happy character, whether or not they are solicitous to follow their example. It was God who gave him the affluent ability; and he conferred a greater gift, when he gave him the heart to employ that ability, so entirely to the divine glory, and so diffusively to the good of men. It

is possible indeed for but very few to extend themselves according to his measure; *but this* is encouraging to every one, who *has first a willing mind*, that the performance *it accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not:* and therefore it may not be improper, according to this rule, and their own measure, to remind professors of the true religion, that their Lord himself has said, *Go and do likewise.*

## CHAP. XIX.

### ON THE DEATH OF RELATIVES AND FRIENDS.

IT was the saying of a man, who had lost all his Children and all his substance, and who found not one true friend to offer him the least real comfort; " Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I go out: The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

This is the resignation of a believer. He refers every thing to the will and work of God; and, having nothing of his own but sin, and nothing to lose by death but sin; all he has, being by bounty and favor, should be freely offered up to the disposal of the Giver. This consideration, indeed, if by itself and alone, perhaps would not satisfy him; but there is another which ought, and, being set home upon his heart by grace, most certainly will: " All providences, whether pleasant or trying, shall work together for good to them that love and fear God." When God loves, and loves for the best end: and when God contrives, and contrives only, the best means; why is the mind of any Christian overcharged with disquietude and lamentation, with murmuring or sorrow? Does he not as much as say by it, "Father, not thy will, but my own, be done!"

"I have lost a friend," says some anxious mind. But who took that friend? Was it not the God, who gave him? And has he taken more than his own? And, if a pious friend, has he not removed him to the best advantage? And is it not your great privilege, after the enjoyment of such an one in this deplorable world, to live and be with him again, not here, but in a better? Besides, Christian, you have neither lost your God, nor your friend, no, nor yet will they ever lose you. Your friend, at the utmost, is but surrendered, not sunk, lent, not lost, and shall be found again with advantage. Pray then against the overstrong impressions of carnal sense; for all this is the striving of animal life, of mere flesh and blood, against the Lord; and desire you to find your will in the Divine will alone. Be silent when it strikes, contented when it denies, thankful when it gives,

resigned when it takes away. It is not the gold in the furnace which bubbles and froths upwards, but the dross and scum.

"I have lost a child," says another: But ask you, Who has found him? Is it not that gracious\* Redeemer, who called little children unto himself when upon earth, and who gave them the highest of benedictions? Has not this child escaped a thousand evils and miseries and sins, which it must have undergone or committed had it lived longer among the miserable sinners of this world? And does it not enjoy unutterable happiness with your own best Friend, with whom also you yourself hope to live for ever? And is it worthy of your love to your child thus excessively to bemoan its deliverance from grief, and its possession of peace? Or, rather, is it not the selfish working of your own too much compassionated heart, which laments its own loss in the flesh, or seeks its own pleasure more than your child's happiness, or its own will more than God's? I believe, if you examine closely, you will find something of this within you: But, however, be it what it may, it ought not to be there. It is no fruit of faith; and it can render no profit or comfort to your soul.

"I have lost a wife or an husband, the very desire of mine eyes, the outward comfort of my life, and my greatest outward support." I would not say, do not feel any grief, hut do not grieve beyond measure. When *Lazarus* died, even *Jesus* wept. Nature may suffer for its own losses; it may suffer for the losses of others; and in many cases it is decent to feel, and charitable to sympathize; but nature, if alone, is impatient and blind, especially in spiritual things, and makes all its reckonings from the outward senses. To say to nature, that grace gains where she loses, will never comfort her; and to say to persons who are at any time greatly under the affections of nature, or more under her impressions than those of grace, that their souls may profit where their bodies have lost, will be dull news, which, then at least, can scarcely find hearing. The appeal must be made to grace itself; and nature, if not quite shut out, must at least stand nearer the door. As grace becomes strengthened and quickened, nature will be subdued and quieted, from her tumult and sorrow. And, therefore, under these trials it is, that it may chiefly be seen in

believers, how strong or weak their faith is in the Lord. I knew a pious and excellent woman, now with God, who, with as much natural tenderness of heart as ever mortal creature had, and with as much affection for her husband as perhaps it is possible for human nature to feel for one every way worthy of her, received the account of his sickness and death, without a murmur or a groan, and with only some silent tears,\* which showed the greatness of her natural loss, the sense of her partner's gain, and the strong and lively hope which filled her soul of living with him again in a blissful eternity. I saw this amiable and beautiful example of the power of grace, and was convinced by it, how much above all sickness and feebleness of nature it can rise, and triumph, and glorify God.— Christian, could you have seen this gracious instance as I saw it, it would have taught you upon fact, how to mourn and bewail the same kind of loss, and how to live upon God; not without a feeling, for that is brutal insensibility, but without being stunned or stupefied in the use of grace by the mere feelings of nature.

But excellent as this example\* is, you and I have a more sure word of testimony to trust in, that we may get the better of our natural crosses and sorrows. God, who gathered all the fathers, will gather us ere long to the fathers in his glory. If our relatives, our dearest relatives, be dead as to this world, they now thank God, that they are so; and we may be reminded of the promise of our gracious Savior, which assures us, that, respecting our souls and the souls of all the faithful, they never shall, they never can, so much as *see* or *taste of death*.

\* The late Mrs. *Talbot*, widow of the Rev. *William Talbot*, Vicar of St. *Giles's, Beading*.

Why then should we sorrow, as those who have no hope? We ought to be ashamed of our selfish grief, and to beseech of God, that he would at least turn it into tranquil resignation, if not into praises and joy. God has wonderfully supported his people in all their extremities; and, if you are one of them, why not you? The youngest child may claim his father's bounty and blessing, though he may not

enjoy so large a portion as the first-born. Trust then to the Lord; and entreat him to subdue in your heart all the passionate and perplexing tempests of disordered nature.

The intended effect of these solemn dispensations to yourself is, to wean you from time, and to set your face towards heaven. There you have many friends indeed, and one great Friend above all, who can never be lost; nor can the others, when met, be separated from you again. They are your friends, in that holy and unchanging region, not for such a shadow of a moment as your time is here, but for a blissful and boundless eternity. With what transport shalt you, one day, ascend to them; with what ecstasy will they all unite to receive you! The very foresight of this joy throws into contempt all the poor affairs of this world. But O what shall the possession do! Could the possibility of descending again to earth, as earth now is, enter the views of the saints in glory, it would throw a damp into heaven itself, and beggar their unspeakable joys. And yet this is almost, if not quite, the wish and desire of every one who murmurs at the departure of Christian friends; or who would, if they could, bring their souls back again, contrary to their heavenly interests, into moldering lumps of clay.

It was a noble saying of one over a dear departed friend: "There he lies (says he), and with him all my worldly comfort; but yet if the moving a straw would bring him to life again; without the will of my God, I would not be the mover of that straw for a thousand worlds."

My dear fellow Christian, may you be like-minded; and, instead of too much bewailing the departure of friends to heaven, let it be one great object of your life and faith to follow them thither, that you may enjoy, together with them, the common portion of the Redeemed, even the everlasting inheritance of the saints in light!

## CHAP. XX.

### THE RECOLLECTION OF THIS THIRD PART IN PRAYER TO GOD.

O MY heavenly Father, when I calmly look back upon my conduct to others in this world, and consider how greatly I have failed in all my known duties to men, against your holy word and against the peace of my soul; I am humbled to the dust before you. I have nothing to say for myself, but with your contrite prophet, *Unclean! Unclean!*

I have not loved my country as I ought; because I have not prayed for its best welfare as I ought. Intent enough I have been upon its vainglory, its outward pomp, its carnal dignity, and its national prosperity; but O how little have I been importunate with you for the greatest blessings, that religion and piety might nourish in the land, without which no true happiness or welfare can really be found.

I humbly implore your blessing upon my sovereign, his family, and his government; beseeching you to grant, with all outward good, the inward mercies of your grace, and, in your due time, the life for evermore. Pardon me also for any failures of my duty on this account.

In obeying those, whom your providence has set over me, O teach me to see how I may best obey you, and glorify your goodness for a just government, good laws, and the valuable liberties I enjoy. If those in authority seem to fall into errors, (for what man is he that sins not?) keep my tongue from reviling, and direct my heart unto praying for them, that your wisdom may rectify what human ability could not apprehend or foresee. Deliver me from sedition and selfishness, from all the evils of political passion and resentment; and give peace, I beseech you, in my time, O Lord!

Enable me to conduct myself towards your church, your ministers, and all who profess to know you, so as to give no just cause of

offence in any thing to any man. I pray you to heal all divisions among your children, which may bring sad and deep reproach on your gospel, or lay dismal snares and stumbling-blocks in the ways of men. O! that they might love and pity each other, considering what infinitely tender pity and love you have manifested for them.

Help! O help me to fill up all my relations in life to your honor and glory, and forgive me, in the numberless instances wherein I have failed. Let the blood of Jesus cleanse me from all my sins to others; and do you forgive, as you have enabled me to forgive, all their transgressions against myself. Grant me larger measures of grace in the days to come, that I may praise you more and more throughout my whole life and conversation, and thus live and die to the edification of others, and above all to your glory.

Keep me from unreasonable and faithless grief, when you are pleased, with equal wisdom and goodness, to remove the friends of my heart, or the outward comforts of my life. Enable me to give them up without reserve to you, knowing that no good thing shall be lost either from them or myself, but that all things shall work together for our mutual, our real, our everlasting good.

Having these hopes, help me to be more and more purified from all uncleanness both of flesh and of spirit, and to endeavor even to perfect holiness in your faith and fear. Lord, I am a blind and feeble worm, and of mine own self can think or do nothing that is good; O do you therefore work in me to will and to do of your good pleasure, that I may neither be barren nor unfruitful in your word or work among the children of men. Help me to bear wrongs patiently, to speak every truth meekly, to carry as much as possible my whole conduct unblameably, with respect to others, that your holy name and truth may be exalted, and they themselves be encouraged to seek the ways of your salvation.

O Lord, I give up myself, all I have and all I am, into your blessed protection; beseeching you to do for me and for mine, in every respect, and at every time, exceeding abundantly above all that I can

ask or think, for the sake of Christ Jesus, my Lord and my God; to whom with You, O Father, and You, O blessed Spirit, Three Persons in One and the Same JEHOVAH, be all honor, grace, and glory ascribed, both now and for evermore. Amen.